

December 2, 2008
Is Your Life A Balance Of Grace and Truth?

"Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

Statistics from these last elections have only confirmed that so many Christians have eliminated obedient trust in the one true God of the Bible as the solution to our nation's problems. This situation appears to be true even for most Evangelicals if you weigh in on those who were cited so often in the news. Who spoke of *recognizing God's hand* in chastising this nation? None that we heard. Rather, the politically minded among the Evangelical community seemed to pride themselves in promoting their agenda and candidates as the way to solve our problems, "needing a triumph of conservatives over the liberals." We all, of course, now know that didn't happen! Do you think our Sovereign God had a hand in this outcome? Yes, He did!

While the conservative/liberal political battle is at the heart of this nation's differences, this shouldn't be true for followers of Jesus. We need to be for our nation and for the world a *balance of truth and grace* because our Lord was the complete balance of grace and truth. And, if we are to become like Him in our sanctification, we need to humbly and responsively acquire this same balance at His hand. It's time for followers of Jesus to seriously scrutinize ourselves to see how we are doing in the balance of grace and truth. Why is this essential?

Truth without grace ceases to be truth. It becomes prideful, legalistic, and pharisaical. *Grace without truth* becomes nothing more than tolerance for sin. This license to sin deceives people into thinking God is so loving that He has NO righteous standards. Ultimately, hell is nullified so that all are universally given a Pass to heaven.

Balance between grace and truth undergirds the simple statement, "**Hate the sin, but love the sinner.**" By our Father's loving plan and design, every human is made in the image of God. Our Lord Jesus died for each one! But because of our innate sin nature, all of us are destined for hell —*unless* someone graciously relates to us the life-giving truth about the Covenant our Father offers us through Jesus. Then we can gratefully respond to the Spirit's prompting and receive that loving offer by trust.

How did the earliest Church keep growing despite persecution and suffering? Because people graciously kept sharing the truth about sin, about the hope of the Cross. They kept pointing people to Jesus and to the responsive repentance that turned them *away from death*. Those who responded *turned toward* the grace of forgiveness and loving union with the Spirit of Christ.

Tragically, today's "church growth movement", along with many other Christian institutions, disguises grace in false garb, allowing tolerance for sin as no one is called to repent. However, not having tasted the freedom that comes with repentance, countless thousands in the pew have not experienced the **grace of forgiveness**. Bereft of forgiveness from our Father, many are imprisoned in bitterness and unforgiveness toward others—the pandemic sin of western Christendom.

In the political arena, those who are church-ed but unforgiven and unforgiving *despise* their opponents and bad mouth them. But as a Spirit-filled follower of Jesus, you're called to lovingly and graciously share the His truth. Anti-people attitudes and actions have no place in your life!

**To experience God's grace is to realize the wonderful extent
of His forgiving mercy toward you when you repent.**

**His grace also provides all the empowerment
you need to obey His truths.**

If you haven't tasted the twin joys of both His grace and His truth, don't go on another day until you do.

You've perhaps been labeled as a "political conservative" just because you follow Jesus. The airwaves have certainly seemed to overflow with evangelicals joyfully claiming both Presidents Bush, Sarah Palin, and even Rush Limbaugh as one of their own! Yet, while each of these four individuals has shown himself or herself to be politically conservative, they acted as **biblical liberals** by not obeying God's commands. Why would a follower of Jesus want to identify with any of them?

- George H.W. Bush, the Evangelicals' choice, was defeated for his second term by Bill Clinton. You may remember that God told one of the noted prophetic men of our time on the *day before* the election that He was choosing Bill Clinton because he was "more humble than George Bush." Our God also made known to this prophetic voice the exact wording of specific headlines that would appear in major newspapers throughout the country on the *day after* the elections. This man mailed a letter detailing this information to key religious leaders on the day before the election.

If you can remember back that far, the senior Bush ignored economic problems in the country and was most known for numerous campaign speeches in which he referred to Clinton as a "bimbo". Not having learned from that sorry example, John McCain, a Senator for 23 years, detailed few specific plans for policy change but overflowed with verbiage berating Barack Obama. Sue and I live among a lot of war veterans, many of whom go all the way back to World War II. These men who had proudly served their country told us they were *embarrassed* that an older man like themselves, a war veteran, would stoop so low. Early in the campaign, most had been favorably inclined toward Senator McCain. By the end, almost all of them voted for Senator Obama.

- George W. Bush, soon after his election, traveled around the world calling for a war against Saddam Hussein to finish what his father had failed to do in Desert Storm — to fight until the other side surrendered. (You may not be aware that our laws require surrender to end a war. The senior President Bush, however, unilaterally ended the Gulf War. Thus, we're at war again in Iraq.)

During George W. Bush's international travels to gain support for another war, magazines began to call him **"The Emperor of the World"**. All of this support-seeking was going on *before* 9/11. The President used 9/11 and the false accusation of "Weapons of Mass Destruction" to precipitate a war which has caused the needless deaths of thousands of Americans and British as well as Iraqis.

His term ending in distress and disgrace, the current President sadly will be most remembered for the delayed and insufficient response to Hurricane Katrina, and the thousands of African-Americans who were left starving and dying in New Orleans. If you're not a minority, you probably can't identify with the grievous racial prejudice that was displayed each night on TV during that traumatic time. He never asked them for forgiveness...

- So many at the Republican National Convention were wowed by Sarah Palin, and Evangelicals cheered her candidacy. However, did it cross their (or your) mind that she had abandoned her young family when they so obviously needed a mother at their side? Paul's words are timeless truth for mothers today: **"But women will be saved in**

childbearing if they continue in faith, love and holiness, with self-control" (1 Timothy 2:15). She forfeited her call to raise her children and sought fame in politics. Mrs. Palin may be politically conservative, but to a follower of Jesus her choices reflect a liberal interpretation of biblical truth.

- Rush Limbaugh, though politically conservative, has inspired generations of people to hate their enemies rather than love them and pray for them. The dark attitudes of bitterness and prejudice which Jesus warns His own to cast down are only fanned into greater flame as Mr. Limbaugh uses his nimble tongue as a club.

Please, don't conflate **political conservatism** with **biblical conservatism**. The former is bent on self-preservation of the status of personal wealth and prestige. It perverts Truth into intolerance of anything that's unlike its goals and ways. Biblical conservatism, however, is bent on self-sacrificial living that seeks justice and mercy for the widows, orphans, poor and needy. A biblical conservative lovingly obeys God's commands and statutes without hesitation because they emanate from the King. Ask yourself if this resonates with your spirit: A true follower of Jesus increasingly manifests the balance of God's grace and truth in their ongoing life journey, and so reflects their Lord Jesus.

The chastisement that is coming on this nation will affect everyone. Find yourself in the cleft of the Rock as you prayerfully and willingly walk in **personal and communal righteousness**. Political action won't save this nation! Only the righteousness of Christ as His own live to serve and love Him and those He puts in their path can make a difference that will reap eternal results. Unbelievers in this nation desperately need to see the power of God at work in and through His own. When His power is manifested, the fear of God falls on people. And, fearing Him opens eyes, ears and hearts to come before Him in repentance and trust so that forgiveness can cleanse them and new life in Jesus begin. ***"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding"*** (Proverbs 9:10; see also 2 Corinthians 7:1, Ephesians 5:21).

Pursue the path of personal and communal righteousness so that the chastisement that is coming will find you prepared to stand firm in Jesus as His representative. Please, don't take this warning lightly...

Servants in our most gracious Lord Jesus,
Mike and Sue