Grace by Ken Legg

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STUDY 1: WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?

http://www.iamlegacy.net/1/post/2011/04/study-1-who-is-a-christian-jyotirmoy-john-hazra.html

"Who is a Christian?" - it is such an important question and this is the question that I am going to look at in this article. It's a simple question but one can be confused when it comes to answering it.

Probably some of you may have seen or heard, from time to time, how people may say, "I am a Christian," but the things that they say or the things that they believe in or the type of life-style that they live, is totally contrary to what the Bible teaches. There are people who may say they are Christians but their life-style is far from being a Christian, they may still be living a life of immorality and promiscuity. There are people who may say they are Christians, and yet they don't believe in the Resurrection or in the Virgin Birth or in the Miracles of the Bible, nor are they 'born-again' nor do they have any relationship with GOD.

Listen, because you '*say*' something, it doesn't make you into '*what you are saying*!' For example, if I claim to be a doctor but if I have never been through a medical college nor do I have a medical degree, do you think just because I claim to be a doctor, will make me a doctor? Or if I claim to be an engineer but if I have never been through an engineering college nor do I have an engineering degree, do you think just because I claim to be an engineer will make me an engineer? Of course not! Similarly, because one '*claims*' to be a Christian, it doesn't '*make*' one a Christian. It may sound funny, but someone has said something like this, that it's time that the term "Christian is copyrighted. Too many people are pirating it." We need to realise that because someone says that he is a Christian, it doesn't make him a Christian. We need to have a Biblical understanding of what it means to be a Christian.

***So who is a Christian*?**

First of all, let me say that a **Christian is someone who is joined with**

CHRIST. You cannot even write the word 'Christian' without writing 'CHRIST" first. CHRIST has to be first in the life of a Christian. If you are not joined with the Lord JESUS CHRIST, if you are not in a relationship with Him, you may *claim* to be a Christian, but according to the teachings of the Bible, you are *not* a Christian.

We need to remember that it's *not being joined with a Church* (some people probably believe that they are Christians because they attend Church, which is not true; though the Bible teaches that we should not forsake the assembly of the believers. So attending Church is important but it doesn't make one a Christian). We need to also keep in mind that it's not *being joined with some kind of a tradition* but it's being joined with the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

It is important for us to note that (a) you cannot be a Christian by your 'natural birth' & (b) nor can you be a Christian because of the 'good things' or the 'good works' that you do.

Let's look at these two statements.

(a) **You cannot be a Christian by your 'natural birth.'** In John chapter 1 and verses 12 and 13, John writes, 12Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—13children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

These two verses actually *clarify* some of the *misunderstandings* that one may have today in relation to the question, who is a Christian.

I want you to note what John says in verses 12 and 13a: 12Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—13children born not of natural descent,.." Note that - 13children born not of natural descent,...

In other words, you cannot be a Christian by your natural birth. In order for you to be a Christian you have to *receive* the Lord JESUS CHRIST, you have to *believe* in His Name, and then you will be given the right to become children of GOD.

Listen, because you have been born in a home where your parents are Christians, that doesn't *automatically* or by *default* make you a Christian. If you are reading this article and you think that you are a Christian because your parents are Christians, let me just say to you to listen to what the Word of GOD teaches, *your natural birth cannot make you a Christian*. Sometimes people may say, I am a Christian because my father was a Christian or my grandfather was a Christian, they were involved in Church and ministry and they did this & they built that. Let me say that you cannot *inherit* Christianity. Because you were *born* in a Christian home, it doesn't *make* you a Christian. As someone has said, that *if you were born in a garage, it wouldn't make you a motor car*. Similarly, if you are *born* in a Christian home, it doesn't *make* you a Christian. I read somewhere or heard somewhere that GOD has no grandsons or grand-daughters but only sons and daughters.

If you want to be a Christian, then you have to *do* something. It doesn't happen *automatically*. You are *not borninherit*. The Bible teaches that you have to *commit* your life to the Lord JESUS CHRIST and *accept* HIM as your LORD and SAVIOUR. If you haven't done that, though you may think you are a Christian but according to the Bible, you are not and I want to encourage you to receive the LORD today, because time is short and you don't know what tomorrow holds. The Bible teaches that 'today is the day of salvation.' Don't procrastinate. Commit your life today.

Hence according to John, you cannot be a Christian by your natural birth.

(b) **You cannot be a Christian because of the 'good things' or the 'good works' that you do.** One of the biggest mistake many people make today is, that they think they are Christians because they do *good things or good works*.

Sometimes one may think because I go to Church, because I attend all the meetings that my Church has, because I am good to everyone, because I don't do drugs, because I give money to the poor, because I help the needy, because I sponsor a child, because I give money to the charity, because I am a good person, I must be a Christian and I would go to heaven. But you see that is not true! We need to realise that though

these things are good but these things are not going to save us. They are not going to give us eternal life.

The question that one needs to ask here is this, how good one has to be to be accepted by GOD? If we compare our good works with each other, our good works become *relative*. If we are going to measure our good works, it needs to be measured by God's standards.

The Bible teaches that ' there is no one who does good, not even one."(Romans 3:12b) and that "23for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"(Romans 3:23)

If all the good things that you do were able to save you then there was no need for the Lord JESUS CHRIST to come and die for you on the Cross. No, doing these things won't make you a Christian nor will they save you. If you want to be a Christian, if you want to receive eternal life, if you want to be saved, then you have to receive the Lord JESUS CHRIST as your LORD and SAVIOUR. There is no other way. Your good things or your good works will not do it.

Now this leads me to ask the most important question, **how is it possible for a person to become a Christian?**

Well, the Bible teaches that for a person to become a Christian, the person has to be "born-again." Many of us have heard that term before but do we really understand what that term means? What does it mean to be "born-again?" Where did this term come from? Now, to understand this we have to turn to the Gospel of John. Let's read verses 1 to 7 from John chapter 3.

John 3:1-7
1Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. 2He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." 3In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." 4"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his

mother’s womb to be born!" 5Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. 6Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’

Here we read that Nicodemus, who was a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish ruling council, came to the Lord JESUS at night. He was a very religious man.

What did the Lord JESUS say to him? Look at verse 3, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." The LORD was telling the truth and what is the truth - no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. That's the truth. *No one* means - *no on*e. That includes us - 'you' and 'me.'

You see, we cannot *inherit* Christianity. According to this verse, every single person has to be 'born again' - if they want to see the Kingdom of GOD. Nicodemus couldn't understand this 'born again' concept. That's why he asked, "How can a man be born when he is old?" In verses 5 and 6, the Lord JESUS answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. 6Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

What does it all mean? Well, let me try to explain this to you simply.

There are two types of birth: There is the *physical birth* and then there is the *spiritual birth*. In verse 6, the Lord JESUS says, "Flesh gives birth to flesh, (here the Lord is speaking about the physical birth) but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. (here the Lord is speaking about the spiritual birth).

According to my understanding, the Bible teaches that we human beings are composed of three parts : *Body*, *Soul* and *Spirit*. *Body* is the *physical part - the flesh (blood and bones) ; Soul* is the *psychological part*- that includes (emotion, will and intellect); *Spirit* is the *spiritual part*

Now, what happens is, that when a person is born in this world, he has a body (flesh, blood, bone) and his body develops as he grows from one stage to the other. For example, a *baby* is born, then one day the baby

becomes a *teenager,* the *teenager* becomes an *adult,* the *adult* becomes a *middle-aged person,* the *middle-aged personold person* - and so on. So from the very moment a baby is born, physically speaking, the body of the baby develops as it grows from one stage to the other. Now, what happens to his '*soul*?' His soul also develops. As I have mentioned to you before that soul is the psychological part of a human being (he grows in his knowledge, understanding, decision making capabilities, emotion etc)

But, what happens to his '*spirit*?' Well, it's quite a different story when it comes to his spirit. His spirit doesn't develop. That means when a person is born and when grows from one stage to the other, his spirit doesn't grow. He grows physically, psychologically, but not spiritually. He is born of the flesh, but he is not born of the spirit. He is still spiritually blind. He is spiritually dead. The Bible teaches that we are born into this world *spiritually dead*. That's why *our spirit needs to be reborn*. That's why *our spirit needs to come alive*. And the *term* which the Bible uses of the '*spirit coming alive*' is the term '*born-again*.'

Let me give you a personal example. I was born over 55 years ago. (Now, I have given you my age. I will be turning 56 this October). I was born physically or naturally in 1955 and my body and my soul developed for the next 19 plus years, but my spirit was dead. The Bible teaches that we are born spiritually dead. But over 36 years ago, when GOD touched my heart and I received the Lord JESUS CHRIST as my LORD and SAVIOUR in my life, that my spirit came alive. From there on I started to understand and comprehend the things of GOD. But before that time, Christianity was only a religion, but from there on, Christianity was not a religion to me, but I had a relationship with GOD through the Lord JESUS CHRIST. To be a Christian means to have your spirit lit.

