

Privilege of the Gospel
The Responsibility

Introduction: Today we bring this series to a close.

Last 2 weeks—

Our Hope—

We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:8 NKJV

Our Aim—

Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. 2 Corinthians 5:9 NKJV

Our Responsibility

In light of this great privilege that provides such a high hope—what is our responsibility?

I. We must diligently stay rooted in the Gospel.

We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. 2 For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. 2 Corinthians 6:1-2 NKJV

- A. They have routinely rejected Paul's authority
 - 1. As a result, his message of reconciliation is being rejected as well.
 - 2. If they continue to reject him and his roles as apostle, they must reject his Gospel.
- B. The warning: "don't receive the grace of God in vain."
- C. What does this mean?

"In vain"—kenos (ca-nas)

- Empty like a vessel—nothing there
- Destitute of spiritual wealth

Four Suggestions

1. Merely external reception

But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Matthew 13:20-21 NKJV

NOTE: What he called them earlier

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 1:1-2 NKJV

And later...

Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. 2 Corinthians 13:11 NKJV

2. Some suggest he is saying don't reject it—that they have not yet received (same argument against).
3. Others, he is talking Judgment Seat of Christ

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 2 Corinthians 5:10 NKJV

- Their practice wasn't living up to their profession
- In danger of works being burned

Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech — 13 unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. 14 But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. 15 But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. 2 Corinthians 3:12-15 NKJV

4. Likely—the chance of grace, once being known, now lost
 - a. Issue of pre-destination, eternal security
 - b. Wherever you stand—a clear point

Don't frustrate, turn away from, or reject the grace of God in the Gospel

Writer of Hebrews

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. Hebrews 2:1 NKJV

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. Hebrews 6:4-6 NKJV

Paul...

But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. 1 Corinthians 9:27 NKJV

Stay rooted in the Gospel

(ILL) *Novelist Describes How We Forget Truth*

In the novel, One Hundred Years of Solitude, by Garcia Marquez, the author describes in his magical but unrealistic way a village suffering from an insomnia plague. As this plague continues, it gradually causes the loss of memory. To try and salvage memory, Marquez describes how a man named Jose developed an elaborate plan that involved labeling everything: "With an inked brush he marked everything with its name: table, chair, clock, door, wall, bed, pan. He went to the corral and marked the animals and plants: cow, goat, pig, hen...banana."

As their memory continued to fade Jose decided that he needed to be even more explicit. He posted a sign on a cow that read: "This is the cow. She must be milked every morning so that she will produce mil, and the milk must be boiled in order to be mixed with coffee to make coffee and milk. Thus they were living in a reality that was slipping away, momentarily captured by words but which would escape...when they forgot the values of the written letter." Eventually the village put a placard at the entrance to town that said, "God exists," as that knowledge too was slipping.

- Our culture is creating insomnia
- Moses to Israel—remember

We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. 2 Corinthians 6:1 NKJV

Stay rooted in the Gospel

II. We must willingly embrace the cost of the Gospel (3-10).

Cost of this Gospel—Price

A. Cost of ensuring that our conduct is not in conflict with our profession

We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. 4 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God. 2 Corinthians 6:3-4a NKJV

1. This is foreign to our individualist-western Christianity
2. So proud of our liberty that we feel no obligation to others

(Example of Christ)—Philippians 2

B. Cost of suffering

In much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, 5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings. 2 Corinthians 6:4b-5 NKJV

1. Paul experienced great suffering

Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. 2 Corinthians 11:25-27 NKJV

2. The Gospel calls us to suffer for God's glory

But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. 24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. 25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor. 27 "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name." John 12:23-28 NKJV

- a. Glorified in death of Jesus
- b. Death to self has to happen for God to be glorified

3. Brogden—3 Martyrdoms

- a. **Red Martyrdom**—physical death (Peter, Stephen, Oman, Afghanistan where 480 Christians today will be martyred
- b. **Green Martyrdom**—(St. Patrick)
 - Ireland so evangelized—no red martyrdom chance
 - Built communities for lost to belong before they asked them to believe
 - Death to self within a community

— Live in team, community to reach truth

- c. **White Martyrdom**—(Send away your best to serve—leaving never to return

Columcille was a disciple of Patrick and his heir apparent, his best. He was commissioned to take the gospel to Northern England. He would do so by establishing a missional monastery at the cross-section of the sea. He would leave Ireland and sail in his leather-covered boat to the Isle of Iona. Thomas Cahill writes:

As he [Columcille] sailed off that morning, he was doing the hardest thing an Irishman could do, a much harder thing than giving up his life: he was leaving Ireland. If the Green Martyrdom had failed, here was a martyrdom that was surely equal of the Red; and henceforth, all who followed Columcille's lead were called to the White Martyrdom, they who sailed into the white sky of morning, into the unknown, never to return.

We can witness to Jesus by giving our physical lives. We must witness to Christ by following Him with surrendered wills. But there is another witness he demands of us—the White Martyrdom of taking His gospel to the ends of the earth to the inconvenient lost.

And here is my plea. I urge you to send your best. Don't send your castoffs to sail into the white sky of morning. You get into the boat and lead the way. Send your professionals. Send the pastors of your best churches. Send the leaders and the influencers. Send your richest and your most educated. Send the ones you cannot afford to send. We send sons and daughters to die for flag and freedom in Iraq and Afghanistan, from the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli, but will we release them to live and die for Jesus among unreached peoples?

