

Christ Reformation Church

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Wise as Serpents – A Practical Theology of Evil

**(Part 21 – Grace is Not for
Everyone)**

May 22, 2016

Sermon Text: Isaiah 26:10

Scripture Reading: Romans 6

Introduction-

This morning I want to show you that God's grace is not to be offered to everyone. I do not speak of his common grace, the kind of favor He exercises when He sends rain on the wicked and provides them with food. I am speaking of the gospel. The saving grace that comes to us in Christ through faith.

If we are to be wise about evil, then we must understand that there is a kind of person in this world who has so despised Christ, who has so long and

knowingly spit upon the cross, often all the while parading as a "Christian," that the Lord would have us be done with them. And to fail to do so, to continue to extend God's grace to them, is to enable evil and to further oppress victims. Many if not most people who profess to be Christians are ignorant of this fact.

Consider this verse for example which one of our blog readers sent to me this last week. Listen to it in both the ESV and NIV -

[ESV] If favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he deals corruptly and does not see the majesty of the LORD. (Isa 26:10)

Isaiah 26:10 (NIV) 10 But when grace is shown to the wicked, they do not learn righteousness; even in a land of uprightness they go on doing evil and do not regard the majesty of the Lord.

That is to say, there is a certain kind of wicked person (remember, all sinners are not the same) who only despises

God's grace and favor. No matter how much mercy and grace might be shown him, he remains in his evil ways. He does not regard the glory and majesty of God.

And I would also conclude from this Scripture that when we continue to extend grace to this kind of a person, it somehow only fuels and intensifies their wickedness. I suppose this is the kind of person Paul speaks of in Romans 1 –

Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (Rom 1:32)

And yet so many professing Christians around us today insist that God's grace is infinite and limitless and must always be offered to the wicked no matter how evil they might be. In fact, this kind of person seems to think themselves quite an example of godliness, and even more so the more evil the object of their affection might be.

This is all terribly skewed and I want to be certain we understand why it is.

Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might

reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? (Rom 5:20-6:2)

"God can do anything, so that means God can save anyone. We should never give up on the abuser, on the evil person, no matter how wicked he is. The Jesus I know does miracles everyday. He saved Saul of Tarsus and Saul was an abuser."

These words about God having the ability to save anyone sound very pious, very full of faith, very noble. But I would like to show you that they are anything but that, and that they are in contradiction to God's Word, that they enable the wicked and further oppress abuse victims. These words are, in fact, the route to continued bondage and continue to do much harm to the innocent.

Paul wrote (as quoted above) that the grace of God shown us in the Lord Jesus Christ must not be used as a license for continued sin. In fact, he says, anyone who does so is at best living in a kind of insanity in complete contradiction to who they are in Christ, and more probably is demonstrating

that he does not know Christ at all and remains in an unregenerate condition. The Christian has died to sin in Christ. The Christian no longer lives in sin.

And yet so often we hear this cry, "We must not judge anyone. We are all sinners. Sure this fellow claims to be a Christian and yet walks in habitual, characteristic evil and has done so for decades. But God's grace is sufficient. We *must* keep praying for this fellow and we *must* believe that God is going to save him. In fact maybe he already is saved but is just a "carnal" Christian."

That's the sort of thing we hear.

But this is all absolutely contrary to Scripture. It enables the wicked. It oppresses the righteous.

Of David. To you, O LORD, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit. Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy, when I cry to you for help, when I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary. Do not drag me off with the wicked, with the workers of evil, who speak peace with their neighbors while evil is in their hearts. Give to them according to their work and according to the evil of their deeds; give to them according to the work of their hands; render them their due reward. (Psa 28:1-4)

Do you suppose that the Lord rebuked David for praying such a prayer and told him, "David, you stop that. You need to keep praying that these people will be saved. After all, you never know when I might save them." Hardly. This is inspired Scripture. The Word of God Himself. This is a godly and righteous prayer. True truth.

There are many things that God *cannot* do. God cannot sin. God cannot act against His own being. God cannot ignore sin nor justify it. And in regard to our topic here, *God cannot save the unrepentant, unbelieving man*. Yes, faith and repentance are surely the gift of God and apart from God setting His saving love upon us even while we were dead in trespasses and sins we would never have turned to Christ. It is a mystery. Yet at the same time unless a person believes in Christ alone and repents, turning from his evil and to Christ, God will not and in fact cannot save him. What God does to a person who knows the truth in Christ, who rejects it over and over again, who lives as a hypocrite pretending to serve God, is to *turn them over to their sin*. Listen to it once more:

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among

themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (Rom 1:24-25)

Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (Rom 1:32)

At some point, in fact, the sinner can even become reprobate, crossing that line from which there is no possibility of ever returning -

For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned. (Heb 6:4-8)

Esau is a case in point -

See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. (Heb 12:15-17)

When Christians misuse and presume upon God's grace in Christ, demanding that victims of evil and everyone else "never give up" on the abuser who has quite often been cruelly persecuting his victim for decades, all the while maintaining a wicked pretense of being quite a holy saint, *those Christians are in fact abusing grace*. They are really *promoting* what Paul says is ludicrous - the continuance in sin under the claim that "grace abounds and is greater than all sin." Their error goes further yet. These claims also even insist that "showing mercy" to the hardened, wicked, conscienceless man is good because it makes grace "abound" even more! See it?

