

REBELLIOUS CHRISTIANS

“How will God deal with people who profess to be Christians but who live in complacency and rebellion, using the grace of God as a license to sin against God and other people?”

Harshly...to answer in one word. Jesus was very clear that mere claims of faith don't make a disciple (Matt. 7:21-23; John 8:31-32). Professing believers whose conduct shows no evidence of spiritual life have a “dead” faith (James 2:17) and live a lie (1 John 1:6). A rebellious and haughty spirit is a mark of a false or counterfeit Christian whose end is “destruction” (2 Peter 2:10, 12). Jude warns of “condemnation” and “eternal fire” awaiting those who distort God's grace into an excuse for immorality (Jude 3-4, 7). We should not be deceived about this matter (Gal. 6:7-8).

Those who truly belong to Jesus Christ have been born again from above (John 3:1-8) and their new life produces a new lifestyle (1 John 3:7-10). Any professing Christian who chooses a life of willful sin courts a terrible destiny at the hands of God who is a “consuming fire” (Heb. 10:26-27, 31; 12:29). Although theologians debate whether such a one was saved and fell from grace or was never saved in the first place, responsible teachers of both persuasions agree that Scripture provides no basis of assurance to anyone who is persistently and unrepentantly immoral. God is exceedingly merciful to the contrite sinner, but He does not countenance flagrant immorality - and neither should the church (1 Cor. 5:11-13; see vs. 1-12).

None of this should discourage anyone who grieves because of his or her wrongs, who loves Christ and wants to be more like Him, who confesses sins to God and claims his forgiveness. No penitent can stumble more often than God can restore. Every prodigal who returns home finds the Father waiting eagerly and with open arms. Those are the people whom Jesus came to save - and He is able to save them completely and forever. An old radio preacher used to say, “The Bible teaches the security of the believer, but it nowhere teaches the security of the make-believer.” I believe he was right. As a church sign once put it, “Jesus saves sorry sinners.” And for that we may all be truly thankful.

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