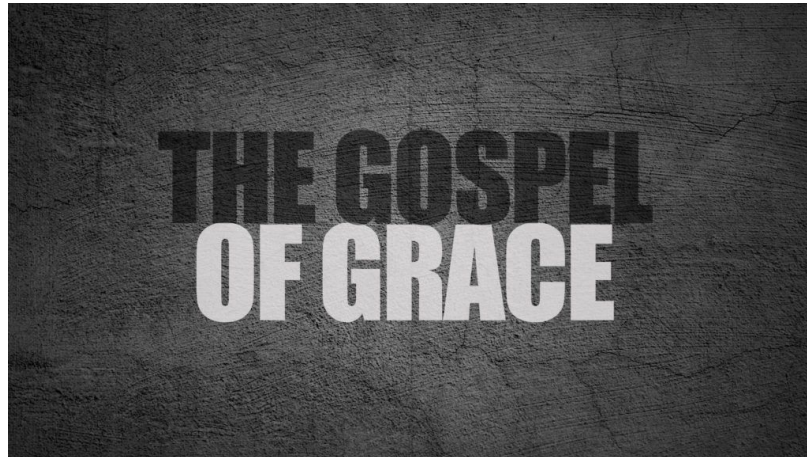


THE DARK SIDE OF THE GOSPEL OF GRACE



Awed by the power of his words, thrilled and terrified by his signs of healing, people were drawn to Jesus from the moment he came out of the wilderness and began to preach.

Men and women left their daily chores, laid aside their worries, and came to hear a man who gave them what no religious teacher had ever given:

A taste of the World to Come, God's Kingdom.

When Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven," all guilt vanished. When Jesus said, "Rise and walk," or "Receive your sight" the laws of this world gave way to the law of the World to Come.

When Jesus hung on the cross, and the sky darkened and the earth began to tremble, only the eye of God could see the evil, the corruption in us all funneling into his dying body, opening the way for a world far better than this one: God's Kingdom.



A clip from Full of Eyes.com

Three days later the earth shook again and the stone that sealed his tomb gave way. Jesus stepped into the early dawn as the Firstborn of the New Creation.

It was the beginning of the End of the Age.

Unspeakable power was at work.

When the Spirit fell on the believers on Pentecost they glorified God with new tongues, manifesting to the startled onlookers the power of the world to come.

What was this power?

The apostles called it **Grace**...

God's unspeakable mercy, given to restore us all to what we were meant to be.



It's all Grace.

Jesus' death on the cross,
his resurrection,
the outpouring of the Spirit,
the fact that you are reading these words---

---it's all God's Grace!

Over the years believers have perceived God's Grace in different ways.

Infused Grace

But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Ephesians 4:7

In this view, God puts his Grace into us as a kind of transfusion of divine life. Filled with this life, we are able to bring hope to others, to make this world a better place.

This infusion of Grace is a free gift, available to all who thirst for it.

Predestined Grace

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Romans 8:29-30

In this view, Grace is given to certain ones whom God chooses for reasons of his own. Once the elect ones receive this gift of Grace it is theirs forever. It can never be lost. These favored ones are eternally secure in God's Grace.

Universal Grace

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

John 1:29

In this view, God will see to it that everybody "makes it" in the end. There may be a season of purification for many, but God's Grace will ultimately bring the entire race out of darkness into the light of his Kingdom.

After all, didn't Jesus die for us all?

*"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth (on the cross)
will draw all people to myself."*

John 12:32

All people. Muslims, Buddhists, atheists, anarchists.

Somewhere, somehow, all are drawn to the Fountain of Grace.
That's a promise from the mouth of the Lord Jesus himself.

But will we all be overwhelmed by Grace?

Will we all walk the walk of Grace to the very end?

Are we all destined for the City of God?

The Dark Side of the Gospel of Grace

Coming from the mouth of the Lord Jesus, the gospel of Grace has a dark side. If we overlook its dark side, the gospel of Grace loses its power and becomes quite limp.

Consider, for instance, the branch that fails to abide in the Vine.

*“If a person does not abide in me, they are cast forth as a branch and wither.
And the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned.”*

John 15:6

God's Grace is there for me.

But if I fail to stay connected to the Master,
if I allow my own agenda to draw me away from him,

Grace in me withers; and I wither.

That little thread that holds me to the Vine is soon cut,
and I'm on my own.

There is also such a thing as Grace built on sand.

*“And every one who hears these words of mine
and does not do them will be like a foolish man
who built his house upon the sand;
and the rain fell, and the floods came,
and the winds blew and beat against that house,
and it fell; and great was the fall of it.”*



Matthew 7:24-27

Jesus' words are pure Grace.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but those words will echo through eternity.
But those words are of little use, if we fail to do what those words tell us to do.

But surely if I perform signs and wonders, prophesy, and cast out demons in the name of Jesus, I'm wrapped in God's Grace!

Again, the dark side of the gospel of Grace warns me to be careful.

*On that day many will say to me,
'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name,
and cast out demons in your name,
and do many mighty works in your name?'
And then will I declare to them,
'I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.'*

Matthew 7:21-23

One way to understand the dark side of Grace is to remember that Grace is holy.

You take off your shoes in its presence.

Once I open my heart to God's Grace,
I am accountable to God in a way I never was before.

*"If I had not come and spoken to them,
they would not have sin.
But now they have no excuse for their sin."*

John 15:22

It's quite simple.

I have been forgiven. So the Father expects me to forgive.

The Lord Jesus has shown me unspeakable mercy. So he expects me to live that mercy.

God has been generous with me. Now he expects me to be generous in my dealings with others.



When I not only receive Grace, but live Grace, the power of the Kingdom of God begins to anoint all I do.

I become broken bread and poured-out wine for all the lives I touch.

I will live the gospel of Grace in the place where God has put me. I will proclaim that Jesus is Lord (the gospel of Grace) to all whom God sends across my path.

Now the fire which the Lord Jesus ignited at Calvary (his baptism of fire) will begin to spread out from my life and ignite others. Such fires are now burning across the earth. They will continue to spread until the earth is engulfed by the gospel of Grace.

Then the End will be upon us.

When the Last Day arrives, I will be asked, not whether I subscribed to the gospel of Grace, but whether I lived it.

"When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.

Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left.

Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;

*for I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
I was a stranger and you welcomed me,
I was naked and you clothed me,
I was sick and you visited me,
I was in prison and you came to me.'*



Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?'

And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'

Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels;

***for I was hungry and you gave me no food,
I was thirsty and you gave me no drink,
I was a stranger and you did not welcome me,
naked and you did not clothe me,
sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'***



Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?'

Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.'

And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Matthew 25:31-46

Prayer

Lord we are awed by you. What power, what love, what unspeakable mercy that you rescued us from darkness, from the evil and corruption in our own hearts. Our hearts can never stop adoring you for your beloved grace, for restoring us to what you call us to be. Precious Lord, may our branches never wither because we pulled away from you, seeking any other agenda except living in your grace. Holy, holy Lord we take off our shoes in your sacred presence, we cannot hide from you, we cannot cover our separation, our sin. We lay our hearts before you willingly and lovingly. Make them like yours... loving, merciful, kind, tender. Light us with fires of faith and compassion that ignite others as we touch their lives with your grace. May we never dishonor, darken, or make a sham of your grace, by not living it, by not carrying it to, and by not seeing your very heart in the least of these.

Maranatha Mirror Messages



THE LAMB
WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN