

Diluted Grace

(December 19, 2006)

<p>Hey, I gotta make a correction!</p> <p>Last week we had a person call and ask me about Psalms 82 where it reads:</p> <p>“I have said, Ye are gods, and all of you are children of the most high.”</p>	<p>I made the statement that the lowercase "g" in gods was not translated in the Hebrew as Elohim.</p> <p>It is. I was wrong.</p> <p>But I was correct in the usage of the word.</p> <p>“Elohim” is used in the Hebrew to denote both God and earthly judges! You can find such an example in Exodus 21:6 where it reads:</p> <p><i>Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever.</i></p> <p>Apologies. Just goes to show what a failure I can be.</p>
<p>If you are LDS, I want you to know that I am very well aware that you “believe in Jesus Christ.”</p>	<p>I know you believe He</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- is the Son of God.- That He suffered for the sins of the world.- That he resurrected and overcame the grave. <p>I KNOW YOU BELIEVE THESE THINGS, if not with your whole heart,</p>

Somehow in the conversations between Christians and Latter-day Saints the fact that Mormons embrace Jesus does not get through and it creates a great amount of frustration for the LDS involved.

I get emails that, like a mantra, repeat "But we are Christian. We believe in Jesus Christ. You are so uninformed! I can't even believe you were ever LDS!" are evidence of this frustration.

I thought I would take this show to try and explain the problem here.

than certainly intellectually.

And yes, having been deeply involved in Mormonism, I am well aware that His name is even in the title of your church.

Email reminders of this are not entirely necessary unless you feel overly inclined.

I want you to imagine that you're holding a cup of Crystal Light powder in your hand.

This happens to be lemon.

This product represents the grace found through the absolute finished work of Jesus Christ.

Let me repeat this:

This product represents the grace found through the absolute finished work of Jesus Christ.

You take off the lid (FUMES) and stick the tip of your tongue in the powder.

Powerful, right? Overwhelmingly concentrated.

Now, imagine that you take the powder and add just a teaspoon of liquid to it – you know – just to make it a little more palatable.

It's still powerful, in fact, you've made it more functional by the addition of liquid!

But in the end, you have diluted the grace found in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

It came to you full of power.

It came ready. You added something to it to make it work better for you.

Now suppose you pour the perfect powder into a five gallon bucket of water.

Why? Because it hasn't been diluted.

Now, let's suppose you add the full amount of liquid to the powder.

It's refreshing, it meets the standards set, it is more useable, you might say.

Never the less, compared to the pure form, it is been greatly diluted.

I call this drink religion today. It is lukewarm. It is acceptable, it refreshes, but it does not have the same power and effect on the individual as the undiluted mix.

And though it's widely embraced and consumed, it makes little impact on the lives of individuals.

Remember now, we're talking about a relationship of faith and grace based in Jesus here, not a flavored drink mix.

It becomes very weak, doesn't it.

But the flavoring has been added hasn't it? The flavoring is there, but it is barely detectable.

All right, what if you pour a cup of it into a backyard swimming pool?

You could honestly say that it has been added, couldn't you?

That it is part of the chemical makeup of the water.

You could rightly say that it is there in the mix, and even get insulted when people claim its not.

Finally, let's say you dump the mix into the middle of the Pacific Ocean!

Within minutes it would be diluted to the point of non-existence!

But you could claim its there, couldn't you?

The question is not, "Do you believe in Jesus" or "Are His teachings in your church," or even "Do you recognize Him as the Savior?" The question is

How diluted is your faith in the Grace and Finished Work

Applying our example to the topic at hand, we must remember that Muslims believe and recognize Jesus.

Jehovah's Witnesses, Branch Dividians, and even demons believe in Jesus - some of them even use His name in their worship!

of Jesus Christ?

If believing in the historical Jesus is enough, then everyone but the “Jesus-was-never-a-real-person” people will be saved.

While very generous, it’s not biblical.

If mentioning Him in the body of your theology is enough, then Jehovah’s Witnesses, Islam, and Buddhism should be considered Christian too.

Believing in Jesus, mentioning Jesus, recognizing Jesus is not the same as worshipping and knowing the undiluted Lord.

The more you embrace the grace Jesus gives, the more you walk by faith in Him, and the more able you are able to do the will of the Father, and not of man.

And the more you walk by faith in Him, the more you please God.

Diluted faith in Jesus will not ever save anyone. Diluted faith is, in fact, a tremendous deceptor; a counterfeit that merely gives people the false notion that they know Him, but in reality don’t.