So according to the Bible, what has happened to me is that I have been *born twice*. I was physically born over 55 years ago and I was spiritually born over 36 years ago. In other words, I have got *two birthdays*. My physical birthday which is in the month of October and my spiritual birthday, which is not in October. It seems to me that this is what the Lord JESUS was telling Nicodemus, Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. So a Christian is someone who has been born again.

The question that one needs to ask is, "Have I been born-again?" If you have not been born-again, then doesn't matter what you may say or claim, according to the Bible, you are not a Christian. Do you realise that you cannot be a Christian by your natural birth, nor your good works will save you? To be a Christian, you have to accept the Lord JESUS CHRIST as your LORD and SAVIOUR. There is no other way.

Before I conclude let me ask you, " Have you joined yourself with the Lord JESUS CHRIST? Have you been born-again? Have you received the Lord JESUS CHRIST into your life? Are you a Christian?

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STUDY 2 - LEGALISM SAYS "DO". GRACE SAYS "DONE" - Ken Legg

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Many Christians across the world are now making the transition from legalism into grace. Legalism is the belief that my works are the basis of God's acceptance and blessing. Grace is the belief that I am always accepted and qualified for every blessing because of the finished work of Jesus.

With legalism the focus is always upon self. With grace the focus is always upon Jesus. Legalism says, "Do". Grace says, "Done!" There is nothing I can do to make God love me more; and there is nothing I can do that will make Him love me less. This is grace. When we try to relate to God and the Christian life through law-keeping we leave the realm of grace. Legalism nullifies the grace of God.

But not everyone is convinced. Here are some of the popular objections I come across to the grace of God, and how I answer those objections:

1) **"We all need rules to give us structure and goals, and to lead a better life"**

- Paul was deceived into thinking this, and it 'killed' him spiritually. Rom.7:11
- Legalism actually incites us to sin, not holiness. The commandment puts a thought in our mind that wasn't previously there, so that we obsess over it. And it touches the point of our rebellion. Rom.7:5,8
- The Law is good, but our 'marriage' to it is bad, because the power-base in this marriage is the flesh, which is weak. Rom.7:18; 8:3. God's plan for us is not to be married to the Law but to Christ. Rom.7:1-4

2) **“I believe in grace, but it needs to be balanced”**

- In other words, grace saves us but works keep us? Having begun in the Spirit are we to be made perfect by the flesh? (Gal.3;3)
- What we call balance is really mixture. Rom.11:6
- Grace must stay pure in order to be radical and effective

3) **“Grace is just a license to sin”**

- No, grace is the only thing that can get us out of sin. It is God’s ability in the place of our inability. It is God’s way of holiness. Rom.6:14
- Some people might abuse grace and turn into licentiousness, but true grace is not an encouragement to sin. Titus 2:11-14

4) **“I believe in grace, but we still have to do our part”**

- Our part is to believe that Jesus has done it all. John 6:29. Our full salvation is provided by Him
- The Christian lives by faith. Rom.1:17; Gal.2:20

5) **“But I believe that if you want God’s blessing, there is a price to pay”**

- Everything that God wants to do in our lives has already been paid for. False teachers try to get you to pay for what Christ has already paid for. Rom.8:32
- We are already blessed with all things. Eph.1:3; 2 Pet.1:3
- Good works are our free response to what God has done for us. Any works that seek to pay for blessing and favour from God are dead works

6) **“If there’s nothing I need to do, why should I do anything? Grace takes away the motive for Christian living”**

- Paul taught grace more than any other, and yet worked harder than all others. 1 Cor.15:10
- If the only reason you serve, give, obey, etc. is to receive something from God in return, then grace does not remove the motive for

giving, but rather it reveals your *mercenary* motive!

- The only acceptable motive for serving, giving, obeying etc. is love. Gal.5:6

STUDY 3 - GRACE OR LAW? - KEN LEGG

http://www.iamlegacy.net/1/post/2011/12/study-3-grace-or-law-ken-legg.html

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(This study is chapter five from Ken's book THIS IS THE LIFE which is the current study text in The Commissions Grace Fellowship meetings)

When we started New Beginnings Christian Church on the Gold Coast of Australia we looked around for some office space. We found something that we thought might be suitable and I phoned the real estate agent who represented that property. He questioned us as to what we wanted it for and I told him it was for a church office. I requested him to seek a favourable price for us from the owner. He asked, jokingly, “If the owner let’s you have it for a good price, will he get a free ticket to heaven?” “He already has a free ticket to heaven if he’ll accept it,” I replied.

There was silence on the other end of the line for a while. The agent then said, “What do you mean? I thought everyone has to earn their way to heaven.” “That’s the rumour that’s going around,” I answered. “We’re trying to set the record straight by getting the truth out.” I then spent the next few minutes sharing with him the message of God’s free gift of salvation through Christ.

One of the things that sets Christianity apart from all other religions is that it offers a relationship with God that is based solely upon His grace. Every other religion teaches that favour with God is conditional upon our works. There couldn’t be a greater difference between the two. Works are what we do for God. Grace is what He has done for us, in Christ. If we do not understand grace we will never understand the Christian life.

Christians And The Law

The Old Testament was a covenant of law, made between God and His people. It was dependent upon them keeping God’s commandments. The

function of the law was to show us our sin. Its purpose in doing so was that we would see the inadequacy of our own righteousness.

Thus, the law was given in order to prepare us for the righteousness of God in Christ, as revealed in the gospel. It is our custodian to bring us to Christ (Gal.3:24). When it has succeeded in doing that it has done the work God intended it to do. Now, the New Testament teaches that:

* We are not under law but under grace (Rom.6:14).
* We are dead to the law through the body of Christ (Rom.7:4).
* We have been delivered from the law (Rom.7:6).
* Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to those who believe (Rom.10:4).
* The law has passed away (2 Cor.3:13).
* Those who are led by the Spirit are not under the law (Gal.5:18).
* Christ has abolished in His flesh the law of commandments (Eph.2:15).
* Christ has wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has nailed it to the cross (Col.2:14).

The Bible uses the term “the law” (with the definite article) in reference to the law God gave through Moses. But when it uses the term “law” (without the definite article) it designates any legalistic system of works we may employ in order to gain merit with God. Christians have left both the realm of “the law” (God-given rules) and the realm of “law” (man-made rules), as the basis for relating to God. We now live in the realm of God’s grace. Our standing with God is purely on the foundation of what He has done for us, not vice-versa.

Christians And Grace

Grace is at the heart of the New Testament. The New Covenant is a covenant of grace. It was never made between God and us, but between God and Jesus as our representative. It was conditional upon His perfect obedience and His sacrificial death. Whilst the law presents a human work to be done, grace presents a divine work to be believed.

Grace does not set aside the law of God, but recognizes that Jesus has

fulfilled it completely. There is nothing for us to do but to receive it by faith. God now deals with us on the basis of grace; i.e. what Christ has done for us. All is of grace. The following is a sample of the centrality of God's grace in the life of the believer:

* We are saved by grace (Eph.2:8).
* We are justified by grace (Rom.3:24).
* We stand in grace (Rom.5:2; 1 Pet.5:12).
* We grow in grace (2 Pet.3:18).
* We are free from sin's dominion by grace (Rom.6:14).
* We are taught by grace how to deny ungodliness and to live righteously (Tit.2:11&12).
* We reign in righteousness by grace (Rom.5:17,21).
* We serve by grace (Rom.12:6; Eph.4:7; 1 Pet.4:10).
* We are what we are by the grace of God (1 Cor.15:10).
* We have abundance of grace (Rom.5:20).
* We receive grace heaped upon grace (John 1:16).
* We receive grace to help us in our times of need (Heb.4:16).
* Whatever we may go through, God gives us more grace (Jas.4:6).
* We can be strong through grace (2 Tim.2:1).
* God's grace will always be sufficient for us (2 Cor.12:9).
* The Christian life consists in discovering all the riches of God's grace (Eph.1:7).
* Throughout eternity we will magnify the grace of God (Eph.1:6).

If we go back to relating to God on the basis of law we will cancel grace from our lives and turn Christianity into just another works religion. This has always been a danger. Ever since New Testament times there have been attempts to mix works with grace to form a foundation of acceptance with God. But the new wine of God's grace cannot be contained in old legalistic wineskins. Like oil and water, law and grace do not mix. The following definition makes this very clear,

"If by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work" (Rom.11:6).

