

**Fake News about Grace**  
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We are in a sermon series entitled Fake News: Replacing Lies with the Truth. Today I'm preaching on Fake News about Grace.

There are major errors being taught about grace these days. These very same errors were dealt with in the early days of the church.

Before talking about that I want to tell you the truth about grace. In biblical terms – grace is the free and unmerited favor of God. What an awesome thought: that we don't have to earn anything from God. In fact - we can't. Ephesians 2:4-9 says:

*Because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.*

Grace is a gift. Many people never understand this. They keep saying, "But I don't deserve it." Of course you don't deserve it. That's why its grace. Once you start talking about what you deserve you are out of the realm of grace and into the realm of works.

There's a place for good works – but Eph. 2 goes on to say that we are saved FOR good works, not BY good works. In other words, salvation is not the result of good works, but rather, good works are the result of salvation. Romans 11:6 says:

*And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.*

None of us can earn our way into heaven. Romans 6:23 says:

*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

What we earn and deserve in life is death. But God in His grace made a way to give us eternal life through Jesus Christ.

This kind of grace is truly amazing. You won't find it anywhere else. Grace is what makes Christianity different from every other religion.

Now - there are three major errors concerning God's law and grace that have been around since the beginning of the church – and three books of the Bible were written to correct those errors.

The first error is legalism which teaches we are saved by keeping the law. Paul addressed this in Romans.

The second error regarding the law is license. The theological term is antinomianism, which means “against the law.” This error teaches that we are not under the law – we are under grace - so it doesn't matter how we live. The book of James addresses this.

The third error regarding the law is called Galatianism. It teaches that we are saved by grace, but we only stay saved if we keep the law. Obviously, the book of Galatians addresses this.

When we talk about the Old Testament laws, we must always distinguish between the civil laws God gave to the nation of Israel, the ceremonial laws God gave to the religion of Judaism – both of which do not apply to us – and the moral law of God that applies to everyone everywhere.

When you talk to people who don't understand this – and you tell them about one of the universal laws of God – they will say something like, “None of those outdated laws apply today because the law says to stone rebellious children, adulterers and thieves and the law says to sacrifice animals.” They disregard the whole law because they confuse civil and ceremonial law with the moral law.

Let me make this clear - Christians are not under the Old Testament civil laws or Jewish religious laws. However, we are not without law. Rather, we are under the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2 tells us to *fulfill the law of Christ*. In 1 Corinthians 9:20-21 Paul told how he reached different people for Christ.

*To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law.*

Believers are not under the Old Testament law as the way of salvation or as a way of life. But we are not lawless – we follow the law of Christ.

We must learn which parts of the Old Testament ended at the cross – which parts were changed by the cross – and which ones continue. For instance – animal sacrifices ended at the cross because the sacrifice of Jesus is sufficient for all sins of all people.

The Sabbath was changed by the cross. In Old Testament times the Sabbath had to be on the seventh day. Under the new covenant, you still need a day of rest

every week, but you get to pick the day.

What continues after the cross is God's unchanging moral law. We know which laws to keep because they are repeated in the New Testament.

Unfortunately – these days many people look at obeying God's commands as optional. It's like they think God gave 10 suggestions rather than 10 commandments!

Now I know it is not popular to preach against sin these days. I know people just want to talk about grace. And we believe grace and preach grace. But we must preach the whole counsel of God. God still has laws in place – universal moral principles. But we are not saved by keeping laws.

### **Fake News #1 – Grace is not enough to save you**

Churches have struggled with this from the beginning of the church. Every time the disciples went somewhere to preach the gospel in the early days of the church – they were followed around by a group called Judaizers. They were legalists who taught that for Gentiles to be saved, they must essentially become Jewish: which meant getting circumcised and keeping the Law. Only then they could be a Christian.

Acts 15 is one of the most pivotal chapters in the New Testament. It was the first Jerusalem council – convened to debate this very issue. Acts 15:5 says that the Judaizers were saying that when Gentiles got saved - *It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.*

There was much debate and Peter said in Acts 15:10-11

*Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.*

He ended by saying this in Acts 15:21

*For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.*

And graceless pastors in graceless churches are still preaching Moses to this very day! But grace-based pastors understand the truth of John 1:17

*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

Lack of grace keeps you living under the old covenant rather than the new. The old covenant was based on outward obedience to the Law. The new covenant is based in an inner change of heart.

The old covenant was based on what man did.  
The new covenant is based on what Jesus did.

That Jerusalem council decided that we are not under Jewish law. But there is a modern day group of Judaizers who are part of what is called the Hebrews Roots Movement. Learning about Jewish roots of the church is good – but when it gets out of balance - it results in putting people back under the Jewish law.

There is a growing movement today of people who teach that Christians are still under the Old Testament law and we must keep the Jewish Sabbath and feasts and dietary laws. They start judging people for eating bacon or going to church on Sunday or not calling God Yahweh or not calling Jesus Yeshua.

Closely tied to this is the Sacred Name Movement that says you cannot be saved if you do not call God by the name Yahweh. Here's the thing – we are not really sure how that name of God is pronounced. Why is that? It's because the Jewish alphabet had no vowels so Yahweh looks like this in our alphabet: YHWH.

