



Grace Gone Wild

Brownsburg Church of Christ
by Edwin Crozier

August 4, 2013
PM Assembly



Or

How to Rely on God's Grace without Becoming an Antinomian

Introduction:

I am wild about God's grace. I can't get enough of it. Sadly, in the past, I paid lip-service to it, claiming that we are saved by it but then preaching sermons that sounded like grace was only something we got when we earned it. For lack of better terms, I taught a legalistic, ritualistic religion that claimed if I jumped through enough hoops, did enough of the right things, avoided enough of the wrong things, and did it better than most everyone else, God would save me by grace. That led to a religion of despair because I never knew when I was good enough. In fact, considering the sins that beset me for years under this mentality, I was certain I was not good enough. It's pretty hard to preach a message of salvation and heaven when you are certain you are destined for damnation and hell. By the grace of God, the eyes of my heart began to be enlightened. I began to understand forgiveness, mercy, grace differently and more biblically. I began to understand passages like **Romans 8:1**: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (ESV). I began to take comfort in passages like **Ephesians 2:8-9**: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one may boast" (ESV). I began to rest in the knowledge that my strength won't save me, but God's will as Paul says in **Romans 8:29-30**: "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified" (ESV).

Not only did I start believing these things, I started preaching these things. And the response has been overwhelming. Others came out of the woodwork admitting they too had paid lip-service to grace while actually ignoring it. But the response has not been completely positive. I have had books and other writings panned by people who thought I was saying it didn't matter how Christians lived. I have had preaching opportunities cancelled as other preachers quoted my sermons and accused me of saying God's law doesn't matter. I have been verbally attacked online by Christians who feared people would think they could ignore God's will based on what I was teaching. At first, I was a bit shocked by this. But really I shouldn't be. Even Paul was falsely accused in similar ways (**Romans 3:8**). Additionally, there is no good and comforting teaching of Jesus Christ that Satan will not try to distort and pervert. Satan doesn't use obvious lies as much as he does really good ones that come pretty close to truth. And so, there have been plenty of false teachers that do distort God's grace. Peter highlights this very same kind of false teaching in **II Peter 2:1-3, 18-19** as he describes teachers that used their teaching to promote sensuality. Interestingly, it seems that Peter was even aware of the misuse of Paul's writings to promote sensuality under the guise of grace. He caps off this entire letter with a defense of Paul's writings and a rebuke of the twisting that leads to destruction (**II Peter 3:14-18**). Notice what he contrasts: the errors of lawless (unprincipled) people contrasted with the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Obviously, while on one side we have to guard against people who believe they will be justified by keeping a set of laws, on the other side we also have to guard against people who say that because we are saved by grace we don't have to follow God's law—"antinomians" which means "against law." While **Romans** and **Galatians** seem to deal with the first issue, **II Peter** seems to be written to address the second. Let's examine this brief letter to find 5 keys that will help us rely on grace without becoming antinomians.

Discussion:

I. Understand your call.

- A. **Galatians 1:6** and **II Timothy 1:9** both explain that we are called by the grace of God. Our calling gives us hope because we know it is not based on our strength and works. We don't have to stand in paralyzed fear because our works have not been good enough. Our calling is based on God's grace.
- B. However, God's calling was not intended to set us free in order to sin, ignoring God's law. According to **II Peter 1:3-4**, God's call was issued to bring us to his own glory and excellence. As **Romans 3:23** says, our sin has caused us to fall short of God's glory. The call of God's grace is not given so we can continue to fall short of God's glory, but so we can come to it. Further, the call was issued so we might escape the corruption that is in the world through evil desire, not continue to be entangled in it (cf. **II Peter 2:20**).

