

***Should We seek to Restore 1st Century Christianity?
(The Foundation of God's Way of Holiness)***

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Introduction: The essence of Christianity is coming to know God.

- A. Jesus wanted all men to find eternal life. **(Jn 17:3-4)**
- B. God wants us to know Him so that we might have fellowship with Him.
 - 1. Consider how you might begin a relationship with another. What must you learn?
 - 2. God wants us to know what He is like so that we might change! God has let us know that He cannot change! **(Mal 3:6; James 1:17; Heb 13:8)**

I. God reveals His nature to Moses

- A. God first wants Moses to know that He is holy. **(Ex 3:1-5)**
 - 1. God tells Him to take off his shoes. Holiness demands a special approach.
 - 2. How can we have a relationship with a holy God without being consumed?
- B. What does it mean for God to be holy?
 - 1. Consider the perfect holiness of God. **(1 Sam 2:2; Isa 40:25; Hosea 11:9)**
 - 2. "In the Old Testament, the verb holy in the Hebrew is "quodesh", meaning "to consecrate, to sanctify, to prepare, to dedicate, to be separate."
- C. God appealed to His holiness to teach His people how to have a relationship with Him. **(Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:26)**
 - 1. Fire represents the purity and holiness of God. There should be a dread brought on the unholy one who is brought into his presence. You must not ignore this!
 - 2. On Mt. Sinai there was an awesome show of His holiness. **(Heb 12:18-21, 29)**
 - 3. God wants us to show us how to have a relationship with Him and live!

II. God has revealed His holiness by delivering words that teach us to change

- A. God delivered words in the O.T. that men were expected to understand and obey.
 - 1. The Ten Commandments were words written on stone. These were holy words.
 - 2. God delivered words to the prophets that were to be handled very differently than the words of men. These words were holy! **(Deut 4:4-5, 10; Jer 1:9-10)**
 - 3. There were things that were inherently true about these words because they came from God and thus were holy! **(2 Sam 22:31)**
 - 4. Nadab and Abihu were priests. Moses and Aaron knew that because God is holy men must stay within what God has revealed. **(Lev 10:1-3; Ex 28:36)**
- B. Jesus showed us how to handle the holy words given Him by the Father!
 - 1. Jesus would only do those things that He saw the Father do. Without instruction He would do nothing! **(Jn 5:19-20, 30)**
 - 2. He wanted others to test doctrine! **(Jn 7:16-17)**
 - 3. The respect for the words of God would lead Jesus only to act when the Father gives Him instruction. **(Jn 8:28-32; 12:32-33)**
 - 4. This same attitude was to be expected of all us whom this precious word would be delivered! These words would become the N. T. **(Jn 12:48-50)**
 - 5. This carefully delivered message would not be added to by Jesus, the Holy Spirit or the Apostles. They delivered these words! **(Jn 16:12-13; Eph 3:5)**
 - 6. Staying within these holy words alone is how we glorify God. **(1 Pt 4:11)**

III. God's holy way is only found through the work of the apostles and prophets

- A. Jesus chose apostles that would deliver these words. (**Jn 17:6-8, 17-20**)
 - 1. It is these words that were delivered on Pentecost. (**Acts 2:14, 22, 38-40**)
 - 2. This highway of holiness was also prophesied. The common man can read and understand it! (**Isa 35:8-10; Eph 3:3-4**)
 - 3. The early church was founded upon and sustained by the apostle's doctrine. (**Acts 2:42; Eph 2:20; Jn 17:20**)
- B. All of the teachings and practices of the early church came from the apostles. When we speak of "restoring 1st century Christianity" this is what we do!
 - 1. The Apostles simply "handed down" what they had received from Jesus. Pay attention when you see these words: "tradition, delivered and received" (**1 Cor 11:2, 23; 15:3**)
 - 2. To fail to obey this "tradition" delivered from the apostles is to forsake Jesus Christ Himself. (**2 Thess 3:3-4, 6, 12, 14**)
- C. When a question or a doctrinal dispute arose they were to ask "what was delivered?"
 - 1. If it was not delivered, it was to be rejected! (**Gal 1:8; Acts 15:24**)
 - 2. When we take this stand, what would local churches look like?

IV. Should we restore the church to the 1st century way of holiness?

- A. Some say that we cannot use the Bible this way because of "cultural context."
 - 1. Some assert that you cannot understand without the help of other men!
 - 2. When an epistle was given to one church it was to be given to other churches (cultures, generations) with understanding. (**Col 4:16; 1 Thess 5:27; 2 Pt 3:1-2**)
- B. Do not let men take your Bible from you! (**Isa 35:8; Acts 11:14**)

