

Jude's Interesting Alarm About Grace

The prophets divine lies...and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not turn from his wicked way, by promising him life.

Ezekiel 13:8-23

To Whom Is Paul Resisting the Charge He Makes Grace a License of Immorality?

Jude was the third bishop over Jerusalem. He was another brother of Jesus, like James, the first bishop of Jerusalem. In Jude's epistle in our New Testament, Jude criticizes without naming names someone for making God's grace a license for immorality. Jude very clearly means that someone was teaching Christians that God's grace saved you despite your later continuing in sin. Jude condemns this as outrageous heresy. We will demonstrate just how clearly Jude makes this point in a moment.

What cannot be ignored is that Paul in Romans 6:1 is responding precisely to the *same* charge. No one has ever been willing to draw Jude's sword in the direction of Paul. Why is there reluctance to see Jude's most likely target is Paul? Because of the historical presumption that *both* Jude and Paul are simultaneously inspired. This *de facto* points our attention *away* from Paul. However, when you

compare Paul's claim in Romans 6:1 that he does not teach grace is a license to immorality against Jude's remarks, the coincidence of the issues is quite striking.



More important, Paul's statements in Romans 6 has never convinced eternal security advocates that Paul really means to deny the charge. They claim Paul does really mean that once you are saved, God's grace does permit you to sin without risking, even for a second, loss of salvation. Paul, they claim, says a Christian who sins is risking loss of *rewards* only. (See Charles Stanley, *Eternal Security*.) Jude, however, precisely says the false grace teaching is that grace permits you to sin and not lose *salvation*. Thus, while Paul says to the charge "God forbid" in Romans 6:1, in the balance of Romans chapter six Paul never disavows the charge that God's grace permits an unrepentant sinning Christian into heaven. The standard Pauline view, especially by Baptists, is that Paul thinks a sinning Christian is guaranteed salvation regardless of unrepentant sin.

Let's now read Jude and Paul to see the sharp contrast. Unless Charles Stanley and most Protestants are wrong, Paul does teach eternal security. Paul teaches once you are saved, there is now no condemnation. (Romans 8:1.) Paul's doctrine of eternal security is precisely what puts Paul in sharp contrast to Jude's statements.

If we ever gave this issue any thought, we already know there is a division between Paul and Jude. However, one solution is to secretly not give Jude much weight. We trust Paul over Jude. However, that is not my point. ***What I am trying to uncover is an historical division between the Jerusalem church under James and his successors and Paul.*** Jude's epistle shows that they are in sharp conflict. This will bolster the other evidence in the same vein presented in other chapters.

Let's take time to see how *explicit* is Jude's condemnation of Paul's teaching of eternal security. First, we will see what Paul says.

Paul's Teaching That He Is Misunderstood on Grace

In Romans 6:1, Paul asks rhetorically does what he says mean that grace should abound even more when we sin: “What shall we say? Should we sin that grace may abound?” Paul then goes on to prove he is not saying we *should* sin so grace abounds just because what he teaches about grace (*i.e.*, eternal security) is true. Yet, Paul never denies that grace licenses unrepentant immorality from the pain of damnation. Paul answers “God forbid!” that he is saying we should sin so grace abounds more. In the next breath, however, Paul does not deny a Christian can enjoy God’s grace more and more even if the Christian goes on in unrepentant sinning. This is precisely how Charles Stanley understands Paul, as explained in Stanley’s *Eternal Security* book.

Thus, all Paul is saying is that even though grace carries with it eternal security, he is not *encouraging* people to sin more so grace abounds more. It is just an unfortunate possible way a carnally-minded Christian could view his (*i.e.*, Paul’s) teaching.

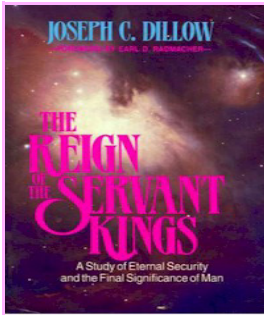
Lloyd Jones is a popular eternal security teacher. This is precisely how he reads Romans 6.

[Regarding] the first chapter of Romans 6... Lloyd Jones says, if people do not accuse you as Paul anticipated them accusing him there of preaching **license** because of the clarity of proclaiming the gospel, you haven’t proclaimed the gospel clearly enough yet.¹

Dillow goes on to say even more emphatically that Romans 6:1 means that grace, if taught properly, must appear to be a license for immorality.

It is possible that some will argue ‘Let us continue in sin that grace may abound.’ The apostle Paul was criti-

1. *The Doctrine of Assurance* (White Horse Inn broadcast, September 3, 1995).



