

How is grace abused?

Lancaster - June 16, 2022

- This lesson is part of a developing study this year in Bellflower - “Drawing Closer to God”
- We can draw closer to God because of His amazing grace (which is demonstrated throughout scripture both in teaching and example)
- I believe this understanding also applies to our commitment. Appreciating His grace can motivate us to commit to Him.

What is grace?

- Grace is “unmerited favor” God has shown us “favor” even though we do not deserve it
- **Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 2:11**
- Grace is the **PRIME** factor in our salvation

What is grace?

- While it is the prime factor, we **MUST** understand that it does **NOT** mean we do nothing.
- While salvation is a gift, we have to accept it and God can - and does - set the terms for receiving it.
- **BUT** when we comply with those terms it is **STILL** God’s grace. Thus, it is “not of works, lest anyone should boast”, **Ephesians 2:8-9**

What is grace?

- In truth, virtually every “believer” in Jesus believes this.
- It is more a matter of **WHAT** you need to do in response to His grace (Is it only a mental acknowledgment in Jesus or are there other steps required?).
- Clearly, scripture lists several things we must do to be saved -
Mark 16:16; Romans 10:9-10; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:20-21; etc.

What is grace?

- The point in all of this - obedience does NOT nullify grace!
When we obey, we are still unprofitable, **Luke 17:10**
- Today, we will notice some ways that grace is abused

How can grace be abused?

- By saying all will be saved
- This is universalism - a belief that all will be saved - eventually
 - This doctrine denies the reality of hell and/or its eternality
- Consistently, if we do nothing to be saved, this is the only real viable option

How can grace be abused?

- By saying all will be saved
- Universalism appeals to verses like:
 - Titus 2:11** - God's grace has appeared to all men
 - 1 Timothy 2:4** - God desires all to be saved
 - 1 John 2:2** - Jesus the propitiation for sins of the whole world
 - John 12:32** - Jesus would draw all to Himself

How can grace be abused?

- By saying all will be saved
- Passages like those are discussing availability BASED upon acceptance.
- Clearly not all will be saved -
 - John 3:16; Matthew 7:13-14, 21-23**
 - 2 Thessalonians 1:5-9;**
 - Matthew 25:46** - which equates eternal destruction to the same amount of time as eternal life

How can grace be abused?

- True Calvinism
- John Calvin (1509-1564) developed a system of belief that essentially teaches that God randomly chooses who He will save and directs His grace toward them alone.

How can grace be abused?

- True Calvinism
- Ironically, the previous passages concerning universalism - **Titus 2:11; 1 Timothy 2:4; 1 John 2:2; etc.** answer this.
 - So does an understanding of freewill - man is free to choose whether or not to obey God
 - AND an understanding that God shows no partiality - **Romans 2:11; Acts 10:34; 1 Peter 1:17**

How can grace be abused?

- By cheapening grace
- A term attributed to Dietrich Bonhoeffer - a German, Lutheran minister in Germany during WW2 (1945).
 - His concern was churches appealing to the grace of God without a willingness to pay the price He demands.
 - It was about churches becoming more secular to accommodate societal demands.

How can grace be abused?

- By cheapening grace
- *“Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline. Communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”*
Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship

How can grace be abused?

- By cheapening grace
- This is the “come as you are” (you do not need to change) mentality
- Understand, grace was NOT cheap to God! **Romans 5:6-8**
NEVER forget what Jesus endured -
1 Peter 2:24; Hebrews 12:2-3

How can grace be abused?

- By cheapening grace
- It must not be cheapened by us!
Matthew 10:32-39 - the free gift of salvation comes at a high cost - EVERYTHING!
Luke 14:33 - whoever does not forsake all that he has cannot be His disciple
- There is NOTHING cheap about God’s grace - it is man who cheapens it!

How can grace be abused?

- Once saved, always saved
- An example of “cheap grace”
Teaches that once you surrender to Christ, it is impossible to forfeit your salvation no matter what you do or how you live.
- This doctrine removes any real need to obey God or to be accountable. One can pay lip service to accountability, but the doctrine contradicts that.

How can grace be abused?

- Once saved, always saved
- Scripture clearly teaches we CAN forfeit our salvation
Galatians 5:4
2 Peter 2:20-22
Hebrews 10:26-31
Hebrews 4:1
1 Corinthians 9:27; etc.

How can grace be abused?

- Once saved, always saved
- Advocates of this doctrine say that if one abandons their faith, they were never really saved in the first place. - They might appeal to **1 John 2:19** “they were never among us”
- I will admit that SOME were never genuine. Their fruits bear them out
- But such an argument is subjective at best. You CANNOT prove one’s prior “faithfulness” was not real.

How can grace be abused?

- License to sin
- Tied to and abuse of the previous point. Some contend they can continue in their sinful practices because of the grace of God. Paul addressed this abuse in **Romans 5:20-21; 6:1-2** - he noted, "God forbid" (i.e. "May it never be!")

How can grace be abused?

- License to sin
- We must not forget that in becoming Christians we put to death the man of sin - that is where Paul goes as he addresses this - **Romans 6:3-6; cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; etc.**
- **1 John 3:6-9** - we cannot continue in sin and expect to be pleasing to God, or invoke His blessings (including His grace)
- We are expected to change! ***Titus 3:3-8; Ephesians 2:2; 1 Corinthians 6:11**

How can grace be abused?

- Works counter grace
- Some believe righteous deeds will earn salvation ("I'm a good person, therefore ...")
 - Or contending that if our good outweighs the bad, we will be saved
 - Catholicism teaches salvation based largely on works - the priest imposes your instructions, indulgences, (history records permission to prepurchase forgiveness, or purchasing forgiveness for others, including the dead), etc.

How can grace be abused?

- Works counter grace
- As brethren, while we know this is not true, do we act as if it is? We put together our "check list" of dos and don'ts and think that is enough. We go "through the motions" but our heart is not behind what we do

How can grace be abused?

- Works counter grace
- Again, we CANNOT earn salvation and we MUST obey God (cf. **Luke 17:10; Ephesians 2:9**)
- BUT why do we obey?
 - Is it, "I have to"
 - OR "I want to because I love God"?**1 John 4:17-19; John 14:15; 1 John 5:3**

How can grace be abused?

- Works counter grace
- What does it mean to be faithful?
- Consider what faith is - trusting and believing God (as opposed to merely believing IN God). This is genuine faith.
- BUT consider another component - faithfulness. The word in Greek is derived from the same word as faith (*pistis*)

How can grace be abused?

- Works counter grace
- What does it mean to be faithful?
- True faith is demonstrated by being faithful! (Dependable, trustworthy). We need to live our lives so that God can trust us, much in the same way we trust Him
Matthew 25:23 - well done, good and faithful servant ...
1 Corinthians 4:2 - a steward must be faithful

How can grace be abused?

- Works counter grace
- Our faithfulness is a manifestation of our faith - hence **James 2:17-18**
- Understand - if you are not obedient to God, you DO NOT have genuine faith!
- When we truly appreciate God's grace, obedience is not an issue!
- AND our faithful works do NOT counter God's grace!

Do you fully appreciate
the grace of God?