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# Words of Truth

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## People Often Mistake Grace For A Free Pass

*By: Brian A. Yeager*

Very often, people are taught and believe that the grace of God somehow absolves them from needing to obey God. Statements such as, “I am a sinner saved by grace” are frequently made by erring individuals and churches. By that statement, they mean that they are actively sinners, not people who have repented of their sins and obeyed the Gospel of Christ.

In recent months, I received a message from a false teacher amongst churches of Christ. In part, he said: “Yes, I sin we all sin (Rom. 3:23). Yes, God wants me to stop sinning. No, God will not send me to hell if I don’t stop sinning. I am freely justified by his grace (Rom. 3:24). Freely means it has nothing to do with me.”

I find it fascinating how many people use a Scripture without having any clue what that verse is actually saying in context. If you look at the context of Romans 3:9-31, you see that it does not teach that everyone is a sinner saved by grace. Verse twenty-five requires one to acknowledge the need for his or her sins being remitted which does not occur by grace alone (Luke 24:47, Acts 2:36-47, and Acts 10:34-48). In that context the Lord, through Paul, was letting both Jews and Gentiles in the congregation at Rome know that in the past they (now Christians; then lost under the Law of Moses) needed a Savior. The book of Romans shows several contexts wherein the Jews and Gentiles needed to understand that being a Jew did not make you better than a Gentile and vice versa (i.e. Romans 11:1-32).

The false doctrines surrounding the grace of God are not going to go away soon. People like to sin and they often try to find a way to make themselves feel better about it. Thus, the frequent target of our day is the grace of God. Therefore, we need to be sure we are often reminded of what God’s grace does and does not do. This will benefit us in not falling for those false doctrines. Then, we can benefit others by being able to show them the errors of their ways. Let’s start with how the book of Romans certifies that grace does not give a free pass to sinners.

### **The Book Of Romans Is Clear That Grace Does Not Excuse Sin**

When God inspired Paul to teach, Paul did not have to count on his own wisdom for the right words (I Corinthians 2:1-13, Galatians 1:10-12, and II Timothy 3:16-17). God is wise. He

had Paul clarify that grace does not excuse sin in very clear terminology. Notice: *“For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein”* (Romans 5:19-6:2)? He went on, in the same context, and repeated this point to clarify that not being under the Law of Moses didn't mean it was okay to sin (Romans 6:15-16). When you consider the New Testament as a whole, you have many things taught that clearly show that grace does not cover up sins not repented of.

### **Opening The New Testament Up Further - Sin is NEVER Okay**

Jesus was clear in His teaching about sin. If a sinner does not repent, that person will perish (Luke 13:1-5). That continued to be shown throughout the writings of the New Testament. The command to repent, be converted, turn to God, and do works meet for repentance is undeniably clear (Acts 3:19 and Acts 26:18-20). If a person claims to be in Christ, that person is expected to have left sin behind (II Corinthians 7:1 and II Timothy 2:19). Grace even teaches us that.

Grace, properly understood, is a tool of instruction. Notice what grace teaches: *“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works”* (Titus 2:11-14).

How can you get any clearer than what you just read? Grace does not teach a person that it is okay to sin. Grace teaches us to live godly. When you study the New Testament, honestly, you can come to no other conclusion. If a person sins, that person is NOT a child of God (I John 3:1-10). There is no free pass. You and I will stand before our Lord Jesus Christ in the Judgment (Romans 14:11-12). We will answer for everything we do (II Corinthians 5:10) based upon the words of our Lord (John 12:48).

### **Conclusion**

Consider this: *“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy”* (I Peter 1:13-16).