



Refiner's Fire

MINISTRIES

Bringing followers of Joseph Smith into the Light of Christ

Newsletter

Issue N° 6 — Winter 2009

Where's the Grace?

Joseph Smith never understood the gospel of Christ. And so he attempted to replace it with his own brand of Old Testament style legalism.

My wife, Leslie, taught at a Jewish synagogue school in Los Angeles for 13 years. A fellow teacher once traveled to Texas for a wedding and returned with a question. "Leslie, what is this Christian thing with grace?" When Leslie asked what prompted her question, she replied, "We saw a number of Christian churches while we were there, and many of them had 'Grace' in their name. We figured it must be a significant Christian concept." What a wonderful opening! Leslie then did her best to explain the Christian gospel of grace. But the concept never seemed to register. You see, this woman was a very observant Jew. She kept a strict kosher home, religiously kept the Jewish Sabbath and invited us to a festive Jewish ceremony where her husband circumcised their newborn son. No wonder Leslie's explanation of grace never registered; there is no room in such a system for the Grace of Christ. This is why Jesus abolished their system.

But this woman was right when she observed that grace must be a significant Christian concept. In fact, grace is the very *essence* of Christ's gospel, as Paul says, "For it is by *grace* you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the *gift* of God — not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). Interestingly, the Greek word for grace, *charis*, may also be translated *gift*. That's why Paul also describes salvation this way, "For the wages of sin is death, but the *gift* of God is *eternal life* in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). Accordingly, he had dedicated his entire life to "testifying to the gospel of God's *grace*" (Acts 20:24). Time and again the New Testament makes clear that Jesus' gospel of salvation is in fact a *gift*, which can never be merited or earned through works of legalism. We honor God by simply trusting

Him and accepting His gracious offer. Period. Consequently, there is no room for legalism in the gospel of Christ. The inseparability of *grace* and *gospel* is the reason *grace* appears in the New Testament 123 times!

Joseph Smith's emphasis, however, is exactly opposite of that found in the New Testament. In his Doctrine & Covenants (D&C) for example, Joseph Smith mentions *grace* 26 times, but *law(s)* 75 times — nearly 3 times as much! And 3 additional times he characterizes God as the church's *lawgiver*. When Joseph Smith does mention grace, it is mostly lip-service in order to make his pronouncements sound more Biblical. Most of the time grace is simply an attribute of deity, such as "full of grace and truth" (D&C 22:4, 21; 36:1; 66:5, etc.). On the other hand,

he makes numerous references to a wide variety of *laws* being given to his church by their *lawgiver*. One of Joseph Smith's clearest proclamations of his legalistic "works salvation" is in connection with the resurrection of the just; he asserted that people obtain this resurrection "by keeping the commandments, [that] they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins" (D&C 76:5b). Consider also his astonishing claim from the Book of Mormon, "And notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses..." (2 Nephi 11:45). That Joseph Smith was solidly rooted in legalism is further evidenced by his creation of an Aaronic priesthood and High Priests, mimicking the Old Testament legal priesthood of Israel.

However, this officiating priesthood was an inseparable part of the Mosaic law and was forever abolished by Jesus' completed work on the cross. The Apostle Paul is most emphatic on this point.

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, *having cancelled the written code [Mosaic law], with its regulations, that was against us...he took it away, nailing it to the cross* (Col. 2:13-14).

You who are trying to be justified by law have been *alienated* from Christ; you have fallen away from grace (Gal. 5:2-4).

Laboring under their burden of false scripture and doctrine, is it any wonder that Latter Day Saints are lost?

Each fall we have a Ministry Picnic for former RLDS members, although others attend as well. A couple of years ago, with well over 100 in attendance, I asked how many were former RLDS members. Nearly every hand went up. I then asked how many never understood the gospel until they left the RLDS church. As far as I could tell, the same hands went right back up. And that's because they never understood the *grace* of God. Conversations with hundreds of Latter Day Saints over the years have confirmed this.

Latter Day Saints are just as lost as Leslie's Jewish teacher friend. When we try to talk to them about the *grace* of God, they look just as puzzled as she did. They need to be set free from their legalistic trap, and introduced to the beautiful Gospel of Grace given us in Jesus.... *because the entire work of Joseph Smith can only be characterized as a dis-grace.* ❖

May the love of Christ grace your hearts and your home this Christmastime!