Grace is radical. It is all or nothing! It's also dangerous. Some might hide behind grace to justify their sin. They might use grace to excuse themselves from their responsibilities as a Christian. For this reason grace is controversial. In fact, many seek to play it safe. The only way they can handle grace is by watering it down, or qualifying it with conditional clauses. Here are just some of the restrictions placed around grace in an attempt to make it acceptable:

* "I believe in grace, but it has to be balanced." But if grace needs to be balanced what will we balance it with? We have just seen that the moment we add works to grace it ceases to be grace. Grace is the one message that cannot, by definition, be balanced.

* "I believe in grace, but not cheap grace." Remember that grace is what God has done for us in Christ. Using the word "grace" in acrostic format it is "God's Riches At Christ's Expense". There is nothing cheap about grace. Jesus paid the ultimate price upon the cross that we might know the blessings of God's favour. Grace might be free to us but it did not come cheap to God, or to His Son. "I believe in grace, but I also believe in holiness." This implies that grace is opposed to holiness. Nowhere does the New Testament teach that grace excuses sin. On the contrary, grace is the only thing that can get us out of sin (Tit.2:11&12; Rom.6:14).

* "I believe in grace, but I also believe that we have to do our part." This is true. But what is our part? It is to believe that Christ has done it all! It is to believe in the finished work of Christ (see Jn.6:29). He has fulfilled all the law. God's part is grace and our part is faith (Eph.2:8).

Jesus' death and resurrection are the sole basis of our acceptance with God and of every blessing we receive from Him. The Christian's power for living is found in God's grace alone. It is what connects us to the life of Christ. It is what qualifies us for every good thing from God. To look to our works as meritorious is to return to the realm of the flesh. The moment we begin to relate to God on the basis of our performance we cancel out the grace of God. This is what happened to the Galatians.

Galatianism

At the commencement of the Church Age the gospel was preached primarily by Jews to Jews. As the gospel began to move into Gentile territory questions arose regarding the relationship of Gentile Christians to the Jewish law. Paul preached the gospel of grace throughout Galatia and established several churches in that region. After he left, however, some Jewish teachers arrived in the churches there. They taught that in order to be saved these new Christians needed to come under the law, beginning with circumcision. Their message was a mixture of grace plus law.

When Paul heard about this, and learned that some of the Galatian believers were on the verge of embracing the 'Christ plus works' gospel, he was incensed. His epistle to the Galatians includes strong warnings to both those who preached this message and those who received it. First, to those who preach this kind of message he says:

* There is only one true gospel message. It is 'Christ alone'. The 'Christ plus works' message is a perversion of the true gospel. It is a different gospel (Gal.1:6&7).

* Every preacher must be tested on the basis of the message he proclaims. It is not the preacher who authenticates the message, but the message that authenticates the preacher. Even if the preacher is one of the apostles, or an angel from heaven, he is to be rejected if his message does not line up with the gospel of pure grace (Gal.1:8). Likewise, a teacher today is not to be received on the merits of the size of his church, or the fact that he has authored several books or that he has a large TV ministry. Every preacher must be tested by this touchstone: "Does he preach the gospel of grace?"

* Those who preach a mixture of grace and works are to be accursed. This is a very strong statement. Yet, to make sure that there is no misunderstanding Paul repeats this solemn warning (see Gal.1:8&9). We will look at what it means to be accursed, shortly. The New Testament cautions preachers to take great care over the content of their teaching

(e.g. 1 Cor.3:10&11; Jas.3:1).

Next, his warning to those who had embraced this false gospel was as follows:

* They have fallen from grace (Gal.5:4). This does not mean that they have lost their salvation, but that they have returned to the realm of the flesh. Contrary to what many believe a person does not fall from grace when they fall into sin. The only way we can fall from grace is by coming back under law. When we place ourselves under law then the grace of God ceases to work in our lives. It is not God working for us and in us any more, but us working for Him. The law always frustrates, or sets aside, the grace of God (Gal.2:21).

* They are exposed to the curse of the law. There is much non-biblical teaching today regarding the possibility of Christians being cursed. According to the New Testament, there is only one way a Christian can be under a curse and that is by coming back under law (Gal.3:10). When the law was given to Israel a curse was pronounced upon those who did not uphold all its commandments. To live under the law and stay free of its curse a person must keep it in its entirety (Gal.3:10&12).

Curse And Blessing

When Christ died upon the cross He bore the full curse of the law on our behalf. In exchange we have received the blessing that God promised would come upon Abraham and his seed.

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs upon a tree’), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal.3:13&14).

The Hebrew word for blessing is baruch, meaning to empower one to prosper. In Christ we have received divine ability in the place of fleshly inability. We have been made sufficient for all things. We are empowered

to prosper. The Hebrew word translated as curse is qalal. A curse is the opposite of a blessing. One who is cursed is disempowered and experiences continuous inadequacy.

The first time qalal is used in the Old Testament is in Gen.8:8. After the flood Noah sent forth a dove from the ark “to see if the waters had abated from the face of the ground.” Qalal means to abate, to decrease, to diminish, to lessen and to make little. This is the curse of the law. It is a covenant of fading glory. Those who attempt to prosper by their works and their law-keeping are disappointed. Their expectations are never fulfilled. They hope for much but achieve very little. The same curse of being diminished falls upon those who teach a works gospel.

Later in his epistle Paul illustrates the difference between the covenant of law and the covenant of grace by using an allegory from the life of Abraham (see Gal.4:21-31). God had promised him a son, but after many years Abraham and Sarah had no son. So they attempted to solve the problem of their barrenness independently of God. Their plan was that Abraham would have a son through their Egyptian handmaid, Hagar. The idea seemed good but ended up a disaster. In the end it was God’s promise that bore fruit, not their endeavours. It was through Isaac, not Ishmael, that the nation of Israel sprang forth, and eventually Jesus, the promised Messiah came.

Those who look to their works, i.e. what they are doing for God, have great confidence initially. Yet they fail to realize that they have returned to the sterile realm of the flesh. We may do many works in the flesh, but they do not produce enduring fruit.

Many of us have sought to prosper in the strength of our vows and promises to God. We have made commitments and re-commitments. We have set goals and made resolutions. We looked for much, yet it came to little. Why? Because without realizing it we had placed ourselves back under the law and began to experience its curse of diminishment. Our works were dead works. They did not originate from God and therefore they were not energized by Him.

In Christ we have been made free from the law and its curse of decrease. In exchange we are promised that the blessings of Abraham will come upon us. Abraham set out from his native land with very little. But he lived in the realm of God's promise. When he arrived in the promised land he quickly prospered so that he became "very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold" (Gen.13:2). He soon had so many flocks and herds that the land was not able to support him and his nephew Lot, together. They had to separate from one another (Gen.13:6). Furthermore, Abraham went from being a childless man to one whose natural and spiritual seed was like the sand on the seashore and the stars in the heavens for multitudes.

The blessing of increase continued all through Abraham's life and was to characterize the other patriarchs, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. In Christ we are heirs of the covenant of promise. The benefits of the promise covenant can only flow to its heirs by faith. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all learned that their scheming and independent working frustrated the covenant and brought them barrenness. Whenever they renounced their dead works and put their trust again in God they prospered.

"So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham" (Gal.3:9).

Ultimately, the promise God made to Abraham consisted of a son, a seed. Through his seed all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. We know that the Seed is specifically a reference to Christ.

"Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ" (Gal.3:16).

The main difference between Abraham and ourselves is that he believed God would give him a son, whereas we believe He has given us a Son. In both cases it was faith in the promised Son that proved to be the basis of righteousness and blessing. Abraham operated under the covenant of promise, which is future blessing. We are under the covenant of grace, which is the fulfillment of that promise. The Christian life is not an attempt to make things happen. It consists in believing that God has given us His

Son, and with Him He has given us all things.

What About Works?

Under the new covenant works do not commend us to God. They are the result of being connected to Him by grace. Works are not the root of our righteousness but the fruit of it. Paul says,

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph.2:8-10 – emphasis mine).

The problem is that in a subtle way this order has become reversed. Many appeal to their works as their confidence for the blessing of God in their lives. For example, it is not uncommon to hear comments such as:

* “If we pray we will have revival.” So we pray, but we don’t have revival. Why? Because God doesn’t do deals. Whilst prayer is the means by which we access the grace of God in our lives, it is not the payment for it. Unwittingly prayer has become meritorious for God’s blessings. Prayer is a great privilege in the life of a Christian whereby we can have fellowship with God. May we never turn it into a bargaining chip with Him.

* “If we fast we will see the power of God in our lives.” Again, fasting becomes little more than a hunger strike designed to force God to give in to us and grant us more power. It is quite remarkable that fasting is only mentioned once in all of the New Testament epistles. Even this single mention of fasting is not a command. It is an instruction to us to ensure that whenever we give ourselves to a season of fasting we are restored immediately afterwards to our full sexual responsibilities within marriage, lest Satan tempt us to sin (1 Cor.7:5).

