

August 1, 2011 Beware of Greasy Grace!

"Greasy Grace" — The Age of Lawlessness

There's a term which many who hold true to God's Word use for *excusing sin* under the guise of "grace": "**greasy grace.**" God intends that His grace *lead you to repentance* so that you'll confess your sin to Him and receive His forgiveness and cleansing of unrighteousness. The deceit of greasy grace, however, is that it nullifies God's righteous laws and allows people to go on sinning without experiencing any sense of shame or remorse. Their conscience grows ever more numb, dull to any prompting to repent before our holy God. Comfortable in their sin and erroneously secure in a "salvation" that some authority figure told them they now have, they see no need to turn away from whatever pleases their soulish desires. (For a full explanation of this topic, see our May/June 2004 Newsletter entitled, "*Be Warned! Greasy Grace Fuels the Fires of Hell.*")

Greasy grace is the lie behind the epidemic of divorce (and remarriage) throughout Christendom. This *law-less rationalization* is the number one reason clergy are among the leading occupations in this nation for divorce today. In order to make sure that congregants keep attending and financing their programs and service, anxious clergy preach people-pleasing, entertaining "sermonettes", carefully avoiding the commands of God which would lead to conviction of tolerated sin. Fear of discomforting those who pay the bills keeps many a preacher from sounding forth God's Word in all its power and holiness! (For more on the reluctance of clergy to lead people to repentance through God's Word, see our Teaching E-mail: 37. *Are You Violating Our Holy God's Law?*)

One of the greatest sermons ever preached was "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" by Jonathan Edwards on July 8, 1741, in Enfield, Connecticut. You may want to research his sermon online for yourself. While Edwards delivered the message in his usual bland style, the Spirit used the truth of his *biblical content* to bring conviction on the hearers — they fell to their knees in humble, holy fear, crying out for mercy in heartfelt repentance.

"[Christianity] is a flat cake not turned over" (Hosea 7:8)

Perhaps you're unaware of how Roman Catholicism and much of Protestantism joined forces about 50 years ago in "ecumenical dialogue". In a theological attempt to nullify guilt, sin, and the necessity of the shed blood of Jesus to pay the penalty for our sins, a lie of "**universal salvation**" has swept intoxicatingly over both camps. As the deception goes, because God is love, almost everyone (if not all) will ultimately be received into heaven. (Some may have to "pay their own dues" in purgatory, but they'll get through the pearly gates eventually.)

But from a biblical framework, it's as if the demonic spirit of **anti-Christ** took up rule over a large part of Christendom—Catholic and Protestant alike. That system of belief is ANTI everything the Bible teaches! Ever since Satan was thrown out of heaven and down to the earth (Revelation 12:7-9), the spirit of anti-Christ has attempted to undermine both the Person of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11) and His purpose for dying on the cross to pay the penalty for sin and reconcile people to the Father (Hebrews 2:17).

The Apostle Peter forcefully warns against the false teachers who indoctrinate so many into **greasy grace**: "*They promise them freedom, while they themselves are **slaves of depravity**—for a man is a slave to whatever has **mastered him**" (2 Peter 2:19). He makes absolutely clear that our freedom from slavery to sin has a *God-exalting life purpose* that's in opposition to worldly self-gratification: "*Live as free men, not using your freedom as a **cloak for evil** but as **slaves of God**" (1 Peter 2:16, literal). In other words, those who love and serve Jesus as their Lord and Master make sure they *know* and *put into practice* God's righteous commands, and repent whenever they violate any of them. Living in Christ means living for Christ according to His Word.**

One of the latest bastions of greasy grace today is the house church/home fellowship movement that has been gaining popularity since the 1980s. Due to the influence of a few misguided men who've marketed themselves as "makers and shakers" in the house church movement, most home churches and home-based fellowships have done away with all forms of biblical authority and leadership. Sadly, this nullifies the scriptural call to imitate the faith of those *leading you* and to *fully hear these leaders out* (see Hebrews 13:7,17,24). It also ignores Paul's detailed instructions regarding the essential role of *biblical elders* (see 2Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9).

Exaltation of the *individual* and his or her "island mentality" regarding their "personal God" underlies the common reasoning for doing away with biblical leadership: "We all have the Holy Spirit, therefore we don't need any authority." (Pause for a moment to consider the internal struggle against his sin nature that even Paul confronted in wanting to do what is good and avoid that which is evil (see Romans 7:14-25). Put that struggle in context with, say, 15 other people, and you can see how those collective sin-struggles might bring both chaos and tolerated sin into "fellowship" gatherings!)

Greasy grace keeps many within house churches and home fellowships from confronting sin in their midst. Again, with an individualist mindset that's similar to eggs in a carton isolated within their own cardboard cells, any consideration of *communal* righteousness as an interconnected family in Christ is disregarded. Over the years we've recognized two strongholds which seem to permeate those who attend many of these fellowship groups: **unresolved bitterness toward parents (especially fathers)** and **rebellion**, which reveals itself through the attitude that "No one can hold me accountable, and no one is going to tell me what I should do."

So many house churches and home fellowships today are modeled after the therapy sessions (T-groups) which became popular in the 1970s. Fellowship gatherings are

more like group therapy sessions where people voice whatever comes to mind, most often exposing unresolved bitterness and blaming others for their problems. Under the guise of "being caring", no one confronts their inappropriate harangues or offers to meet privately with them so that the underlying causes of their distress can be addressed and brought before our Father. They motor on, oblivious to the discomfort they're inflicting on others and the slander that generally accompanies these verbal tirades.