The other problem is that the Hebrews considered this name so sacred that they would not say it out loud. So, no one really knows how it is pronounced. Some say Yahweh – others say Yahveh or Jehovah or Yehowah or something else they've come up with. But the thing these legalists have in common is that they believe you can only be saved if you pronounce God's name the way they believe it is pronounced.

We must resist these modern day Judaizers and their attempt to put Christians back under that law. Listen to how Paul addressed this in Galatians 2:14-16

*How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs? "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.*

Galatians 3:1-3 says:

*You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?*

Galatians 3:24-25 says:

*The law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.*

Galatians 4:9-11 says:

*But now that you know God — or rather are known by God — how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.*

Colossians 2:16-17 says:

*Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.*

Not only should we not let other's judge us for these things, but Titus 3:9-11 says:

*Do not get involved in foolish discussions about spiritual pedigrees or in quarrels and fights about obedience to Jewish laws. These things are useless and a waste of time. If people are causing divisions among you, give a first and second warning. After that, have nothing more to do with them. For people like that have turned away from the truth, and their own sins condemn them.*

Do not buy into the fake news that you need to keep the Jewish religious laws or add to grace or add to the work of Christ on the cross!

### **Fake News #2- Grace means I can sin without consequences**

This opposite extreme is called the hyper-grace movement. This movement teaches an extreme form of grace that results in license. The book of Jude addresses this in verses 3-4

*Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.*

Notice that after you are saved – there is still some fighting to do. And one of those fights is against turning grace into license. What is license? License is official permission for someone to do something.

For instance – I have a driver's license. I have been given official permission by the state of Texas to legally drive an automobile. If I want to drive a motorcycle – I need a license to do so. Another meaning of license is the abuse of freedom. Spiritually, license is when Christians abuse the grace of God by thinking it gives them permission to sin without cost.

They think grace means they can live any way they want without consequences. Wrong! Yes, when you sin and ask for forgiveness God will forgive you! 1 John 1:9 says:

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

But being forgiven for sin does not mean there are no consequences for your sin! Galatians 6:7-8 says:

*Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*

Always remember there are always consequences for sin! Think of it this way – suppose you're convicted of committing a murder. Can you be forgiven by God for that? Of course! But guess what? You're still going to prison. Even though you are forgiven by God – there are still consequences!

This is the balance I try to live in and teach:  
No – there is no condemnation in Christ.  
Yes – there are always consequences for sin.

I am very concerned about some of the popular teachings going around these days that are teaching out-of-balance grace. They teach that once you are saved, you no longer need to confess sin or repent. They say that the Holy Spirit never convicts you of your sins or points out your faults – so preachers should never talk about repentance or consequences of sin for believers.

Really? I want to ask them if they've ever read the book of Revelation. It's the last book in the New Testament. In chapters 2 and 3 – Jesus Christ Himself speaks to seven churches. So He is speaking to born-again believers! And do you know what He says to five of those churches? REPENT! And He points out specific sins and tells them there will be consequences if they don't repent.

For instance, in Revelation 2:19-22 Jesus told the church at Thyatira they were guilty of sexual immorality. He said:

*And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.*

In Revelation 3:19 Jesus told the lukewarm church at Laodicia:

*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.*

Remember, repentance is change, an about face, turning around, turning from our way to God's way. Jesus says we must repent of our lack of zeal – our lukewarmness – our lack of fire – or there will be consequences!

This Jesus is way different than the gentle little Lamb that many people envision! Too many Christians today believe in a Jesus who neither rebukes nor chastens! They act like Jesus only rebukes and chastens unbelievers, but He does not rebuke and chasten them, He rebukes and chastens His children. As a parent, I never spanked another person's child. But I did discipline my own children! Hebrews 12:5-6 says:

*My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son.*

God is a good Father who loves us, blesses us and disciplines us when necessary. So don't buy into the fake news that grace means no consequences. This may surprise you – but keeping the law cannot change your heart! Keeping the law will not make you righteous! Romans 3:20-22 says:

*Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.*

The law requires some things of us. First – it requires keeping. Then it requires punishment for those who don't keep it.

This is the awesome thing about being in Christ. We can't keep the law, but Jesus did! Not only did He keep it – but here's the awesome thing – He took the punishment that we deserved for breaking God's law.

Jesus didn't go to the cross because He deserved it, but because we deserved it! Jesus didn't pay the price for His sin – He had none – He paid the price for our sin!

Jesus didn't just die FOR us – He died AS us.  
He took the beating we deserved.  
He bore the shame we earned.  
He died the death we should have died!

When Jesus was crucified they nailed up a sign that everyone could see saying King of the Jews.

But there was another sign nailed to that cross that no one physically saw! But the spirit world saw it and we'd better see it!

Colossians 2:13-15 says:

*When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

Every law that you broke was nailed to the cross!

Every sin you ever committed or will ever commit was nailed to the cross!

That's how the enemy is disarmed!

He has no ammunition against you because everything he can use against you was nailed to the cross!

So when the enemy tries to condemn you for your sin – just agree that you are guilty but add this – The price has been paid at the cross!

When Jesus said “It is finished” – it was finished.

There's nothing you can add to it!

The blood of Christ was enough!

The cross was enough!

Grace is enough!

That's the true news!