

Contending for the Faith

I want to address what I believe has become a major problem in the church today; although, it is not a new problem just one that recycles over and over again. This problem is addressed in various places in scripture, but Jude meets it head on in verses 3-4.

...I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed...ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jude 3-4

That is a pretty strong statement but never more relevant than it is today. Many have taught grace wrongly - either out of ignorance or purposely to justify wrong living on their own part. The problem we have is that, the moment we talk about right living, there are those who claim we are judging or yell "Pharisee", "legalism" or "works" which simply is not true.

I want to show you that grace is not an excuse to do wrong but an enablement to overcome and live right and live godly.

Let's look at Titus 2:11-12. We see that it is grace that teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously and godly.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age. Titus 2:11-12

The Greek word used here for "teaches" would probably be better translated "trains". In fact, this is the word the Amplified Bible uses. When we use this, it lends a different perspective to grace than what is traditionally taught. Grace is then understood as an enablement to overcome not an excuse to yield.

We can also see this in such passages as Hebrews 4:16 and 2 Corinthians 12:9. The writer of Hebrews says that we can come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and grace to *help us* not *excuse us*!! When we take it along with verse 15, we see that it is help or enablement to overcome, to rise above, to defeat sin and not yield to it. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 12:9, says that strength is perfected in us when we face weakness because His grace is sufficient.

I simply cannot find anywhere in scripture where grace is an excuse to live wrong or sloppy; instead it is an enablement to live right, godly and holy. Let me state this: grace enables us to live right as a proper response to being justified not to be justified.

We also see this supported in Romans 5:17-21 where we see that we are to reign in life by grace and the gift of righteousness. Grace is the supernatural ability of God that enables us to do what we cannot do on our own or through our own ability. Galatians 2:16 and 3:11 tells us we could never be saved by works or our own performance so God “enabled” us to be saved by faith apart from works or performance - doing what I could not do for myself.

Ephesians 2:4-10 reminds us that because of His great love with which He loves us He is rich in mercy and enabled us to be saved by faith and to walk in good works!! I believe any response other than desiring to walk pleasing and righteously is ungrateful for what He has done for us.

Simply put, grace takes us beyond our abilities or lack thereof and enables us to do what we cannot do on our own. Grace enables us to overcome weakness and adds to our strengths and abilities. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15:10 that he was what he was by grace. Grace enabled him, and he labored because of and by that grace.

I believe there is grace for everything we do in life; grace that will help us or enable us to succeed. 1 Peter 4:10-11 says that there are many sides to God’s grace and likens it to ability to help us in our ministry whatever that is. Grace is there for husbands, wives, employees, and everything we face in life - to help us.

Anyone who uses grace as an excuse to justify wrong living is simply ignorant, misinformed, or their heart is not right. I also know they cannot be walking in love toward God or toward their fellow believers because love does not do anything that would bring dishonor to God or His Body.

I hope this helped you, and I want to encourage you as Jude did to contend earnestly for the faith and not accept any watered-down version.