

CHIEF

MINISTRIES

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It has become very apparent to me that in prison and also in the free world that most people don't want to be held accountable by other people and a lot of it has to do with their mishandling of grace. Heresy is when you take a half-truth and make it the whole-truth. May we never forget that "grace and truth" came through Jesus Christ (John 1:14, 17). So we must preach grace and truth rather than grace alone. Otherwise, we will have a spiritual crisis on our hands, in fact we already do! I hear teachers, pseudo-leaders, pastors, evangelists sporting all kinds of ridiculous statements.

Tell me what you think of this quote, found in the dedication of a book where the pastor (and author) is thanking his congregation for taking the journey into grace with him; "This book is dedicated to the members of New Revelation Christian Church, who have taken the difficult journey from legalism to liberty and have become a better community of believers as a result."

Does that sound good to you? How glorious it is to be liberated from legalism to liberty! The problem is the pastor is a practicing homosexual and his church embraces practicing homosexuals into membership and ordains them into ministry. This is an example of grace without truth, which is not really grace at all.

One of the foundations of the hyper-grace message is that God has already forgiven all of our sins, meaning past, present and future sins. In fact we're told that God doesn't even see the sins we commit since he sees us as completely sanctified and holy in His son.

In the words of Joseph Prince, "His grace is cheapened when you think that He has only forgiven you of your sins up to the time you got saved, and after that point you have to depend on your confession of sins to be forgiven. God's forgiveness is not given in installments." He also wrote, "My friend, this is the assurance you can have today: the day you received Christ, you confessed all your sins once and for all. With teaching like this it is no wonder so many swallow the "once saved, always saved" doctrine.

To back this position up, modern grace teachers commonly quote the words of the new covenant prophecy spoken in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and repeated in full in Hebrews 8:8-12, culminating with these words: and *I will remember their sins no more.* This is again quoted in Hebrews 10:17- *I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.* followed by an important observation in verse 18 for the Jewish believers reading the letter: "*where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.*" In other words, because Jesus the Messiah died for all our sins, bringing us forgiveness, there is no longer a need to offer animal sacrifices for sin, nor would these sacrifices procure forgiveness. The work has been done once and for all!

There is some powerful truth in this modern grace message, since on the cross Jesus paid for every sin we ever committed or ever will commit. And the moment we come to the Lord and receive His saving grace, He declares us righteous and forgets the sins we have committed until that moment.

Did you commit adultery before you were a believer? Or fornicate? Did you rob and steal before you were saved? Did you mock God's name before you knew Him? When you came to Him and turned from those sins, asking for forgiveness in Jesus name, He washed you clean and made you a new creation, and He has forgiven and forgotten the adultery, fornication, stealing and mocking. He said, "*I will remember their sins no more.*" Praise God!

And it is true when Jesus died for us, our sins were still future since we had not even been born. So, yes, he died and paid for our future sins as well as our past and present sins. What we must realize, however, is that the transaction of forgiveness takes place at different points in time. In other words, Jesus died for you and me sometime around AD 30, and the moment he breathed his last breath, he had paid for the sins of every human who would ever live on the earth. But were we forgiven at that point and time? Absolutely not!

Paul explains that before we knew him, we were dead in our sins and by nature, objects of God's wrath (Ephesians 2:1-2, Colossians 2:13) guilty in God's sight and "*alienated and hostile in mind doing evil deeds.*" (Colossians 1:21) this means that even though Jesus paid for our sins, until we turn to him for salvation, our sins were still counted against us, separating us from God. That's why throughout the book of Acts, the apostles urged their listeners to turn from their sins and be saved.

In other words, although Jesus had already paid for their sins, they were not forgiven because they had not yet appropriated forgiveness through faith. I believe virtually every born-again believer agrees with the simple truth that we are not saved and forgiven until we put our trust in Jesus, even though he already paid the price for our salvation.

Then what happens when we get saved? God forgives us for all the sin we have committed until that time, as stated in Colossians 2:13-14. "*And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it on the cross.*"

We had a massive debt in God's sight, a tremendous record of guilt that we could never remove in a thousand lifetimes, yet the Lord in His mercy canceled that debt and wiped away our guilt in a moment of time, making us white as snow. That is amazing Grace! So, Jesus died for our sins on the cross, but forgiveness for our sins wasn't transacted until the day we repented and believed. And what sins were forgiven at that point and time? The sins we had already committed. How could it be otherwise? That was the debt we owed - the sins we had committed, not the sins we had not yet committed.