Matthew 7:21 ¶ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.
22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

<p>Remember Heb 11:6: “without faith it is impossible to please God.”</p>	<p>Let’s go back in time for a moment, and take a look at the historical attempts there have been to dilute the grace that comes through the finished work of Jesus.</p>
<p>In the fourth century of our Lord there was this British monk whose name was Pelagius.</p> <p>He grew tired and impatient of the writings of St. Augustine which he thought were too “grace oriented.”</p> <p>Augustine had some unique ideas but he certainly represented Apostolic thought when it came to grace.</p> <p>So in order to show Augustine wrong, Pelagius <i>reintroduced</i> to the world the very natural and humanist idea that human beings achieve salvation by their own efforts.</p> <p>I say, “reintroduced” because this deluded concept was nothing new to the body of Christ.</p>	<p>The idea that human beings could “save themselves” by virtue of their own righteousness was alive and well in the Pharisees when Jesus was on earth.</p> <p>These legalists, with their “creeping moralistic views” believed they could actually get to God by virtue of their outward worthiness, even though their inward parts were full of “dead, dried bones.”</p> <p>Jesus despised such thinking and was not reticent in pointing out the inability of people to reach God by virtue of their</p>

<p>When the rich young ruler came to Jesus and walked away because of his many possessions, the disciples were blown away because Jesus said he would not enter the kingdom of heaven! And he was otherwise a righteous dude!</p> <p>So they cried, "Well who then can be saved?"</p> <p>And Jesus replied, "With man it is impossible. But with God all things are</p>	<p>righteousness.</p> <p>Yet in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said to the people</p> <p><i>"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."</i></p> <p>What did all this mean?</p> <p>Well the Pharisees were the most outwardly obedient people on earth! They lived the Law – their life was the Law! They spent every waking moment attending to the Law and there is not a gentile alive today who comes near their outward righteousness.</p> <p>How could a person's righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees?</p> <p>Only by faith in the finished work of Jesus! Because through faith on the only "perfectly righteous One," His righteousness is imputed to us - which righteousness always exceeds that of any Pharisee.</p> <p>Get it?</p>
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possible.”

With “mans works” it is impossible, but by God’s grace - based on faith in the finished work of Jesus - all things are possible.

So back to this guy named Pelagius in the fourth century AD.

His heresy emphasized that sin occurred from “the will” rather than inborn sinfulness. That human beings become sinners by following Adam’s poor example and become holy by following Christ’s good example.

There was no original sin to Pelagius.

Man would be punished for his own sin and not Adam’s transgression.

Everything was by choice, and as a result the need for spiritual rebirth became a response to “individual sins,” absolved through religious sacraments, and not applied to the whole person.

Paul also faced an early attempt to dilute the grace provided by the finished work of Jesus.

Last week we discussed the book of Hebrews and how it was written to the Christian Jews who were tempted to return to the Law because the Grace of God was too difficult for them to understand or embrace.

The entire book is aimed at showing them that faith in the finished work of Jesus is the better way, to not dilute it, and to see faith in Him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Pelagianism inflamed the fourth and fifth centuries and was at the crux of the battles fought by Martin Luther, who saw the horrible religious results of any system that diluted the pure message of grace through faith on the finished work of Jesus.

Several hundred years later, new religious leaders started popping up, who, like Pelagius, didn't buy into the undiluted message of salvation by grace and began, once again, to add to the pure and powerful grace provided by Jesus.

These most popular of these movements included:
The Shakers
The Jehovah's Witnesses
The Seventh-day Adventists
The Christian Scientists
And the LDS

All of these presented their diluted – and sometimes fanciful - versions of the “true” gospel of salvation to the world.

Luther saw first hand how the remnants of Pelagianism, which was renounced hundreds of years earlier, corrupted the hearts of otherwise good people by getting them to believe they had to work their own salvation out by virtue of allegiance to an organized religion, strict obedience to rites, rules, and ordinances, and by paying demanded financial obligations to the church to save themselves and their dead.

And so he tacked his 96 thesis on the door at Wittenberg and ignited the reformation.

Why?

Whether with good intentions or bad, they all decided, in one way or another, that grace through faith on the finished work of Jesus *was just not enough.*

There HAD to be more to it.

And they were going to improve upon it, reinterpret the scriptures about it, and provide the imbalanced world of Christianity with their own special blend of man-made additions.

Immanuel Kant, a philosopher who most embodied these beliefs, openly embraced Pelagianism, and recognized Jesus as nothing more than a “good example” of moral duty.

“Autonomy” (the rule of the self), seeped into every discipline, including theology, and “the blue ribbon of

With the Age of Enlightenment, modern-day Pelagianists championed “human ability” as the means to overcome the world and obtain sanctification.

God became “the moral law giver” but it was Man who possessed the ability to overcome himself.

Spires replaced crosses, science replaced faith, and Man, once again, decided he could provide solutions to existential angst, alienation, and sin.

With a focus on human achievement, reason, social perfectionism, and ethics over regeneration, Jesus once again was forced into the back seat of many philosophies and religions.

spirituality” began to be awarded to those who achieved worldly success, intellectual acumen, and the power to overcome human weakness.

The supernatural was soon replaced by the “superman” - the Übermensch, and like Babel, nothing could be kept from human progress.

Nothing but true salvation.

Friedrich Nietzsche, that most disturbed philosopher of Humanism, even pointed out the fact that “when Christian morality is severed from Christian theology,” neither can remain.

In other words, when Christian morals are applied outside of the unique Christian theology of grace, neither will last.

Just look at the Church today.

Being Christian does not first mean being moral. Being Christian first means recognizing your sinful nature and turning to the undiluted grace given to you by faith upon the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Now what does the LDS Church maintain?

