**TURNING THE GRACE OF GOD INTO LEWDNESS**

“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who ***turn the grace of our God into lewdness*** and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 3-4).

In the text above, Jude speaks of “turning the grace of God into lewdness.” The world “lewdness” refers to behavior that is “shameless, outrageous, or without restraint” (see Vine, Thayer). It has sexual overtones, but is not necessarily limited to sexual matters. In other words, what Jude is telling us is that some people turn God’s grace into an excuse for conduct that is “shameless, outrageous, or without restraint.” ***This is an extremely important point!*** It strikes at the very heart of modern-day perversions of the grace of God. In this article, I want to explore this further.

Today, most who profess faith in Christ perceive of God’s grace as a veiled excuse to indulge in sin. “Don’t worry,” they say, “grace will cover that.” From there, it further devolves into diminishing, or even ridiculing, the need for obedience. The end result of such thinking is that they “deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 4). They “deny” the Lord by refusing to submit to His authority. If this means anything at all, it means that those of us who are saved by grace must continue to pay attention to our conduct! “Once saved, always saved,” and “You cannot fall from grace,” are the lies of the Devil (cf. Ga.5:4).

These facts leave us with an important principle: ***Any notion of “grace” that diminishes obedience is NOT the grace of God!*** Grace is not an excuse to continue to sin; but a way to get OUT of sin! Sin is the very thing that got us into trouble to begin with (Rm.6:23). And grace is what God has done to remove that problem, and give us a fresh start. Jesus did not die to save us IN our sins; He died to save us FROM our sins! Notice: “For the graceof God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, ***denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly*** in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might ***redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works”*** (Tit.2:11-14).

This is also consistent with the notion of “free will” (cf. Rv.22:17). Grace was designed to appeal to free-will creatures, and encourage them to abandon their sinful lives for a better way. “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all were dead; ***and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again”*** (2Cor.5:14-15). What Christ did on the cross was designed to change our conduct – to persuade us to abandon sin, and live for Jesus!

This, in turn, enhances our understanding of the atonement. What happened on the cross made forgiveness ***possible*** (Mt.26:28; Hb.9:22); but it ***does not guarantee*** forgiveness to the impenitent (Lk.13:3). The gift of God’s unique Son must be accepted (Jn.3:16; cf. Ga.3:26-27); and once accepted, it can be rejected (Hb.6:4-6). When seen in this light, it becomes clear that Jesus did not endure our punishment on the cross; for if He had, then God would be ***obligated*** to save us ***regardless*** of our conduct (because the punishment for sin has already been meted out). Instead, what Jesus did on the cross was to provide ***an alternative to our punishment*** – a blood sacrifice (Rm.5:8-9).

Let us be thankful for the amazing grace of God. But may we never abuse it, by considering it as an excuse to sin! If you are ready to accept His grace, we would love to help you!

--Lanny Smith