

The Effect of God's Grace

"Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (Acts 11:23).

After the killing of Stephen a time of persecution of the Christians began. Fleeing this persecution the believers scattered into extensive areas. Thus Christians came to Antioch and began to speak to the Greeks. They preached the gospel of Christ. Much of the nation believed in the Lord. When the tidings of this victory march of the gospel reached Jerusalem, Barnabas was sent to Antioch. When Barnabas saw what the grace of God had accomplished in Antioch he exhorted them all to cleave unto Christ with purpose of heart through faith.

The spreading of God's kingdom has always happened in this manner, messengers sent by God have arrived to visit a locality and have proclaimed repentance and forgiveness of sins, or some believers have moved into a locality and have not put the candle under a bushel but into the candlestick. They have spoken of faith and related how God made them righteous. They have proclaimed God's kingdom being at hand and also the gospel of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. In many localities the fires of God were kindled thus. God's healthy grace received a place in human life and heart. They have rejoiced together of God's goodness.

It is not enough that one has once been helped and blessed into faith. One needs to be preserved in faith to the end. We still need men and women like Barnabas who preach faith in their surroundings. Many a tired and tempted traveler can be struggling in the midst of everyday trials. They have endeavored to cleave unto God's grace in faith with purpose of heart. But during struggles their strength has waned. It could seem today as if the last threads will sever, when everyday worries and sorrows fall heavily. Sickness and economical difficulties can be there and one's own deep evil and corrupt heart weighs heavily. The feelings are like on a former wilderness journey: "We surely started on this journey in vain for death will overtake."

My friend, you who are poor in your ownself, the gospel is the wealth of the poor. As unworthy and tempted as you find yourself, you can believe all sins, temptations and sorrows forgiven in the holy name and precious redeeming blood of our Lord Jesus, just as you are. You can be perfectly secure in Him who has promised to care for us. Do not dwell upon your own evilness and unworthiness. Sinless steps have been taken upon this earth once. That wayfarer has been altogether pure even in His thoughts. He, the Lord Jesus, has taken your sins and carried them from Gethsemane to Golgotha. There in the place of the skull He died for your sins, an acceptable sacrifice to God. Death could not keep Him, but victorious over death our Lord arose on Easter morning. Victory is received and death has been overcome. With a steadfast and strong heart we can trust in the Lord and stay in His grace, also live as a partaker of the resurrection's victorious power.

It is worthwhile to believe, worthwhile to cleave unto the Lord with purpose of heart. One day faith will change into seeing and hope into eternal joy.

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Ridicule of the World

The ridicule of the world is not strange to . any believer, not to the old, nor the young, nor even the child. It is part of the believer's life, and it is spoken of in the Bible in many situations. The ridicule of believers can often be heard behind the back. As the Bible says, they are kept as objects of ridicule and a laughing stock.

It is said that what the ear does not hear, that cannot grieve the heart. Therefore we do not grieve over that which we don't know. But if we suddenly find ourselves in a situation where we hear angry words of ridicule to our faces, in our human thoughts we become dumbfounded. We are

amazed if, for instance, it comes from t♦e

direction of one who formerly was ' a

friendly or pleasant work or school mate. It is doubtful that we can say our first reaction is a good mind, that we are ridiculed for Christ's sake. We can be