



ZWTF

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2012 Zapping-you Whenever Thoughts Flow

“Falling out of grace”; is it possible?

Where sin increases, grace superexceeds. The apostle Paul wrote that sentence (Romans 5:20), and we have no record that the man ever drank to excess. How many of my readers even knew this statement was in the Bible? It has been there a long time. What does it mean? It means what it says: There can be no superexceeding grace without increasing sin. Whenever sin increases, grace rises above it. Sin is the petri dish where grace flourishes. You can't beat grace. Sin hard, grace goes harder. Sin wild, grace goes wilder. You can't out-sin grace—ever. Grace will frustrate you—if you're odd enough to find it frustrating.

Since the cross, grace is the undisputed champion.

I am not the deviser of this principle, so no one should look at me funny or write me insensitive letters. What you should do instead is jump out of your chair and run around the living room. Stop feeling guilty, at least. This is good news.

BESIDES, THINK ABOUT IT

Besides, think about it. Sin is the only field against which grace can be manifested. Look up all the occurrences of “grace” in the New Testament, as I did, and you'll find sin in the wings. Grace is “a benefit bestowed on one who deserves the opposite.” If anyone was deserving, where would grace be? In order for grace to function, there must be people “who deserve the opposite.” I can't speak for you, but, finally, here is something I can manage. And then, grace not only functions, it overwhelms. Why? Because Jesus Christ is not merely equal to sin; He is stronger than sin.



Since the cross, grace is the undisputed champion.

WHAT ABOUT FALLING OUT OF GRACE?

There is a passage in Galatians (5:4) that mentions “falling out of grace.” Let's go ahead and quote it in its context, starting with verse two:

Lo, I, Paul, am saying to you that if you should be circumcising, Christ will benefit you nothing. Now I am attesting again to every human who is circumcising, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Exempted from Christ were you who are being justified in law. You fall out of grace.

Has grace the potential of failing, then? No.

Examine the context. Those who fall out of grace in that passage do so, not by sinning, but by trying to impress God by keeping laws. By working hard to “earn grace” (an absurd concept which parallels modern, Christian teaching), these people miss the relaxation grace brings. This is what it means to fall out of grace. In falling out of grace, these people forgo the pleasures of grace by trying to earn them.

GOT YOUR GRACE CARD?

Grace is like a 24-hour public library. It exists continually on your behalf, operating for you whether you go into it or not. You can get a book free at the public library, or you can pay \$29.95 for it at Barnes & Noble. Likewise, you can lean back and enjoy grace, or you can sweat to earn God’s favor. The library is still open while you’re at the outlet, and God still favors you, even while you imagine He doesn’t. Your library benefits are forfeited at Barnes & Noble—that’s the thing. The library hasn’t closed, you’ve simply fallen from the sphere of getting free books.



Poor kid. Nobody told her God already accepts her.

It’s the same with grace. You fall from its benefits when you try to earn it. Grace isn’t closed—you’ve just missed its peace. In this way only can someone fall out of grace. They fall from the sphere of enjoying its benefits.

That these people from Galatia are falling out of an enjoyment of grace is the gist of the passage. You certainly can’t sin your way out of grace. How can you, when more sin only causes grace to superexceed? How can you, when grace is a favor bestowed upon those who don’t deserve it? If you weren’t a sinner, grace couldn’t apply to you. Why? Because then you would deserve it. If you deserve it, then you don’t need it. Grace applies only to the undeserving.

WHAT ABOUT IDOLATERS?

Idolaters? They go to hell for eternity. Ha, just kidding; actually, they get their own television shows.

Be not deceived. Neither paramours, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor catamites, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards; no revilers, no extortioners shall be enjoying the allotment of God’s kingdom.

—1 Corinthians 6:9-10

How does this fit in with all I’ve been saying? Surely it undoes everything, and these sinners are bound for the smokehouse, or worse. No. Salvation is still of Christ, not of sobriety or saintliness.

This passage speaks of rule in God’s kingdom, not of salvation; this is “the allotment of God’s kingdom.” An allotment is a special assignment above and beyond “mere” salvation. The Greek word for kingdom, *basileia*, means “reign.” Thus, the allotment of God’s kingdom involves a part in God’s reign. Not all saved people have it.