People who promote this abuse of grace are at best ignorant and in fact

are more often just plain arrogant (they may not even know Christ at all as Paul indicates). What they are saying to us is that they are a cut above in holiness. After all, "their god" (small "g" is intentional here) never gives up on anyone, no matter how wicked they might be. Really? Have such people ever even read the Bible? God hands the wicked over to their sins at some point. There is in truth a "point of no return" and there are people like Esau who God Himself *cannot* save because to do so would violate His very person.

Yet how often do we hear it? "Well, yes, so and so did live a wicked life. He even blasphemed Christ and was a terribly abusive man. But God can save anyone and God's grace is so wonderful that how do we know this man won't greet us in heaven when we get there?" (They look up to heaven with a pious gaze at this point. Yuck). How do we know the wicked, unrepentant man or woman is not going to greet us in heaven? Because the Lord Himself has said so.

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor

revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (1Co 6:9-10)

Do not be deceived. But today many apparently are deceived. Many who claim to be Christians.

Rather than telling victims of evil that it is God's will that they continue to be bound to their abuser in some way (such as zealously praying for their salvation, telling them they are praying for them, hoping against hope that the big salvation day comes, etc), *God has given us quite different instructions* about how we relate to the wicked and specifically about how we are to relate to wicked people like abusers who claim to be Christians -

But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you." (1Co 5:11-13)

I encourage you to read all of 1 Corinthians chapter five very carefully. It is the scriptural pattern to follow in

dealing with an abuser who is wearing the disguise of Christianity. *Do not even eat with such a one.* And yet local churches often and even typically *are* embracing such wicked ones, keeping them in fellowship in their church, all in the name of "grace." Such churches are invoking God's anger against them, enabling evil, and adding to the oppression of the innocent. Just recently, as I do so often, I heard from a victim of terrible, ongoing, life-threatening abuse that was *fully known to the pastor of her church*, and yet her abuser is still allowed in that church and even "serving" in "ministry" there. Make no mistake. That is not grace. It is rank disobedience to the command of Christ. It is evil. *And it is inevitably going to encourage other evildoers in their wickedness.*

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be

separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty." (2Co 6:14-18)

Victims of evil will find that the path to freedom from the bondage of abuse is not to be discovered in some kind of distortion regarding the grace of God ("grace on steroids" as one of our readers put it), but in handing the wicked one over to the Lord and walking away from him and moving on.

And to all who continue to insist that what I have said here is judgmental and cruel, that their "Jesus" is kind and compassionate and never, ever, ever "gives up" on anyone, I say to them that they are adding to the suffering of the righteous, that you are enabling the wicked, and that you are in great need of picking up your Bible and learning who God really is.

And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. (Mat 12:7)

Let me close with this note I received last week.

This morning I was reading John 13. Judas had intimate dinners with the Lord and the other disciples. He had witnessed miracles, signs and wonders. He remained unchanged, unsaved, unregenerate. Even when Jesus said someone would betray Him, the others had no clue it was Judas.

It is not a stretch to know the very same thing happens in churches today. The scary thing is, Psalm 41:9. He that has been my familiar companion, and has eaten my bread has lifted his heel against me. I was thinking how that heel kicking someone is so violent, so hateful, as if one would be kicking someone or something that they despised. He was doing this to Jesus. Judas just got some golden coins for identifying Him.

I've heard folks being sympathetic towards Judas, defending what He did. Yet we refuse to see the true violence of evil that is spiritually pictured for us in that act. Our Lord however, was greatly troubled. Violence and abuse, control, towards women and children [and any vulnerable people] is an assault against God. Evil is in the midst of their little group, and present day church groups as well. There are still unsaved, parading as disciples, betraying Him. (That is a "negativity", I've been told.)

I've heard preachers say how Judas

will be in heaven, even after Jesus said it would be better for him if he were never born, even after the Bible says, "Satan entered Judas."

The warning Jesus gave to them before going to His death, about washing one another's feet, is heart breaking. Many evangelical and charismatic teachers in the church today do not have this attitude. They are prideful, arrogant, self important, and refuse to see evil, being sympathetic only towards the Judases that are operating in secret betrayal, yet looking outwardly like a true disciple. They aren't touched or moved by the cries of the afflicted. It is neither easy nor pleasant to see evil, and speak against it.

You also seem "greatly troubled." Thank you for speaking out. I can see it is a fire in your bones. May God bless and encourage you in your ministry, ACFJ. .

Grace is not to be extended to everyone. This is something we must get right, else we will find ourselves enabling evil.

And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town. "Behold,

I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, (Mat 10:14-17)