

LEST YE FAINT

by

S. Franklin Logsdon

Pastor, Moody Memorial Church, Chicago, Illinois

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CHAPTER TEN

THE FURTHER APPEAL TO FELLOW-WORKERS

“We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain” II Corinthians 6:1).

HERE IS A CALL FOR MORE cautious and careful treatment of divine bestowments. In the development of his appeal, Paul envisaged a threefold danger; namely, the disuse, misuse and abuse of God’s grace.

The Danger in the Disuse of the Grace of God

“We . . . beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.” Disuse of the grace which God so wonderfully and so liberally supplies is, wittingly or unwittingly, a thwarting of the purpose of God. This must be viewed subjectively and objectively.

THE GRACE OF GOD BROUGHT US A PERSONAL SALVATION

“For by grace are ye saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:8).

The holy involvements in so sacred and important a matter cannot be fully comprehended this side of the veil. When we think of the present joys and future blessings which are and will be ours irrevocably, faith at once points its finger to the grace of God as the sole and unchallenged reason.

- Grace sought us when we were far from God and effected our reconciliation.
- Grace saw us when we were in the slough of despond, hopelessly dejected, and interposed its strong arm to lift us to the Rock-foundation.
- Grace observed our impoverishment as non-participants in the covenants and introduced us to a joint-heirship with the Son of God.
- Grace perceived the turmoil of painful restlessness in our hearts and led us into the peace chambers of the Most High, made rich by the blood of the Saviour’s cross, where the tranquility of His peace settled with comforting bliss upon our turbulent souls.

- Grace took cognizance of the fact that all we like sheep had wandered away, and with tender affection welcomed our believing hearts into the household of faith.
- Grace viewed with concern our prodigality as we sought to subsist on the husks of the world, and brought us to the Father's banqueting house.
- Grace knew the brutal lashes which our old master inflicted, and wooed us into the tender care of Him whose banner over us is love.
- Grace witnessed the scorching rays of the sun which beat relentlessly upon our poor, weary lives and directed us under His shadow.

THE GRACE OF GOD TEACHES US HOW TO LIVE

The grace of God teaches us that **“we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world”** (Titus 2:12).

This is the norm of spiritual comportment. It is not only higher than the highest moral plane, it is a different plane. It is a realm in which grace gives enlightenment, strength and direction, for the Christian's disciplined conduct is not the successful overpowering of fleshly propensities by imposing stringent measures of personal prohibitions. It is definitely more than telling the “flesh” to behave itself, or run the risk of suffering a lenten moratorium on desired excesses. Asceticism is merely an attempt to “discipline the old man”, a curbing of the natural self. Spiritual behavior, or Christian conduct, is the Spirit-motivated life taking precedence over the flesh. It is the dominance of the Spirit in a yielded person.

There is no greater incentive to godly living than sweet, daily communion with the Lord, made possible by grace, for friendship tells on character. Sooner or later we become like those with whom we keep company.

If our friend has high ideals amid the sinful ways of man we, too, shall have caught some real sweetness from the rich aroma of that life. We cannot thwart the molding influence of a constant friend.

This is especially true in the spiritual sphere. Those who are on more than speaking terms with the Lord experience this truth. Only this very day, we heard a thoroughly dedicated young missionary say, “I pray as I walk along the street and the Lord is as near and as real as if He were walking by my side.” Such a person has little difficulty with his conduct.

THE GRACE OF GOD SUSTAINS US IN TRIAL

“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (II Corinthians 12:9).

While this inspiring revelation came pursuant to Paul's indescribable excursion to realms supernal, and while there was no human medium for his transmission of the account of this experience, one does not need to ascend to the third heaven to understand about God's sufficient grace. Nor is His divine strength made perfect in Paul's weakness only.

“For there is no respect of persons with God” (Romans 2:11).

Every truly born again person is integrated into the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13) and is in vital contact with the source of supply which furnishes each member of that body.

- If it is a temptation which plagues you, **“God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape”** (I Corinthians 10:13 8).

- If it is a perplexity which drives you to your wits’ end, **“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you”** (I Peter 5:7).

He who does not find such sweet and complete relief from the storms of life has received the grace of God in vain (without using it).

