

tools. Religion forces all kinds of rules upon people, instead of encouraging them to simply trust God. God is quite capable of fixing whatever needs fixing in an individual's life, and any other way is like putting the cart ahead of the horse. But many fall to this deception!

***A life of freedom... "Love God,
and do what you like!"***

A very famous man called Saint Augustine said those words! It sounds radical, but it's right out of the bible: "...where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2Cor3:17). The bible also says "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Rom.10:4). "*You mean all I have to do is believe?*" When asked, Jesus himself said "The work of God is this: to believe in the one He has sent" (John 6:29). I'm not making this up folks! It's all real... and it's all good! Christ... Eternal life, a life of love, tolerance, blessings and freedom... it's all yours for the asking. Instead of laws, the bible speaks to believers about maturity and responsible living, saying "Everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible, but not everything is constructive" (1Cor. 10:23-24). It even goes so far as to say: "So whatever you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1Cor. 10:31).

No my friends, following Christ does not mean becoming a "holier than thou" finger pointing jerk! Yes, He will cause you to become more compassionate, loving and principled, and I would be lying if I told you it is an easy road. But what a relief that a life of judgement and intolerance is NOT the Lord's plan for us. Does that mean we no longer see what is right and wrong? Sure we will. But it is the resentment, bigotry, hatred, racism, and a host of other burdens that we lay aside. If you invite Jesus into your life, he will become a lifelong presence that you can depend on. If you have trouble believing, he even promises to confirm his reality and

show himself to you! (John 14:21). And all He asks is summed up in Loving God and loving each other.

Just Who am I?

I am just one person testifying of God's grace, goodness, and blessings in my life. I've many flaws and don't claim to be any kind of role model. You may even be surprised at the circumstances under which I gave you this message, or where you found it. You might even be inclined to judge me if you reviewed my life. But God blatantly says that he delights in using even what this world calls trash: "...God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong; He Chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things -- and the things that are not -- to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him" (1 Cor. 1:27-29).

I don't know about you my friend, but that's my kind of God! He loves you too and is eager to be invited into your life. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me." (Rev 3: 20). Why not toss aside all the nonsense religion has told you. Simply come to the Lord, and let Him love and bless you! I invite you to write or email me if you'd like to talk or have questions. I don't know all the answers, but I know the one who does!

Through The Cracks Ministries

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Sin! Sin! Sin!

Can't you guys talk about anything else?

Aren't you tired of Christians talking on and on about "sin"? Spending more time condemning people then telling them about God's love? Or maybe the closest you've heard about this love sounded more like hellfire, and judgement. I've written this short handout to testify about how good, indeed how much better God really is, than many are willing to tell you. So if you usually throw away handouts like this, *please* save this one, because this message is very different!

Where did all this "sin" stuff start anyway?

No doubt you've heard the Garden of Eden story about "original sin". Regardless what you believe about creation, someone was still first to have the ability to think as we do today. The bible implies that the first humans were under no laws, had no knowledge of sin, and were free to do *almost* anything they pleased. They were in a state of grace, and any mistakes they made in exploring their world were simply that.... mistakes! But of that one tree of "knowledge of good and evil", God told them not to eat, and warned that it would kill them! (Genesis 2:16).

Skits performed by comedians often portray Adam and Eve eating this "forbidden fruit", and having a sexual awakening. But in the bible it seems like just the opposite was true! Before they ate of this tree, it says "The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame" (Gen 2: vs. 25). Sounds like they were pretty happy with themselves and each other! Yet after eating, their first "enlightened" decision was to hide their nakedness (Gen. 3. Vs 10). Imagine that! A loving couple suddenly judging their own bodies as shameful! What better proof could there be that this

"knowledge" was a curse, and no wonder God was angry! If they judged themselves this way, it was no surprise that this judgmental view was extended to others, and the curse passed on to all generations.

So what did we do with this great "knowledge"

Throughout history, every person, group, tribe or nation, has inherited this nature. We all size up the differences between ourselves and others, and judge those differences as ugly, unlovable, or in some way evil. No one is immune! Watching even the youngest children play, most people find their apparent natural cruelty to each other to be very unsettling. Only during times of plenty, and then only with concentrated effort and maturity, do grown up humans even begin to alter this pattern. All wars, all human hatred, bigotry, racism, and a major portion of the world's evil are arguably the result of this attitude of judgement. This is the road mankind has gone down. God was right! Judging good and evil is too big for our human egos to deal with.

From one curse to another: the law!

The major world religions, Christianity Judaism and Islamic, all agree that Moses was a prophet of God, and through him the 10 commandments were given. These have formed the basis for most modern laws, and few would argue against outlawing stealing and murder. But did you know that the bible says "All who *rely* on observing the law are under a curse (Gal. 3 vs 10)"? It describes striving for goodness under law as the "old covenant", saying "... if there had been nothing *wrong* with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another" (Heb. 8 vs. 7). "Wrong?" What is "wrong" with the law? Well first of all, when children can't get along you do have to set some rules. But laws have to be applied equally to everyone, and common sense tells us that "one size fits all" is less

then ideal. A perfect example was the law forbidding work on the Sabbath day, which was supposed to be a blessing. Yet someone actually criticized Jesus Christ for breaking this law, because he healed a sick person on that day! (Luke 13:14). Secondly, and more to the point, nobody can follow laws perfectly. Yet for imperfect people, we sure spend a lot of time judging the flaws in everyone else! So the law, at best, is only a temporary and imperfect solution.

Now you've surely heard Christians speak of how Jesus died for our sins. (Heb 9. Vs 28). But what is seldom explained is that he did it by removing the requirements of the law for those who receive him. That is a huge difference! It is one thing to be excused for a single speeding ticket. It's quite another to have a court declaration that the law no longer applies to you! Don't believe me? Here are just a few scriptures I'll bet you never hear quoted when sin is discussed:

"...He forgave us our sins, having cancelled the written code, with it's regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us, he took it away, nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2: vs. 14).

"But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code" (Romans 7. Vs 6).

"Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, 'the righteous will live by faith'" (Gal.3:11).

You mean I don't have to follow a bunch of rules to gain God's approval?

The bible says that "...if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing" (Gal.2:21). The truth is that receiving Christ and repentance has nothing to do with us "correcting" ourselves with a

bunch of rules. Rather, it has to do with accepting the free gift of God's goodness. The bible says that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace" (Rom. 3:23). So it is his grace and not our performance that justifies us. By trusting God with our lives we can literally rest, knowing He will do any correcting that needs to be done! All he asks is that we respond by extending the same loving acceptance to others. The bible says "Accept one another, just as Christ accepted you" (Rom. 15: 7). And, "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven" (Luke 6:37). You see? The only rule is the same as the first... don't eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil! Or even more simply, "Love one another". (John 13:35), and "Above all, Love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins" (1Peter 4:8). Will we fail? Yes, but he promises to forgive us every time! About the only unforgivable thing is to refuse God's forgiveness! And it gets better: this free gift also includes eternal life! "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" (John 3:16). Not a bad deal!

But some preachers say just the opposite!!

Yes my friend, they often do. It's been going on long time. A study of the life of Jesus reveals how much trouble even he had with the religious people of his day (Luke 11:52-53). Many of his harshest words were directed at very religious people, with a very "holier than thou attitude"! But the famous story of the "woman caught in adultery" (John 8:3-11) show's the true heart of Christ. After chasing her accusers away, he said "And I don't condemn you either. Go and sin no more".

Make no mistake, religion is one of the devil's greatest