

Who Wants to End Up Like Ted Haggard?

Recently, I received a call into my Heal Your Servant conference call line. On the other end of the phone, there was the voice of a broken and frightened man. He was sobbing uncontrollably—so much so that it took over five minutes for him to gain his composure enough for me to understand anything he was saying.

He then began to just systematically break down his sexual sin. He stated that when he was a little boy, his dad was very dominating and abusive toward him, his mom and his sisters. The only time he would receive any accolades from his father would be when he acted out with verbal aggression toward his mother or sisters. His father claimed to be a Christian man and always quoted Scripture that emphasized man's dominance over women.

At age 9 or 10, the man found a stack of his father's pornographic magazines in his garage. He regularly visited the magazines, being ever so careful to replace them just as he found them when he was finished.

He gave his heart to Christ at 18 and began his studies to become a minister. He is a pastor today. In his voice, I could hear his passion and love for Christ. I could also hear his deep sorrow and regret for the sin that buffets his flesh to this day.

Though the man learned to disagree with his father regarding male dominance, he has always struggled with lust. He has been able to camouflage it. He got married and in no time began a series of affairs. Though to this day he has never been caught, he has come close several times. His wife has had her suspicions.

The man is currently involved in an adulterous affair with an acquaintance of his wife. He is beginning to feel as if everything is unraveling.

He was somehow directed to my ministry website, and reality struck him when he watched the video and saw the picture of Ted Haggard.

His statement to me was, "I don't want to end up like Ted Haggard."

I began to express to him that Ted and I have been friends for some time now and that Ted and Gayle are doing better than ever today. Because of Ted's honesty and contrite spirit before God, he has tapped into that same grace that Jesus exercised to the first 12. Ted is in the greatest place he could ever be. He serves a merciful God. He is married to a fabulous woman who has recently written two amazing books. He is pastoring a wonderful church that is walking in applied grace, and he is surrounded by those who love him.

The young man began to sob once again. I invited him to allow me to walk with him past his sinful trial. I encouraged him to contact a friend who is an expert in this arena and watch what the God of grace will do.

Grace. This seems to be current buzzword in the body of Christ—or is it? Over the past few years, there has been a great deal of controversy regarding this subject. Books are rolling out as fast as the presses can print them. Cotton collects on the corners of a pastor's mouth as he preaches on the subject. Articles are written every day, yet today's church is still in chaos.

Some claim an exaggerated emphasis on the subject and warn that its teaching is leading many into sinfulness, debauchery and "sloppy agape."

Others have limited its meaning to a simple salutation, cute

acronyms such as “God’s Riches at Christ’s Expense” and clichéd statements such as “unmerited favor.”

As the Holy Spirit moves this subject to the forefront, the church as a whole seems to possess a lack of understanding of the word and concept.

As a freshman in college, I had a professor who made a memorable statement: “Any intellectual discourse must begin with a definition of terms.” We must define grace and develop a working definition of it in order to gain clear understanding of what it is and how it is to be applied.

What is grace, and what does it truly look like?

The word *grace* originates from the Greek *χάρις* or *charis*. It is used 131 times in 122 verses of the New Testament.

Though Jesus himself was never quoted using the word *grace*, He did, however, demonstrate its application throughout every moment of His earthly ministry. He determined that He would choose ill-equipped men, entrusting them to deliver this message of salvation and ensure its perpetuity.

I dare say that not one of the original 12 would ever be hired on any church staff in our modern church era.

At one point or another, every single one of them turned their back on Jesus. Peter even denied ever knowing Him. Paul confessed to having some sort of “thorn in his flesh.” Jesus did not throw them away. He restored. This is what grace is. This is what grace does.

Grace is a verb. It is an action. It is the vehicle that transports salvation, forgiveness, mercy and every gift of God to every circumstance and situation in the believer’s life.

Grace is confrontational. To quote my friend Michael Cheshire, “Grace has bad breath.” When we walk in and exercise grace toward one another, we walk so close to our brothers in Christ

that we feel their breath upon the nape of our neck.

Grace is advocacy. When we walk in grace, we become like Jesus (the advocate of the sinful and hurting heart).

We all agree that our God is holy. He hates sin; however, He loves the one who sins. He came to redeem us from our sin. God is love. God is good.

