

Messianic Jewish Scholar Dr. Michael L. Brown Affirms Conditional Security

Dr. Brown wrote a book called, *It's Time to Rock the Boat: A Call to God's People to Rise Up and Preach a Confrontational Gospel*. In chapter eight titled, "Counterfeit Grace," he confronts the once saved, always saved teaching. The following is most of what he wrote.

There is a message sweeping through the Body today. Famous pastors are teaching it; best-selling authors are espousing it; leading theologians are defending it; *and the apostle Paul warned us against it*—three separate times.

To the Corinthians he wrote: "Do not be deceived" (1 Cor. 6:9). To the Galatians he wrote: "I warn you, as I did before . . ." (Gal. 5:21b). To the Ephesians he wrote, "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient" (Eph. 5:6).

What was this great deception? What erroneous doctrine was Paul fighting against in such strong language and with such urgent appeals? It was the teaching that says, "Since you didn't do anything to earn your salvation, you can't do anything to lose it. No matter how you live, no matter what you do or don't do, no matter how far you walk away from God, if you're saved, you're saved. Otherwise grace would not be grace!"

But that is not grace according to the Scriptures. That is counterfeit grace, and it is producing what some have called counterfeit conversions. Jude also sounded the alarm, warning the saints in no uncertain terms:

For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, *who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality* and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord. (Jude 4)

Of course, most of those today who teach the message of counterfeit grace are not "godless men" whose "condemnation was written about long ago," although, without a doubt, there *are* some charlatans and hustlers who have infiltrated our ranks and fleeced the flock of God. Woe to them on that Day! May they be exposed even now, while there is still time to repent and get right.

Such men—deceiving predators who parade around like devoted prophets—are the exception rather than the rule. Instead, good men and women, ministers dedicated in many way to the things of God, Christians leaders who really do love the Lord, have bought into this doctrine, thinking somehow that it glorifies the Lord and liberates the saints. It does

not! It stands in contradiction to the Scriptures and, in the name of grace, pollutes and sometimes even perverts the true meaning of the Word. Even though these ministers urge Christians to lead a holy life, (they do not openly condone sin!) their teaching opens wide the door to false assurance and loose living.

Look again at what the apostle Paul wrote:

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? *Do not be deceived* [That means the enemy will try to deceive us! But, as someone has said, being forewarned means being fore-equipped.]: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. 6:9-10)

Could anything be more clear? Those who continue to live wicked lives will not inherit the Kingdom of God. This is not simply a matter of “going to Heaven but losing your reward,” as many have tried to teach. No! The *wicked* do not go to *Heaven*. They have no reward to lose. So don’t be deceived! The professing believer who lives a wicked life will not go to Heaven either. He will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Paul uses this very same language—“inheriting the Kingdom of God”—to speak of the blessed event that awaits the saints:

I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed. (1 Cor. 15:50-51)

That is what it means to inherit the Kingdom! It means being changed. The perishable will put on the imperishable and the mortal will put on the immortal. But the wicked will not be changed. They will *not* inherit the Kingdom of God. In other words, they will not be saved!

He who overcomes will inherit all this [i.e., the new Jerusalem filled with the presence of God and the spring of the water of life], and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.

Amazingly enough, one of the most influential preachers in England, quoted earlier in this book, argues:

The warnings of Paul relative to the kingdom of God do not remotely relate to being saved but to something else, namely, the *conscious presence of God*. . . . It is not salvation, then, but

their inheritance in the kingdom of God that these Christians [whom Paul was warning] were in danger of forfeiting.

Yet it folly to argue that the sin of a “Christian” idolater or adulterer will exclude him from the presence of God *here and now*, but will have no effect on his enjoying the same holy presence—in even more direct fashion!—forever. No. It is because the wicked are not at home in God’s presence now that they will be barred from His kingdom later. As Bishop J.C. Ryle explained:

We must be saints before we die, if we are to be saints afterwards in glory.

“But,” someone will ask, “who are we to judge what sins will keep someone out of the Kingdom of God? Who are we to judge who is wicked and who is not? We do not have the right to do such things.” Of course we do! In fact, the Word does not only say that we have the right to judge, the Word also says we *must*. There is a world of difference between forming our own opinions about another believer (i.e., setting ourselves up as judges) and evaluating their lives by the Scriptures (i.e., judging them by the Word):

But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. (1 Cor. 5:11)

Such people will be excluded from the world to come, so we shouldn’t make them feel at home in the local church. If they claim to be saved, but after having been confronted in a biblical manner (Gal. 6:1; Matt. 18) refuse to repent and live up to the most basic standards of godliness, then we are to *put them out of the Body*.

Listen again to Paul:

What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked man from among you.” (1 Cor. 5:12-13, quoting Deut. 17:7; 19:19; 21:21; 24:7).

Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.” (2 Tim. 2:19)

The people of God are expected to live so differently from the people of the world that gross sinners will stand out clearly. (At least, that’s what is supposed to happen! Today, instead of gross sinners standing out clearly, some of them stand behind pulpits boldly.) Our inheritance as saints is in “the kingdom of light” (Col. 1:12).

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? (2 Cor. 6:14)

We must “come out from [among] them and be separate” (2 Cor. 6:17). And if they are among us, calling themselves children of God while living hypocritical, unrepentant lives, we must put *them* out!