The original goal of T-group therapy was to support the self-esteem of the individual by letting them share whatever they felt without fear of accountability for what they said. Yet allowing their perceived "victimization" to be voiced brings anxious apprehension to others and does nothing to build up the collective body in Christ. What may seem "caring" has nothing to do with following Jesus by forgiving from the heart and praying for those who have offended or hurt you (see Mark 11:25; Matthew 6:14,15; Luke 6:28). Rather, individuals are offered a platform on which they perfect their bitter and rebellious attitudes and defile their listeners (Hebrews 12:15). (We encourage you to read chapters 12 thru 15 of our book, *Pastoring By Elders*, for a biblically-based understanding of home churches. It's a free download at our website.)

Other unbiblical influences have kept modern house churches and home fellowships from having the spiritually powerful Kingdom impact the earliest followers of Jesus experienced. Instead of scripturally addressing the sinful, selfish pursuit of attendees, these groups adopt the world's standard of catering to the soulish desire for *self-esteem*. Recent technology has intensified this hunger to be noticed and applauded. For example, a recent study revealed some startling information on the effects of texting on the brain, a response very similar to those of slot machine addicts. Take note of how these effects are so contrary to how God would have His people live:

"When we get a new little piece of information, our brains release some dopamine — which is the neurotransmitter chemical that is how the brain encourages us to do things; it's also the chemical implicated in most addictions. ...You're on constant high alert, your adrenaline is rushing because you're clicking and you're texting and as soon as you respond a new thing flashes. In terms of human beings up until now, this is an unusually fast-paced, interactive activity. And we know that dopamine dampens an important frontal part of the brain called the prefrontal cortex, which can cause people to behave more recklessly and with less empathy toward others. [This is a mode] that small children are in, which has a strong sensory focus and it's very exciting and arousing. ... It's like a small child: 'Look at me, mummy. Because if you don't look at me and give me feedback, I won't exist.'" (excerpted from Colorado Springs Gazette article, 7/24/11)

Even TV commercials tout the "ME" mantra. Have you noticed the latest one for CVS pharmacy? "Laura" exclaims how she loves all the attention there: "It's all about me!", and closes the commercial with a satisfied declaration: "It's my CVS, all mine." So which is having the greater impact on fellowship groups today: the self-sacrificial, looking to the interest of others which Scripture urges? Or, the unspoken but widely believed deceit that God exists to make ME happy? A *reckless disregard for others* has proliferated among the churched and house-churched communities in which Scripture

has been replaced by cultural self-idolatry, supported by technology.

Still wondering what we're talking about? We've personally found that shopping at Walmart has become a life-threatening experience as people obliviously push their carts into others while talking on their cell phone or texting. And for us in this city of four hundred thousand, crossing intersections on foot or by bike is a terrorizing experience as drivers see right through us in making their turns because *their minds are on their phone conversations!* Distracted and consumed with self-interest, they behave recklessly and are unable to empathize with anyone outside their conversational/textual frame of reference. The people we're describing may even be akin to some in your fellowship group, who take part with you only as long as you satisfy their needs and desires!

The end result of these man-centered personal and cultural influences on home churches and fellowship groups has been *spiritual debilitation*. Supporting and condoning *self-pursuit* and *self-esteem* have superseded helping people grow in Christ's character and fulfill their God-given purpose and responsibility to serve others out of love for Him and for them. Just as a frog in a pot of water doesn't notice that the gradually rising temperature will boil him, churched and nonchurched alike have given way to the permeating influence of SELF-fulfillment and happiness. The sacrificial, loving concern of Jesus which looks to the interest of others first has become irrelevant —unless it's *convenient* for the doer.

Because of the void in house churches of biblical authority/leadership of elders and the refusal to confront sin, people are able to comfortably continue their sin-based lifestyle regardless of whose home they bring it into. Keep in mind that those who lay no claim to walking in Jesus are fertile opportunity for you to represent His care and concern through hospitality in your home. But people who bring down the reputation of Jesus by *calling themselves by His Name* and *living no differently* than the world does are another matter! What are *you* tolerating and condoning under the guise of "Christian fellowship"?

Perhaps you've already left the clergy-dominated religious system. But, you may not be wholeheartedly pursuing the *righteous foundations* God gives you in His commands out of His great love for you. So many who email us or call are fearful of losing their old sin-based, stronghold-controlled relationships — especially with others in their faith community, relatives, parents or even their adult children who don't want to journey with them as they press on in their transformation into more of Christ's character. (See the diagram in our previous e-mail which illustrates this.) Fear of losing relationships thwarts growth in Christ-likeness, and in experiencing His spiritual power!

Ever since Jesus walked the earth, a *divided heart* has separated those who belong to Him from those who *think* they belong to Him but whose loyalties lay elsewhere. Knowing that natural love could easily override love for Him in the Spirit, Jesus warned, *"Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and anyone who does not*

take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37,38). The love for Jesus that *He* calls for surpasses that which is a normal and natural response to our relatives and human goals and values. But that's what our Lord and King proclaims to His people!

Please, if you find yourself fellowshiping with the unrepentant, make known to them in sincere love their need to repent before our holy God. If those in your fellowship group who call themselves "Christian" refuse to repent of their sin, then it may be time for you to depart. We've offered this warning of the need for communal righteousness in your faith family so that you will respond according to the righteous will of our Father. *Deliberate sin* is a dreadful affront to the Spirit of *authentic* grace (Hebrews 10:26-31).

Mike & Sue