In the Bible dictionary, at the back of the LDS Bible, it reads that grace is God’s “enabling power to lay hold on eternal life and exaltation after they have expended their own best efforts.”

This is God’s grace diluted with an ocean full of mans works.

It makes me want to wretch.

Spencer W. Kimball said in the Book of Mormon Student Manual (page 36) that “one of the most fallacious doctrines originated by Satan and propounded by man is that man is saved alone by the grace of God; that belief in Jesus Christ alone is all that is needed for salvation.”

This man is held up in the highest of esteem by the LDS, and like Pelagius, like the Pharisees, like Kant and Nietzsche, he flat out contradicts the Bible’s saving message of Grace!

Which is . . . ?

Romans 3:28 *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*

Ephesians 2:8 *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

Titus 3:5 *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;*

Romans 5:1 ¶ *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*

John 3:15 *That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

Romans 3:20 *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight:*

John 11:25 *Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.*

Galatians 2:16

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

There is certainly a great attraction toward Pelagianism in the heart of Man even today.

It makes us feel good to take our salvation into our own hands.

It makes sense to the unregenerated heart that we can please God by our efforts and thereby secure a place with him after this life.

But all this configuring does is dilute the power and majesty of what Jesus did once and for all to them that believe.

Grace cannot be grace if it is combined with anything else.

There is no salvation by grace AND works.

Romans 11:6

And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

There are always LDS comebacks to this biblical truth.

	<p>The most popular say:</p> <p><i>Well we have to do something?</i></p> <p>OR</p> <p><i>Faith without works is dead?</i></p> <p>OR</p> <p><i>You can't just say I accept Jesus and sin like there's no tomorrow!</i></p> <p>Before we go to the phones – (801) 973-8820 973-TV20 Let me address each of these common responses individually.</p>
<p>First, there's the idea that "we have to do something."</p>	<p>What do you want to do? What can you do but believe? What can you add to the formula provided for your salvation that hasn't already been taken care of by Jesus?</p> <p>There is nothing you can do that will get God to save you "more." Nothing.</p> <p>There is nothing you can do to get God to love you "more."</p> <p>God's love for you is uncaused by you.</p> <p>Here's the thing:</p> <p>God sees you through the shed blood of the son. Period. You are either covered or your not. You have either embraced Him by faith or you have not. If you're covered, you're saved, and rewarded according to your works, if you're not covered, you're damned, and you go to hell.</p>

<p>#2 “But faith without works is dead.”</p>	<p>Your “doings” and “works” and contributions will be seen for what they are in God’s eyes - “Filthy rags” – unless they are done with a heart solely dedicated to Him.</p> <p>You cannot hide your motives from God.</p> <p>But remember, by faith we should have</p> <p>Heb 10:19 ¶ . . . <i>boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,</i> <i>20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;</i> <i>21 And having an high priest over the house of God;</i> <i>22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.</i> <i>23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.</i></p> <p>Glory awaits all them that have faith in the undiluted grace provided by the finished work of Jesus.</p> <p>This is possibly the most repeated verse in the repertoire of LDS Bible verses.</p> <p>“Faith without work is dead.”</p> <p>Recognize the order here:</p> <p>“Faith . . .”</p> <p>James is talking about faith here. He is talking about how our faith is seen to exist before men, not how the</p>
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<p>And the third response is usually something like:</p> <p>Well, you can't just say "I accept Jesus" and sin like there's no tomorrow!</p>	<p>presentation of works definitively prove faith before God!</p> <p>Do you see the difference, here?</p> <p>Listen to what Paul says about the relationship of works in his life that came as a result of his understanding grace.</p> <p><i>1st Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.</i></p> <p>I had an LDS Bishop once tell me that "90% of the work in the Church is just showing up even though you don't want to even be there!"</p> <p>When I discovered the grace of Jesus I not only wanted show up, but I wanted to serve, and give, and give away my entire life for Him each and every day!</p> <p>Ninety percent is just showing up. Ninety percent of hell is just showing up.</p> <p>I work a thousand times harder for God as a born-again Christian than I ever did as a committed Mormon.</p> <p>Do you see the difference?</p> <p>Anyone I have ever known who comes to know the genuine grace of Jesus in their lives does anything but "sin like there's no tomorrow."</p>
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<p>The Pharisees, the Judaizers, Pelagius, and Kant got it all wrong.</p> <p>They missed the point.</p> <p>So did Joseph Smith and Spencer W. Kimball, among others.</p> <p>We are saved by grace through faith on the finished work of Jesus.</p> <p>Nothing added at all.</p>	<p>Whenever someone makes this statement all it tells me is that they have absolutely no idea what it personally means to have been saved by the grace of God through faith on Jesus.</p> <p>They think it's actually something that is just "said."</p> <p>Romans 6 is a fantastic chapter on the relationship between grace and sin.</p> <p>The idea that people accept Jesus and then sin on is a heinous and gross perversion of the reality of the born-again experience and I've yet to meet a true Christian who believes it is alright to sin in any way.</p> <p>What's fascinating however, is that those people who embrace a modified version of Grace are the ones who actually justify sin the most!</p>
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