

Time to Drop the Hyper-Grace Rhetoric

A hyper-grace pastor recently accused me of believing that “Jesus is not enough.”

How should we respond to accusations like this? And are these catchy little phrases, which attempt to make others look like subpar Christians, really helpful? Do they even tell us anything at all?

This particular pastor was critical of my book *Hyper-Grace: Exposing the Dangers of the Modern Grace Message* (or, at least, he was critical of how another author presented my book, often in extremely misleading ways). He stated, “In Jesus you’re forgiven, sanctified, made holy and made eternally righteousness, yet, Dr. Brown says Jesus isn’t enough. Now he wouldn’t come right out and say such a thing but ... Dr. Brown still depends on human effort to complete the work Jesus began.”

Really? I say (or believe) that Jesus isn’t enough? I depend on human effort to complete the work Jesus began?

This is news to me, after leaning on Him as my only source of righteousness and life these last 42 years.

What point, then, is this pastor trying to make? Is he saying that I don’t mean it when I sing the words, “Oh, precious is the flow that makes me white as snow; no other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus”?

Is he claiming that when I joyfully shout out the lyrics to “In Christ Alone” that I’m just going through the motions? Does he honestly believe that I’m saying that “Jesus is not enough” when I sing with tears of joy those glorious words: “‘Til on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was

satisfied, for every sin on Him was laid, here in the death of Christ I live”?

And isn't it ironic that hyper-grace teachers who claim that I (and others like me) say “Jesus is not enough” believe that the words of Jesus, such as those found in the Sermon on the Mount, do not apply to them today? How, then, can they say that “Jesus is enough” and then ignore most of His words? (As documented in depth in my *Hyper-Grace* book, these teachers commonly claim that most, or even all, of what Jesus taught before the cross was not intended for believers today.)

So, what exactly does this pastor mean when he claims, “Dr. Brown says that Jesus isn't enough”?

Is he implying that those of us who reject hyper-grace believe that we have any source of forgiveness outside of Jesus? That we plan to stand before God one day and claim justification by our works? That we have any boast outside of our Savior?

The fact is that Jesus did everything that needed to be done to secure our eternal salvation (as He said on the cross, “It is finished”), and now He calls on us, by His Spirit, to respond to His gracious offer, to follow Him, to grow in Him and to work with Him to fulfill the Great Commission. Through His blood, He makes us holy, and then He calls us to walk that holiness out in this world. The Word is quite clear about this.

But based on the hyper-grace rhetoric, are we saying that “Jesus is not enough” when we call on sinners to put their faith in Him? Isn't this adding something on our part?

And why should we be baptized? Isn't this “depend[ing] on human effort to complete the work Jesus began”? And why witness and pray if “Jesus is enough”? And why, for that matter, do we need pastors and teachers if “Jesus is enough”?

Do you see how meaningless these phrases can be when used as

rhetorical weapons?

When Peter wrote, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct" (1 Pet 1:14-15, ESV), was he saying that Jesus wasn't enough?

Peter also wrote, "Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul" (1 Pet. 2:11). Was he telling his readers to "depend on human effort to complete the work Jesus began"?

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1), was he saying that Jesus wasn't enough?

Paul also exhorted the Colossians to "put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col 3:5). Was he telling them to "depend on human effort to complete the work Jesus began"?

One hyper-grace pastor wrote, "We are driven to 'do, do, do', forgetting that Christianity is actually 'done, done, done'."

Another pastor rightly responded, "The Bible tells us to 'do, do, do' because though Christ's redemptive work on the cross IS 'done, done, done' Christians still have a lot left to do (see the Sermon on the Mount, the Great Commission, the Book of ACTS, the book of Titus (whose theme is GOOD WORKS) and the Book of James (whose theme is being DOERS of the Word))!"

Exactly!

Why can't our friends who claim to have been wonderfully touched and enlightened and helped by the hyper-grace message simply revel in their newfound liberty without bashing and

insulting those who differ with them? Why must they demonstrate how “free” they are by insulting the walks of others? How is that a fruit of grace? (For my part, I am not bashing anyone when I use the term *hyper-grace*, since many of those who embrace that message say, “Yes, grace is hyper!” I use the term to be descriptive of their message.)

One hyper-grace author criticized me for listing a number of Scriptures that required an active response on our part, claiming that I was calling for self-effort, as if responding in obedience to the Word is a bad thing. How does rhetoric like this advance the cause of the gospel?

And so, once again, I appeal to my hyper-grace friends: Let’s openly and prayerfully discuss our differences, seeking God earnestly and giving ourselves to the gospel of grace, without resorting to cheap and unhelpful rhetoric.

Wouldn’t this please the Lord?

Michael Brown *is author of Hyper-Grace: Exposing the Dangers of the Modern Grace Message and host of the nationally syndicated talk radio show The Line of Fire on the Salem Radio Network. He is also president of FIRE School of Ministry and director of the Coalition of Conscience. Follow him at AskDrBrown on Facebook or at @drmichaellbrown on Twitter.*