

Wasted Grace
II Cor. 6:1-2

INTRODUCTION

Waste is sinful in every realm. The more precious the commodity being wasted, the more sinful the waste. The waste of energy has become more serious because of the energy shortages. The waste of food has taken on new moral implications in a hungry world. Can you imagine someone wasting a new medication that gave promise of curing cancer.

The most precious thing known to man is the "Grace of God". This is the term used to present the generosity of God that brings salvation. The incarnation of Jesus, His death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection are all an expression of His grace. The present intercession of Christ in heaven on our behalf, and the gift of the Holy Spirit are also expressions of the same grace. And according to our text it is possible for those who have received God's grace to waste it. "We then as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." "In vain" means without purpose. Anytime the grace of God does not accomplish for a person what God intended, the grace has been in vain, or wasted.

This is obviously a rather serious matter. To whom is the Apostle directing this appeal? Scholars are divided over this question. Some are confident that he is appealing to the Christian in the Corinthian Church, while others are just as sure that he is appealing to the unsaved. Why should we make a choice here? To whom has the grace of God been made available? Clearly the grace of God has been made available to "all men". Anyone to whom the grace of God has been made available is a potential waster of the grace. Let's consider the application of the word to each of us - regardless of our spiritual condition.

I. CHRISTIANS CAN WASTE THE GRACE OF GOD

The Christian is well-acquainted with the grace of God. "For by grace are ye saved." He is in the family of God because of God's loving generosity. But even though he knows personally God's saving grace, this does not guarantee that the purpose of God's grace will be fulfilled in his life. Paul's appeal speaks to me.

When we do not allow the purpose of God's grace to be accomplished in us, we have wasted His grace. We do not need to be in doubt about the purpose of God's grace. A holy life is one of the basic purposes of His grace. Paul wrote to Titus, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world". (Titus 2:11-12) God's grace does not give us a license to be indulgent in the things of the world. Rather it schools us in the way of holiness.

But there must be something amiss. So many who prefer to know God's saving grace show little evidence of God's schooling grace. They have not allowed

God's grace to instruct them in the ways of holiness. They are guilty of wasting this grace. They want to go to heaven by grace, but they do not want to be made holy by grace.

There is yet another purpose in God's grace. It is the purpose of God's grace to make us a missionary people. Last week we saw this in the previous paragraph. Those He reconciled, He gave the ministry of reconciliation. Those he gave peace, He made ambassadors of peace. Peter wrote of this, "But ye are a chosen generation (we could add by grace), a royal priesthood (by grace), an holy nation (by grace), a peculiar people (by grace); that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light". (I Peter 2:9) Do you see the purpose of the grace? We received the grace that we might make known the goodness of the Lord in the darkness. Grace has a missionary purpose.

Yet so few of us feel ourselves to be ambassadors or missionaries. Those who do, stand out so much from the norm that they make some of us very uncomfortable. What has gone wrong? Clearly we have been guilty of wasting the grace of God. We have not allowed the grace of God to do in us what God intended.

There is another way in which we waste the grace of God as Christians. Whenever we do not avail ourselves of the fullness of God's provision, we waste His grace. In His grace God has abundantly provided for all our needs. Whatever we may need to accomplish His will, His grace has provided. But we are often like the children of Israel in the Old Testament. By the grace of God they were gloriously delivered from the tyranny of the Pharaoh. The same grace that brought them out of Egypt was prepared to supply their every need in the journey. But they found it extremely difficult to walk in dependence upon that grace. When they came to Kadesh Barnea with the promised land before them, God's grace had already provided a victory for them if they would only claim it by faith. Instead of claiming it by faith, they turned back in unbelief. They wasted the great opportunity God had for them.

Our opportunity is even greater. As Paul affirms through the quotation from Isaiah, now is the acceptable time with God. We now are assured of full acceptance before Him through the Lord Jesus Christ. Now is the day of God's salvation. Is your life reflecting the richness of God's provisions? Are you living the abundant life or wasting the grace provision?

II. THE UNSAVED CAN WASTE THE GRACE OF GOD

In supporting his appeal, the Apostle turns to Isaiah for a quotation. In the original text God is speaking to His servant. God says, "I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee," Then Paul adds his exclamation, "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation," It is a strong affirmation concerning the very nature of the day in which we live. "The accepted time" means literally "well-received" or "entirely acceptable." It is a stronger word than the one used earlier in the text. The point of the Apostle is that this is the day in which it is possible for sinners to be accepted before God. God is ready to receive all who come to Him through the

Lord Jesus Christ. The other part of the exclamation is that this day has the character of being a day of salvation. This cannot be properly appreciated unless: you contrast it with the day that is to come, the day of wrath and judgment. This is not the time of wrath, but rather the time of salvation.

But what about who lives through this time and is not saved? Surely He can be justly charged with having received the grace of God in vain. He has wasted the grace of God. This day of salvation is God's gift to the whole human family. What will we do with it.

Some waste the grace of God through neglect. They neglect to take advantage of the opportunity that grace has provided. Do you remember the parable of the foolish and wise virgins? They were both provided the same opportunity. The foolish did not rebel against the coming of the bridegroom. They were just so busy about other things, possibly good things, that they neglected to get the oil for their lamps. They wasted the opportunity that the grace of God had provided for them.

But there are others who waste the grace of God through deliberate rejection. The writer of Hebrews has a very sobering word about this. He writes, "of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an wholly thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:29) What a picture! Walking right over God's precious Son to go to judgment! Treating His blood as though it were, just like the blood of any other! Actually insulting the gracious Holy Spirit who seeks to draw you to Christ! Everything that God has done to make salvation possible is wasted. It is wasted because of a blind, foolish rejection of what grace has provided.

Have you taken advantage of this acceptable time, of this day of salvation?

CONCLUSION:

This text calls on us to be thoughtful. We need to be aware of the nature of the time in which we live. When you consider the nature of the time in the light of eternity, it is a time of tremendous spiritual opportunity. The God of grace has opened the door to His holy presence through the Lord Jesus. He has literally opened up the spiritual storehouse of heaven to those who will come through the Lord Jesus Christ by faith. He appeals with you! I appeal with you! Don't waste the grace of God. Take full advantage of the advantageous situation in which you find yourself. Do it right now!