

THE FARFLUNG REACHES OF GOD'S GRACE

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my finite needs," to use just one other definition—the grace of God, I say, is God's answer to man's sin, and it provides for him a perfect remedy. It is, of course, always conditioned by penitence on the place of the recipient. Grace superabounding does not mean that I can sin at pleasure and expect God to wink at it and turn a blind eye my way. That heresy lies at the root of what we call antinomianism. You must repent and then turn to Him, for only then can you ever hope to receive of the grace and mercy of God.

But I want to tell you right now that however far you may have gone into sin, however deep into the pit and miry clay your feet have floundered, there is a way of deliverance. God's grace is deeper, higher, wider, and broader. It can lift you out of the dunghill, and plant your feet again on the bedrock of the Word of God. And if you have ascended that hill called "Self-righteousness," then the grace of God can go even higher—bring you down to earth again, and reveal to you the cancerous condition of your heart and life. Wonderful salvation all this, for no man has gone too far. No one is too bad, and no one too respectable. Walk the pathway of penitence—the grace of God will superabound.

Sin loses no blessedness that grace cannot more than restore. God can restore your locust-eaten years. That is a promise from the Book of Joel. I suppose a most remarkable illustration of that is Simon Peter himself. He fell as low as to deny his Lord. He later went out and wept bitterly. I have often thought that John, the disciple who stood around the Cross and took Mary back to his own home after, who with Peter went out together and spoke of the many things that the Master had taught them—perhaps John even read to him that part of the Sacred Scriptures which we know as Psalm 103:

"The Lord is full of compassion and gracious,
Slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.
He will not always chide;
Neither will He keep His anger for ever.
He hath not dealt with us after our sins,
Nor rewarded us after our iniquities;
For as the Heaven is high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.
As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath He removed our transgressions from us.
Like as a father pitieth His children,
So the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.
For He knoweth our frame
He remembereth that we are dust"

(vv. 8-14).

A day or so later the Lord Jesus sent a special "love letter" to Peter. He asked Peter to meet Him way up in Galilee. It was a private interview. Never this side of eternity shall we be able to discover what was said, even if then. But we do know that the Saviour forgave Peter, and recommissioned him anew, and in the Book of Acts we get just a faint glimpse of the wonderful service for the Master in which he was later enabled to engage.

Sin had abounded in Peter's life, but Peter repented and came back to the Lord Jesus, and the grace of God superabounded. Wonderful grace!

Maybe this was at the back of Peter's mind when, in one of his own messages, he told the people gathered around him to "repent and be converted," and then assured them, on the sole authority of the Word of the Lord, that their sins would be blotted out, and times of blessing be experienced from the presence of the Lord (see Acts

3:19). Peter knew it would happen, because it had happened in his own life. Sin may abound, but God's grace superabounds.

All this can happen to you, and happen right now, if—and I say it again—if you are prepared to repent and come to Christ in lowly submission.

"But, brother," you say to me, "I have gone too far. Do you say there is hope for me even yet?"

No hope for you whatever, dear friend, only absolute certainty. Come and surrender to Christ today.

PROFANING THE HOLINESS OF THE LORD

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for God, we are thieves. Jesus said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:9, 10). In a real sense, if I, a servant of God, fail through lack of devoted consecration to hand on to God the souls that he gives me the opportunity to win in my ministry, I am a thief.

Let us turn now, to the last longing look of our Lord to the Temple. We find our Lord weeping and leaving the Temple and the holy city to desolation. Of all pathetic pictures in the whole Bible, Matthew 25:37 is surely unequalled—the Christ weeping over his willful children. "How often would I...and ye would not." Then follows the revelation in which he denounces them. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee." His pronouncement is terrible—"Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

No wonder our Lord wept, and I wonder how many of us have caused him tears, in which he has said to us, "How often would I...and ye would not." It is as if in effect he had said, "Not that way, my child; that way means defilement, and desecration, and desolation. It is the hard way of the transgressor."

Then listen to the final, awful pronouncement, "Your house is left unto you desolate." On previous occasions our Lord said, "my Father's house," "my house," but now it is "your house," and it is "left unto you desolate." It has become home for any wandering demon; the hovel for any soul-destroying lust. The angels of God have withdrawn and gone far away from that desolate man. The Spirit of God is no longer there. That and that only gives the picture of a backslider.

We gather from Jesus' experiences at the Temple that when our Lord cleans up and fills the temple of our lives by his Spirit, he will not leave us, but keep us until we through disobedience give him the order to go out. But if he is forced to leave, the condition of the soul is one of desolation. God grant that every one of us may carefully order our lives in fear, and with holiness unto the Lord.

LOYALTY — THE MARK OF SINCERITY

One who is sincere in his quest for God's will for his life is one who is loyal to his church. Carelessness is no comrade to sincerity. If you love God more than this world, the desire will be yours to be where His people are. God has asked only "your reasonable service": one-tenth of your money, the tithe; and one-seventh of your time, the Sabbath. To give Him less is to rob God of what is His. The Bible has set the standard—do you measure up?

—Wesleyan Methodist