We know that sin attempts to separate us from the One who loves us most.

Does the modern church truly understand God's forgiveness? It appears that we love the concept of forgiveness of sin until someone actually sins. It seems that our understanding of redemption does not match in practical application.

We use phrases like, "Well, that disqualifies them from ministry," as if to say that there is some type of loophole in the contractual obligation set forth by the Father when the blood of the Son was shed.

If the gospel does not apply to the fallen or the broken, who does it apply to? How does grace apply to us when we sin? Where sin abides, does grace much more abide?

There is a deeply rooted weed in our theology that seems to trip us all up. When we read our Bibles, most of us do the same thing. We read a bit of the Old Testament along with the New Testament and interchange the principles. This is erroneous at best.

The reason that the book of Hebrews was written was because there were many Jews who were doing just that. They would incorporate the concepts of Old Testament law and amalgamate them to the New Testament teachings of grace. This very idea has created controversy in the church. Did the Law fail? Did our Savior completely fulfill the Law?

I am by no means attempting to minimize the Old Testament. It

has its place. The word *Testament* itself comes from the Hebrew word (ברית) *Beriyth*. Literally translated, it means “to cut until blood flows.” The Old *Beriyth* was based upon works righteousness. As a result of Adam’s sin, we were separated from the presence of God. Man tried to cover his sin with leaves, and God demanded that blood had to be shed to cover man’s nakedness. “Without the shedding of blood, there is no covering for sin.”

When Jesus, the perfect lamb came, He did not just cover our sin. His blood set forth the New *Beriyth*, which eradicated sin. As far as heaven is concerned, it never happened.

How can we be disqualified for something that the judge of the universe declares never happened? Are we limiting the power of the eternal in exchange for temporal memory? Are there cases where truly repentant individuals cannot be forgiven and restored to their calling?

These are a few questions we must all consider. We have compiled quite an array of America’s leading Christian thinkers in order to discuss these difficult issues during our May Round Table in San Antonio, Texas.

If God loved this world enough to send His only Son to redeem it, it is expedient that we live our lives to serve those for whom Christ died. The religious mind, on the other hand, instinctively attempts to appease the gods of religiosity. We must vow to pick up those who have fallen short of perfection, recognizing that each of us is fatally flawed.

Several years ago, I worked as a business development director for a billionaire by the name of Red McCombs. He owned several car dealerships and many other businesses, including the Minnesota Vikings football team. One morning I sat in one of the sales towers and watched as the salespeople went through their daily ritual of “feeding the car gods.” They would take all of the pennies out of their pockets and throw them on the

pavement in front of the car lot to “ensure” a prosperous day of business.

Minutes later, I saw Red walking toward the front door. He looked on the ground and saw dozens of pennies strewn across the lot. His eyes perked up. He got on his knees and picked up every penny and placed them in his pocket. He stood to his feet with an expression on his face as if he had struck gold. I learned a lesson that I remind myself of every day of my life: “That which seems to have no value to many is a treasure to those who truly understand value”.

The church has systematically thrown away people. This indicates that our perception is that each individual is of different value. It seems that we have no understanding of the price that Jesus paid to ensure our salvation and forgiveness. Whether it be a fallen congregant or minister, a homosexual or an adulterer, or even someone we disagree with politically, our arrogance is pathetic. This is the very reason that Christians are perceived as a hate group. It is as if we have changed the lyrics of the old hymn (sing it with me): “And they’ll know we are Christians ’cause we judge and condemn; yes, they’ll know we are Christians ’cause we judge.”

Why is it that the American church, in our generation, has spent more money than every previous generation combined to evangelize the world? Yet we find that people are more skeptical about our faith than ever. The hatred of Christians in America has reached an all-time high. We are seen as mean, judgmental, arrogant and hateful. If you don’t believe me, Google the words “Christians are.”

We stand at the precipice of the potential destruction of our nation. Though we have Christian TV, books, magazines, Internet, music and creative Christian technology, more people are turned off by our message than ever. Our legalistic works righteousness does nothing to differentiate us from Islam. We behold our nation inviting the teaching of Muhammed to be

given unfair advantages over Christianity. What have we done?