V. One application of this foundation – Instrumental Music

- A. The Lord's Supper was delivered to the Corinthians from which there would be a right way and a wrong way to keep it! (**1 Cor 11:23, 20**)
 - 1. Does the outward form matter? Suppose we substituted hamburger and coke for the "fruit of the vine" and "bread?"
 - 2. Could we use "bread" and "fruit of the vine" but add some peanut butter to it?
- B. How should we praise God in our worship?
 - 1. When God wanted instruments in the OT He said so! (**2 Chron 29:25-26**)
 - 2. Why not look at every verse in the New Covenant and see what God wants? (**Mt 26:30, Acts 16:25; Rom 15:9; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16; Heb 2:12; Heb 13:15; Jas 5:13**)
 - 3. This is an application of the foundation. This takes time and maturity!
 - 4. Misunderstandings often arise because the foundations are not present!
- C. Have we created a "man-made hermeneutic" in "CENI?" God's word communicates!
 - 1. Because God used words to reveal His will then we must understand that these words will: 1. **Tell us something** (direct statement or command)
2. **Show us something** (example) 3. **ImPLY something** (we draw conclusions).
 - 2. When you reject any of these principles you have rejected the use of words.
- D. Consider who God honors in heaven! The work of the apostles is much more than a narrative! (**Rev 18:20; 21:14**)

Conclusion: The holiness of God demands that we seek only that which is apostolic!

Turning the Grace of God into a Carnal Weapon **by Larry Rouse**

All who know the Lord understand the power of His grace! Those who have seen the blackness of their own sin and were then melted by the message of how God gave His Son for them, can attest to the life-changing power of the gospel. We do not deserve salvation. We cannot earn salvation. In our sin we were once active enemies of God. Still, God, by His grace, gave us the greatest gift that has ever been given **(Rom 5:6-8)**!

Those who have been changed by this grace, find their hearts and their lives defined by it. Paul plainly proclaimed "By the grace of God I am what I am" **(1 Cor 15:10)**. When Paul converted some Jews and proselytes to God he urged them to continue "in the grace of God" **(Acts 13:43)**. Our true spiritual growth is measured by our increase in "the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" **(2 Peter 3:18)**.

The Perversion of God's Grace

Satan hates the grace of God, for by it men are rescued from his clutches. Being the cunning adversary that he is, Satan has encouraged many to serve him under the banner of the grace of God! There were those who preached a doctrine of "grace" that left men's hearts untouched by the teaching of the Spirit of God. Men were told that they could "continue in sin that grace may abound" **(Romans 6:1)**. Others found under this banner of "grace" that in their hearts they could hate their brethren and exalt themselves over these "inferiors" in their pride **(1 John 3:14-15)**. Jude proclaimed that these men had in fact turned "the grace of our God into lewdness" **(Jude 4)**.

Modern Day Examples

Years ago I read an article by Connie Adams that I never forgot. He received some advice concerning men who claim to define their lives by the "grace" of God and how they actually act under pressure.

"Years ago, an older preacher told me of a warning he had received years before from Cled Wallace. He said, "Watch out for the real sweet men. They will rip you to pieces when they get a chance." I have received more unkind and unjust treatment over the years from those who had the most to say about love, kindness, gentleness and such nobler qualities, but who could not tolerate any criticism about what they were teaching."

"I much prefer to deal with people who will meet you in the open before witnesses to air honest disagreements than those who isolate and insulate themselves in ivory towers where they look down with contempt on the fray below them."

I, too, have experienced the wrath of these men who talk about grace, love and peace. Often these men are seeking to form a party, split a church or work to destroy the reputation of another Christian they view as a competitor in any way they can.

Tests for the True Grace of God

Peter wanted Christians to clearly identify and stand in the "true grace of God" rather than some self-serving philosophy **(1 Peter 5:12)**. Consider these questions and test your own heart.

1. How do I view those who disagree with me? Those who are motivated by God's grace and love are forbearing and willing to listen to others that have a difference with them. God's grace will always lead to an open Bible and an open heart to search out "the word of His grace" **(Acts 20:32)**.

When Satan's "grace" is involved, there will be quick judgments about others. Many are quickly labeled as unworthy of study, particularly if they have displayed a strong faith and knowledge of God's word. However, those who are struggling and separated from other Christians are often approached in private about these new views (**Peter 2:1**).

2. Am I being honest with others about what I really believe? The grace of God will be open and honest about anything God has revealed. There is no need to plot, plan or scheme concerning how to teach others. "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (**2 Cor 4:1-2**).

Those who are motivated by Satan's wisdom have learned to lie. They have as their goal to bring as many into their party as possible and in any way they can. If a false impression about their own beliefs would keep a knowledgeable Christian from questioning them and thus give them more time to work behind the scenes, then they will do that very thing. If they can misrepresent what another Christian believes so they can pull another Christian into their group, then they will do that too (**Gal 4:17**).

3. What is the focus of my own heart and those that associate with me? Our tongues will ultimately reveal our hearts. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things" (**Matthew 12:35**). Those motivated by the grace of God will be looking to serve others, to speak well of others and to see the best in others.

A sure sign of Satan's wisdom is seen when men's concept of "grace" leads them to quickly label others as "traditionalist," "legalist" and with many other terms (**James 3:16**). These men are constantly looking at men, whether it is to condemn and attack their "opponents" or to flatter one another over their spirituality. "For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (**2 Cor 10:12**).

One Final Test

We must know the difference between these philosophies. From my personal experience, I have found most that have used God's grace as a weapon to have hearts that are filled with anger and bitterness. Sadly, if given time, they will fill their disciples with this same spirit. Keep your eyes open and see if it is God or Satan that is behind these teachings.

"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace" (**James 3:13-18**).