

Dear Friend,

Pretend with me for a few minutes and let's say you visit a church of the "whatever" denomination and everything looks right and smells right. The people are dressed right. They sing good songs, the choir is good, the piano player is good. You begin to think this is really a nice church.

You listen as the preacher begins to teach along the line of, *"Thank God for Jesus and His blood. Jesus is God manifested in the flesh. He led a sinless life and shed His blood for us."* So far, so good. Man, this must be a good church. But the pastor continues, *"Thank God for His grace that covers all our sins, past, present and future. God knows we are mortal, weak, fallen creatures that cannot cease from sin. We love Jesus, but thank God, He knows we cannot keep His commandments. God knows we are sinful creatures, so He gave us grace that covers all of our disobedience. We are just mere humans, sinners by nature, but we worship Jesus who was God manifested in the flesh. We love Him, but we cannot be like Him. We are just old sinners saved by grace."*

There was a time in my life when I would have thought that was great preaching. I would have given the preacher big "Amen's," and maybe there even would have been a tear in the corner of my eyes. Sadly, there are millions of Christians sitting in churches today who are hearing that same kind of preaching and believe it to be the truth. The end result of that kind of teaching is to believe that Christians are still sinners by nature, weak and unable to stop sinning, and that the purpose of the grace of God was to cover their sins instead of to set them free from their sins.

By contrast, here is the pure Bible definition of the grace of God ... the kind of grace that brings salvation to mankind ... the only kind of grace that brings salvation to mankind:

Tit 2:11-12 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, (12) Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

What does the grace of God teach us? Does it say we are weak and unable to say no to sin? God forbid! It says the grace of God allows us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. Also, it empowers us to live soberly, righteously, and godly ... IN THIS PRESENT WORLD!

Thank God for His mercy, longsuffering and grace. Thank God for the blood of Jesus, by which we have received forgiveness of sins. But the gospel does not end at the cross. If it ended at the cross, we would be forgiven by the blood of Jesus ... but we would simply be forgiven sinners ... unchanged and unable to cease from sin.

Thank God the gospel continues through the resurrection of Christ to new life. When we are born again, we are not only forgiven through His shed blood, we are also born again to new life. When we become Christians, we literally die to our old life as sinners, and we are raised to new life as children of God. The apostle Paul wrote about this newness of life in Romans chapter six:

Rom 6:3-7 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? (4) Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (5) For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: (6) Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (7) For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Henceforth means ... from this point forward ... we should not serve sin. Why not? Because we don't have to anymore. Notice later in this chapter Paul commends these Romans for believing the "doctrine" that was delivered unto them:

Rom 6:17-18 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. (18) Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

What? We have been made free from sin? YES! That is the true power of God's grace. God did not simply forgive us and leave us as weak, forgiven sinners. God literally gave us the "light of life" so we would no longer have to walk in darkness.

Joh 8:12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

The very name that the angel instructed Joseph to give the baby in Mary's womb means, "He shall save His people from their sins." He does not save them "in their sins," but "from their sins." This is what Jesus meant when he said,

Joh 8:34-36 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. (35) And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: *but* the Son abideth ever. (36) If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Free from what? FREE FROM SIN! And not just free from the penalty of sin (meaning hell), but from sin itself. And if we do slip up and sin, thank God He still has not forsaken us, but has given us His own Son as our lawyer:

1Jn 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

But what was the purpose of John's letter? That ye sin not. Most people still sit in churches hearing pastors teach it is not possible to "sin not." We must not only preach the truth; we must live the truth before an unbelieving world.

Your friend and co-laborer,

Gary