It will help to note what the passage does not say. It does not say that these kinds of people “shall not be saved.” It doesn’t follow that if a person does not enjoy an allotment in God’s reign, then he or she will not live under its jurisdiction. Yet that is what the passage is contorted to

“With grace, you fall from its benefits when you try to earn it.”

say. The contortioners ought to pause and consider that greed is listed right along with adultery and sodomy; I have yet to meet a contortioner who wasn’t greedy.

According to 1 Corinthians 3:15, some saints will be saved “as through fire.” This is basic salvation with no added rewards for service. Some folks are content to just “make it to heaven.” God made them that way, to desire just this. Others look toward what Paul calls “the prize of God’s calling above” (Philippians 3:14), which is ruling and reigning with Christ. This too is of God. Neither party will complain when God fulfills their respective desires.

There are varying degrees of glory in resurrection.

There are bodies celestial as well as bodies terrestrial. But a different glory, indeed, is that of the celestial, yet a different that of the terrestrial, another glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for star is excelling star in glory. Thus also is the resurrection of the dead.

—1 Corinthians 15:40-42



Some are appointed to rule with Christ for the eons, others are not. Being selected for rule is an honor above and beyond salvation. As the context of the passage is “in glory” (“star is excelling star *in glory*”), these differing excellencies cannot be comparing one resurrection to heaven, and another to the orthodox version of hell.

If resurrection were identical for everyone, where would reigning be? Reign-ers require reign-ees. Paul listed those who will not be reigning. Who *will* be?

Faithful is the saying: “For if we died together, we shall be living together also; if we are enduring, we shall be reigning together also; if we are disowning, He also will be disowning us; if we are disbelieving, He is remaining faithful—He cannot disown Himself.”

—2 Timothy 2:11-13

Those who endure, will reign. What is a mark of endurance? I assume it to be refraining from adultery, idolatry and these other mischiefs.

Notice how Paul flip-flops here in 2 Timothy between general salvation and reigning: “If we died together, we shall be living together also.” This is general salvation, for “One died for the sake of all, consequently all died.”

The next two statements, however, deal with the allotment of the kingdom, that is, with reigning: “If we are enduring, we shall be reigning together also; if we are disowning, He also will be disowning us.” Those who endure, reign. Those who disown Him are disowned for reigning, *only*. That’s the context.

Disowning pictures for us a believer becoming tired of “all this Christ stuff” and embarking upon a career of robbing banks at gunpoint (“thieves, greedy, extortioners”), raping the married tellers regardless of their gender (“adulterers, catamites, sodomites”), kissing the bank safe

(“idolaters”), drinking too much beer in the escape car (“drunkards”), and cursing the pursuing police officers (“revilers”). It is assumed that such persons committing any or all of these things relieve themselves of any kingdom responsibilities.

However, once in Christ, always in Christ.

Thus, “if we are disbelieving, He is remaining faithful. He cannot disown Himself.” No one pre-selected to membership in Christ’s body can ever lose it, not even by doubting Him. How can He deny His own body? God deals similarly with Israel: “For what if some disbelieve? Will not their unbelief nullify the faithfulness of God? May it not be coming to that” (Romans 3:3-4).

Be careful with your horse-and-cart. It is not that adultery or sodomy disowns one for rule. It is that no one pre-designated for rule will be found enmeshed in these crimes. Those who endure to reign still owe it to a superabundance of grace, not to a self-mastery of flesh. ■

To be continued ...



Rebecca and I would like to thank all those who made the Sioux Falls conference a success. Thanks to Tom Sargent and Dan Baker, who ably lead this spiritually hungry group of more than 20 people. Take encouragement, folks: There is a bonafide ecclesia in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, that is growing in the revelation and realization of God.

Thank you, fellow members of the body of Christ, for the support that allowed me—along with Clyde Pilkington—to travel to South Dakota to help establish this fledgling group in the teaching of the grace of God. All attendees went away full and rejoicing in the God of the Scriptures. Next stop? Rochester, New York! ■

(For a large photo of some of the attendees, see the following page.)



Reflected in artwork, downtown Sioux Falls.



Fellowship & Outreach
Contemporary Service
Sunday 10 am

Sioux Falls, SD

AUGUST 2012