

A Dangerous and Deadly Deception

It is one thing to downplay the ugliness of sin in the life of a believer. It is another thing to deny the existence of sin in the life of a believer. Yet today, there are believers who claim that they do not sin, even when they do. As scary as this deception is, the reasoning behind it is even scarier.

I first encountered this in some fringe hyper-grace circles, where the reasoning goes like this: "I am a spirit, I have a soul and I live in a body. My spirit is born-again, redeemed and perfect in God's sight. Therefore my spirit—which is the real me—is incapable of sinning, which means that if there is sin in my life, it's not really me committing the sin."

Of course, there are some truths mixed into this line of thinking, but it ultimately leads to an unbiblical, very dangerous conclusion: "Yes, I sin, but it's really not me sinning!" You can easily see where this nonsense can go.

One well-known hyper-grace teacher asks the question, "Does a daily walk of joyful, sinless existence seem like an impossibility?" He then assures his readers that it is hardly impossible at all.

A friend of mine became concerned by some teaching he was hearing in his church (a very well-known church in his region), and so he called the pastor's right-hand man and asked him to answer a question with a yes or a no: "Do you sin?" The leader replied, "No, I don't sin," explaining that his spirit within him was perfect and sinless and that's who he really was.

This reminds me of extremes in the Word of Faith camp where people were taught never to say they were sick, since they were already healed at the cross. Instead, they were told to

say they were suffering from lying symptoms. (How much better it is to say, "I'm fighting some sickness but I confess that God is my Healer and that Jesus paid for my healing, so believe God with me for complete restoration now.")

Because of this kind of thinking, a famous Word of Faith Bible school had to inform prospective students that they wanted "fact" answers on their applications rather than "faith" answers. Some applicants actually believed that they could "create new realities" with their words—"calling things that are not as though they were," based on Romans 4:17—and so they would give false answers about their past education or drug use or finances. I kid you not!

Some extreme hyper-grace adherents will take a biblical verse and stand it on its head. For example, John writes, "No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God" (1 John 3:9, ESV). But rather than understanding the plain meaning of the verse, namely that a truly born-again believer will not make a practice of sin, they conclude, "Even if it appears that I'm doing wrong things, I'm really not sinning, since God's Word says that I can't." (I have read this with my own eyes.)

It appears that these deceived people have overlooked John's exhortation just a few verses later: "Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth" (v. 18). In other words, don't just talk about the new life, demonstrate it with your deeds.

It also appears that they have ignored Peter's exhortation to his readers, "as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pet. 1:15-16). Yes, our conduct matters—not just what our spirits allegedly do and don't do.

That's why Paul told the Corinthians that "the sexually

immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:18-20).

A mainstream hyper-grace teacher once explained, "We are not our sins." But what exactly does that mean? Perhaps an adulterous husband could tell his wife, "But honey, I am not my adultery!"

But it gets worse. There are some so-called believers who have become so deceived that they not only claim to be sin-free, they actually believe they have redeemed profanity and made it holy! (I expect that every mainstream hyper-grace teacher in the world would repudiate such trash.)

A concerned sister sent me links to a Facebook page where two consecutive posts from a deluded young man read, "Rage against the devil is a fruit of the Holy Spirit" (which doesn't sound bad) followed by, "A fresh f— you from the Holy Spirit" (with the young man giving readers the finger in his picture; the profanity was written out in full). Others joined in the comments section with equally perverted garbage, all "in the name of the Lord."

More than 1,900 years ago John wrote, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). Ironically, some hyper-grace adherents who claim that this verse was written for unbelievers and heretics, not for believers, have embraced the very same heresy.

People of God, wake up! Deception can be deadly.

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