

Empowering Grace Pt 3

It is easy to look at these Scriptures as if they are ancient history and they don't apply to our daily lives. In fact, we face the same problems today.

Entire denominations are being torn apart by false interpretations of what the Bible says about sexuality. The largest non-Catholic denomination in the US had been the Methodist Church. This is the second time that it has suffered a schism. The first time was in the 1800's when two issues tore it apart. The first was their view on the Holy Spirit and, the second was its' view on slavery. Out of those issues came the Holiness movement, including the Nazarenes, the Wesleysans, several Pentecostal Holiness denominations, and the Free Methodist Church.

More recently, they have split over their view on affirming homosexuality, including ordaining practicing homosexuals. More than half their churches have already left and many more are contemplating leaving. It has led to the establishment of the Global Methodist Church.

Just in case you are wondering, the view of the Vineyard is welcoming, but not affirming. We welcome everyone, just as they are regardless of their lifestyle. We want all to come just as they are, but we want all to experience change as a result of an encounter with the Holy Spirit.

1. Influence of False Teachers

2 Peter 2

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

There are people who come into our midst that claim to believe in Jesus, and in their minds may believe it themselves, but who twist His words and teachings to fit their own morality and needs. Peter says that they secretly bring in heresies. In other words, they don't overtly teach these things, they come in as fellow Christians, but then they take people aside and start talking to them about their beliefs. When they find people that interested in what they have to say, they hold secret meetings where they again talk about their beliefs and they plant doubt about the elders and their teachings.

I harp a lot on the Catholic Church because I believe that many of their teachings go against the Scriptures. But I have to give them credit, throughout history they have held 21 councils, with the latest one being Vatican 2, where they examine their stands and make corrections to their doctrines. I also give them credit for their stance against abortion and against homosexuality. While public opinion has been swayed by a new morality, they have stood firm on these things.

False teachers can be identified primarily by three things:

- A) Their teaching departs from the orthodoxy of Scripture.

- B) Their teaching justifies aberrant behavior.
- C) Their teaching benefits them.

2. Deliverance from False Teachers

4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; 5 if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;

While we know that Gnostics separated the spiritual from the physical and therefore justified sexual immorality, we don't know specifically what that immorality was. However, I think that from the text and Peter's reference to Sodom and Gomorrah, that it included all types of sexual immorality, including homosexuality.

They may think that they are getting away with something. They may justify their positions before man, but God won't let them get away with their teachings or their behaviors. Because lightning doesn't strike people down in the moment, they think that God either agrees with their reasoning, or is letting them get away with something. History shows us that God always brings judgment and that no one gets away with anything forever.

7 and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked 8(for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, 10 and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.

God knows that there are always a few that are faithful to His Word and His teachings. God will protect those who are faithful and keep them from judgment. God will provide deliverance from false teachers.

3. Character of False Teachers

Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, 11 whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord.

These people are so convinced of their wicked ways that they are emboldened by their lies and try to impose their will on others, while at the same time, accusing the righteous of trying to impose their morality on everyone.

If you go on social media today, you will see the same thing play out. Christians are accused of trying to repress people and impose our morality on the world, where it is in fact, the other way around. If you don't believe in their "woke" ideals, then you are attacked, called names and you are the one "out of touch" with the new morality.

12 But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, 13 suffering wrong as the wage for their

wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. 14 They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! 15 Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, 16 but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

These people make irrational arguments sound like logic. They are so driven by their flesh that they have found ways to rationalize things that most people have found to be wrong for centuries. They not only sin, but they also sin openly and challenge anyone to call it a sin. They have redefined sin as a "personal choice". Adultery, pedophilia, being poly-amorous are all no longer bad things, they are personal choices. Gender is no longer a matter of biology; it is a personal choice. They attack anyone who does agree with them and makes their accusers out to be the evil ones.

They convince themselves that they are right in order to live for themselves. But God judges them and uses even the most unexpected things to accuse them; as He used Balaam's donkey to talk to him when he refused to listen to God. (Numbers 22:1-35)

4. Judgment on False Teachers

17 These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. 18 For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. 19 They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

These people target new Christians who are knowledgeable in the ways of the Lord. These are people that are trying to escape the world and get to know God better. These false prophets deceive them into believing that they can still serve God, go to church and experience freedom while behaving in ways that are pleasurable to the flesh and appealing to the mind. There is not substance to these people but they offer freedom, while in reality, they are exchanging true freedom for slavery to addiction and sexual pleasures.

20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. 21 For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. 22 What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."

It is bad enough that they proclaim their evil ways, there is a special judgment reserved for those who mislead new Christians into a false faith.

This is where I part ways with Calvinists who believe in eternal security or "once saved, always saved". I personally and this is my opinion, that we have free will. We can come to Christ and ask Him to be our Lord and Savior, but if after, we allow our hearts to be

hardened against God and we choose our own pleasure over Him, then we leave ourselves open to eternal judgment.

I believe in the assurance of salvation. If we follow Jesus and our hearts are for Him, then we are saved by faith. But faith should always be accompanied by actions. Just as baptism is an outward expression of an inward decision, so should works be an outward result of a personal faith.

Conclusion

Our job is to remain faithful to the good news of the Gospel as modeled by Jesus, prophesied by the Bible, and passed down by His Apostles.

Judgment is His job.

We are to recognize and steer clear of false teachers and love those who are being deceived back into the Kingdom of God.

We are to stand firm to the truth of God's Word in the face of pressure from the modern world to change our values to fit a new morality.

We are to demonstrate God's agape love to a lost world by offering them hope, rather than pointing fingers.

We are to listen to the lost and really hear what they have to say before we get in arguments with them and try to convince them that we are right.

We are to welcome all to come just as they are, but we want all to experience change as a result of an encounter with the Holy Spirit.