The Christian’s power does not lie in fasting, or in any other works, but in the gospel of grace. Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes”

(Rom.1:16). Since fasting is referred to only once throughout the whole of the New Testament epistles, and grace is mentioned over one hundred times, why do we emphasize what God doesn't emphasize and fail to emphasize what He does? The answer is simple. Basically, we are works-oriented.

* "If we give, then God will give to us." It is true that we can never out-give God. Our motive for giving, however, should be the same as His. He gives because He loves, not in order to get (Jn.3:16). God has already given us all things freely in Christ (Rom.8:32; 2 Pet.1:3). God's grace, not our works, is His motivation for giving to us.

* "If we pay the price we can have a great ministry." Many pastors, who are now burned out, were sold that lie. They are now embittered against God, because they paid a high price but He never kept His side of the bargain. But God never made a bargain with us. He made a covenant with His Son that if He paid the price God would bless all those who are in Him. The price was paid in full. We now minister on the basis of the measure of grace that He gives to each one of us.

I was ministering on the grace of God in a church one day. A pastor who was present came up to me afterwards and said he agreed with everything I had shared. But he had a problem. He had taught his congregation about the grace of God and they started to slacken off in every area – in their praying, serving, giving, attending meetings, etc. My answer to him was this. Their actions, or lack of them, did not invalidate the message of grace. Rather, they laid bare the real condition of the hearts of the people.

When they heard that it is by God's grace, and not their works, that they have favour with God they ceased doing works. Thus, they revealed what was in their hearts all along. They never really wanted to do these things. They only did them because of what they thought they might gain by doing them. They were never a spontaneous overflow of the life of Christ within them. They were just dead works! Like the elder brother in the story of the Prodigal Son, they had been exposed by grace!

Changing Lanes

The story is told of a woman who contacted her husband on his mobile phone as he was driving home. “Darling”, she said, “You had better be careful. I have just heard that there is someone driving on the wrong side of the road.” “Someone!” he exclaimed. “There’s not just one person. There are hundreds of them!” Life’s hard when you are driving on the wrong side of the road. It’s even harder when you think you are on the correct side.

Are you operating under law? Do you need to switch lanes? Do you relate to God on the basis of doing deals and striking bargains? Do you see God as a vending machine? Do you put your deeds in the slot and wait for the purchased blessing. Prayer, works, giving, integrity, etc. are all a valid part of the Christian life. But when we turn them into merit points with God we have switched lanes. If this is true of you, don’t stop travelling. Just change lanes. Get into the lane marked “Grace”. Establish your heart in the grace of God (Heb.13:9).

STUDY 4 - GOD + WORKS? DID JAMES TEACH A DIFFERENT GOSPEL? - KEN LEGG

http://www.iamlegacy.net/1/post/2012/02/study-4-god-works-did-james-teach-a-different-gospel-ken-legg.html

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In the epistle of James we read: “You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only” (Jas:2:24). Understandably, many have been both confused and disturbed by these words because it appears that James is teaching a completely different way of salvation to Paul. The only way a person can be justified before God, according to Paul’s clear and consistent teaching, is through faith in Christ alone. For example: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law” (Rom.3:28), and, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified” (Gal.2:16).

Martin Luther, who’s teaching on ‘justification by faith in Christ alone’ spearheaded the Reformation, wanted to exclude the epistle of James from the Bible, calling it “an epistle of straw”. But we know that all Scripture is God-inspired, and whilst there may be some apparent contradictions, there are no real disagreements between the different parts of the Bible when understood correctly. So we must always seek to harmonize the Scriptures, not exclude those passages we cannot explain. How do we harmonize James and Paul?

James And Paul Agree On The Gospel

First, we know that James was not at variance with Paul on the matter of justification by faith, because both men were an integral part of the Council of Jerusalem when this teaching was under siege by Judaizers

who taught that it was necessary for Gentile Christians to be circumcised and keep the law in order to be saved (Acts 15:1&5). During this Council it was unanimously resolved once and for all that we are not saved through works of the law, but by grace, through faith in Christ alone (e.g. Acts 15:9-11).

Paul wrote both Romans and Galatians with the express purpose in mind of clarifying God's way of righteousness. Romans was written to explain the true nature of the gospel, in which the righteousness of God is revealed, i.e. we are justified by believing in Christ alone. Galatians was written to bring correction on this issue when false teachers were attempting to deceive new Christians into believing that it was also necessary for them to keep the law in order to stay right with God. The purpose of James' epistle was not to explain the way of justification at all. His concern was that believers show appropriate mercy and care towards their fellow Christians; and in doing so, he said, they would give evidence of the genuineness of their faith. In this way their works would justify, or authenticate, their profession of faith.

Those who teach we are not justified by faith alone, but also by our works, appeal to James' statement without understanding the background, context and indeed his purpose in writing this epistle. If you wanted to know more about Paul's letter to the Ephesians and you heard that I had a 12-part exposition on CD on the entire epistle; but you also heard that I happened to mention Ephesians in passing in a message about a totally unrelated topic, which would you obtain to get a better grasp of Ephesians? Well, of course you would be interested in the 12-part series which specifically expounds this epistle. Similarly, if we want to understand the subject of justification we would not seek to do so, on the basis of a few words mentioned by James in passing. We would turn to those epistles which were specifically written to teach the truth about the doctrine of justification. Never make the obscure cancel out the plain teaching of God's Word on any subject.

Paul's Teaches Justification By Faith Alone. James' Asks 'What Is Faith?'

James does not throw into question whether we are justified by faith. He agrees with Paul that it is the only way we can be saved. What he seeks to do is put to the test one's profession of faith. Is it really faith? For example, he asks, does the person who says to the cold and hungry, "go in peace, be fed and made warm" really believe that they will? On what grounds? Such a person is saying, "I really believe you will be OK." He believes empty stomachs can be automatically filled. He believes that naked bodies can be automatically clothed. This kind of faith is groundless; it is empty. If a person has this kind of faith towards their brothers and sisters, what kind of faith did they have when they professed to believe Christ? James asks, "Can such faith save him?" (James 2:14, NIV).

Furthermore, true faith is much more than giving mental assent to something. For example, even the devils believe that God is real. But are they saved? No, genuine faith leads a person to put their trust entirely in the finished work of the Christ on the cross for salvation. The devils don't do this.

Paul Is Concerned With Justification Before God. James Is Concerned With Justification Before Man

This leads us to another important point. Paul is concerned with justification before God. Throughout Paul's teaching in Romans and Galatians, God is the One who does the justifying. The whole matter of justification is between us and God. He sees those who put their trust in Christ and declares such to be righteous. James, however, is concerned with a person's profession of faith being justified (or verified) before man as it is evidenced by its outworking. He says, "Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works" (James 2:18).

It is only when we grasp this that James' reference to Abraham being justified by works can be understood. Abraham was justified a long time before he offered up Isaac to God; in fact, even before Isaac was born! (See Gen.15:6). But his obedience faltered many times, leaving us asking, "Did he really believe?" God knew all along that he was a true

believer, and justified him the moment he believed. But an onlooker would be left wondering. Decades passed from the time Abraham was declared righteous until the day he offered Isaac. Then, his faith was demonstrated for all to see. Our actions let others know that our faith is real. But before God, he was already justified. In Genesis 15 he was justified before God. In Genesis 22 he was justified before men.

Works are the effects of righteousness. But emphasizing the effects will never produce the effects. Emphasize the cause and the effects will follow. Emphasize grace and works will result. Grace will always produce good works. Works will never produce grace. That’s why grace preachers usually don’t preach a lot about works. Instead they tend to the roots, knowing that the fruits grow from the roots. Christ is the root of our righteousness and our sanctification.

STUDY 5 - LICENSE TO SIN? - KEN LEGG

http://www.iamlegacy.net/1/post/2012/04/study-5-license-to-sin-ken-legg.html

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Probably the most common objection people raise in connection with the teaching of grace is that it just gives people a license to sin. Even Paul was “slanderously reported” as teaching this (Romans 3:8). In Romans 5:20 he says that the law can never deal with sin. In fact, it causes sin to abound even more (see Rom.7:5&8). The strength of sin is the law, because not only does it place in our minds thoughts that were not previously there, the law also touches the point of our rebellion.

Sin will always ‘out-sin’ the law. But where sin abounds God’s grace abounds much more. You can never out-sin grace. Now that’s the sort of language legalists cannot handle. And they accused Paul of actually teaching: “Let’s sin more so that grace might abound!” Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said that if a preacher has never been accused of teaching that, or something similar to it, he has probably never preached the true gospel of grace. A faithful presentation of grace will always lead people to conclude that you are saying that sin is OK because grace has got it covered.

In fact, Paul taught the opposite. He said that grace is the only thing that can deliver us from the power of sin. Sin will not have dominion over us because we are not under law but under grace. That’s what he meant when he said that where sin abounds God’s grace abounds more.