- II. Recognize the purpose for which God saved you by grace.
- A. One of the big misunderstandings about grace is the goal of it. Are you aware that God didn't save us so we can go to heaven? Certainly, the saved will enjoy the blessing of eternal heaven. Certainly, many are motivated to pursue salvation in Christ because of this reward and blessing. But God's purpose was not to set apart a people who are going to heaven. His purpose was to set apart a group of people who are useful and fruitful (**II Peter 1:8-10**).
 - B. Paul explains the exact same point in **Titus 2:13-14** when he points out that Jesus gave Himself in order to redeem us from lawlessness and purify a people zealous for good works. Jesus didn't give Himself to keep us enslaved to lawlessness, but to buy us out of it and set us free to be useful and fruitful. And again in **II Timothy 2:20-22**, we see that we are saved in order to be useful to God. Therefore, we are to flee sin and pursue righteousness.
- III. Remember who God rescues.
- A. Somehow, some people have the idea that since salvation is by grace, ungodliness doesn't matter. Some think that because they went through some salvation experience they are saved no matter what. Perhaps they think because they had a moment of faith or they said a prayer or they got baptized that they are in and what they do next doesn't matter.
 - B. But **II Peter 2:4-10** puts the last nail in this coffin. God rescues the godly. Certainly, Noah found grace in God's eyes, and Lot was certainly saved by God's grace. Yet, in these cases the godly were rescued. Understand it is not the churchgoers that are rescued. It is not the baptized that are rescued. It is the godly that are rescued from trial and judgment. **II Peter 3:7** explains the other side of this. Just as the angels of **II Peter 2:1** and the unrighteous of **II Peter 2:9** are being kept for judgment, God is keeping the present heavens and earth "until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly."
 - C. As **Titus 2:11-12** explains, grace trains us to renounce ungodliness. It doesn't rescue those who promote and pursue ungodliness under the guise of grace.
- IV. Grasp how gross this perversion of grace is.
- A. Remember that God's call of grace is issued to us so we might escape the corruption of the world. In **II Peter 2:20-22** Peter explains exactly what going back to the corruption of the world is like. He says that **Proverbs 26:11** is about this. A fool who repeats his folly is like a dog who goes back to his vomit.
 - B. First, going back to the enslavement of sin is being a fool who repeats his folly. **Romans 6:16** says when we submit to sin to obey it, we become a slave of it. Do you remember the fruit of that enslavement that we once wanted to escape (**Romans 6:20-21**)? Furthermore, do you remember the cry of despair we uttered when we were in that state (**Romans 7:24**)? We were fools then. Why would we want to repeat that folly.
 - C. But if knowing this isn't enough, Solomon and Peter give us a graphic picture. We are not just fools returning to our folly, we are dogs returning to vomit. That's just gross. And completely stupid. Whatever the dog ate to begin with made him so sick he vomited. How dumb do you have to be to go back to eat the vomit?
- V. God is withholding judgment so we can repent not because He doesn't care about sin.
- A. Some people try to turn to a seeming show of logic to support their sensuality under the guise of grace. Have you ever heard anyone say something like this: "I did such and such and the roof didn't fall in" or "the sky didn't collapse" or "lightning didn't strike." What are they saying? I didn't get judged instantly so God must not care about that.
 - B. But Peter explains this in **II Peter 3:8-13**. God's patience is not an indication that He doesn't care about ungodliness. It rather is an indication of His love. He doesn't want anyone to perish so he doesn't bring judgment immediately. When you do something God's Word condemns and lightning doesn't strike, don't take that as a reason to keep sinning. Take that as a reason to repent. God, by His grace, has granted you time. Don't let that time be vain. Let His grace lead you to repentance and godliness.

Conclusion:

All of this leads to Peter's conclusion. The patience of the Lord is salvation. No doubt, there are some hard things in Scripture to understand about plenty of things including God's grace. But if we twist hard things to justify ungodly rebellion and sensuality under the guise of grace, we do so to our own destruction. Don't be carried away by the false ideas of lawless people/antinomians. Instead, grow in grace and knowledge. Growing in grace doesn't mean increasing your sins that God will forgive by grace. It means relying on God's grace more and more to lead you to godliness. Don't let grace go wild. Rather, just be wild about God's grace.