Paul Trask

In his writings, Joseph Smith created many "laws," and characterized God as the church's "lawgiver."

Thank You So Much!

At this time of year we want to thank each of you who have faithfully supported us, financially and spiritually. It has been an incredibly busy and successful year. And it simply would not have been possible without your help. Your encouragement means more than you can know. *Thank you for standing together with us.*

Video Ministry Opportunity

More and more people are getting their information from online videos and DVD's, instead of — or in addition to — printed material. This may be why many people have asked if we have any videos of our teaching. Right now, the answer is 'no.' But we'd like to change that.

As resources allow, and as the necessary skilled individuals become available, we will pursue this ministry opportunity.

Help Wanted

- ➔ **Video Production** – experience in the various stages of video production, from shooting footage, editing, effects and production.
- ➔ **Graphic Design** – to support various ministry publications, website and video production.

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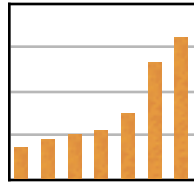
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Website Traffic is UP



We are experiencing unprecedented web traffic. In fact, it is now well over 300% of our summer levels! This has never happened in the 9 years the site has been up.

One possible reason for this is our new blog, which began in June and is now receiving a lot of traffic. Another reason may be that — for the first time — we sent our Fall newsletter to nearly 400 pastors.

Our Blog has Become Popular!

Beginning this past June, our Blog Master, Jan Moon has posted several thought-provoking articles. As a result, our blog has begun attracting about half our web traffic! (Go to our home page menu to access the blog.)

Come visit our blog and see why!

Taking a 'Closer Look'

The best antidote to Joseph Smith is a strong dose of Biblical theology!

Paul Trask continues teaching a Sunday morning class at East Side Baptist Church in Independence, MO (the *Closer Look* class). Right now we are closely examining the Book of Mormon, and why it cannot possibly be



legitimate. And in the process, we're learning a lot about the Bible!

We are building up a small army of people with the knowledge and confidence to reach out to

their Latter Day Saint family, friends, neighbors and work-mates.

We meet in room 307-B from 9:15–10:30, and always start with prayer for each others' needs — and for praises. All are welcome!

If You are a Pastor....

Then we have a gift package waiting for you! Just give me a call, Paul Trask at (816) 824-5824, and we can schedule a time for me to drop it by and chat for awhile. (Lunch would even be better!) Or you can email me at paul@help4rlds.com.

I would be happy to discuss visiting your church. The information and solid Bible teaching we provide is equipping Christians to reach out to the Latter Day Saints in our community. Latter Day Saints desperately need friends like this.

Your congregation can play a vital role in this part of the Great Commission to the lost people group right next door!

Ministry Activity - The Year in Review

This has been a very busy year for the ministry. Paul Trask spoke 14 times in 7 different venues in the course of 2009. Here is a condensed summary.

- 1/09 - Moment of Truth Baptist Church, Claycomo, 4 week evening series
- 1/09 - New Salem Baptist Church,
- 11/09 Independence, Preach/Teach 2 evenings
- 3/09 - Salvation Army, Independence, Preach/Teach & Temple Lot Tour
- 4/09 - Baptist Bible Fellowship, Independence, Preach/Teach on RLDS issues
- 5/09 - Calvary Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Guest Lecturer, Apologetics Class
- 10/09 - New Community Church, Blue Springs, Annual RFM Ministry Picnic
- 11/09 - First Baptist Church of Buckner, Buckner, 4 week Sunday evening series

My heartfelt thanks to our volunteers who have accompanied me, maintained our literature table and spoke to countless people.

New Book Coming

In the coming year we hope to publish a new book by Peter Elliott, *Reasons for Disbelief*. Well, it's not exactly *new* — it was written in 1980. Peter is currently a theology professor and Ph.D. candidate from Australia, and a former RLDS member. He wrote this book as he was leaving the RLDS church years ago. It represents his personal process. A special feature of the book is that it includes many revealing quotes from RLDS leaders at the time! A very well written book.

Our Ministry Motto

Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.
(2 Cor. 4:1–2)

*May the Lord bless
each of you with
His peace this Christmas!*