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## Grace abuse #1

2013 06 29, John Fenn, [www.supernaturalhousechurch.org](http://www.supernaturalhousechurch.org)

Hi all,

The topic I get the most email about these days, especially within our house church network, is about some of the extremes of the 'grace' teaching. The beliefs of some in hyper-grace can include:

- 1) The gospels aren't for today, they are Old Testament, so have no relevance. (They are 'the law')
- 2) I John wasn't written for us today, in particular, I John 1:9 - I don't have to confess sin.
- 3) Related to #2; Sin doesn't exist anymore due to Jesus/cross, only grace exists.
- 4) Therefore I don't have to be accountable to anyone, don't have to apologize or confess sin/wrong, for there is no such thing as sin any longer because Jesus took it out of the way.
- 5) Hell either doesn't exist, is misunderstood, or all people down through history will one day end up in heaven - because of grace.

**"Everybody complains about the weather, but nobody does anything about it"** - Charles Dudley Warner

The usual situation I hear about is that someone has gone around and around in a discussion with a hyper-grace believer on the subject, ending in a stalemate, hurt feelings, exasperation, and often broken relationships.

But Jesus' pattern was not to go round and round with the Pharisees or Sadducees, rather just teach what the Word says and let them decide. So here is what the Word says about grace. You decide its validity.

### Grace and truth

Paul's writing follows the pattern we see throughout the New Testament, expounding on something the gospels state, in this case John 1:14: The Word became flesh and lived among us, full of grace and truth. Also verse 17: The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ

Grace is the favor of God we've received and includes the work of the cross. Truth is the application of grace. Truth is the 'vital' or living demonstration of grace in our lives. Thus Jesus was full of grace and truth.

Think of it this way - you may have grace for someone, but unless you show them grace in action, all they will know is the idea of grace because you told them you had grace towards them. They don't know if you are telling the truth or not.

But when you act on that grace you are revealing the truth of it. Then that person can live in that grace and truth in relationship with you for they know your heart. Thus grace and truth are the embodiment of Christ Jesus and the means by which we know Him and the Father. He carried the grace the Father has towards us in His heart and lived the truth of it before mankind all the way to the cross to prove it so.

We see this same pattern of grace (invisible in the heart of God) linked with truth (revelation and application of that grace in our lives) throughout the New Testament. Or to put it another way, truth is imbedded in and inherently part of grace, for to have the favor of God is also to have the ability to live in that favor.

If all a person sees of grace is the unmerited favor part, they'll get off balance thinking there is no truth to be lived out, and life becomes very self-centered, very 'me' focused, very selfish. Grace is the legal work done on the cross, which allows the truth of the power of the resurrection to be lived out in daily life.

### Grace teaches

"For the grace of God, which can save every man, has become known, and it teaches us to have no more to do with godlessness or the desires of this world, but to live here and now responsible, honorable and God-fearing lives. And while we live this life we hope and wait for the glorious appearing of the Great God and of Jesus Christ our Savior." (Phillips NT, Titus 2:11)

Here is grace and truth: Grace which can save every person is the favor part, teaching us is the truth part - the living and vital part in our daily lives. Grace and truth coupled once again, this time manifest in teaching us to live Godly lives. Grace teaches, which means a person in grace is teachable.

One sign of someone off balance in 'grace' is that they aren't teachable, unable to entertain another's thoughts on the subject without feeling personally threatened. Grace teaches us to live Godly lives. So if you see grace taught as a license for immoral behavior, it isn't grace - that person is deceived.

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### Grace is always linked with purpose

"He has saved us and called us to a holy life - not because of anything we have done, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us before times eternal." (II Timothy 1:9)

Notice grace - 'He has saved us...'

Notice truth; '...and called us to a holy life'.

Here is the rest of this verse: "Not because of anything we have done, but according to His own 'purpose and grace which was given to us before times eternal." Purpose is the living truth, grace is within His heart.

The purpose of God is always part of the grace of God. Noah received grace, building the boat was the purpose and truth - living that grace. Moses received grace, the truth and purpose was to lead Israel.

