

# Yet Again, a Major Hyper-Grace Error

Although the hyper-grace movement is not quite the rapidly spreading fad it was a few years back, it continues to entrench itself into the hearts and minds of millions. That's why, to this day, I get requests from leaders in America and abroad to come and address this aberrant teaching. And that's why my book on the subject continues to be translated into different languages. The need remains acute.

To be clear, there are many wonderful truths presented by hyper-grace teachers, who are our brothers and sisters in the Lord. They are life-giving truths. Jesus-centered truths. Transformative truths. To each of these truths, I give my hearty "Amen."

But these truths are mixed with dangerous, even deadly, errors.

Recently, a colleague forwarded me an email with hyper-grace teaching, asking how he should respond. He, in turn, had received the email from a friend who was quite enthusiastic about the content. Yet the content was clearly in error, making two main points.

First, the email claimed that God didn't judge the nation of Israel for its own conduct but rather for the conduct of the high priest. If the high priest were righteous, the nation would be blessed. If the high priest were sinful, the nation would be cursed.

The implication, then, is that God deals with us based on the righteousness of Jesus (our great high priest) alone, not based on our conduct. As stated in the email, "What the high priest was before God, so was the entire nation before God."

Second, the email stated that, if we are truly believers in Jesus, God doesn't see us (and our sin) when He looks at us. Instead, He sees Jesus. Consequently, we are told, "If God sees Jesus perfect, then He sees you perfect." As a result, "you cannot lose your right standing, because Jesus Christ is your high priest."

Are these claims true? Certainly not. In fact, whatever truths they contain (pertaining to the finished work of the cross and the Savior's ongoing work on our behalf) are obscured because of their errors.

To respond, then:

1) There is not one verse in the entire Old Testament that says that God blessed the people of Israel because the high priest was righteous (even though the nation was in sin) but then judged them when they were righteous (but the high priest was in sin). Not one verse.

In contrast, we are told over and over again how God judged the people of Israel because of their sin. Just read Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 (the blessings and curses). Where do these chapters say a word about the high priest? (I agree that we are not under the Sinai Covenant, but remember, the first claim in the email pertained to this covenant.)

2) The high priest made atonement for the people on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement; see Lev. 16), but if anyone in Israel did not afflict himself that day as prescribed by the law, that person would be cut off from the people. So, the atonement did the person no good unless he did his part.

3) Throughout the New Testament epistles, believers are rebuked for their sin. (Paul wrote like this, as did James, Peter, John and Jude.) Of course God sees us in all our imperfections and doesn't just see Jesus.

And what does Jesus say in Revelation 2-3? He rebukes those He

loves, calling out sin in the church (Rev. 3:19). If God only saw Jesus, He would never rebuke and correct us.

Does God see us as accepted because of the cross? As forgiven because of the cross? As His children because of the cross? Absolutely. Does He see Jesus, rather than us, when He looks at us? Of course not.

4) There are many verses in the New Testament that call us to persevere in Jesus, saying that if we do not, we will not be in right standing with God. Just read verses like this: John 15:1-7 (remember, this is addressing branches in the vine, meaning in Jesus); Colossians 1:21-23 (note that word "if"); Hebrews 2:1-4, 3:12-14, 4:1-11.

Again, without a doubt, our righteousness come from Jesus. But if we abandon Him or renounce Him or refuse to obey Him, we forfeit that gift of grace, hence this warning:

*Pursue peace with all men, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord, watching diligently so that no one falls short of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness spring up to cause trouble, and many become defiled by it, lest there be any sexually immoral or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected. For he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears (Heb. 12:14-17).*

In short, if the teaching in that email was right, these verses would not be in the Bible.

So, let's continue to exalt God's grace and swim in the ocean of His grace and glory in the finished work of the cross. But let us not be lulled into a false sense of security based on hyper-grace extremes that mix life-giving truths with deadly error.