

By the Grace of God

By Hendrik Joubert

The story is told that at age five my oldest brother, when he was **caught in any trespass**, would work on my mother in the following way: *My dearest mother I know that I have been bad and that I deserve a spanking, please just kiss me before you spank me so I may know that you still love me!* He may have been a super sensitive individual, sincerely sorrowful for his actions, or he was a great manipulator even at that age. I have the benefit of knowing his whole history – unfortunately he was a little manipulator. We may find the story somewhat amusing, but that often is how manipulative we are in trying to sooth-talk God.

Think about some of the statements you have heard people make as they discuss the grace of God. Does it not tend to be rather patronizing? Attention is focused upon God's grace and His love, rather than upon what our responsibilities are in order to qualify for the grace of God – or why it is we need His grace in the first place. An old friend of mine loved to talk about the grace of God which *will just streeettttch and ssssttttrreeetttchhh*, and how we will never really appreciate what all it would cover.

The majority of people do not seem to pay attention to what God has revealed to us, but rather discuss what they think His grace amounts to. God is very specific in His instruction and through the apostle Paul tells the Ephesians (5:17): **So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.** Not understanding God's grace often is the result of us finding it difficult to accept some rather strong statements such as: **For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,²⁷ but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.** Hebrews 10:26-27.

Notice also the following statement: **You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.** Galatians 5:4. What is sinful or immoral about trying to keep the law in order to be acceptable to God in and of itself? The point I am trying to make is for us to realize how easy it is to forfeit the grace of God. The Galatians lost His grace by reverting back to the Law which God gave to the Jews. Where does it leave: **certain persons** (who) **have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.** Jude 4.

How many attempts are made to justify sins which are a direct result of a lack of self-control in the name of grace? Homosexuality, fornication and adultery are but a few. **Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.** 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.

Consider for a moment the significance of the opening words: **Do not be deceived...**and then consider the list of sins which will disqualify us from inheriting the kingdom of God.

God is serious. **God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)** His sincerity and commitment is never in question. Consider the drastic action of the Son humbling Himself to take on the form of a bondservant to come live among us, and then be brutally murdered. Did God overreact? Or do we fail to realize the seriousness of our offences? Do we understand the utterly sinful nature of sin – as viewed by the One whom we have offended?

The people who were directly responsible for the crucifixion were religious and Paul bears them witness that they had a zeal for God. **(Romans 10:1)** It is easy to criticize them when what we are doing is merely confirming the criticism of God. How good are we at recognizing our own shallowness in our approach to sin and the grace of God? Having them as examples compound our lack of commitment and the shallowness of our approach.

We should spend more time hungering and thirsting after the righteousness of God and less time speculating about His grace. When we learn just how serious sin is, we will understand just how gracious God has been. We will echo the words of the Lord: **So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, "We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done. Luke 17:10**