

Here we have a most clear warning to those who would use grace as a cover for wickedness. There are two clear and most dangerous errors connected with the doctrine of grace in the Bible. The first is to think that we found to be worthy of forgiveness because of something we have done—that God responds to some initiative on our part and sends more grace to us, based upon our move toward Him. This is deadly and those who think such things consistently overthrow all of the Gospel.

The second error is equally deadly, that because sins are freely forgiven, we no longer need to struggle with sin. This second error is the subject of our discourse this afternoon. There are several things that I want to say about this passage. I want to take a quick look at several of the key words of the passage, and then I want to make some observations about the passage.

I. The words.

- a. “Unrighteous” Who are the unrighteous? The word here is “unjust.” It is a legal term and stands for all kinds of injustice; those whose lives are characterized by treating people unfairly—contrary to law. Of course the reference point is God’s law, which is the standard of justice. What are the Ten Commandments but God’s rule for man’s behavior.
- b. Be not deceived: Man’s heart is so prone to error and sin, that he is easily blinded about the issue of sin. He tries to cover his sin, to blame others for them, or to think that his sin can be taken away by ceremonies or religious affections.
- c. Inherit: Here we see what man’s true inheritance is: the kingdom of God. It is unrighteousness that disqualifies men from their inheritance. In this passage a stark contrast is made between those who serve the world and their flesh, and those who serve Christ and look toward the world to come. That is the significance of “Meats for the belly and the belly for meats,” which characterizes men of the world who will not inherit the kingdom of God. There is nothing that enters into the body which can make any difference in the body—the only thing that meats can do is to provide necessary things for physical life: no material food can do anything for the soul—either of good or evil, as Jesus said. Hence, those who look to the world for spiritual food will be damned and both the body and the meats will be destroyed.
- d. The particular sins that are mentioned:
  - i. Fornicators: stands for all sorts of sexual sins—the misuse of sexuality outside of marriage.
  - ii. Idolaters: Those who worship and serve the creature—give adoration of lying symbols and images.
  - iii. Adulterers: a specific kind of fornication, involving the corruption of marriage, and unfaithfulness in marriage. To be joined to a harlot is a impious debasement of marriage—which joins a man to his wife in a holy and healthful union, both in body and in spirit. It is a sin against a person’s own body,
  - iv. Effeminate: womanly or soft. It was the word for male prostitute, a particular homosexual, denial of maleness and manliness.
  - v. General homosexuality—includes not only male, but also female.
  - vi. Thieves: Three legitimate ways of transfer of property: work for it; buy it; by gift or inheritance. Getting property by force or deceit is wickedness.
  - vii. Covetous: Those greedy and eager to get the property of others.
  - viii. Drunkards: Those who are overtaken by alcohol or chemical abuse; these change their perception of reality, and are running away from God.
  - ix. Revilers: those who abuse others by words.
  - x. Extortionists: Those who gain property by the threat of force of some kind.
  - xi. There is overlap here, and the list is not exhaustive.

- e. One thing in common: they are serving the creature more than the creator. They serve the world and the things in it. They do not submit to Christ or to Christ’s church—in fact, they will build false churches to hide in, for religions have always been erected to sanctify the lusts and desires of the flesh, just as Aaron made the golden calf—for the people to become naked and dance around and pretend it had brought them out of Egypt. A great many religions and perverted forms of Christianity have been begun for the purpose of doing something about sin—for preoccupation with sin is a fact of reality in the world.
- f. Where there is a preoccupation with the world rather than with God, there is the proliferation of sexual sins of all kinds. There was fornication at Corinth and Paul issues a very strong warning and also sets forth the cure.
  - i. The warning: The body is not for fornication.
  - ii. The cure: the resurrection of Christ: verse 14: We are dead with Christ and alive with Him: The death that the body deserves because of sin is fulfilled in Christ: we are therefore to walk in newness of life
  - iii. The way: recognize that you do not belong to yourself, but to Jesus Christ. We are bought with a price: glorify God in you body and spirit.

## II. Considerations:

- a. The question is, to whom do you belong. As long as you keep yourself for yourself, you are lost and undone. Sin will ravage your body and soul—no matter how you afflict yourself in body and soul. If you love your life, clinging desperately to it, to keep it for yourself and to live for yourself, you will die and sins will overcome you, for you are unrighteous and will not inherit the kingdom of God.
- b. The characteristics of the unjust, the unrighteous are these:
  - i. They are deceived. They believe a lie. It is the truth that sets men free—not truth in abstract, but truth in Jesus Christ and the Gospel.
  - ii. They are under the power of the devil: They belong to the devil’s kingdom, and have no part in the kingdom of God.
  - iii. They are of the world and live of the world. Their religion is pleasant to the flesh, and promises liberty, but they are under the power of sin misery. They mingle the things of the world with the promises of the gospel, and subtly assign the promises of the Gospel to their worldliness and corruption. They promise liberty, but they are servants of corruption.
- c. It is impossible to be joined to Christ and not have the fruit of that union. To be joined to Christ is to be joined to His life: this is the meaning of verse 14. We are made new creatures because of our union with Christ. If you say that you have fellowship with Christ, and walk in darkness, you lie and do not the truth, according to John. According to John, there are two deceptions that belong to those who are not joined to Christ:
  - i. They pretend to have no sin: they do not recognize their sins—just as Solomon says of the “adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.” Proverbs 30:20 How arrogant and wicked is the modern generation, where all kinds of sexual sins and wickedness is defended and promoted, often in the name of liberation and truth.
  - ii. They pretend to have fellowship with Christ: They claim to walk in the light. These two deceptions are related: Let us hear the words of the Apostle John:

5 ¶ This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

- 6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:
- 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.
- 8 ¶ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
- 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Conclusion: If you are a Christian, you will have a double reaction when you read or hear passages such as these in the Bible.

- A. You will feel guilt, for you know that you have not perfectly kept the commandments of God—the more sensitive you are to the Lord, the greater you will see that you have come short of the glory of God. The light is often very painful, but there is something in you that craves the light, even though it is painful to you. This something is the work of the Holy Spirit, and is called the adoption, or the Spirit of adoption, whereby you believe that the Scriptures are true, although you are condemned by them.
- B. You will seek Christ anew and afresh, for you know that your comfort both in life and in death is that you belong to your faithful Savior Jesus Christ. You know that your inheritance is in Him and in His righteousness, and you long to be conformed to Jesus Christ. His promise is that when He appears then you will be like Him, for you will see him as He is.
- C. You therefore confess your sins: Confession involves a couple of things:
  - a. You do not condone them, or excuse them. You acknowledge that you alone are to blame for them, and you surrender all excuses and blaming of others for them.
  - b. You do not wish to remain in them: you long for the resurrection of the last days, when you will finally be free from temptation and sin.
  - c. You accept tribulation and trials now, knowing that God purposes in them to bring about His purposes in your life, for it is by tribulation and trials that God purifies our faith and conforms us to Christ.
  - d. You acknowledge the necessity of the ministry and the sacraments—the order that God has provided for you to escape temptation---you put no confidence in men or ceremonies, but you do put your trust in God, who has provided for your sins.

May God bless you.