

Online Grace Bible School

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**Online Grace Bible School
Phase 3
Grace Based Discipleship**

1) Paul's Pattern For Making Disciples

The gospel of grace is a unique message. It is not a product of human reason or teaching; it is of divine origin and the apostles received it by revelation (Eph.3:1-9). It is the power of God unto salvation (Rom.1:16-17), and will continue to be so as long as it remains a gospel of *radical* grace. But the moment it is mixed with legalism it loses its power and effectiveness.

And yet, in the New Testament epistles there are many exhortations relating to how we should live. So how can we live righteously without becoming legalistic?

Here are 3 important distinctions between legalism and New Testament instruction:

1) Paul always taught the Christian life in two parts – doctrine and application

- ✓ First he taught believers who they were in Christ
- ✓ Then he exhorted them to be those people, i.e. to live in the power of their new creation identity.

First he taught the believer's position in Christ; and then exhorted them to embrace the 'walk' that corresponds with that position. Examples:

Ephesians

- ✓ Chapters 1-3, Doctrine - we are 'in Christ'.
- ✓ Chapters 4-6, Application - Our walk, see 4:1, 17; 5:2,8,15.

Colossians

- ✓ Chapters 1-2, Doctrine - Our inseparable union with Christ – He is the Head and we are the body (1:18). In Christ we have access to all His resources (2:3). We are '*complete in Him*' (2:10).
- ✓ Chapters 3-4, Application – '*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above...*' (3:1).

Romans

- ✓ Chapters 1-8, Doctrine – We are the righteousness of God in Christ.
- ✓ Chaps 12-16, Application – '*... present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God ...*' (Rom.12:1).

Paul taught the root of holiness before he exhorted his readers concerning the fruits of holiness. The root determines the fruit, Col.2:6&7. If we preach fruit without root, we will end up with artificial fruit!

2) Paul never taught Christians to produce something; he taught that they had already received something

- ✓ Legalism teaches us to *manufacture* certain behavioural works.
- ✓ In contrast, in Christ we are *given* something. We have been given His life.

This means that instead of trying to produce patience, purity, love, generosity, etc., by faith I '*put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness*' (Eph.4:24).

Phil.2:12&13. Whatever *outworking* of the Christian life God asks of us He has already *worked in us*.

3) We overcome the flesh not by focusing upon the flesh, but the Spirit

- ✓ Legalism is always law-focused and sin-focused.
- ✓ New Covenant holiness is Spirit-focused.
- ✓ When spring arrives we don't pluck off all the old leaves from the trees. Why? Because the new leaves automatically rid the old ones from the branches, Gal.5:16.
- ✓ Don't focus on fighting the flesh, but on walking in the Spirit, Rom.6:13.
- ✓ By yielding the members of our bodies as instruments of righteousness unto holiness, we inevitably make them unavailable to serve sin, Rom.13:14. The way to put off the old is to put on the new.

2. The Path of Grace-based Discipleship (1 Jn.2:12-14)

Jesus commanded us to make disciples. What does that mean? How long does the process of discipleship last? And, how do you know when it is completed? God has a simple, yet specific, plan for this which includes three stages. Let's look at God's plan.

1 Jn.2:12-14 speaks of three distinct levels of maturity:

a) Little Children

- ✓ Little children need a righteousness-consciousness.
- ✓ Sin-consciousness is one of the biggest hindrances to spiritual growth.
- ✓ The real veil that keeps us from God is consciousness of sins. See Heb.9:7-9,14.

The writer to the Hebrews exhorts us: *"Let us go on to perfection."* (Heb.6:1). The word 'perfection' here means to bring something to completion for what it was created. We were created for a perfect, intimate relationship with God. For this goal to be realized:

1. We must be convinced that the thought of our sin has been removed from God's mind – Heb.8:12;
2. The thought of sin must be removed from our hearts.

For this to be possible God ordained the Great Exchange – 2 Cor.5:21. *"...God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them..."* (2 Cor.5:19).

God does not impute our sins to us, because He imputed them to His Son. He now imputes Christ's righteousness to us. Sin was credited to Jesus. Righteousness was credited to us. We are righteous by believing, not behaving.

God forgets; religion reminds! Heb.10:1-3;11-14, 19-22

b) Young Men

Young men need to be made strong. *"It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth"* (Lam.3:27). (E.g. David; Joseph.)

How are we made strong? *"...be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might..."* (Eph.6:10). We are not told to be strong *for* the Lord but to be strong *in* the Lord.

"You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim.2:1).

- ✓ The one who tries to be strong *for* the Lord, puts on the armour of the flesh
- ✓ The one who tries to be strong *in* the Lord, puts on the armour of the God

In order to be strong in the Lord it is essential to learn how to access grace:

1. First, understand righteousness (Rom.5:1&2). Grace reigns through righteousness (Rom.5:21)
2. God gives grace to the humble (James 4:6)
3. Ask for it! (Heb.4:16)

c) Fathers

A qualification of fathers is that they have children, i.e. to make disciples. A true leader is not just someone who is followed, but one who makes disciples of those who follow him. Some leaders have a need to be needed. Their goal is just to get people to follow them. They don't care whether those who follow them change. Their goal is not to see people transformed, but to justify their position as a leader. Their aim is not discipleship but followers. They make disciples unto themselves (Acts 20:30) not unto Christ.

The goal of true Christian ministry is not co-dependency but Christ-dependency. The one who has righteousness-consciousness, and is strong in the grace of God is ready to disciple others.