

## GRACE UNPOPULAR



By Grant Hawley

### INTRODUCTION

“ **He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. - Isaiah 53:2-3**

Anti-grace messages seem to rule the narrative out there about Christianity, and true grace often goes unnoticed or is condemned by the two main contrasting anti-grace messages that are out there. Like our Savior, His message is despised and rejected by men.

### TWO KINDS OF ANTI-GRACE MESSAGES

There are two very popular kinds of anti-grace messages, those which heap up condemnation, and those which peddle vindication.

The messengers of condemnation make salvation out to be by works. They ignore grace completely or they give verbal assent to grace while they go on to deny it with everything else they say and do. Paul says, "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace" (Rom 11:6a). It is by grace or it is by works; it can't be both. Works salvation messages have been popular for millennia, but lately the so-called "radical" teachers have discovered the marketability of taking it to the extreme. Sadly, millions of people, especially young people, have had the fear of death (Heb 2:14-15) reinstated in them through these messages.

The other anti-grace message doesn't seem so anti-grace on the surface. It says, "Hey man, it's all good. There's nothing wrong with what you did there. You're a good person." This message eases peoples' consciences by covering up sin with the fig leaves of postmodernism. This message is commonly taught by both Christians and non-Christians. But this isn't grace. Grace calls a spade a spade. Grace sees sin for the awful thing it is and counts it nailed to the cross, washed away by the blood of the Lamb.

The common denominator in both of these anti-grace messages is pride. The condemnation message gives people a tough goal to reach for, one which if they can attain to it, will prove that they are better than others. The self-vindication message just photoshops the flaws out of the picture so we all look great on the cover of our own magazine. But it's just a delusion. It doesn't change who we are in reality.

Both of these systems leave people in a fragile state, not really freed from the guilt and shame that sin brings. When Jesus pointed out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, they plotted to destroy him and attributed His miracles to Beelzebub (Matt 12:1-24). He must have hit a nerve. When Adam and Eve covered up their shame with fig leaves, they still hid in the bushes when God came looking for them in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:7-11). Our own cover-ups don't really cover much of anything.

### THE GRACE MESSAGE

In contrast to the condemnation message, grace does not open up room for boasting. Grace recognizes that we can do nothing to earn, keep, or validate our salvation. We receive it as a free gift, with no strings attached, simply by believing in Jesus Christ: "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" (Eph 2:8-9). So, grace erases all boasting (Rom 3:27; 4:1-5).

Grace also erases the fear of death, and gives full, unflinching assurance. Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24). Past, present, future, our security is set, and the foundation of that assurance doesn't get washed away by the waves of our struggles and failures. Our foundation is the unchanging Creator and Sustainer of the universe (Col 1:15-18).

On top of this, our freedom from shame isn't dependent upon our pretending that sin isn't sin. We know better anyway. Our conscience condemns us when we try to justify our actions rather than accepting the perfect justification that the Lord Jesus provides. When we know that we are accepted into God's presence as we are—because of what Christ alone has done—we can "come boldly to the throne of grace" without fear (Heb 4:12-16), and be sanctified by the only Power to sanctify that exists, the indwelling Jesus Christ.

### SO, WHAT CAN GRACE BELIEVERS DO?

The grace message isn't popular, and I don't believe it will be until the Deceiver, the Accuser of the brethren, is chained up and cast into the pit. But that doesn't mean we can't be effective in spreading the grace message.

What it means is that we need to change our methods.

Grace will not thrive through the use of slick advertising and big-time productions. Grace will thrive when people who believe in grace build relationships, make disciples, and live graciously, lovingly, in contrast to the evil age in which we live. Facing the same kinds of circumstances, the Lord Jesus disciplined a small group of individuals and empowered them to share the message of grace. Every faithful church body today has been blessed by those few men. Bold Grace will soon be working with those who want to do that kind of work throughout the world. We will have more info coming soon, so be sure to keep an eye out. You can "Like" [Bold Grace Ministries on Facebook](#) to stay in touch. You can also contact us there or send us an email if you would like to request info about the Bold Grace Church Planting Initiative.

### CONCLUSION

The Lord Jesus said, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you" (John 15:18). We are called to faithfulness, not popularity. But despite this, there is a comfort of love, and fellowship in the Spirit for grace believers living in community. If you have this blessing now, give thanks and focus on this blessing that God has given you. If you don't have that now, let us know. We may be able to help.

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## MINISTRY PURPOSE

### BOLD GRACE MINISTRIES EXISTS TO:

**Unite** believers under the banner of God's grace (Eph 4:3-6), **share** the gospel and aid those who will proclaim it faithfully (Rom 10:14-15), **increase** believers' confidence in the power of the indwelling Christ (Gal 2:20), **love** without hypocrisy (Rom 12:9a), **proclaim** the hope of Christ's glorious kingdom (Rom 8:18-21), and **equip** the saints to share Christ's matchless grace and love with others (2 Tim 2:2).

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