

Craving Approval

Joe Slater

We like to be liked and love to be loved. It's normal. And like most normal things, we can carry it to unhealthy extremes. How many "likes" did I get on my Facebook post? Only fourteen? Woe is me!

The earliest Christians in Jerusalem were "praising God and having favor with all the people" (Acts 2:47). The general population looked on those disciples approvingly as they saw them living reverently before God and taking care of the needy (2:42-45). Does our example today encourage our community's approval? "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Before long, however, those positive feelings turned into bitter opposition and persecution. Proclaiming the risen Jesus as the Messiah didn't set well with the religious elite. How disappointing! Our ancient brethren, however, didn't despair, nor did they modify their message or their conduct. Even when beaten, they thanked God for the privilege of suffering for Jesus (Acts 5:41).

When the world looks favorably upon you as you do right, that's icing on the cake! But don't allow yourself to develop an unhealthy craving for people's approval. Remember these words from Jesus: "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Luke 6:26).

"For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10).

The High Cost of Health Care

It is reported that our country has one of the highest costs of healthcare in the world. In 2021, U.S. healthcare spending reached \$4.3 trillion, which averages to about \$12,900 per person. Without health insurance, it is likely that most of us could not afford to be cared for and treated if we were to become injured or seriously ill.

When it comes to our spiritual lives, we all are in need of spiritual healthcare. The Preacher of Ecclesiastes stated, "For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin" (Ecclesiastes 7:20). Romans 3:23 agrees, saying that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." In our sinful state, we need spiritual healing which can only come from God. However, forgiveness and salvation come at a great price!

Our spiritual healthcare premium has been paid by the precious, innocent blood of Jesus Christ. "For He (God) made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The wonderful news is that God's spiritual healthcare is available to all people everywhere. "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). We must always remember the great cost of our spiritual healthcare and that we are forever indebted in His service. "For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)

Freedom

Most people do not really want freedom, because freedom involves responsibility, and most people are frightened of responsibility. (Sigmund Freud)

Not Getting What We Deserve

"Do all things without grumbling or disputing" (Philippians 2:14).

We often grumble because we don't have what we want, instead, we should be thankful that we don't get what we deserve. The Bible tells us that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Since "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23), we ought to be ever so grateful that, in Christ, we do not get what we deserve (Romans 8:1).

While modern man seeks to redefine sin and restructure God's commandments, the Bible clearly says that sin is "the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). Sin is not determined by popular opinion, but by the word of God. God rebuked those in Isaiah's day who called "evil good, and good evil" (Isaiah 5:20). Many in our day have been afflicted with the same twisted morality. This is why we must get serious about discovering what the Bible says about sin rather than trying to make the Bible say what we want it to say.

Being delivered from the penalty of sin involves knowing and obeying the truth. Jesus said that "the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The truth, as it is embodied in Christ and His word, can set us free from the power and penalty of sin. However, we must accept His word by faith. Paul tells us that we are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). Faith is the means by which grace is appropriated. Biblical faith is known by its obedience (James 2:18). Consequently, ours must be a faith that works through love (Galatians 5:6).

Grace is a beautiful concept. But, it is not cheap. Neither should it be taken for granted. Instead, grace must be accepted by means of an active faith. Grace and gratitude are inseparably connected. Only those who have been sufficiently impressed by the grace of God will respond with overflowing expressions of thankfulness and love.

Rather than grumbling or complaining about life's difficulties or hardships, focus instead on the grace of God as it is extended to us through Jesus Christ. In Christ, we can always be grateful that we do not get what we deserve!

--Glen Elliott (Greenbriar, AR)