THE GRACE OF GOD STRENGTHENS US FOR SERVICE

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (I Peter 4:10).

As stewards of the manifold grace of God, cherishing intense love and practicing hospitality, all for the glory and honour of God, we are not surprised if we are tested by fiery trial (I Peter 4:12).

If we are reproached in the line of duty for the sake of the name of Christ, His grace will enable us to count it a joy that we are partakers of His sufferings (I Peter 4:13, 14).

In a street meeting conducted by the students of the London Bible Institute, a young lady handed a gospel tract to a man passing by. The man received the silent messenger which could have brought him the joy of meeting and knowing the Saviour. At once, and with a disdainful attitude, he tore the tract to bits in the presence of the one who graciously handed it to him. A Christian business man from the city of Detroit was standing nearby. Witnessing the incident, he walked over to the Bible Institute student and said: “The Lord Jesus saw that transaction and has given you credit for your dedicated attempt to reach that man. He will also bless you for the rebuff you have sustained.” If His grace were not received in vain, we would be more industrious in His service.

THE GRACE OF GOD MAKES US WHAT HE WANTS US TO BE

“But by the grace of God I am what I am” (I Corinthians 15:10).

The Apostle made this statement approximately twenty-four years subsequent to his conversion to Christ, and just a few years prior to his martyrdom. *

* *Ussher’s Chronology.*

It was made, we may conclude, while he was keeping the faith, fighting a good fight and running well the race (II Timothy 4:7).

The power resident in him, making him competent and effective in his exemplary ministry, was the grace of God. It was the impelling force which gave to him his vitality, his vision, his ventures and his victories.

What the grace of God did for him and through him, it is capable of doing for and through us—that is, if ye have not received it in vain.

THE GRACE OF GOD IS DESIGNED TO REACH, OTHERS WITH THE MESSAGE OF REDEEMING LOVE

“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (II Corinthians 6:2b).

It can be clearly seen that the subjective aspect of this matter must be promoted if the objective side is to be pursued. Until His grace means everything to us, it will not mean enough to exuberantly tell others of its greatness. This period of special welcome is termed **“the day of salvation.”** It began when our blessed Lord initiated His earthly ministry. Standing in the midst of the synagogue with the scroll of Isaiah opened to chapter 61, He declared, **“The Spirit hath anointed me . . . to preach the acceptable (dek-tos) year of the Lord”** (Luke 4:19).

The Spirit, through Paul, heralds the same news, but adds a prefix to the word **“acceptable”** (eupros-dek-tos). This, plus the limited time suggested by *“day”* in contrast to *“year”*, gives an urgency to the message, both for its deliverance on the part of the servants and for its reception on the part of sinners.

There is not a more solemn consideration than that this special welcome time, this Salvation-day, is drawing to a close. **“I say unto you, many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able when once the master of the house is risen up, and has shut the door”** (Luke 13:24, 25).

With countless numbers yet to be reached with the message, and with a lessening period of time in which to reach them, we are receiving the grace of God in vain if we are not beseeching men in Christ’s stead to be reconciled to God (II Corinthians 5:20).

The Danger in the Misuse of the Grace of God

MISUSE OF THE GRACE OF GOD HINDERS THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

“Giving no offence in any thing” (I Corinthians 6:3a).

This was a statement of true experience on the part of Paul. It is a statement of serious warning for us. The implications are solemn in the extreme.

- There is the suggestion that obstacles might be hurled in the way of a sinner.
- There is the intimation that Christians could be the agents in such a reprehensible matter.
- There is the bald fact of inevitable consequences—for the believer at the Judgment Seat of Christ and the unbeliever before the Great White Throne.

- There is the hint that a servant of Christ may carelessly overlook or wilfully ignore the denunciation of the Master when He stated, **“Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh”** (Matthew 18:7).

Jesus had just revealed something of His heart’s concern about human agency hindering His work in the lives of men. **“Whoso shall offend (cause to stumble) one of these little ones which believe in me,”** He warned, **“it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea”** (Matthew 18:6).

The local minister who recently dubbed the infinite God “the cruel Oriental despot of the Old Testament,” might have some equally blasphemous word to say about the Saviour for the foregoing statement. But let it be known that the One who once pulled a sinking apostle out of a watery grave never submerged even a disobedient disciple beneath the mirrored blue of Galilee. He was simply revealing how seriously Deity detests the matter of causing others to stumble.