But the question in the minds of many is, “But what if someone hears the message of grace and uses it as an excuse to continue in sin?” Before we look at Paul’s response to that in the second half of Romans 6, let me say two things. First, it is not only some who are under grace who choose to live in sin. There have been many examples of legalistic preachers who have secretly committed the very sins they preach against.

Secondly, just because someone chooses to abuse the message of grace by using it as an excuse to live in sin, this doesn't mean that we should stop preaching the gospel of grace. That's what the enemy wants, because grace is the only thing that can empower against sin!

Paul says that anyone who chooses to live in sin will experience three consequences:

- **Bondage (Rom.6:16).** Sin always takes us much further than we want to go. That's the deceptive power of sin. It makes you think you are getting what you want. In fact, you lose control the moment you give yourself over to its power. Jesus said, "Whoever commits sin is a slave to sin" (Jn.8:34). Whenever a person chooses to sin he is no longer in control of what will take place.

- **Shame (Rom.6:21a).** Probably most of us has done shameful things in our past, which nobody knows about because we have been too ashamed to speak of them. Thankfully God has forgiven and forgotten those things! One of the wonderful things about our salvation is that shame is replaced with glory. We have been saved in hope of the glory of God. Then why, like a dog returning to its vomit, would we want to go back to those shameful things God has delivered us from? The grace of God does not take us back to shame, but forward to glory.
- **Death (Rom.6:21b&23).** Sin and death are inseparable. Sin kills joy, peace, dreams, relationships, ministries, etc. Let's be clear, it is not that God brings judgment upon sin for the believer because their sin has already been judged. But, the law of sowing and reaping reminds us that there are always consequences for sin.
  In contrast to sin's fruit of slavery, shame and death the blessings of righteousness are freedom, glory and life. The Christian's freedom does not mean that we are free to do what we want to do. That's the bondage we are saved from! Real freedom does not exist outside of being one with Christ. It is like flying a kite. The kite's freedom to fly is related to the string to which it is tied. The very thing that holds the kite to its owner is what keeps it in the sky. If the string is cut the kite will crash to earth. The string, which seems to bind it, gives it the ability to fly. Our freedom is being held tightly in the grip of God's

grace. We, who once were slaves to sin, by God’s grace are now slaves of righteousness. That’s the outworking of our true identity; and that’s true freedom!

STUDY 6 - HOW TO WALK WORTHY WITHOUT BECOMING RELIGIOUS - KEN LEGG

http://www.iamlegacy.net/1/post/2012/07/study-6-how-to-walk-worthy-without-becoming-religious-ken-legg.html

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It is no secret that Jesus was an enemy of religion. Some say that the word 'religion' comes from the Latin word *religare*, which means "to tie, or to bind." Concerning the religious leaders of His time, Jesus said: *"…they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers"* (Matt.23:4).

He was referring to how the leaders restricted people's lives through a superabundance of rules and regulations. The Law had 613 commandments, but the scribes and elders decided that was not enough and added thousands more! That's what religion does – it lays heavy burdens upon unsuspecting people who are led to believe that these man-made commandments are actually God-given. In contrast, Jesus said that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. He never came to bring people into bondage through the imposition of laws, but to set them free by means of the truth.

New Testament Instruction

And yet, the New Testament epistles abound with exhortations relating to how we, as God's people, should live. So what's the difference? If we fail to answer this question correctly we will either end up using the New Testament in a legalistic way, or we will simply disregard all the instructions from the epistles and the truth will not impact our living.

Legalism or morality teaches us how to behave. In contrast, authentic Christianity helps us to *"learn Christ"* (see Eph.4:20). What does that mean to "learn Christ"? Here are three important distinctions between legalism, or morality, and New Testament instruction.

1) Morality tells people what to do, or not do, without any reference to Christ. It is a list of rules that can be used as a general moral checklist, even outside the context of the Church. We can give the same rules to the world – and in fact, sadly, much of Christianity today attempts to moralize society in this way. In contrast, the apostles always first taught Christians who they were in Christ and then exhorted them to be those people, i.e. to live in the power of their new creation identity. First they taught the believer's position in Christ; and then they exhorted their hearers to embrace the 'walk' that corresponds with that position.

I often use a pair of scissors to illustrate this point. If you attempt to cut a piece of paper with a single blade of the scissors you are going to find it difficult. Scissors are effective only as both blades close against each other to produce a cutting result. Likewise, Paul's epistles, such as Romans, Ephesians and Colossians are made up of two parts. The first part is doctrinal, in which Paul tells us who we are in Christ. In the second half he goes on to exhort us to let there be an outworking of what God has worked in us (Phil.2:12-13).

No one who preaches or teaches from the Word of God has the right to exhort God's people to behave in a certain way without first telling them who they are in Christ. Otherwise they will just bring their hearers under the power of legalism and condemnation. On the other hand, if we think it is sufficient to only focus on the doctrinal truths of our new creation identity, without teaching the walk that corresponds with the new life, we will be equally deceived.

2) Morality makes demands upon us to *produce* something. We are expected to *manufacture* certain behavioural works. In contrast, in Christ we are *given* something. We have been given a life; His life! He that has the Son has the life. So, for example, instead of trying to produce patience, purity, love, generosity, etc., by faith I put on the new man which is the very life of Christ Himself (Eph.4:24; Rom.13:14).

3) Morality is an attempt to clean up bad habits. But the Christian life is different to this. The old behavioural patterns are replaced, not by

focusing upon them but by embracing the new. When Spring arrives we don’t go into the garden and pluck off all the old leaves from the trees. Why? Because the new leaves automatically push the old ones from the branches. Likewise, as we put on the Lord Jesus Christ we make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its desires. By yielding the members of our bodies as instruments of righteousness unto holiness, we inevitably make them unavailable to serve sin. Walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh!

STUDY 7 - ONCE A SON, ALWAYS A SON - KEN LEGG

http://www.iamlegacy.net/1/post/2012/09/study-7-once-a-son-always-a-son-ken-legg.html

www.small-groups-ministry.com

I am often asked the question. “Do you believe ‘once saved, always saved’?” My reply is, “I prefer to say, ‘once a son, always a son.’” Christians are born again, and it’s impossible to be unborn. At times I may be a bad son or a rebellious son, but I am still a son.

When we were saved the Father gave us to the Son for safe-keeping. Jesus promises, *“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out”* (Jn.6:37). The term, ‘by no means,’ in the Greek language is a strong expression. It is a double negative. Jesus is saying, “Whoever comes to me I will never, no never, cast out.”

Jesus is not only our Saviour, but also our Great High Priest. He makes intercession for us at God’s right hand (see Rom.8:34). We see the high priestly ministry of Jesus in operation in the life of Peter. Just before Peter denied the Lord, Jesus said to him, *“Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail”* (Luke 22:31&32). Peter failed, but Jesus his High Priest prevailed!

All the disciples were likewise given to Jesus by the Father, and He kept each one of them. At the end of His ministry on earth He prayed, *“While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition...”* (Jn.17:12). The son of perdition was Judas. It is clear from the New Testament that Judas was never a true believer. All the other disciples were believers and were kept safe and secure by Jesus’ high priestly ministry.

Jesus made this promise concerning those who are His sheep: *"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one"* (Jn.10:28-29). We are in Christ's hand and Christ's hand is wrapped around by the Father's hand.

Double Wrapped

When I became a Christian, at the age of 13, the pastor who led me to Christ placed a coin in his hand and said, "This is your life." And then he closed his fist tightly around it. Next, he wrapped his other hand around that one and quoted Colossians 3:3: *"…your life is hidden with Christ in God"*. He said, "You are double-wrapped. No one can take you away from God!"

I once heard a story that dates back to the days of slavery in the United States. A black slave woman who was a believer was sharing with her mistress the confidence she had that she was eternally secure, based on these verses. She said, "I am in Christ's hand, and His hand is in the Father's hand. No one can take me out of Christ's hand now." Her mistress was also a Christian, but did not believe in eternal security. She said to her, "But you can wriggle out of His hand, if you choose to do so." "Oh, but Madam, you don't understand," she replied, "I am not just in His hand, I am the little finger of His hand. How can I slip out of His hand when I am a part of His hand?

When we were saved we were joined to Christ so as to become actual members, or parts, of His body. If we perished this would mean a member of Christ's body would be maimed. Can you imagine the body of Christ in heaven being dismembered, being short of a nose, missing an ear, etc.? The idea is ridiculous.

Dear friend, as a believer you are eternally secure because the Father has given you to the Son for safekeeping. You are safe in His hand!