Before I demonstrate this from the Word of God, stop and think about this for a moment. When you first came to the Lord, what happened between you and the Lord? What was going on in your heart and mind?

I remember the spiritual battle I was fighting to believe that Jesus died for my sins - and then, once I believe that He was the Savior, the battle was to turn from my sins. I loved my sin, indulging the flesh, living in prideful rebellion and pursuing the dream of being a professional musician and world renowned. But when God's love and conviction won the day, I asked the Lord to forgive me and surrendered my life to Him.

In a moment of time I was clean! The guilt was totally gone, and even when I looked for it I couldn't find it. I was forgiven! God remembered my sins no more!

What about the sins I hadn't committed yet? The question never even crossed my mind, not one single time. And I imagine it was the same thing with you. Why in the world would we be thinking about future sins? And who in their right mind would say, "Praise God I am forgiven for all the wicked things I did, and I am already forgiven for all the wicked things I will do from here on for the rest of my life." Who would ever think like this? Honestly, in all the years of my life in the Lord, I've never met anyone who thought along these lines.

We may have wondered if we would be able to stay faithful, asking out loud, "but what if I fall?" And friends have told us, "Don't worry, just put your trust in Jesus, and if you mess up, just get back up and keep going. You're a child of God!" And we might have asked if God would forgive us if we sinned again in the future. But we certainly didn't think, "Praise God! I'm already forgiven for the rest of my life no matter what I do or how I live." And if you look at the preaching in Acts and the teaching in the

Epistles, you will see that the focus was always on the sins people had already committed or were continuing to commit, not the sins they would commit in the future.

In Acts 3, Peter urged the Jewish crowd to turn from their sins, saying to them, “*Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out*” (Acts 3:19). Which sins? The sins they had committed until that point, as the content makes clear, focusing on their rejection of Yeshua as Messiah. And when Peter preaches to the Jewish crowd along similar lines in Acts 2, he said, “*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins*” (Acts 2:38). Which sins? Clearly the sins they had already committed.

That’s why Jewish crowds, coming to John the Immerser to go through his baptism of repentance, confessed their sins - meaning the sins they had committed and the sins they were living in. They weren’t confessing their future sins! And that’s why John urged the religious leaders to “bear fruit in keeping with repentance.” (Matthew 3:8) meaning, demonstrate that your repentance is genuine by leaving the old behind and living a new life.

Simply stated, there is not a single verse anywhere in the Bible that pronounces us already forgiven for our future sins (meaning, sins we have not yet committed). Not one verse. Nowhere. Not even a hint of such a concept. All the promises of forgiveness have to do with sins we have already committed, since God is dealing with us in space and time, and He only forgives us for what we have actually done. It’s as if you have a debit card with a prepaid amount of \$1,000,000, but the account is not charged until you go out and use it. In the same way the forgiveness of all our sins has been prepaid, but the forgiveness is not applied in advance, it is applied as needed.

The good news is that God has placed us in the “righteous” column. He has already pronounced us “Not Guilty!”, and has brought us into His family, and if we sin as believers, forgiveness is transacted as we ask for it through the blood of Jesus.

If God already forgave all our sins, past present and future, why would He have instructed us to pray the Lord’s prayer in Luke 11:3-4 or in Mark 11:25 - *and when you stand praying forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your father who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*” Why would Jesus talk about being forgiven on an ongoing basis? It’s clear that our present sins need present forgiveness not for the purpose of salvation but as part of our relationship with the father. This is presupposed throughout the entire New Testament.

That’s why Paul often deals with sin issues when writing to the different congregations urging them to lives worthy of the Lord and giving instructions on how to deal with sin in their midst, as in 1 Corinthians 5. How foolish it would be to argue Paul saw the sins of these believers and was grieved over this and addressed it, but God didn’t see their sins because He had already forgiven them and saw the Corinthian church members only as perfectly righteous. Where is this taught in the New Testament?

More importantly, there were consequences of these sins, as Paul explained to the believers in Corinth, who were guilty of partaking of the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner: “*Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and the blood of the Lord.* [Notice that Paul did not say, “But, of course, your sins have already been forgiven and God doesn’t even see them.” Not at all!] *Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.*” (1 Corinthians 11:27-32)

Have you ever heard anyone say: “If anything I did on a daily basis had any effect on my relationship with God, that would be salvation by works!”?

