

“Cut it down and Forget it”

The Civil War left a tragic aftermath of bitterness, hatred, and resentment in America. The wounds inflicted by the war were deep and painful. Though the guns fell silent, the angry, recriminations went on. Many could not forget or forgive what had been done. Exchanges between former enemies rarely rose above the level of angry accusations and scornful denunciations.

One man who refused to participate in or condone this terrible harvest of bitterness was General Robert E. Lee. In word and deed, Lee urged reconciliation between North and South. He knew that the war was over and that the future of the nation demanded a new attitude for a new day. To the day of his death, the "Gray Knight" was never heard to speak an unkind word about those who had formerly been his enemies. Lee even opposed the erection of Confederate monuments because he thought they would only serve to keep wartime passions alive.

On one occasion a lady in Lexington, Virginia, where Lee lived after the war, showed him the scarred re-

By Bobby Dockery

mains of a tree in her yard. All the limbs had been shot off by Federal artillery during a raid. Thinking the General would share her sense of outrage she waited expectantly for him to comment. Finally, Lee spoke: "Cut it down, my dear Madam, and forget it."

"Cut it down and forget it!" In many ways that is good advice for us as well! It could be applied to all the following:

1. Past Sights, Hurts and Wrongs.
2. Past Losses, Defeats and Failures.
3. Past Sorrows, Grief and Heartaches.
4. Past Mistakes, Transgressions, and Sins.

Consider **Philippians 3:13-14** - "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing / do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.



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We Meet at the Piedmont Family YMCA
442 Westfield Road, Charlottesville 22901

Email: larryrouse@cvillechurch.com
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Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. **(Matthew 5:16)**

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Thoughts To Ponder

Grace binds you with far stronger cords than the cords of duty or obligation can bind you. Grace is free, but when once you take it, you are bound forever to the Giver and bound to catch the spirit of the Giver.

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Larry Rouse
Evangelist & Editor

Turning the Grace of God into a Carnal Weapon

By Larry Rouse

All who know the Lord understand the power of His grace! Those who have seen the blackness of their own sin and were then melted by the message of how God gave His Son for them, can attest to the life-changing power of the gospel. We do not deserve salvation. We cannot earn salvation. In our sin we were once active enemies of God. Still, God, by His grace, gave us the greatest gift that has ever been given **(Rom 5:6-8)**!

Those who have been changed by this grace, find their hearts and their lives defined by it. Paul plainly proclaimed "By the grace of God I am what I am" **(1 Cor 15:10)**. When Paul converted some Jews and proselytes to God he urged them to continue "in the grace of God" **(Acts 13:43)**. Our true spiritual growth is measured by our increase in "the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" **(2 Peter 3:18)**.

The perversion of God's Grace

Satan hates the grace of God, for by it men are rescued from his clutches. Being the cunning adversary that he is, Satan has encouraged many to serve him under the banner of the grace of God! There were those who preached a doctrine of "grace" that

left men's hearts untouched by the teaching of the Spirit of God. Men were told that they could "continue in sin that grace may abound" **(Romans 6:1)**. Others found under this banner of "grace" that in their hearts they could hate their brethren and exalt themselves over these "inferiors" in their pride **(1 John 3:14-15)**. Jude proclaimed that these men had in fact turned "the grace of our God into lewdness" **(Jude 4)**.

Modern Day Examples

Years ago I read an article by Connie Adams that I never forgot. He received some advice concerning men who claim to define their lives by the "grace" of God and how they actually act under pressure.

"Years ago, an older preacher told me of a warning he had received years before from Cled Wallace. He said, "Watch out for the real sweet men. They will rip you to pieces when they get a chance." I have received more unkind and unjust treatment over the years from those who had the most to say about love, kindness, gentleness and such nobler qualities, but who could not tolerate any criticism about what they were teaching."

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"I much prefer to deal with people who will meet you in the open before witnesses to air honest disagreements than those who isolate and insulate themselves in ivory towers where they look down with contempt on the fray below them."

I, too, have experienced the wrath of these men who talk about grace, love and peace. Often these men are seeking to form a party, split a church or work to destroy the reputation of another Christian they view as a competitor in any way they can.

Tests for the True Grace of God

Peter wanted Christians to clearly identify and stand in the "true grace of God" rather than some self-serving philosophy (**1 Peter 5:12**). Consider these questions and test your own heart.

1. How do I view those who disagree with me?

Those who are motivated by God's grace and love are forbearing and willing to listen to others that have a difference with them. God's grace will always lead to an open Bible and an open heart to search out "the word of His grace" (**Acts 20:32**).