STUDY 8 - THINK ORGANICALLY, NOT PRAGMATICALLY - KEN LEGG

http://www.iamlegacy.net/1/post/2012/11/study-8-think-organically-not-pragmatically-ken-legg.html

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Last year I spoke at a pastor's conference and my theme was "Think Organically, Not Pragmatically." The Church is a living organism. It is not something that was brought into being by the planning and strategy of man. Neither does it grow by carnal ambition or program-driven activity. Jesus said, *"The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how"* (Mark 4:26-27 – emphasis mine).

Whilst God uses us to sow and water the seed of the Word, yet it is He who gives the increase. Only God can impart spiritual life. Jesus said the wind blows where it chooses. We hear its sound, we know which direction it is blowing from, but we cannot determine when and how it will blow. So it is with those who are born again. It is the work of the Spirit. And spiritual growth is not something that can be manufactured or manipulated. People do not grow because we tell them to or because we get them hyped into a frenzy. They grow because they have life. There's nothing more natural than growth. Growth is only an expansion of the life we already possess. Just like plant life, people grow when they are placed in the right environment. Peter says we are to, *"Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (2 Pet.3:18). A Christian may be stunted in their growth for years. But place them in an environment of grace where Jesus is constantly being unveiled through the Word, and then watch them grow! We can easily forget that the Church is a living organism and when we do we tend to operate pragmatically. We think we have to do things to make the Church grow. When this happens, in a subtle way, the living organism becomes an institutional organisation. **A Living Organism, Or An Institutional Organisation?** What's the difference between the Church as an

organism and the Church as an organisation? Here are some distinctions:

1. As an organisation the Church is an institution governed by the appointed board. As an organism the Church is the Body of Christ directed by Jesus the living Head.
2. As an organisation the system determines the way we will function. As an organism our spiritual gifts determine the way we will function.
3. In the Church as an organisation, growth may be measured in terms of numerical increase and facility expansion. In the Church as an organism, growth is measured by conformity to the image of Christ.
4. The power of the Church as an organisation is in the rules of the system. The power of the Church as an organism is the life of the Spirit.
5. In an organisation the leadership control the people. In an organism the leadership empower the people.
6. The Church as an organisation encourages co-dependency. The Church as an organism encourages Christ-dependency.
7. The Church as an organisation emphasizes the event. The bigger, the better. The Church as an organism emphasizes the journey.
8. In the Church as an organisation the leader is the anointed superstar. In the Church as an organism, there are no superstars, but everyone is anointed.
9. The people are responsible for building the Church as an organisation. Christ builds the Church as an organism.
10. In the Church as an organisation, success is measured by results. In the Church as an organism, success is measured by obedience.

I am certainly not suggesting that every local church is like the organisation model, or that your church is; but I am sure that this is what Jesus encountered at the self-made church in Laodicea. He said to them, *"...you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked"* (Rev.3:17). This church had everything – except Jesus. He was on the outside, knocking at the door! The Head was detached from the body! Someone once said that if the Holy Spirit was taken from the

Church, 80% of it would carry on as normal. When we were first saved it was all about Jesus. If you have made it all about the organisation, and you are weary of empty, hollow activity, He is standing at the door of your heart today. He wants to come in and make it all about a relationship with Him. The door handle is on our side. Your call.

STUDY 9 - UNVEILED FACES

http://www.iamlegacy.net/1/post/2012/11/study-9-unveiled-faces.html

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"...we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor.3:18).

At one of my ***Radical Grace*** seminars I was teaching on what it means to live in the glory of the new covenant and someone asked me, “What about the Old Testament? Should we not read the Old Testament anymore?” That’s a good question. First, let’s be clear that we are living in the era of the new covenant. The old covenant has passed away and has become obsolete. Sadly, some Christians are still trying to relate to God on the basis of a covenant which no longer exists. And others attempt to mix covenants, or have one foot in each. If we place ourselves under the old covenant we will experience an ongoing struggle in our Christian lives.

Under the old covenant, God gave a law and promised to bless Israel as long as they obeyed its commandments. It was a conditional covenant, and because of this it became a broken covenant. It is now null and void.

The new covenant was made between the Father and the Son. Jesus has fulfilled it in its entirety and, because we are in Christ, we are now reaping the blessings of His obedience. That’s grace.

Our response to grace is faith. We believe in His finished work and are qualified for every good thing. This is how God wants us to live.

The Surpassing Glory Of The New Covenant

The old covenant had a glory, and this is seen when Moses received the law. His face shone so brightly that he had to wear a veil to cover his

face.

This represents the glory of the old covenant. Its glory is that it brought to us the knowledge of God's holiness and our sin. Through the law people would be conscious of their need of a Saviour.

The new covenant has a glory that surpasses that of the old covenant, and brings a fuller revelation of God's character. *"The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"* (Jn.1:17).

If Moses' face shone so brightly that people could not look upon it, and yet the covenant he brought ministered condemnation, how much more glorious will the new covenant that brings righteousness be? If there was glory in that which brought death, how much more glory is there in that which ministers righteousness and life?

What About The Old Testament?

But that brings us back to the question of the place that the Old Testament occupies in the life of a Christian.

First, we need to understand that the Old Testament is the only Bible that the early Christians had. And yet they taught Christ from those Scriptures. Read the sermons that were preached in the book of Acts, especially to the Jews. You will discover that they all quote the Old Testament, and they were all about Jesus. That's the key.

The Pharisees knew the Old Testament better than anyone. The problem is that they knew what it *said*, but not what it meant. Jesus said to them, *"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life"* (John 5:39-40). All their Bible knowledge never brought them to Jesus. They rejected Him and ended up crucifying Him.

The Veil Is Taken Away In Christ

In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul contrasts the two covenants and points out that a veil was over the minds of the Jews, and still is, each time they read the Old Testament. The veil is only taken away when one sees that Christ is the central message of the Scriptures.

This is what Paul said: *"But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless, when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away"* (2 Cor.3:14-16 – emphasis mine).

This applies to the New Testament also. If we fail to see that Christ is the main theme there will be a veil over our minds.

Do you know someone who tends to be legalistic? Most likely they are reading the Bible with a veil over their eyes. Their minds are blinded to the true meaning of God's Word. But whenever one turns to the Lord, i.e. sees that God's message is the finished work of Jesus, the veil is taken away.

Living under the old covenant is like driving in the dark with our car lights on. We are seeing dimly by means of artificial light. But life under the new covenant is like driving during the daytime; we don't need our car lights anymore because we see all things clearly in the light of the sun.

Dear friend, don't stop reading the Old Testament. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus to you as you read it. It's all about Him.

The glory that was upon Moses became dimmer and dimmer until it vanished completely. That's the glory of the old covenant; it's a fading glory. But God promises the opposite for you and me under the new covenant. *"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord"* (2 Cor.3:18).

(This article is an excerpt from Ken's new book ***Grace Roots***)

STUDY 10 - LOOK INTO THE MIRROR

http://www.iamlegacy.net/1/post/2013/03/study-10-look-into-the-mirror.html

Author: Ken Legg - www.small-groups-ministry.com

1 John 3:9 reads, *"Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God"*. This verse troubled me for some time. If John had said those who are born of God *should not* sin, that would have been challenging enough. But he states emphatically that a born again person *does not*sin, and in fact *cannot* sin.

How do you respond to that? If preachers were aiming for a large number of re-dedications in a meeting this would be a great verse to use! It's just one small step to conclude, "Real Christians don't sin. Therefore, if you do, you're probably not a real Christian. So come and re-commit your life to the Lord."

But, how many times can you re-dedicate your life to Christ? Can you be born again and again and again...? Some people's theology would have us think that we can be in and out of the kingdom of God like a fiddler's elbow!

We are one spirit with Christ

John, in fact, is referring to the supernatural work that takes place in our spirit when we are born again. We are joined with Christ and become a partaker of His divine nature. We are one spirit with Him (1 Cor.6:17). Thus, we have been perfected forever and our spirit is incapable of sin, (Heb.10:14; 12:23). We can no more sin than Christ can, for we are one with Him.

Do Christians still sin? Of course we do. John acknowledges this in other parts of his epistle, (e.g. 1 Jn.2:1). But when Paul speaks of his own

experience of sin he is clear that it is something that is taking place in that unredeemed part of him, i.e. his body. He says, *"Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me"* (Rom.7:20).

Like John, Paul is aware that his new nature does not sin. As a new creation he is in complete harmony with God's own nature. But, at the same time the relics of sin which remain in his body make their appeal to the flesh. And it is in the area of the flesh, not the spirit that we sin. Paul goes on to explain, *"I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members"* (Rom.7:21-23).

Stop looking in the wrong place

The problem is that when we sin we tend to look to our behaviour to determine our identity. When we do this we are looking in the wrong place. If you think there is something wrong with your appearance - e.g. your hair is in a mess or you have some dirt on your face - where do you go to resolve the issue? You look in the mirror, of course. You trust the mirror because it accurately reflects what is true about your appearance.

