

We hear a lot about the grace of God, the free gift of salvation through our faith in Christ, and our response to it. We may have the attitude that God really wants works anyway, or we may have the opposite attitude, that he doesn't require or desire obedience. Whatever our attitude is, we must not take God's grace lightly. It is very serious business. Let us look briefly at a couple of scriptures that verify this thought. First let us read Hebrews 6:4-6,

*It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age and who have fallen[a] away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.*

Now it is bad enough for us to be sinners and enemies of God; he will overlook that if we respond to the great sacrifice of son, if we respect the blood that was shed for us. But to turn our nose up at it, to reject it as meaningless and worthless, is to spit in the face of God and literally pour salt into the wounds of Christ. To crucify him again.

We read further in Hebrews 10:26-31...

*If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

In reading this the other day the seriousness of our response to God's grace once again hits with great impact. The phrase 'insulted the spirit of grace' is almost too much to consider. Think about the idea of the spirit of God in a rage. It is almost too much to consider. The point that it brings me to is this: how can we approach God with this terrible responsibility towards his grace. How can we approach God with this terrible responsibility towards His grace? How can we possibly come into the presence of God? We are unworthy in the highest possible sense. Now this should not cause us to despair; greatly to the contrary, we should feel tremendous joy that God had decided to account us as though we were righteous if we respond in obedience and love to his great grace. But we must fully realize the implications of that grace as far as our relationship to God and our approach to Him.

We read in Luke 18:9-14,

*To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable:*

*"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people - robbers, evildoers, adulterers - or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'*

*"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'*

*"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."*

Look at the tremendous differences in approach between these two men. The Pharisee approached God as someone basically on his own level, who thought of himself as someone worthy of the attention of God. He deals only with the things he has done which he decides must be acceptable to God. The publican, on the other hand, realizes that he simply is not worthy to approach God at all; he is a sinner, and depends totally on God's mercy and not his own worth. He would not even dare to look up as though it were to the face of God, because of his unworthiness. And we read that he went down to his home justified rather than the Pharisee. Christ says that we must humble ourselves to approach the presence of God; we cannot approach him otherwise or he will indeed humble us himself.

Perhaps this has something to do with the next few verses (Luke 18.15-17):

*People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."*

We must approach our God as a child, as someone small and immature, knowing the difference between father and son.

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