It's ironic that these hyper grace believers will often quote Hebrews 10:17 where God says he will no longer remember our sins, but they failed to deal with the rest of the chapter (let alone the rest of the book). It's clear the author is writing to believers: *"For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of 2 or 3 witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of Grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "the Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God."* (Hebrews 10:26-31)

The author is writing to believers here, those who have already been forgiven, those whose sins God no longer remembers, those who have received the knowledge of the truth and have already been sanctified by the blood of Jesus. Go on reading verses 32-39 and into Chapter 11. There is not the slightest doubt about who is being addressed. Our past sins have been forgiven, but if we turn our back on the Lord or go back to a system of man-made religion or choose our sin rather than the Savior "There no longer remains a sacrifice for sins."

But Hebrews 10:1-3 seems to imply that we shouldn't even be conscious of sin, because God forgave us once and for all at the cross. *For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.* ^{v2} *Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?* ^{v3} *But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.* (ESV)

Once more we have to ask, if this is the case, why do Paul and Peter and Jacob (commonly, but wrongly, called James) - dig a little deeper for yourself and you'll find out, and other New Testament writers remind their readers about sins in their midst? If God doesn't want us to be conscious of sin, why did His servants keep bringing it up? Why did Jacob (James) write things like this? *"You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is an enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.... Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded"* (Jacob [James] 4:4, 8)

And why did Jesus Himself, speaking by the Spirit expose the sins of His people in Revelation 2-3, telling the believers in Ephesus they had left their first love, rebuking the believers at Pergamum for holding to teaching that encouraged idolatry and immorality, calling the believers in Thyatira to account for tolerating the teaching of Jezebel, telling the believers in Sardis that they were dead and rebuking the believers in Laodicea for their lukewarm, self-deceived, proud state? And He called each of them to repentance, offering them grace if they repented and giving them warnings if they didn't.

Why do this if their sins were already forgiven and if God no longer wanted them to have any consciousness of sin? You would have to say that Jesus didn't understand the message of grace!

It looks like Paul didn't have the grace Revelation either. Why else would he write things like, *"I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality they have practiced."* (2 Corinthians 12:21). If the Corinthian's were not to have any consciousness of their sins, what business did Paul have bringing them up again?

And what about Jacob (James) 5:14-15, *"is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven."*

How could the word be any clearer? If one's future sins were already forgiven in terms of the transaction of that forgiveness - this verse would have no meaning at all.

How then should we understand Hebrews 10:1-3? I will let Hebrew Scholar William Lane, Word Biblical Commentary explain.

“Under the old covenant worshipers never experienced a definitive cleansing..... Even on the occasion of the awesome ceremonies associated with the ritual of the Day of Atonement worshipers continue to have a “consciousness of sins” (he’s quoting the Greek text here). This expression connotes the Hebrew sense of a burdened, smitten heart which became most pronounced on the Day of Atonement when it was necessary to confront the holiness of God..... As long as this sense of sin and transgression with respect to God remained, there could be no effective service of God. A decisive cleaning of the conscience is a prerequisite for unhindered access to God (10:22) and this has been achieved only through the sacrifice of Christ.”

In fact, Lane makes this observation about the most important day on the biblical calendar for ancient Israel, the Day of Atonement, the day in the year designated for forgiveness of sins. “What impressed the writer of Hebrews was that a remembrance of sins, which constituted a barrier to worship, was confirmed and renewed... ‘year after year’ by the annual Day of Atonement ritual. This is what is also written in Hebrews 9:13-14; *“for if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”*

So, the point is not that we are never to be conscious of sin in our life, which is an impossible concept based on the clear testimony of the entire New Testament. The point is that the work of forgiveness was accomplished once and for all at the cross by Jesus, wiping away our guilt and pronouncing us righteous and holy, with no need for another sacrifice or an annual Day of Atonement to bring us cleansing. So we live as forgiven people, and rather than having to bring an annual (or daily or weekly or monthly) sacrifice of atonement, we look back to the cross, celebrating the forgiveness we have received. And if we do sin, we confess our sins to God and leave them behind, rejoicing in the fact that the payment has already been made.

As expressed beautifully in just seven Hebrew words in Proverbs 28:13, *“The one who covers his transgression will not prosper, but whoever confesses them and forsakes them will find mercy.”* And if we ever doubt that mercy, we need just to look to Jesus. As the old hymn proclaims:

Jesus paid it all,
All to him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.

Let us grow in grace and truth.....

Chief

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