In a similar way, we will only know the truth about ourselves when we look into the mirror of God's Word. The Bible reveals the truth concerning our new creation identity. We will never know who we are in our spirit if we look anywhere else. We will become confused.

James speaks about the man who looks into the mirror of God's Word, but then immediately forgets what he looks like. This is like so many Christians, who forget what the Bible says about them and, instead, look to their behaviour or listen to wrong teaching to try to understand themselves.

Our behaviour does not determine our identity. A Christian who sins is not a sinner. He is a saint who sometimes sins; but still a saint even when he

does sin. I have a saying: “It’s not what you do that determines who you are, but knowing who you are will determine what you will do.”

Look into the mirror and be transformed into the image you see

Don’t fall into the trap of looking to your behaviour to find the truth about yourself. Look into the mirror of God’s Word. And, as with unveiled face you behold there the glory of who you are in Christ, you will be transformed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor.3:18). What is true of you in your spirit will eventually manifest itself in your behaviour. That’s God way of change.

STUDY 11 - Was The Cross A Form Of Divine Child Abuse?

http://www.iamlegacy.net/1/post/2013/04/study-11-was-the-cross-of-jesus-a-form-of-divine-child-abuse.html

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A recent visiting speaker on the Gold Coast challenged our understanding of the work of Jesus on the Cross. He took issue with what is commonly called the doctrine of 'penal substitution'. Without getting too theological, the best way to understand this term is to break it down like this: The death of Jesus was 'penal' because He paid the *penalty* for sins which the justice of God demanded; it was a 'substitution' because He died not for His own sins, but for ours.

This is what the apostles taught, as well as the Church Fathers, the Reformers and great gospel preachers such as John Wesley, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, Billy Graham, etc. It is also the theme of many of the precious hymns which have stood the test of time. And this message has brought peace and comfort to untold millions down through the ages.

But it has also had its critics within the Church. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), who is generally regarded as the father of modern liberalism, and who denied the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, objected to the idea that salvation is deliverance from divine wrath. Those who take a similar hostile view to penal substitution have likewise tended to be those who do not believe in the authority of the Scriptures.

However, surprisingly, in recent times opponents of this teaching have also come from amongst Bible-believing, evangelical Christians. They argue that it is inconsistent with the Bible's portrayal of a loving God. This is a primitive, tribal concept of God, they say, depicting Him as angry and vindictive. And in their attempts to discredit penal substitution

some have even denounced it as a form of ‘cosmic child abuse’.

These critics contend that the death of Christ had no God-ward benefit. Sin, they say, is not an offence against the holiness of God demanding a death penalty. In fact, it does nothing to God, only to us. The drunkard ruins his life and health, the lazy person who will not work ends up in poverty, etc. One preacher put it this way, “If I spend all my life eating at McDonalds I am going to end up being sick.” Sin brings its own punishment. The wages of sin is no more than the law of reaping and sowing. That’s what Jesus died to remedy. Sin has got us into a mess; but His death absorbed all of that so that we could be set free.

First, it needs to be said that we never have to choose between whether the purpose of the death of Christ was God-ward or man-ward. The Bible clearly teaches that it was both. But it is vital to understand that Christ first died to meet the demands of the Law in respect of sin so that God could legally and righteously reconcile us to Himself. Then, the curse is removed and the redeemed are made recipients of the innumerable blessings of the gospel, described as “the riches of His grace”.

Understanding The Cross From The Backdrop Of The Old Testament

In order to understand what the death of Christ is really all about it is important that we do not approach it from the basis of human reason, but from the background God gave us to prepare our understanding of it, namely the Old Testament. As we do so the following points become evident:

*Sin must be understood as opposition to God’s will as expressed in His law (Gen.3:1-6; Rom.4:15; 1 Jn.3:4).

*The law is far more than a list of commandments given by God arbitrarily. Every law is a transcript of His nature. It shows us what God is like. So, violation of the law is an assault upon the Lawgiver. As someone has said, it is an attempt to “ungod God”.

*God hates sin with His whole being and has to respond to it in judgment. God's judgment upon sin is death. (Gen.2:17; Rom.6:23). This is primarily separation from God. *"…your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear"* (Isa.59:2).

So, the judgment of God against sin is not just consequential, i.e. the reaping of a bad harvest; it is punitive also. This is clearly seen in many instances. For example, in the case of the Flood (Gen.6:7), the judgment of Sodom (Gen.18:20&21), etc. In Rom.1:18,19&32 we read,"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them… who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them."*

*Here are just a few more examples of where God is seen directly responding to sin with judgment:

"Because he has despised the word of the LORD, and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt shall be upon him" (Num.15:31).

"So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the LORD, because he did not keep the word of the LORD…" (1 Chron.10:13).

"Upon the wicked He will rain coals; Fire and brimstone and a burning wind shall be the portion of their cup" (Psa.11:6).

"For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; It is fully mixed, and He pours it out; surely its dregs shall all the wicked of the earth drain and drink down" (Psa.75:8).

Notice in the last two references that the wrath of God is referred to as

His “cup”. This is important because Jesus spoke of His death as drinking the cup that the Father had given Him (Matt.20:22-23; Lk.22:42).

*Punishment of sin vindicates the righteousness of God. God by no means clears the guilty (Ex.34:7):

“Righteous are You, O LORD, and upright are Your judgments”(Psa.119:137).

“For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You. The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity” (Psa.5:4-5).

“God is jealous, and the LORD avenges; the LORD avenges and is furious. The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies” (Nah.1:2).

*When sin entered Eden and Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves with fig leaves, God removed these and covered them with the skins of a slain animal. This was the beginning of revelation that *“without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins”* (Heb.9:22). The wages of sin is death, i.e. sin demands the forfeiture of life and, “the life is in the blood”. But God accepts a substitute.

*The account of Cain and Abel re-enforced the lesson that the only way for a sinner to stand before God is through the shed blood. God accepted Abel on the basis of his offering, but rejected the bloodless religion of Cain (“the way of Cain”).

*In Egypt, as God’s judgment passed over the land, the nation of Israel was spared because of the blood of the Passover Lamb which was applied to their homes.

*Of the five Levitical sacrifices which became the basis of Israel’s approach to God, four were blood sacrifices. The only exception was the grain offering and this had to be offered with one of the four blood

sacrifices. It could not be offered alone. So the shedding of blood was basic to all, including the grain offering. Three of the four blood sacrifices demonstrated their man-ward benefits: the peace offering portrayed the offerer in fellowship with God; the sin offering showed that there was provision for forgiveness for every sin; and the trespass offering made restitution for the consequences of man's sins. But the first sacrifice, the burnt offering, was God-ward. The Hebrew word translated as 'burnt' is *holah*, meaning 'to ascend'. It is from this word that we get 'holocaust'. It was totally consumed upon the altar. Neither priest nor offerer ate any part of this offering. It ascended as a sweet-smelling aroma to God, as a picture of the Lamb of God who would totally satisfy the demands of a holy God against sin in the offering up of His spotless life, which was a ransom payment for our sins (Mark 10:45).

*The Levitical sacrificial system dealt with the day-to-day sins of God's people, but there were sins of ignorance that were not covered in this way. These accrued throughout the year and were cancelled on the Day of Atonement. There were two goats used for this purpose. One was slain and its blood sprinkled before God; the high priest laid his hands on the other goat and transferred the guilt of the nation upon it, and then sent it away outside the camp of Israel. God and Israel could then remain in fellowship for another year.

The Cross Fulfills The Righteousness Of God

This is just a sample of what was integral to the relationship between God and Israel. The sacrifices, the priesthood, the tabernacle with its veil separating God from a sinful people, all proclaimed loud and clear the inescapable truth that sin separates man from God and must be covered by sacrificial blood. That's what the word 'atone' means – "to cover". It is an Old Covenant term. Under the old economy sin could never be taken away because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to <u>take away</u> sins (Heb.10:4). But when Jesus came, John the Baptist proclaimed, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who <u>takes away</u> the sin of the world!"* (Jn.1:29).

Jesus drank the bitter dregs of the cup of the Father's wrath. As our

burnt offering He totally exhausted the wrath of God against sin, exclaiming as He died, “It is finished!” The sin issue has been dealt with totally and completely, and in a way that upholds the holiness of God.

Is it conceivable that God would allow the terrible suffering of His Beloved on the Cross if it was not a necessary payment for sin? Jesus Himself asked the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane that if it were possible for the cup to pass Him by that this would be so. But there was no other way for mankind to be redeemed and, at the same time, divine justice to be fulfilled. *“...if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law”*(Gal.3:21).