“But,” someone will surely say, “what about grace?” Exactly! That is Paul’s whole point. What about grace? Where is the evidence of grace? God’s grace cannot possibly be at work in the heart of someone who ultimately refuses to turn back. Absolutely not. *God’s grace does something.*

... [God’s grace] goes beyond forgiveness of sins. God’s grace means transforming power. It means His holy influence on our hearts. It is an overriding work of the Spirit to make us like Jesus, converting criminals, sanctifying sinners, delivering drunkards, and renewing rebels. How wonderful is the grace of our God!

For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! (Rom. 5:10)

The grace that saved us from sin, cleansing us through the death of Jesus, when we were not worthy, is the same grace that will keep us from sin, enabling us to live in victory through the life of Jesus, now that He has made us worthy. That is the power of grace. The pattern of our life is now victorious.

For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14) ...

Yet some people still misunderstand Paul. They think he said, “Sin will no longer condemn you because you are not under the law but under grace.” In other words, whatever you do, there is no condemnation because you are under the unmerited favor of God. That is not what he said, let alone what he meant. No. He said, “For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14). The reason “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1) is simply “because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set [us] free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2).

Jesus’ death set us free! Gloriously free! Free from the law of sin and death! Free to be a slave to righteousness! Free to walk and live in the Spirit! Free to submit to God! That is the message of grace.

Yet counterfeit grace is cheap grace, not because it cost Jesus any less (in that sense there is no such thing as “cheap grace”), but because it *does* less. It seals without sanctifying and

redeems without regenerating, writing the sinner's name in the Lamb's book of life while he continues to live in death. (Remember, "The mind of sinful man is death. . ." [Rom. 8:6].) That is not biblical grace!

Of course, many sincere teachers are afraid of falling into legalism, which is the real danger of setting up an external standard of holiness and calling people to attain to it in the power of the flesh. Yet consider this: It was to the Galatians, Gentile believers who had actually become caught in the trap of seeking to be justified by the works of the law, that Paul wrote these words:

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:19-21)

Calling believers to live a holy life, to conduct themselves in a godly manner, and to keep their hearts pure, is no legalism! That is what God's grace is for; that is how His grace will always instruct us to live.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age. (Titus 2:11-12)

So many leaders in the Body today claim that those who preach repentance and who emphasize biblical standards of holiness do not understand grace. . . . These teachers assert that the true meaning of grace excludes any specific rebuking of sin. For them, the pardoned pervert—who never turns from his perversion—goes to Heaven, and the child killer who says the sinner's prayer is saved—even as he stalks his human prey. That is not mercy; it is a monstrosity.

Make no mistake. *Sin can keep you out of the Kingdom of God—in this world and in the world to come.* The Word is perfectly plain:

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, *and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.* (1 John 3:14-15)

If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you *to enter life* maimed than with two hands *to go into hell*, where the fire never goes out. (Mark 9:43)

Willfully continuing in sin, in defiant disobedience to your Maker, could cost you eternal life and secure you a place in hell. The wages of sin is still death (Rom. 6:23)! . . .

Let me speak plainly to those of you who have swallowed the lie of counterfeit grace, believing somehow that “you are covered” no matter what you do. Here me carefully. (Actually, hear what the *Word of God* says clearly.) If you are walking in willful disobedience to God, if the consistent and dominant pattern of your life (not the exception, but the rule; not a momentary lapse, but your actual life style) can be described by any of the acts of the sinful nature Paul listed in First Corinthians, Galatians or Ephesians, then you must *question your salvation*.

Wake up! Get right with God! Turn back to Him now while He is still calling you. Receive forgiveness and grace. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. Cast off the old man and his ways. Walk in the Holy Spirit. He will give you strength!

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires (Gal. 5:24)

I urge you in the name of the Lord: *Do not listen to those who lead you astray*. It is one thing to argue that if a person is truly saved, he will persevere in holiness until the end. In other words, if he falls, it will be only a temporary fall. He will prove his election by getting back up and going on with the Lord. (Whether or not that particular doctrine—called the perseverance of the saints—is taught in the Bible, at least it has this merit: It does not give out false assurance to the hardened backslider.) It is another matter entirely—in fact, it is absolutely criminal—to comfort the hell-bound with hollow promises of grace.

But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if *you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel....* (Col. 1:22-23)

We have come to share in Christ *if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first*. (Heb. 3:14)

The apostle is sounding an alarm:

For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. *Let no one deceive you with empty words....*

Empty words! Like these, from a concerned teacher:

[There is absolutely nothing] I can do about regeneration once I have experienced it. By that astonishing miracle I am constituted a child of God. Even if I were to decide I did not want to be His child, it would do me no good. My spiritual birth, like my physical one, is

irreversible.... Of course, our faith in Christ *should* continue. But the claim that it absolutely must, or necessarily does, has no support at all in the Bible.

Or like these, from a concerned author:

It is possible, even probable, that when a believer out of fellowship falls for certain types of philosophy, if he is a logical thinker, he will become an “unbelieving believer.” Yet believers who become agnostics are still saved; they are still born again. You can even become an atheist; but if you once accept Christ as savior, you cannot lose your salvation, even though you deny God.

Or like these, from a concerned pastor and theologian:

I state categorically that the person who is saved—who confesses that Jesus is Lord and believes in his heart that God has raised him from the dead—will go to heaven when he dies, no matter what work (or lack of work) may accompany such faith. In other words, no matter what sin (or absence of Christian obedience) may accompany such faith.

No!

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. [This is not just a matter of “losing your reward.” This is a matter of suffering the wrath of God that comes on the disobedient!] *Therefore do not be partners with them.* (Eph. 5:6-7)

Otherwise His wrath will come on you.