

PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD!

Joe Slater

Suppose you were going to meet the President, or even the state Governor. Politics aside, you would make appropriate preparation. At the very least, you'd want to be clean and suitably dressed.

Now, what if you were going to meet God? If you are in fellowship with Him, it would be a joyful, though awe-inspiring, event. If not, however, you would be horrified! Your sins would make you unclean, and you would know that only condemnation awaited you.

Through His prophet, Amos, the Lord told His apostate people in the northern kingdom, *"Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!"* (4:12). Spiritually, they were unclean. The Lord had called His people to repentance by repeated chastening. He sent food shortage (*"cleanness of teeth . . . lack of bread,"* 4:6); drought (4:7-8); crop failure due to disease and insects (4:9); war and its accompanying plagues (4:10); and overthrow (destruction, 4:11).

What was Israel's response? In each and every case, God said, *"Yet you have not returned to Me"* (4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11). Therefore they would, indeed, meet God – not face-to-face, but through the devastating judgment He would inflict:

The virgin of Israel has fallen;

She will rise no more.

She lies forsaken on her land

There is no one to raise her up (Amos 5:3).

One day you will meet God. He *"now commands all men everywhere* (including you) *to repent"* (Acts 17:30). *"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).

Are you prepared to meet God?

Grace Versus Religion

Have you ever heard someone complain, "I believe in grace, but not in religion"? Such a statement is a perfect example of popular ignorance. And I say that in the most polite way possible.

Why would anyone need grace? Many recognize that the need for grace is because of sin. But to create a false contrast between grace and religion demonstrates a gap in someone's knowledge about what religion is.

True religion is not ornate vestments or golden candlesticks. Neither is it a collection plate, a "Christian" band or choir, or stained glass windows. Religion is the means by which grace is obtained and maintained.

The word "religion" is derived from the old languages, its original meaning being "to bind again." Psalm 2 explains. When we choose to sin, we humans collectively say to God and His anointed, *"Let us break their bonds asunder and cast away their cords from us"* (v. 3). We have elected ourselves to be our own moral gods. We have decided to sever the ties that once bound our hearts to His. If we ever want to restore (re-bind) our hearts and mend what is broken, it will be through **His religion**, and that alone.

The psalmist concludes, after his Messianic prophecy of the coming Son:

Now therefore be wise, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve Jehovah with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss (i.e. worship, serve) the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish in the way, for His wrath will soon be kindled. Blessed are all they that take refuge in Him (2:10-12).

Religion is the means by which we are bound again to God. True religion is the grace of God. It is a plan, a system, a scheme by which our Heavenly Father

reconciles us to Himself through the sacrifice of Christ and the instructions of the Holy Spirit.

But man is constantly trying to corrupt the meaning of both words: "grace" and "religion." "Religion" has become nigh unto a curse word, and "grace" has been twisted to mean the freedom to do whatever we want while pretending to be smothered in Heaven's approval. Our job is to figure out ways to teach folks that grace isn't like gravy . . . making anything underneath instantly taste better.

Grace is the blessing of God's religion.

--Jared Jackson (via Fortify Your Faith)

* * * * *

Changing Tastes

Have you ever heard anyone complain about airline food? I'm sure many of you have, but the airlines aren't necessarily to blame. Did you know that our tastes change depending upon our altitude? That's right.. Food that you may enjoy eating in your favorite restaurant would not taste the same if served on an airplane at 35,000 feet. This is due to a decreased sense of smell and a reduction in taste bud sensitivity humans experience at that altitude.

When I learned this truth, I couldn't help but reflect upon how the same thing happens to us within the spiritual realm. When we embark on a quest to be more and more like Jesus, we sometimes find ourselves in "thin air." As we pursue godliness, we'll find ourselves reaching new heights of spiritual maturity. Consequently, we will no longer have a "taste" for many of the things we once found enjoyable. The nearer we are to God, the less earthly things appeal to us.

My prayer is that we will all reach spiritual heights that will cause our "tastes" to change.

--Steve Higginbotham (via Bulletin Gold)