*Don't hoard the best resources to your overfed selves and cast the crumbs of the marginal to the nations. You lead the way! You walk away from prestige and become a nothing that Jesus might become everything to one Muslim. You. Yes, you! Walk away from everything comfortable and live dead on a church planting team in Tripoli, Jeddah or Mogadishu! Jesus asks His church for the White Martyrdom, the white death of sending our best. Dick Brogden—
This Gospel*

C. The cost of complete dependence on Christ

By purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, 7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, 8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; 9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. 2 Corinthians 6:6-10 NKJV

NOTE v. 10

1. Are you willing to have nothing but Jesus?
2. Are you willing to surrender all you have to Him?

III. We must fervently guard the witness of the Gospel.

O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. 12 You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections. 13 Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open. 14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." 17 Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." 18 'I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.' 2 Corinthians 6:11-18NKJV

A. Here Paul speaks as a father to his children

O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. 12 You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections. 13 Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open. 2 Corinthians 6:11-13 NKJV

1. Spoken openly—our heart is wide open v. 11
 - a. So honest because He loves us so much
 - b. Speaking truth in love—do we?

NOTE: Next few weeks I will. It's time to do something extraordinary

- c. Call them by name—Corinthians—he is pulling out all the stops
2. Blames any issue on them v. 12
 - a. They have allowed others to plant discord
 - b. It was not him that had changed
3. He asks for reciprocated openness v. 13
 - a. The need for pastoral/parishioner trust
 - b. Integrity so important—must address
 - c. Much independence
 - d. A relationship of animosity is dangerous

B. Paul calls believers to uncompromising fidelity.

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." 2 Corinthians 6:14-16 NKJV

1. The metaphor—double yoke when 2 animals work side by side

"You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together. Deuteronomy 22:10 NKJV

'You shall keep My statutes. You shall not let your livestock breed with another kind. You shall not sow your field with mixed seed. Nor shall a garment of mixed linen and wool come upon you. Leviticus 19:19 NKJV

2. Paul applies principle to incongruity of believers paired with unbelievers.

NOTE: No specifics given here but earlier subjects would lead us to believe.

- a. Marriage
- b. Business
- c. Intimate fellowship

3. Not condemning all contact

- a. Earlier addressed

I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. 10 Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. 1 Corinthians 5:9-10 NKJV

- b. Not pharisaical exclusiveness
- c. Paul took charge of Gospel to Gentiles seriously

4. Note distinctions

- a. Believer—unbeliever
- b. Righteous—lawlessness
- c. Light—darkness
- d. Temple of God—Idols—Monotheism/Polytheism

5. Sorting it out—practical

- a. Unbeliever centered on self—believers on Christ
- b. Unbelievers treasure on earth—believers Heaven
- c. Unbelievers seeks worldly pleasure but believer wants to please Christ

Calvin—“When Paul says the Christian has no portion with unbelievers, he is not referring to food, clothing, estates, the sun, and the air, but to those things from which the Lord has separated us.”

C. Paul calls believers to clean-cut holiness

Therefore "come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." 18 "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." 2 Corinthians 6:17-18 NKJV

1. Quote from Babylonian captivity

Depart! Depart! Go out from there, Touch no unclean thing; Go out from the midst of her, Be clean, You who bear the vessels of the Lord. Isaiah 52:11 NKJV

2. If we separate ourselves, He will satisfy us as His children.

D. Reason for call is not:

1. Spiritual pride
2. Pharisaical elitism
3. Guard our witness

Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 NKJV

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 2 Corinthians 4:7 NKJV

IV. We must consistently cultivate the fruit of the Gospel.

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. 2 Corinthians 7:1 NKJV

Final Responsibility of Gospel people

A. Pursue godliness together as a church “let us”

1. Not some better than others
2. In this together
3. Accountability, prayer, encouragement, grace

B. Thoroughly cleanse ourselves of any form of unhealthy compromise (flesh and spirit)

NOTE: External, internal, actions, attitudes, seen and unseen

C. Advance in holiness

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. Romans 6:13 NKJV

Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God. Hebrews 6:1 NKJV

NOTE: Not just do nots, but prayer, study, fasting, service, giving—perfect holiness

(ILL) *Take Time to be Holy*

Some years ago we often sang a hymn, "Take Time to Be Holy." I wish we sang it more in these days. It takes time to be holy; one cannot be holy in a hurry, and much of the time that it takes to be holy must go into secret prayer. Some people express surprise that professing Christians today are so little like their Lord, but when I stop to think how little time the average Christian today puts into secret prayer the thing that astonishes me is, not that we are so little like the Lord, but that we are as much like the Lord as we are. Reuben Archer Torrey in The Best of R. A. Torrey. Christianity Today, Vol. 39, no. 10.

D. Keep eternal focus—"in the fear of God"

(ILL) Parent driving behind teen

'I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.' 2 Corinthians 6:18 NKJV

Conclusion: Gospel people: Responsibility

1. Stay rooted in the Gospel
2. Embrace the call of the Gospel
3. Guard witness of the Gospel
4. Cultivate fruit of the Gospel

(ILL) *The Highlands of Holiness*

When an observatory is about to be built, the site selected is always on some high mountain. The aim is to find a place where there is a clear, unobstructed view of the heavens. Similarly, faith requires for its heavenly vision the highlands of holiness and separation, the pure sky of a consecrated life. A. B. Simpson

(ILL) Striving for Sanctity

We must strive for sanctity, for holiness, to the point that we show up at Heaven's gates "squeezed out like a lemon." This image is vivid and challenging--at once heroic, romantic, and intimidating. Indeed, it is in striking, almost shocking contrast to the consumerist, hedonist, and materialist deliriums of our decadent society. From an editorial in the New Oxford Review (July-Aug. 1988). Christianity Today, Vol. 32, no. 16.