

FREEDOM TO LIVE

Walking In Grace

I had the privilege of growing up in a Christian home. My parents were God fearing people. They were of the Pentecostal Holiness persuasion (heaven was high and hell was hot!). Where the men looked like dignitaries and the women looked like pioneers with PHD's (Pentecostal Hair Do's). They were very definite in their perception of right and wrong. Growing up, I had a deep sense of "God will get you for that" instilled in me. The God that was presented to me was 'Jehovah' of the Old Testament. The God who declared **not one** could keep the law. Yet, our concept of God was mostly "do's, don'ts, and musts." I remember having a mental picture in my mind of a big angry God, sitting on a throne just itching for me to do something wrong.

I recall as a young boy, going to the altar to repent of my sins because our preacher literally scared the "hell" out of me. I got "saved," not because of my awareness of His great love and mercy that is new every morning, but because I was afraid of hell. That fear drove me to the altar but did not deliver me from the 'old man.'

Within days the fear subsided and I was back to my old ways 'just a sinnin'.

I suspect my mother (who is with the Lord now) considered me the black sheep of the family. I am curious by nature and that seemed to always get me into trouble. I have an older brother who was always submissive and obedient in every way. I (the 2nd of three boys), on the other hand, always pushed the envelope and was continually in trouble. As a teenager I experimented with just about everything that came my way. Then, at nineteen years old I came to know a God of love. He revealed Himself to me in a way that changed my life forever. His goodness led me to repentance. His goodness still causes me to open my heart and say "create in me a clean heart O' God."

Now I serve a God of love whose mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. I found the God of the New Testament with whom I can identify. He is not an angry God but a happy one.

When Jesus died on the cross, we died with Him. When Jesus was buried in the tomb, we were buried with Him. When Jesus arose from the dead, we arose with Him. When we were

baptized in water we made an affirmation of total identification with Him.

As He is in this world, so are we. His life is our life. We live by the faith of the Son of God. If we only focus on our identification with His death, then all we will see is death. Whether it is His death or anyone else's, death is death, and we will continue to struggle with **sin**. We are not made alive because He died; we are made alive because He arose from the dead. Romans 8:2—*“For the law of the Spirit of **life** in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”* When we identify with His life we no longer have a problem with sin.

What is sin? The definition is **missing the mark**. All have sinned (missed the mark) and come short of the glory of God.

Galatians 3:19—*“The law was added because of transgression.”*

Romans 4:15—*“Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.”*

To walk in the liberty of grace is to walk in the absence of law (legalism). The law is the strength of sin. Paul teaches that all things are

lawful, but not all things are expedient, or edify (build up) [especially in inappropriate times and places].

When law (legalism) rules our conscience, then any violation of that becomes **sin**. Just as the eating of meat, or drinking a glass of wine, etc. violates some people's conscience; others have a freedom to enjoy these things. That is, provided they do not use their liberty as an occasion for their flesh to stumble others who are weak in the faith, whose consciences are easily violated. Whatever is not of faith is **sin**. Therefore, whatever we do, must be done in faith. There is an appropriate time and place for all things.

There is a freedom and liberty in the Spirit that mature ones may enjoy that bound and legalistic ones cannot. The spirit of the **liberty of life** hath freed me from the law of sin and death. Praise God!!!

Yes! I do believe that there are appropriate times and places where those who have a grasp of the spirit of the liberty of life can participate in things that weaker ones cannot.

When Jesus' disciples were questioned by the Jews why they were eating with unwashed

hands, Jesus response was *“that it is not what entereth into a man that defiles him, but it is what comes out of him that defiles him.”*

I Samuel 16:7—*“...for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”* If the heart is evil and has not been changed by the Spirit of God, an action by that person is motivated from his evil heart. What comes out of him defiles him. But, a person whose heart has been changed by the indwelling presence of God may have similar actions, but with completely different motives. Therefore, he is not defiled. Titus 1:15—*“Unto the pure all things are pure. But unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure.”*

If we believe that there is a restoration of all things, then we must accept that all things are in and of Him. He created all things, and by Him all things consist. We no longer view issues in the light of “is it lawfully permissible,” but in the light of “expediency and edification.”

Romans 14:14—*“I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.”*

Therefore, if one believes that the doing or not doing of such things as eating, drinking, entertainment, Sabbaths, holy days, etc. is unclean (wrong), then to him it is unclean (wrong).

Romans 14:22—*“Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.”*

Folks, we have been coming out of the ages of darkness. Many of us have been governed by puritanical ideology that has formed our belief systems in such staunch legalism that we have not been free to live. We could not enjoy our lives for the veil of bondage that covered our understanding had us bound. The word ‘*freedom*’ to many conjures up visions of people living in the excessive appetites of their flesh. It is quite the contrary, to those who have understanding. How can we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein. The grace of God teaches us to walk uprightly. As long as we use the law (legalism) to govern our flesh we are not walking in grace, and we will always struggle with **sin**. Again, the law is the strength of sin. Grace and the understanding of it, is freedom from sin.

So we see that clean and unclean are issues of **“faith.”** We are cleansed by faith in the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ. When we refuse that simple truth in every situation, and depend on our own legalistic efforts, then we are walking in uncleanness because of a lack of faith. Without **faith** it is impossible to please God.

The fundamental definition of what constitutes sin has not really come into full focus for most. Most even yet have an archaic view of their relationship with God, and do not fully grasp what happened two thousand years ago on the cross. Our ‘old man’ **was** crucified with Him. If you can receive it, if you have identified with Him, then you don’t have an ‘old man.’ He passed away two thousand years ago. Our identity is in Christ. II Cor.—*“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: behold all things are become new.”* The old passed away and the new man/creature is here (Christ).

We must begin to judge righteous judgment. That which does not judge one another by what we see. We can only examine our own heart and that by letting the Holy Spirit be the judge.

Jesus died that we might have life and that more abundantly. You shall know the truth and

the truth shall make you free. We are free to live in Him and enjoy all things that He created, for He has given us dominion over all things. Amen.

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