

## Faithfulness

by Hendrik Joubert

*Continuing in the grace of God (Acts 13:43)* does not come naturally because of so many distractions. Just when it becomes easy to criticize others for the apparent ease with which they are so *easily entangled* in sin (**Hebrews 12:1**), one becomes aware of a personal vulnerability – even if it amounts to a mere lack of humility. **Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. 1 Corinthians 10:12**

The immediate challenge is to not abuse passages of Scripture in an attempt to justify our lack of commitment to overcome weaknesses and accept sin as simply *a fact of life*. **Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. Galatians 6:7.**

Consider for a moment the opening phrase of this warning: **Do not be deceived...** We are most effective in deceiving ourselves. We must take care lest we are deceived by our own desires, or by the appealing teachings of others: **Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:8.**

The expression in **Acts 13:43**; Paul and Barnabas **urging them to continue in the grace of God**, clearly indicates that the responsibility lies squarely upon the shoulder of the believer to remain faithful to God. Grace is not a *free-for-all* gift which guarantees salvation to all who merely accepts and admits the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. This faith is the motivating power which should activate obedience in order to activate the grace of God. Paul and others **received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake... Romans 1:5**

How does one remain *faithful*? How may we *overcome* our weaknesses and not merely *manage* them? First of all we need to be honest with ourselves to *admit our sinfulness* – recognize our weaknesses and limitations. **...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,... Romans 3:23**

Then we need to recognize the *seriousness* of *our sin*. We must see our sin as *God* sees it. Sin is not mere indiscretion, neither is it naughtiness – a case of *boys will be boys*. Sin is offensive to the Most Holy God who taught us how He feels about it by declaring His Son as the only fit sacrifice in order to keep us from being punished eternally. That is grace – making forgiveness possible.

Next we need to *confess our sins* to the One whom we offended. Notice the confession of David in **Psalm 51**. He recognizes that any sin is first and foremost against God. **Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge. Psalm 51:4.** This is something we should recognize when we sin against others, even if they treated us badly – sin is first and foremost against God. We must *seek the forgiveness of God* with a contrite spirit, as David declares: **The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Psalm 51:17.**

It is important to work on an *escape strategy*. We should learn what the circumstances are which weaken our defenses. The most important fact to recognize is that *we cannot do it alone*, it is only with the help of God that we are able see sin for what it is and be motivated to overcome it. Notice the following comforting, but also incriminating promise: **No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide**

***the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:13***

Finally we need to recognize the role of ignorance concerning God's ways. Ignorance is not a bliss, it is a curse: ***My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. Hosea 4:6.*** Notice also the words: ***Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. <sup>2</sup> For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. <sup>3</sup> For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. Romans 10:1-3.***

Very often sin is as a result of ignorance. Sinners decide on their own what should be pleasing or displeasing to God, instead of *hungering and thirsting for God's righteousness* by studying the Scriptures with a sincere desire to learn what it is God requires of us. We must allow God to speak to us.