

What the Bible Says About Grace

The main point. The grace of God is extended to each and every person, regardless of his or her fallen condition. This is where Grace Church has always stood.

We as a church stand firmly on the Word of God, prohibiting sexual sin, including same-gender sexual intimacy. At the same time we stand with the Word of God when it says, *The Lord is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.* [1 Peter 3:9] We believe that we should regard all people, regardless of their condition, sins and failures with the love of Christ. In support of this stance we offer the following.

1. The Official Statement of The C&MA on Human Sexuality defines the view of our denomination and our church regarding extending grace to those involved in sexual sin.
 - a. “The same passage of Scripture that states *“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: 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 Corinthians 6:9-10) also strongly affirms the liberating power of the Christian gospel. Sinful men and women may be freed from all former sinful patterns of life, including sexual sin, whether heterosexual or homosexual: *And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.* (1 Corinthians 6:11).” (This does not necessarily mean that the person is now heterosexual)
 - b. “Like all other sins, the corruption of sexual sin can be fully forgiven through repentance and faith in Christ’s atoning work even though physical and psychological scars caused by sexual sin cannot always be erased in this life. We grieve with those who suffer hardships caused by sexual immorality, even if it is caused by their sinful acts. We strive to give aid in ways that do not deny personal responsibility for sexual behavior. We believe Christ set an example of loving ministry to those who suffer from the results of their own acts of sin in the example of the woman caught in adultery, *“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”* (John 8:3-11).”
2. The Bible contains many examples of God extending grace to fallen people, including people often looked down upon by the world or even by Christians.
 - a. Among those whom Jesus most vehemently chastised for their hard-heartedness and sinfulness were the Pharisees. Yet when any of them chose to repent and believe they were readily forgiven and received into the kingdom of God.
 - In John 3:1-15 we read that the Pharisee Nicodemus came asking Jesus about being born again. Though he may not have been born again at that time, it is clear that he was saved at some point because

much later he accompanied Joseph of Arimathea to prepare the body of Jesus for burial.

- b. The story of the woman caught in adultery in John 8.1-11 is a remarkable example of the grace of God. Adultery is clearly and repeatedly condemned in the Word but it wasn't just the woman who needed God's touch. All in attendance that day were in need of Christ's transformation – the Pharisees and the woman. In fact Jesus first addresses the need of the accusers. Transformation for the accusers begins with the dropping of their rocks – the means of their condemnation. That action opens the door for the woman to also experience transformation. Jesus offered each one in attendance that day his gift of Truth and Grace. Did they accept his gift? We don't know. But we do know that he offers the same gifts to us today. How will we respond? May we each grow in humility, and loving and living as Jesus does – in the fullness of grace and truth.
 - c. Jesus was called to account by the religious leaders of his day for associating with "tax collectors and sinners," presumably the worst of the worst sinners. The problem was that he had no problem relating to them just as they were. This is what earned him the title "friend of sinners." The self-righteous leaders intended this title to be degrading; instead Jesus was honored to be seen as gracious and accepting of such people. As Luke 19.10 says, *"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."* Lost people matter to God. He wants them found.
 - d. The Apostle Paul also says about himself and his mission prior to encountering Jesus Christ... *For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. [1 Corinthians 15:9] In Galatians 1:13 Paul says, For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it.*
 - Yet, despite being the worst of sinners, he was shown mercy. In 1 Timothy 1.13-17 we read, *Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.*
 - e. In John 3.16 & 17 we read, *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*
3. **Conclusion.** Jesus considered no one beyond the reach of grace. In fact, he was very deliberate about seeking those that others considered beyond help.