

PERVERTING GRACE

By Kim Josephson

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jude 3-4

Can you imagine that even within the first fifty years of the Church's existence, Jude, the half-brother of Jesus would have to contend or fight for the faith? That the faith would be under attack from outside the Church was a given. Jesus promised that. But that heresy ushered in by “ministers” would threaten the very life of the Church shook them, and it should shake us, to our very core!

What was this heresy? What was this threat to the Church that had to be exposed? The answer is in verse 4. That “certain men crept in unawares... turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness.”

The Amplified Bible says it like this:

For certain men have crept in stealthily...ungodly persons who pervert the grace (the spiritual blessing and favor) of our God into lawlessness and wantonness and immorality, and disown and deny our sole Master and Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the way it was then and that's the way it is now! Can you see that for 2000 years, satan has been trying to pervert grace and turn it into lawlessness, wantonness and immorality? And who has helped him in this diabolical plan? Why man of course! Sometimes knowingly but I'm afraid most times unwittingly. The human heart is so easily deceived. We are so easily given to our enthusiasms. I've said it before, but it bears repeating, truth pushed to the extreme is error, and error that becomes foundation for other doctrine is heresy. So it is with grace. Satan could not successfully drag Christians back into a covenant of works. The law, as interpreted by Jesus gives man no place to hide. The external righteousness of the Pharisees is so far from the mark of Jesus' interpretation of the law, that no man can utter one word in his own defense. In fact, that is the point of the law, that it stop every mouth and pronounce all men guilty, as criminals before God. So, you can see, satan could not exalt the law as the way of salvation. The law is powerless to save, but powerful to condemn. And, since he can't drag us back, he pushes us too far in the opposite direction. This is always a tactic of the devil. If he can't hold you back, he'll push you too far.

He becomes “a minister of light to deceive even the elect”. Just so with grace. He magnifies it and blows it up into something it couldn't possibly be. And man's heart, howling from the sting of the law, is an all too willing accomplice in the perversion of grace. We get carried away and begin to lay stone after stone of falsehood upon a foundation of error. Soon, our stronghold of doctrine is established and that's when the nature of the thing really exposes

itself. If anyone or anything challenges our doctrine, we lose every shred of Christlikeness and fight like dogs to preserve our doctrine. And here is the point, **even when Jesus' own words come against our doctrine, we cling to our doctrine and dismiss, disown and deny even Jesus!** O, the hellishness of this religious spirit!

So what is grace? Grace is the gift of God. I've heard it

defined as: **God's
Riches
At
Christ's
Expense**

I think that's good. But even better I think you can spell grace, **J E S U S !**

We were guilty and deserved to die, but God gave us grace. He gave us Jesus. That is grace. For God so loved the world that He gave us **Jesus**. As the hymn writer put it so very long ago:

"Nothing in my hand I bring
Simply to thy cross I cling."

That's grace – that's **JESUS!**

"Amazing Grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost but now I'm found
Was blind but now I see."

Thank God - that's **JESUS!**

"O the love that drew salvation's plan
O the grace that brought it down to man
O the mighty gulf that God did span
At Calvary."

O thank you God for Your grace,

O thank you God for **JESUS!**

Seen in this light it is impossible to pervert the grace of God. Seen in this light, grace is the exaltation of **Jesus** as Lord of Lords and King of Kings. It exalts every word He says and everything He does. It hallows and honors His every intent. His words become the final authority. They won't be manipulated to preserve a doctrine or even a denomination. **Jesus** becomes the doctrine! **Jesus** is the Word and the Word is **Jesus**. Hallelujah!

Seen in any other way, grace, as something apart from **Jesus**, becomes a thing of itself and unfortunately often because of perversion, something not even subject to **Jesus!** Men wax eloquent about the inexhaustible riches of God's grace. That's great, sounds pretty and it can make one euphoric, but let's get down to where the rubber meets the road. Can a man thwart, frustrate, even exhaust God's grace? Of course he can. All he has to do is reject **Jesus** and die in his sins. His place in hell is secure and God's grace will not save him! Our doctrine says once in grace always in grace, but **Jesus** straight up says in Matt 10:33 "But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." How's your fur? Are you bristling already because I've said something that challenges a cherished doctrine? But let's get real – I didn't say Matt 10:33, **JESUS DID!**

Our doctrine says "Say the sinner's prayer and you are in grace" but **Jesus** says "Repent, believe the gospel, and take up your cross and follow me". **Jesus** says "turn the other cheek", **Jesus** says "go the extra mile", **Jesus** says "lay not up for yourselves treasures on the earth", **Jesus** says "be ye perfect"...

And before long we say "Hold on, we're in grace we're excused from what **Jesus** said!" That's heresy! And here's where we really get nuts. We say "Jesus was talking to the Jews," "Jesus was a legalist," "Jesus was too hard," "Paul had the further revelation." **HERESY! HERESY! HERESY!** This is straight up denying **Jesus!** O God have mercy, but how can He?

We say "we're free from the law." Sure, as to its condemnation, but not from its obedience. You want to say that because you are a Christian you don't have to obey God? What nonsense! Because you are a Christian you are free to murder, free to steal, free to commit adultery, to

lie, take the Lord's name in vain, dishonor you parents, break the Sabbath, bow down to images, have idols and be covetous? How absurd! To argue such non-sense is anathema to a holy God. And then to call that grace? It's a slap in God's face! All heaven must weep, that **Jesus**, God's grace to man, would be disowned and denied and that those who call themselves Christians would fight to be free of Him whose "yoke is easy and

whose burden is light."

I must close. That the doctrine of grace has been perverted into a monstrosity of falsehood is plain to see,

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but what can we do about it? First, we must open our eyes and see what's happening. Then we must hear clearly what's really being said and where it's going. If a doctrine is tending toward lawlessness and laxity it can't be of God!

Jesus didn't save us so that we could continue to sin. He came to save us **from** our sins. He came to set us free from sin, not to make us free to sin. It's absurd, but the perversion of grace has spawned a careless Church – presumptuous Church and a disobedient Church.

Can you see the impossibility of these oxymorons? If Jesus is the Lord and we are His body, how can there be disobedience, carelessness, or presumption? Simply, we have been carried away by our own lusts. We've been deceived by our won hearts. As the hymn writer said:

Prone to wander, Lord I feel it
Prone to leave the God I love
Here's my heart O take and seal it
Seal it for thy courts above.

It's time for us to awake unto righteousness. Time for us to run back to God. There is no more time for delusion. It is time for us to come home to Jesus. Time to recommit ourselves to Him and Him alone. Give Him all your heart, mind soul and strength. That's what being in grace is. O thank God we have been given the grace to do it.