### Heart is established with grace

"Do not be carried away by diverse and strange teachings: For it is good that the heart is established by grace; not by ceremonial foods, which have no real spiritual benefit to those who eat them." Hebrews 13:9

The born-again heart of a person, their spirit, is established by grace. The point in this verse is that the heart isn't established by works, by ceremony, by ritual. Grace is the establishment of the heart, the truth presented is that grace is not found in ritual and ceremony.

### Putting these elements together: Grace & truth, teaching, purpose, established hearts

Grace is allowing your child to pursue a driver's license. Embodied within that grace is truth - they need to learn how to handle a car, they need to learn the purpose for driving a car, they need to become established through life experience behind the wheel of a car. All these are elements of the grace you exhibited when you gave permission for them to pursue their license.

Behind the scenes, in the heavenly realms in 'times eternal', the Father God and Christ had grace in their hearts for yet-to-be-created mankind. But grace had to be more than a revelation of their favor towards us, it had to be empowerment to live out the benefits of salvation that grace provided. Grace and truth.

### Pull one element out and you have...

Love cannot be broken down into its many elements, for to remove even one element of love destroys the very meaning of the word. To remove long suffering, hardly noticing when wronged, faithfulness, loyalty, devotion, fidelity, honor, respect, transparency, or any other element of love is to lose the meaning and impact of full-force love.

If we pull one element out and concentrate on that separate from the rest, we get dangerously off balance and jeopardize the object of our love entirely. For instance, if 'transparency' is pulled out of love, that transparency meant to be between a husband and wife, and one spouse becomes transparent with another person. When they transparently share things intended for their spouse with a friend, co-worker, or member of the opposite sex, they violate the love of their marriage. Many affairs and heartache have resulted in one spouse pulling one element of love to the neglect of the rest, and sharing that element with someone.

If they pull 'devotion' out of love to concentrate on that, they risk becoming a slave to the object of their devotion, unable to do anything but give themselves 100% to the object of their devotion. This will eventually result in at least burn-out, if not fatigue and the destruction of their own well-being, even if that devotion is towards their spouse, and certainly if towards work or children or a hobby or personal sin.

### As it relates to grace

Similarly grace cannot be broken down into its many elements without destroying the very meaning of the word. To focus on unmerited favor while neglecting the truth of being taught to live Godly lives, live with purpose and remaining free from religious ritual and ceremony, is to open oneself to the idea they have so much favor that sin doesn't exist, they don't have to admit sin or error, and other errors.

This series is about understanding the multi-faceted elements of grace so we may be balanced in our understanding, holy in our lives, and further down the road towards being like Him.

I close with a quote from 150 +/- years ago, that you may know there is nothing new about this 'grace' movement at all - it even existed in Paul's time, but that is next week.

"Men talk about free grace without having the slightest acquaintance with it from personal experience; instead of living in the element of grace, they have nothing but a mere head knowledge, or a superficial perception of it in their hearts;

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a complete break with the world, the flesh, and the devil, has not yet taken place; the conscience sleeps the sleep of death, and Christ is regarded as a mere substitute, whom the sinner thinks will make up the deficiency of his own fancied merit.

Thus the abuse of this doctrine becomes very easy. When the whole head, the whole heart is filled with false premises, how can we be surprised that they should lead to the most false—no, infamous conclusions? What wonder is it that such a man, who chatters about grace without having become acquainted with it from heartfelt experience, with the tears of repentance, should appropriate the kindness of this Redeemer to himself, in such a manner as to leave his heart and life unchanged." F. W. Krummacher (1796 - 1868)

More next week, blessings,  
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## Grace abuse # 2

2013 07 06, John Fenn, [www.supernaturalhousechurch.org](http://www.supernaturalhousechurch.org)

Hi all,  
Last week I shared how Jesus came with grace and truth; grace being a quality of God's heart, truth being the walking out of grace - embodied in the person of Jesus Christ. This grace and truth then flows to us for we are in Him and He in us.

I talked about the qualities of grace, including that grace teaches, grace always has purpose, and grace establishes the heart.

### Accountability and grace

The common theme that runs through many hyper-grace believers involves lack of accountability. Whether that is ultimate justification - all people end up in heaven in the end, or believing there is no such thing as sin therefore you can do what you want when you want, or somewhere in between like selectively deleting parts of the Bible to fit their belief system like I John or the gospels - the thread through all is no accountability.