When Satan's "grace" is involved, there will be quick judgments about others. Many are quickly labeled as unworthy of study, particularly if they have displayed a strong faith and knowledge of God's word. However, those who are struggling and separated from other Christians are often approached in private about these new views (**Peter 2:1**).

2. Am I being honest with others about what I really believe?

The grace of God will be open and honest about anything God has revealed. There is no need to plot, plan or scheme concerning how to teach others. "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. ²But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (**2 Cor 4:1-2**).

Those who are motivated by Satan's wisdom have learned to lie. They have as their goal to bring as many into their party as possible and in any way they can. If a false impression about their own

beliefs would keep a knowledgeable Christian from questioning them and thus give them more time to work behind the scenes, then they will do that very thing. If they can misrepresent what another Christian believes so they can pull another Christian into their group, then they will do that too (**Gal 4:17**).

3. What is the focus of my own heart and those that associate with me?

Our tongues will ultimately reveal our hearts. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things" (**Matthew 12:35**). Those motivated by the grace of God will be looking to serve others, to speak well of others and to see the best in others.

A sure sign of Satan's wisdom is seen when men's concept of "grace" leads them to quickly label others as "traditionalist," "legalist" and with many other terms (**James 3:16**). These men are constantly looking at men, whether it is to condemn and attack their "opponents" or to flatter one another over their spirituality. "For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (**2 Cor 10:12**).

One Final Test

We must know the difference between these philosophies. From my personal experience, I have found most that have used God's grace as a weapon have hearts that are filled with anger and bitterness. Sadly, if given time, they will fill their disciples with this same spirit. Keep your eyes open and see if it is God or Satan that is behind these teachings.

"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace" (**James 3:13-18**).



Competition for the Mind

By Dee Bowman

There is a battle raging—a serious, eternal life threatening battle. We can lose it if we are not careful. The mind is the battleground. Choose your associations carefully and well.

In **Ephesians 4:26-27**, Paul commanded, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil." This passage is variously translated. Phillips renders it, "Don't give the devil that sort of foothold." Goodspeed's translation says, "You must not give the devil a chance." The Twentieth Century New Testament gives it, "And give no opportunity to the Devil." The thought in all of these is the same: mainly, don't give the Devil residency in your mind.

Someone has said, "You can't keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from nesting in your hair." In the same way, you can't keep the Devil from making periodic trips through your mind, but you don't have to give him a place to stay.

In this age, there is a constant bombardment of the mind by the Devil. He is seeking a place to stay. And one of the ways he does it is by advertising. Our society is addicted to it. Its influence in our lives is astounding.

This competition for the mind is relentless and indefatigable. Just as the means is subtle and effective. Secularism is disguised as success; materialism wears the mask of excellence; free love is passed off as freedom of human expression. The result is indifference toward God.

Those who give over to this cunningly devised plan will find it hard to leave. Once they enter this world of "let me do it my way," they quickly become so mired that only the strongest will can divorce them from their predicament. The appetite for such loose activities cannot be satisfied and calls for an ever-deepening, always increasing evil just to top the last "satisfaction" they enjoyed.

Such careless subscription to the devil's ploys results in disaster. The giving of oneself to a life without restraint results in a cluttered, undisciplined

mind, one difficult to penetrate and often without much feeling for others. Such thinking dampens the spirit of purpose, causes its adherent to be tentative in his plans, temporary in his judgment. It restrains the inclination to grow—intellectually, spiritually, or any other way.

It is short-sighted, foolish to listen to promises of the sort we see everywhere displayed by our adversary. Three things stand out to me as necessary to guard against the Devil's efforts to capture the mind:

1. Make sure your focus is right. Where are you looking? In what direction are you heading? Like Paul, we must "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (**Philippians 3:14**). The Hebrew writer said of Jesus, ". . . who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross . . ." (**Hebrews 12:2**). We need to set before us the hope of heaven.

2. Develop a determination toward self-regulation in your life. Paul said it was necessary. "But I keep under," (buffet – ASV) my body and bring it into subjection: that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (**1 Corinthians 9:26-27**). The life that is not managed properly vacillates, is tentative, not fixed on course.

3. Return to a regular association with truth. It is just so that we are influenced by our companions. When you tolerate associations with the Devil, you are just apt to be like him. But when you are in constant contact with the truth, it will be the pervading influence in your life.

There is a battle raging—a serious, eternal-life threatening battle. We can lose it if we are not careful. The mind is the battleground. Choose your associations carefully and well.

