

Neo-Pelagianism

The Old Heresy in a New Age

“God helps those who help themselves.”

You’ve probably heard this phrase. It sounds wise, even biblical—but **it’s not**. In fact, it reflects a **dangerous distortion of grace** that has quietly infiltrated modern Christianity: **Neo-Pelagianism**.

Neo-Pelagianism is a modernized version of **Pelagianism**, the 4th-century heresy that denied **original sin** and taught that humans can achieve righteousness through their own willpower.

While **Neo-Pelagianism** is more subtle than its ancient counterpart, it still shifts the focus away from **God’s sovereign grace** and places it on **human effort**—turning Christianity into a **self-help religion** rather than a **divine rescue mission**.

The result?

- ⚠️ **A faith that exalts human ability over divine grace.**
- ⚠️ **A Christianity that preaches moral improvement over supernatural transformation.**
- ⚠️ **A Gospel that sounds like "try harder" instead of "be born again."**

Let’s break it down.

What Is Neo-Pelagianism?

Neo-Pelagianism is the belief that:

- ❌ Humans are not totally depraved but only "wounded" by sin.
- ❌ We can seek God on our own, without divine intervention.
- ❌ Salvation is a cooperation between God’s grace and our effort.

It denies that **God’s grace alone** is what saves a person and instead suggests that humans have the **inherent ability** to turn to God **apart from His regenerating work**.

This **contradicts Scripture**:

“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.” (John 6:44)

“You were dead in your trespasses and sins, but God made us alive together with Christ.”
(Ephesians 2:1, 5)

Neo-Pelagianism **downplays sin, weakens grace, and elevates human effort**—and it’s everywhere in modern Christianity.

How Neo-Pelagianism Shows Up Today

Neo-Pelagianism **doesn’t always come with a label**. It hides inside motivational sermons, Christian self-help books, and church teachings that sound **encouraging** but are **spiritually empty**.

Here’s where we see it:

◆ 1. “Follow Jesus’ Example” Instead of “Be Born Again”

Many churches teach **Jesus as a moral model**, rather than the **Savior who must regenerate us**.

✗ “Be kind like Jesus.”

✗ “Love others like Jesus.”

✗ “Live like Jesus.”

While these are good things, they **miss the core of the Gospel**—which isn’t about self-improvement but **spiritual rebirth**.

“You must be born again.” (John 3:7)

The Bible says we need **new hearts, not just better habits** (Ezekiel 36:26).

◆ 2. Free Will Overemphasized—Grace Downplayed

Many modern teachings say:

⊘ "God offers grace, but it’s up to you to take the first step."

⊘ "Your salvation ultimately depends on your decision."

This **puts human will above divine grace**, implying that sinners—who are spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1)—have the ability to seek God on their own.

But **Scripture teaches the opposite:**

“So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.” (Romans 9:16)

Grace is **not just an offer**—it’s **the power of God that makes spiritually dead sinners alive.**

◆ **3. The Self-Help Gospel**

Neo-Pelagianism fuels the modern **self-improvement culture**, leading to **self-help Christianity:**

- ✗ **“You have the power within you to change your life.”**
- ✗ **“You just need to tap into your potential.”**
- ✗ **“You are enough.”**

This message **sounds empowering** but is **spiritually bankrupt.**

The truth?

- ⊘ **You don’t have the power within you.**
- ⊘ **You can’t change your heart.**
- ⊘ **You are not enough—but Christ is.**

Christianity is **not about self-help—it’s about divine rescue.**

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

The Danger of Neo-Pelagianism

Why is Neo-Pelagianism dangerous? Because it:

- ⚠ **Turns salvation into self-improvement instead of a supernatural work of God.**
- ⚠ **Shifts trust from Christ to human effort, leading to pride or despair.**
- ⚠ **Leads to legalism—if salvation depends on effort, we end up enslaved to works.**

If **we could save ourselves**, Jesus wouldn’t have needed to die.

Neo-Pelagianism **robs God of His glory** and replaces grace with effort.

But the Gospel is clear:

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” (Titus 3:5)

How Should Christians Respond?

We must **reject** Neo-Pelagianism and **hold fast to biblical truth**:

- ✅ **Humans are totally depraved—We are not just wounded; we are spiritually dead (Romans 3:10-12).**
- ✅ **Grace is essential, not optional—Salvation is God’s work, not ours (John 6:44).**
- ✅ **Faith is a response, not a self-generated decision—It is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9).**

We don’t **reach up to God**—He **reaches down to us**.

Salvation is by **grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone**—anything else is a false gospel.

“He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” (Titus 3:5)

Final Thought: Grace Alone Saves

Neo-Pelagianism isn’t just a **theological mistake**—it’s a **direct assault on the Gospel**.

Either **God saves sinners**,

Or **we save ourselves**.

There is no in-between.

💬 **Have you noticed Neo-Pelagian thinking in modern Christianity? How should we respond? Let’s discuss.** 🗨️

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