MISUSE OF THE GRACE OF GOD DISCREDITS THE MINISTRY

“Giving no offense in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed” (II Corinthians 6:3).

Upholding the dignity of the ministry is a towering ideal. The ministry of the gospel of Christ was never intended to be a means of personal promotion in popularity and prestige. To make it such is to misuse the privileges thereof.

Innumerable sermons have been delivered from dedicated lips on the sanctity of the Lord’s Day with no notice whatsoever coming before the public, even in the localities of their delivery; but, when a preacher in Altoona, Pennsylvania, makes a statement from the pulpit that Sunday movies are acceptable, the matter becomes an international news item. The servant may not always know when he is out of order, but Satan does. And he is alert to capitalize on it.

- Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offered strange fire (Leviticus 10:1);
- Uzziah, the king, intruded into the priest’s office (II Chronicles 26:16);
- Ananias and Sapphira withheld a promised offering (Acts 5:2);
- Peter was rebuked for apparent misconduct (Galatians 2:11);
- The Galatian believers were guilty of frustrating or laying aside the grace of God (Galatians 2:21).

These illustrations of the misuse of the divine privilege find their corresponding analogy in our day with its prevailing and increasing disregard for sacred things. The wrath of God is incurred, as perhaps never before, because the truth is held in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18).

Every move the believer makes either honors or dishonors the One who has called us unto His glory.

MISUSE OF THE GRACE OF GOD DISPROVES TRUE SERVANTHOOD

“But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God” (II Corinthians 6:4).

Whatsoever the Christian does is to be for the glory of God. Prayerfulness of planning, carefulness of procedure, and loftiness of purpose should characterize his every action.

It becomes a solemn consideration when we call to mind that the Christian is an ambassador of the Lord. What he does and says reflects upon the cause he represents.

The servant of Christ is not to conform to this age with its whims and fancies (Romans 12:2).

- He is to be holy because his Lord is holy (I Peter 1:16).
- He is to keep his eyes on the Author and Finisher of faith (Hebrews 12:2).

Backed by a state of separation and sobriety and impelled by challenge and hopefulness, a true servant moves out on the field of conquest with confidence. If there is a misuse of the means and privileges of grace he cannot but produce doubts as to his earnestness and interest in the vocation which he claims to be his.

The Danger in the Abuse of the Grace of God

“O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels” (II Corinthians 6:11, 12).

The underlying cause for this poignant announcement is readily discoverable in the immediate context.

The Corinthian believers were losing, or were in danger of losing, their distinctive Christian position by gradually slipping into compromise and complicity with questionable entities and enterprises.

Frequent challenges for a reconsideration of their inordinate tendencies were resulting in a display of resentment.

- The preacher was a killjoy;
- The Church was too rigid in its prohibitions;
- They could not sit in a corner and twiddle their thumbs;
- They were being “hedged in”, so they thought.

And their impressions about the matter were becoming vocal. With frank firmness, the Apostle made it clear that they were not being hedged in by him, but were, to the contrary, cramping themselves in their own selfish affections. No quarters are so small. Then came the further appeal of their fellow-workers not to accept the grace of God without using it.

II Corinthians 6:14 to the end of the chapter is a strong, persuasive and urgent treatise on the unquestionable necessity for a separation from all associations and entanglements which could in any wise limit their usefulness for God.

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”

“And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?”

“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty”

This would bring them, and us, out into the broad, limitless field of fellowship and fruitfulness. He who thinks mostly about himself and his own desires thinks little about the lost and their need. He has become cramped in the little corner of his own affections. If the boundless stores of grace were appropriated and applied they would make us that we should no longer be barren and unfruitful.

At the moment of this writing, there is an acute shortage of electricity in the Niagara area of Canada, with legally enforced dim-outs and the use of certain appliances rigidly restricted. There is, of course, measureless power pouring over Niagara Falls constantly—ininitely more than the need, but it is not being appropriated. Instead it rushes into the rapids of non-use and reaches the whirlpool of lost energy.

How strikingly illustrative is this of unavailed, superabundant grace.

“Receive not the grace of God in vain.”

~ end of chapter 10 ~

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