



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Articles

MOTIVATED BY GRACE

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How can the church thrive in a culture of increasing pluralism and decadence where the only tolerated intolerance is the refusal to be completely tolerant?

Let's learn from the letters of Jesus as penned by John to the churches of Asia Minor. He reminded them of great blessings, but said they were conditional upon heeding what had been written (Rev. 1:3; 22:7). He conveyed Jesus' warning that they would be rewarded or punished according to their works (Rev. 2:22-26; cf. 2:2, 5, 19, 3:1-2, 8, 15). He held them accountable to the highest standard and told them to repent if they didn't measure up (Rev. 3:19; cf. 2:5, 16; 3:3).

The seven letters join other New Testament writings to help us see what it means to live the call Jesus issued in the Gospels. Being a disciple is about self-denial and taking up crosses — every day (Luke 9:23-27). It is about counting the cost and going all in (Luke 14:25-33). It is about being a slave to Christ (Rom. 6:16). It is understanding that Jesus' way is at odds with society's norms and leisures (Rom. 12:2; 2 Tim 2:3-6; 1 Pet. 2:11-12; 1 John 2:15-17). It is a vocation, a calling, not an avocation, an interest one gets to if he has time (Eph. 4:1; 2 Thess. 4:11; Heb. 3:1; 2 Pet. 1:10).

Some would tell us such an emphasis diminishes grace. In truth, it is where grace leads. Grace (*charis*) led Paul to the work of bringing about the obedience of faith among the nations (Rom. 1:5). Accepting grace led believers to yield themselves as obedient slaves to Christ (Rom. 6:14-17). Part of being a living sacrifice, not conformed to the world, involved using gifts (*charismata*) that varied according to grace (*charis*) (Rom. 12:2, 6). Paul worked "like a skilled master builder" to build churches "according to the grace of God" (1 Cor. 3:10). He said that grace prompted him to "work harder than" the other apostles (1 Cor. 15:9-10).

How does my commitment compare with Paul, John, and Peter? What does lax commitment say about my understanding of the blessing of grace? Disciples should ask these questions.

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