Have we failed to communicate that the supreme sacrifice of Christ has liberated us so that we may all become people of humility, mercy, acceptance and love? We have placed ourselves on an equal plane with the religions of the world. Did Jesus not say that we are to forgive 70 times 7? Mercy, redemption and a risen Savior are the difference.

Who wants to end up like Ted Haggard? Is it that difficult of a question? Certainly, not one of us wants to fall short of God's glory. Not one of us wants to sin. But the truth is, we all do. So we lay our transgression on His mercy seat, trusting that the precious blood of Jesus will do exactly what He said it would do. Our destiny is not based on our works but rather the completed work of the cross. Our end is certain to be that of eternity in the presence of a holy God. He is the only one who gave all for anyone who would call upon His name.

No, Ted, God is not mad at you. He's not mad at any of us. Religious people are, though. Who cares what the self-appointed Pharisees of this generation say? They precipitate the church with confusion and ill will, as the exit doors of sanctuaries are rushed by wounded people with no intention of ever stepping back into "that place." Jesus said it, and it still applies: They are whitewashed sepulchers. They are full of dead men's bones.

After my last article on , I had dozens of ministers who called in to confess that whenever a scandal would arise in the church, they would stand before their congregation and condemn it openly. Every one of them declared that they felt as if it was what they had to do in order to cover up their own sin.

Though many may see this "Word of Grace" as a new message, I remember hearing it at Rhema in a class taught by the late Doc Horton. I was so inspired that I went back to my apartment and

began to pray for the lost. I wrote this poem in 1984:

How I Love the Sinner

While others thumb their nose at them to make their way to a steeple,

They are seen through stain glass holy eyes as something less than people

Their garment have been stained by sin, their lives are filled with pain

While it is said by hierarchy, "What have we to gain?"

Religious stench, self-righteous quench all hope that lay inside

The broken hearts of each of those for whom my savior died

But there are just like myself who see with different eyes

The precious lives that lie beneath those bruised by satan's lies

No price too high, No cost too great to pay to set them free

The price was paid by precious blood, if they will just believe

How I love the sinner, and vow to set them free?

For it is now I must confess, that sinner once was me.

Every time we hear of a fallen soldier of the cross, our instinctive response should be, "Lord, they need your help. What can I do?" It is imperative that we remember the one and only command that Christ embedded into this dispensation: love. While others attack, we are to cover. While others judge, we are to speak forgiveness.

Whenever we find a believer trapped in impurity, it is

imperative that we respond like David Robinson, “boxing out” for a rebound. We keep them behind us as we fend off the attack of the religious. When the accusers depart, we turn to them and ask, “Where are your accusers? Neither do I condemn you. Now go and sin no more.”

God has called us to love the prostitute, the homosexual, the alcoholic, the business man, the fallen minister. Instead, we spend millions on image management and damage control. Jesus was not concerned with image management; He continually placed himself in that which the religious would consider to be “compromising situations.”

This is one reason the Holy Spirit led me to start the ministry of Heal Your Servant. We are completely confidential. We guard and protect the sinner. Any minister can call and confess any sin. We serve as an advocate for Christ and speak the mercy of God. Many have found that it is a safe place to land, a place in which to begin their road to restoration.

Recently I had an individual call into our ministry and express that his wife was in an affair with one of the most well-known ministers in the world. He wanted me to expose this man. I informed him that our focus is to restore, not destroy. I deeply empathized with his anger. I directed him to one of America’s top professionals in this field. He, his wife and this minister are all people for whom Christ died. This issue is now being handled gently and biblically. Everyone one of them is being cooperative.

Galatians 6:1 indicates how a truly spiritual person will act when a situation like this occurs. A spiritual person works to restore. καταρτίζω (kat-ar-tid’-zo) is translated *restore*. A literal translation would be “to pick them up in their place of sin and drop them off at the place of their calling.”

It is our call to proclaim the Good News. It is our mission to function as ambassadors of Christ in this world. We are to

declare that God is love. His mercy endures forever. No matter what we have done, His blood will bring us back to the road that leads to our destiny. This is not a license to sin. It is a license to serve. His kindness ever draws us closer to Him.

When one's most well-kept secret is made public, the church must possess the capacity to help a person successfully navigate through it.

We are the body of Christ. We are the only vehicle God has chosen to get His message out to a lost and dying world. Let's do this!

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