Dillow defends eternal security and refutes perseverance of the saints.

cized for this very thing. (Romans 6:1) Any doctrine of grace which cannot be so misunderstood is not a biblical doctrine of grace.²

Thus, let it be clear that Paul was answering the charge that grace was a license for immorality. The defenders of Paul admit this was the charge that he was answering. Yet, the defenders of Paul admit that in answering the charge, Paul essentially agrees he does teach that grace is a license for immorality. However, just because we *can* does not mean we *should*. Romans 6 says that we *should* not indulge the flesh after being baptized and accepting Christ merely because we safely can do so without risking hell. We all have to concede that Paul pulls up short from saying that sin by a Christian results in serious consequences such as loss of salvation. This is where Paul and Jude are sharply at odds.

Jude's Concern Was A Grace Teaching That The Threat Of Hell Was Erased For Unrepentant Sin

Next, let's review Jude's charge against persons not named who teach "grace is a license for immorality" (King James). This quote below is from the NIV. Please note how the NIV takes the word that everywhere else is translated as *grace* but here changes it to *forgiveness*. Is this because of the apparent embarrassment if the reader could readily realize this quote fits Paul precisely? You decide. Here is Jude in the NIV:

Some godless people have wormed their way in among you, saying that God's forgiveness [**grace** KJV] allows us [**licenses** KJV] to live immoral lives [**immorality** KJV]....[T]hey have turned against our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. I must remind you—and you know

2. Dillow, *Reign of the Servant Kings*, *supra*, at 603.

it well—that even though the Lord rescued the whole nation of Israel from Egypt, he later destroyed **EVERY ONE OF THOSE WHO DID NOT REMAIN FAITHFUL**. And I remind you of the angels that **did not stay** within the limits of authority God gave them but left the place where they belonged. God has kept them chained **in prisons and darkness**, waiting for the day of judgment. And don't forget the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah ... Those cities were destroyed by fire and are a warning of **the eternal fire that will punish all who are evil**. (Jude 4-6) (Emphasis added.).

Jude is concerned about a false message of Christian liberty. Someone is teaching that grace licenses immorality. Some true consequence of immorality (sin) has been subtracted (licensed) by a false grace teaching.

The question is what was this false grace message. What was false about this Christian liberty? There are only two possibilities. Either the false grace message teaches grace is a license to commit sin without repercussions of (1) loss of salvation or (2) loss of rewards with possible chastisement. It can only be one of these two possibilities. If it is (1), then Paul's doctrine of eternal security is being attacked as a false grace message. If (2) is correct, then Jude is concerned that Christians are not told they may lose rewards if they sin.

So what was Jude concerned about? Jude explains his concern, saying that not remaining faithful ends in destruction and eternal fire. Jude punctuates this by saying Sodom was destroyed by fire as a warning of “the eternal fire that will punish all who are evil.”

Thus, we find the answer easy to discover. Jude is expressing outrage that anyone is teaching the grace of God means a Christian can sin and still avoid the eternal fire that will punish all who are evil.

So it is not hard to see Jude teaches that it is a false grace teaching that gives Christians liberty to sin, not repent, and still go to heaven. Perhaps that is why Dillow in *Reign of the Servant Kings* never discusses these verses in Jude. Nor does Stanley in *Eternal Security of the Believer: Can You Be Sure?*

So if Jude is condemning a doctrine that teaches grace allows a Christian to live an immoral life and not suffer eternal fire, then Jude is condemning as heresy Paul's doctrine of eternal security. That's plain and simple to see. Jude could not be talking about losing rewards or chastisement because he is talking about the risks from immoral living for Christians are destruction in eternal fire.

Conclusion

Jude is pointing the finger at Paul. Only Paul taught grace is a license to immorality. Likewise, in Romans 6:1, Paul is responding precisely to Jude's charge. In doing so, while Paul at first appears that he will recant, Paul carefully crafts a response of *just because we can does not mean we should*. Thus, Paul responds by admitting the claim, but sidesteps it by asserting his exhortation to holiness somehow has deflected the charge. Paul thusly believes he has avoided addressing Jude's charge. This is why Pauline defenders can even cite Romans 6 as proving Paul indeed is defending the idea that sin does indeed abound the more we sin. This conclusion is likewise unavoidable, due to Paul's subsequent discussion in Romans that salvation is by a single confession saving you (Romans 10:9-11) and there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1.)

This Jude-Romans 6 battle is the first of many pieces of evidence of a deep rift opening up between the Jerusalem apostles and Paul.