And some go the other direction, seeing anything but grace as 'the law' and therefore not under anyone's particular authority, for anything or anyone that sounds like what they perceive as legalism is something to corrected, shouted down, or run from with all haste.

Yet you cannot have grace without accountability. Just as truth, teaching, purpose, and the ability to establish the heart are 'imbedded' and inherently part of grace, so too is accountability. This is easily understood in the natural, so let me give some examples.

### Going steady?

The summer I turned 16, 1974, is when Barb and I started dating. By the time school started and with her attending the big city school with over 900 kids in her class, and me in my country school with 200 in my class, I wanted to go 'steady' so guys in her school would know she was off the market. At least that was part of my motive - the biggest motive is I fell head over heels for her and vice versa - but to protect that...

I was as nervous as a bug in a yard full of chickens as we sat in my car and I stumbled over 6 little words, trying to say in order: "Will you go steady with me?" Somehow 'Will' and 'me' and 'steady' fell over themselves on the way out my mouth, and Barb, who knew what I was trying to say while also staring down my new class ring, took the ring from my hands she said - "You want to go steady with me, John, is that what you're trying to spit out?" As her sentence ended my class ring was already on her finger - I think that was a yes! She has always been direct...lol.

Going steady was grace. We each felt we'd met someone special and maybe they were 'it'. We 'liked' each other enough to be exclusive - that ring she wrapped blue angora yarn around it until it fit on her finger was a signal to other guys at her big high school - hands off, she belongs to someone else. Sometimes she wore it as a necklace, but it was a sign of grace - and accountability.

Within that grace we were each active in our schools. We interacted with many different students both boys and girls. Grace has a lot of freedom within it. But there are borders to all grace, for there are no examples of grace without accountability anywhere in life or the Bible.

IF she or I had been unfaithful to the grace we gave each other in our hearts, there would have been a huge 'scene', a

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huge fight - because grace has accountability built in. Had one of us every been unfaithful to our 'going steady' it would have hurt! Grace requires it be lived responsibly.

### **Grandad's Volkswagen**

My grandfather owned a 1967 Volkswagen Beetle, or 'bug', and while that sounds like an old car, in the winter of 1974/75 that car was only 7 years old. My penny pinching (didn't like to spend money) grandfather was a doctor and lived 3 blocks from the hospital and a couple miles from his office - so the VW had low miles. As he retired and declined in health to the point he could no longer drive, mom inherited the VW, but I drove it every chance I got. It was a fun car! Mom giving me permission to drive granddad's car was grace, and I had a lot of freedom as a result.

But here is the 'truth' part of grace, the walking out the grace responsibly. The winters of '74/'75 and '75/'76 provided ample opportunity for Barb and I to take that car and go sliding around my high school parking lot covered with ice and snow. I'd get the car up to maybe 30mph (50kph) just as we hit the ice, from then it was only a matter of turning the wheel and hitting the brakes, or giving it some gas, to spin like an Olympic ice skater.

I gained a lot of experience and skill for driving on ice and snow as I learned how that car behaved, but this is how it ended: As I was sliding sideways at about 30mph I ran out of ice. The tires bit into the pavement and granddad's car was up on 2 wheels for what seemed an eternity.

Barb screamed, my life flashed before my eyes - I was young so it was a short show - but still I remember thinking in a flash there's no way to explain my granddad's VW crumpled like a hard boiled egg about to be peeled to my grandfather or my mom. I thought of Barb and how her head would hit the side of the car and be hurt - and just as suddenly we landed hard on all four tires in a sudden stop.

I had reached the limits of grace. I had forgotten about the fact the grace of driving granddad's car also carried responsibility to granddad and mom - I was young enough up to that point only to think of the freedom of grace.

### **Grace in the natural comes first from the Father**

In the same way we understand examples of grace above, we can also understand and trace the spiritual roots of grace - like parents loving children because that love originated long ago in the heavenly Father's love for His Son and spiritual children, so too does grace in the natural originate in the unseen realm of the Father.

When you are offered a job, that is grace. But grace has expectations and accountability - you had better do the job or the grace for you to work there is retracted. You buy a house or car with a loan or mortgage note, and that is grace. But if you fail to meet the payments grace is retracted and you are held accountable for the whole amount.