The Exceeding Sinfulness Of Sin

The Bible consistently teaches the offensive nature of sin towards God. Ralph Venning described it as “high treason against the majesty of God.” Those who trivialise it by saying that He is not affected by it have conjured up a God of their own imagination. Just before the Flood, when the wickedness that was upon the earth was so great that God determined to destroy the earth with a flood, we read: *"And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and <u>He was grieved in His heart</u>"* (Gen.6:6).

The "exceedingly sinfulness of sin" (Rom.7:13) is so awful that the penal substitution of Jesus is its only remedy. *“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all”* (Isa.53:5&6).

No Condemnation Now For Those In Christ

Forgiveness of sin through the death of Christ is so thorough that it results in a complete restoration between those in Christ, and God. He will remember our sins against us no more. When we fall into sin we do not need to do anything new to be forgiven; nor does God. If you are a believer there is nothing between you and God, nor ever will be. There is

no condemnation, i.e. expectation of judgment. You are a son of God and an object of His immeasurable grace and favour. You are righteous and blessed with every spiritual blessing.

If the death of Jesus Christ was not a judgment for our sins, then there is no judgment awaiting those who are still unrepentant. But the Bible teaches that if we do not believe in Christ we will die in our sin and bear its judgment (see Jn.8:24). *"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him"* (Jn.3:36)

There is no conflict here between God's justice and His love. God is love, and love cannot rejoice in iniquity. Because God's love is holy, sin cannot abide in His presence. And therein lies our eternal guarantee that sin will never wreck heaven, as it did earth. *"There shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie..."* (Rev.21:27).

Penal substitution is not the only way of understanding what happened at the Cross. There are many other aspects of our salvation expounded throughout the New Testament. But, as someone has aptly stated, this is the linchpin. Take this away and everything else we try to say about the Cross will fall apart.

We don't need to understand it. Trying to understand the ways of God is what got Adam and Eve and the entire human race into trouble. We just need to believe it. The heart of penal substitution is this: I owed a debt I could not pay; and He paid a debt He did not owe (2 Cor.5:21). This is the amazing grace of the gospel!

STUDY 12 - GRACE, THE POWER TO REIGN

http://www.iamlegacy.net/1/archives/06-2013/1.html

Author: Ken Legg - www.small-groups-ministry.comThe main enemy of the gospel is not atheism, but religion. If you need to be convinced of this, just read the gospels and the book of Acts. The…
Author: Ken Legg - www.small-groups-ministry.com

The main enemy of the gospel is not atheism, but religion. If you need to be convinced of this, just read the gospels and the book of Acts. The people who opposed Jesus and Paul the most were those who knew their Bibles better than anyone else. Yet, they failed to understand the truth about God, and substituted a life of faith and love with the tyranny of religion. This resulted in placing heavy burdens upon themselves and others.

It is no wonder, then, that the purpose of the first church council meeting was to deal with the threat of religion. At the Jerusalem Council it was unanimously resolved that our salvation is by faith in Christ alone.

Yet, the questions dealt with then are still being raised today. “Is salvation a gift given to us, or a burden placed upon us?” “Do we need Moses to complete what Jesus began?” “Are we saved by a mixture of faith and works?”

God’s answer to these questions is just one beautiful word – grace! Grace means the focus is no longer on us, but on Jesus. Through faith in Christ we have been baptized into Him and are now one with Him. We are complete in Him. There are no more tests to pass and no more conditions to fulfil. God has perfected us forever in His dear Son. As He is, so are we.

Grace Is God's Answer To Sin

It is through grace that God triumphed over sin. *“Where sin abounded,*

grace abounded much more" (Rom.5:20).

Grace not only deals with the *penalty* of sin, but also its *power*. It is crazy to think that God would forgive us our sins, but still leave us under sin's control.

Amazingly, the most common misconception about grace is that it is a license to sin. It is argued that only those who want to indulge in a life of sin talk about grace.

Paul taught the opposite. *"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace"* (Rom.6:14). Grace is God's empowerment against sin. *"Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"*(Rom.5:20-21).

Grace, The Power To Reign

God's grace goes even further than enabling us to reign over sin. We are also equipped to reign in life. In the very first sentence God spoke to man, He included these words: *"Have dominion!"* (Gen.1:28). Mankind was handed a birthright to reign on planet Earth. At the Fall that privilege was stolen from us.

But grace restores our inheritance to us! *"For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ"* (Rom.5:17).

Reigning is a choice. It is a moment by moment decision. There are only two options. We will either reign, or be reigned over. Some Christians reign over sin and their circumstances, while others seem to be constantly overcome by them.

But let's be clear about this; if a believer is living in defeat, grace is not the culprit. Either this person is trying to live the Christian life by religious

methods instead of by faith in Jesus Christ, or they are simply choosing death over life.

Maybe you are struggling right now. Don’t make the mistake of trying to ‘get the victory’. Christ has already won the victory. It is finished! Now God offers to you abundance of grace and says: “Choose life!” Grace is your power to reign!

STUDY 13 - GRACE: MORE POWERFUL THAN ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOUR - KEN LEGG

http://www.iamlegacy.net/1/post/2013/10/study-13-grace-more-powerful-than-addictive-behaviour-ken-legg.html

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Often, people believe that sin is the pathway to pleasure; otherwise they wouldn't do it. People become addicted to anything that gives temporary pleasure as a means of distraction from the emotional pain they are going through.

The brain works in such a way that when we do something we enjoy it releases endorphins as a reward. This encourages us to repeat the behaviour each time we need relief from emotional pain. It serves as a coping mechanism.

Once a person has learned they can manipulate their emotions by running to the refuge of their habit/drug the basis for addictive behaviour has been set. Of course the relief never lasts, necessitating a return to the same sinful practice and, eventually, bondage to it.

I always smile when I hear that well-worn cliché, "Grace is just a license to sin." Paul teaches the opposite. Grace is the only power that can deal with habitual sinful behaviour. He assures us that sin will no longer have dominion over us because we are not under law but undergrace (see Rom.6:14).

Dealing with sinful habits and addictive behaviour is different for a believer than it is for a non-believer. A believer is now free not to sin.

Why do Christians choose sin?

So why would a Christian still choose to live in sin? This is a very

important question. In Romans 6, Paul asks, *“Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?”* (Rom.6:16).

The reason he asks this question is not so much because we might not*know* that sin leads to death, but that we might not *believe* it. We often need convincing that sin really is the source of our pain and grief.

Now if we believe that sin is what would make us happy, and God appeals to us not to yield the members of our bodies to sin but to yield them to righteousness, then in our heart we would conclude that God is the source of our unhappiness! He is withholding good from us.

Does that sound familiar? It was the logic behind the temptation in the Garden of Eden. From the beginning of time Satan has deceived people into believing that what God has forbidden is the very thing they need for happiness and fulfilment in life. This makes God the source of our unhappiness. Many Christians would never admit this openly, but it’s what they believe it in their heart.

Having set before us life and death, God gives us the freedom to choose for ourselves. Why does He do this knowing that we may choose sin and death? If we do not believe Him when He tells us that sin leads to pain and unhappiness, then He allows us to learn it by tasting the fruit of the choices we make. He says, “You choose; and you live with the consequences.”

Similarly, Paul counsels us to reflect upon the fruit of our behaviour when we were under the dominion of sin. He asks, *“What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death”* (Rom.6:21). We need to be honest with ourselves. What good fruit ever resulted from going down the road of sin, either before we were saved or after?

Contrast this with the fruit of making our bodies available to God: *“But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God,*

you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life"(Rom.6:22).

Being free indeed

Jesus said, *"If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed"*(Jn.8:36). Real freedom consists not merely of breaking free from habitual sinful behaviour, but of *wanting* to do so and having no desire to go back there. People don't genuinely repent because they are told to. They change their behaviour when they change their minds about sin. That's what the word 'repent' means.

Sometimes it is only after a long, painful process that we come to truly believe - in our heart as well as in our mind - that sin is our enemy and God is our Friend; sin is the cause of our pain and God is the fountain of all true, lasting pleasure.

Maybe you are puzzled by Paul's terminology. He said that we are either a *slave* to sin or to righteousness. It seems strange to speak of our freedom in terms of slavery.

In my book ***This Is The Life*** I wrote, "A slave is in the total grip of the master whom he serves. Whenever a person chooses to sin he is no longer in control of what will take place. That's the deceptive power of sin. It makes you think you are getting what you want. In fact, you lose control the moment you give yourself over to its power. Sin always takes us much further than we want to go." Adam had no idea that committing that one sin would result in him and the planet coming under Satan's control.

If sin is so powerful, how much greater is grace! When we are in the grip of grace God will take us much further than we ever imagined possible! Is there a limit to what God has in store for those who yield their bodies to do His will? *"…as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.' But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit"* (1 Cor.2:9&10).

(This article is an excerpt from Ken's new book, ***Grace: The Power To Reign***, which is due to be released at the end of this year)