Who Could Stand?

Ponder: What if God kept a record of your sins?

Scripture: “If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, who could stand?” (Psa. 103:3a, NKJV).

Is God a God of justice, or is He merciful? Fortunately for us, the answer is “yes!” It isn’t “either justice or mercy,” but “both justice and mercy.” Let’s look carefully at today’s Scripture:

“If You, Lord, should mark iniquities . . .” This word for “mark” is used hundreds of times in the OT and has numerous shades of meaning. The one that fits best for this verse is “to keep, to retain, to treasure up in memory.” The New International Version gives a helpful paraphrase: “keep a record of.” Think of a bookkeeper recording things in a leger.

What if God was like that bookkeeper, keeping a record of our sins? The psalmist finishes the thought with a rhetorical question: “Who could stand?” That word means to endure, to abide, to remain, as opposed to being destroyed. Psa. 76:7 uses this word in the same way, asking “Who may stand in Your presence?”

If God kept a record of sins to use against us, who could possibly avoid destruction? The question itself implies its own answer: NO ONE could stand! Therefore, we ought to be thankful that God doesn’t treasure up our iniquities in His memory. Paul told the Corinthians that love doesn’t keep an account of wrongs suffered (1 Cor. 13:5). Since God is love, we shouldn’t be surprised that He doesn’t keep a record of all the sins we commit. Instead, here’s what He does according to the next verse of Psa. 130: “But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared” (v. 4). God’s gracious willingness to forgive us, rather than holding our sins against us, should move us to have a deep and abiding fear, not in the sense of being terrified, but having profound respect and reverence for Him.

We stand and are not destroyed because of God’s love, grace, and mercy, not because we have merited His favor. May we always be thankful and hold Him in the highest regard!

Hymn: “Grace Greater Than Our Sin”

Prayer: Kind Father, may we always hold You in deep reverence, ever thankful that in Christ we are forgiven. In His name, Amen.

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