### **What Jesus meant when He said He fulfills the law**

When Jesus said in Matthew 5:17 He came not to abolish the law and prophets, but to fulfill them, He put it in terms easy for us to understand.

Buying that car or house by a loan is like being under the law. Within the law is great grace - you can drive that car or live in that house and call them your own as long as you make the payments. The flip side of the law is when a person fails to make those payments.

In my parable the payments on the car or house are like the Old Testament offerings and other requirements to remain in good standing with God - or with the car company or mortgage company - like maintaining the house, having insurance on both that will reimburse the mortgage/note holder, and so on.

But when you pay off the car and house what happens to the contract? What happens to the mortgage note and closing papers you've had in your files all those years? What happens is you own them. They are yours. You have not done away with the loans, pretending they don't exist. You have fulfilled them - you become owners of the paperwork.

### **Now what?**

At this point some in hyper-grace would say that I am correct - by owning the paperwork, the mortgage note, I am no longer under the bounds of those contracts - and they are correct. And that is used to justify either (take your pick) no hell, no I John 1:9, no accountability to anyone, no need to confess/admit sin, and so forth.

But the reality is that now that you own the car and house outright, you CAN do what you want with them - Wreck the car, burn the house to the ground, whatever you wish. You CAN do that. But the greater truth is that now as owner of the notes, you have a responsibility to be a good steward of the car and home because a great price was paid for them, with many sacrifices.



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Sure, you CAN burn the house down, and you CAN break the car on purpose - but that dishonors the price paid, the fact you now own something worth living for and taking care of, and the responsible person will continue to care for their car and home even more now that it is all theirs.

### **Romans 6**

Paul puts it another way in Romans 6:1-2: "Shall we go on sinning that grace may increase?" And his answer: "By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"

And that's the point - Grace can be turned into a license for sin, as Jude 4 says some do, or grace can be used to step up in faith, to step out of sin - and as seen last week, it does so by teaching us to avoid ungodliness and teaches us what we have in Christ, and is always revealing the Father's purpose while establishing us.

### **Modern Gnosticism**

In the days the New Testament was being written the hyper-grace teaching was running rampant, just as in our day. In fact I John and James and much of what Paul wrote were written to counter hyper-grace - and just as now many want to delete those passages/books from the New Testament.

The hyper-grace teaching then is what we call Gnosticism. That name comes from the Greek 'gnosis' which means 'to know'. But 'to know' doesn't say it accurately enough. In English we can say we know something without experiencing it personally, like 'I know Nigeria is in Africa' without having ever been there.

Gnosis is based on personal knowledge - 'I know Nigeria is in Africa and I've been there'. That means Gnosticism is based on a mystical knowledge adherents claim to have - they KNOW better than you, a higher knowledge. First century Gnostics believed the body is inherently evil and will return to earth, and since Christ lives in your spirit, you can do what you want with your body because it is going back to dust anyway.

That is the root spirit behind modern hyper-grace teaching - Christ lives in you so nothing else really matters, so live how you like and you'll be fine.

### **So thank you!**

I love history, and I enjoy living history museums. So when I run into or hear of someone caught up in hyper-grace today, it is like looking back in time to see the same error Paul and James and John taught and wrote against - like that person is a living museum, willingly giving themselves over to a very ancient spirit masquerading as the Holy Spirit. And I marvel, and I grieve, and I learn.

I feel so sorry for those who use grace as a means to justify not growing up in Christ. They are missing so much life in Christ. But I think one reason people look for reasons to justify their sin may be because the traditional church has given them 'church' experiences, but not God experiences, for to know Him is to want to leave all else by the way side and be like Him.

### **If we can understand...**

So if we can understand that grace in the natural has accountability built into it - the grace of relationships, the grace of having a job, the grace of driving a car or owning a residence - and the flip side of accountability in relationships, in the work place, in the owning of a car or home, then why do people lose all common sense when it comes to spiritual teaching?

Grace empowers...the Spirit of Truth lives within. When you sin and feel that grievance, apologize for it, don't pretend that sin didn't happen or doesn't exist. And that leads me to next week's topic...when Christians die with unresolved sin. Until then!

Blessings,  
John Fenn

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