

"COMING BOLDLY TO THE THRONE OF GRACE"

"Let us therefore come boldly [run fearlessly] to [Father God's] throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in [our] time of need." (modified from Heb. 4:16 KJV)

The truth of this verse is vital for every believer to apprehend, but particularly those who are seeking emotional and spiritual healing. The very nature of the healing process exposes our **need**—the need for a deeper sense of love, joy and peace—which can only come through a deeper relationship with Father God through His Son, Jesus Christ. This verse is an extravagant invitation to **run fearlessly** into the Father to receive and find that which we so desperately need and are promised, yet so many of us hesitate at the threshold, entering cautiously or even standing outside. Yes, there are some (in reality, probably a pretty small number) who truly know and regularly experience a deep awareness of His mercy and grace during times of need and boldly come. Yet there are many, many believers who struggle with consistently "coming to the Father's throne," and still others who even seem at times *paralyzed* and can barely move--let alone run--in the direction of the One who so desires to meet them. Why is this so?

THE TRUE MEANING OF GRACE

As we allow the Lord to show us about His grace, we may realize that we need to comprehend its meaning in greater depth. It is a word that is used freely in our Christian walk, yet the fullness of its understanding is terribly lacking. According to *Nelson's Bible Dictionary*, the word "grace" refers to "a favor or kindness shown without regard or merit of the one who receives it and in spite of what that same person deserves." The Greek word in the New Testament for grace is *charis*, and according to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, it speaks of, from the one who bestows it, ". . . the friendly disposition from which the kindly act proceeds—graciousness, loving-kindness, goodwill—especially with reference to the divine favor [of God]." It is free, universal, spontaneous, and it brings forth a sense or feeling of pleasure, joy, and gratitude in the one who receives it. In fact, *charis* comes from another Greek word, *chairo*, which actually means to "have joy, be glad, rejoice." This grace is a *gift* and thus its acquisition is not dependent upon anything we can do to earn it, nor is its maintenance dependent upon anything we might do to lose it (Eph. 2:8-9). Again, it is truly an expression of the *kindness and favor* of Father God. Grace, however, must be accompanied by faith. One must believe and trust in this kindness, mercy and favor of God, as expressed in its ultimate manifestation through His Son, Jesus Christ, who also is described as One who is "full of grace" (John 1:14).

IS HE GOOD, AND AM I HIS "FAVORITE ONE"?

Since I have been given eternal life by this kind God who looks upon us with favor (He has extended His grace to us) and we are now "justified" (just as if I'd never sinned), what holds us back from experiencing great pleasure and joy and responding with deep gratitude? Why, also, do many of us struggle with "running fearlessly" to the "throne of grace?" At a very deep level within, we must not believe that He is that "kind and looks with favor toward us," and/or we are not worthy of such a gift

from Him. Due to either our perception of God or our perception of ourselves, we individually believe "I must not be His favorite one." (Note: God is capable of maintaining each one of us uniquely as His "favorite son or daughter.") When we struggle with internalizing the reality of this free gift at a deep level, we then return to something that is more "tangible and reliable"—the law—to justify our position with Him. Unfortunately, the law cannot free us from sin which leads to death, and we live in a state of bondage to varying degrees. Our very best effort will never result in a greater love from the Father. Let us say that another way . . . there is nothing you can do to make Him love you more and there is nothing you can do to make Him love you less. His love for you is already mature and complete and unchangeable. It is constant. **It doesn't go up . . . it doesn't go down . . . no matter what!**

We would like to share a story we read in a book entitled, "Embracing the Love of God" by James Bryan Smith that speaks so well to this issue of God's grace and acceptance, apart from our efforts:

One morning, long after becoming a Christian, I woke to the realization that I was avoiding God. I had been trying so very hard for a very long time to be the kind of person I thought God wanted me to be, but I had failed over and over, to be that person. I was sure that God was ashamed of me, of my weaknesses, cowardice, and pride. I knew that I was ashamed of myself. I could barely stand to look in the mirror. The person I saw in the reflection was flawed, imperfect, and had fallen short of God's expectations and my own. I felt that I deserved judgment. So I stayed away from solitude and prayer and instead kept myself busy, hoping to overcome my feeling of failure through good works. But on this day I decided to face God again. I knelt down and confessed all my sins and weaknesses, and I begged God to take away my flaws. I told God I would do better, try harder, and that I was sorry that I had failed so many times.

I had done this before, of course. And even though I was making a thorough and heartfelt confession, I still felt alienated from God. The silence was deafening. I felt all alone. In my nervousness I found myself chattering away at God: "I am so sorry, please forgive me, I know I can do better . . ." Then suddenly, the Spirit spoke within me: "Be quiet, Jim, and close your eyes." When I closed my eyes I saw a lush green field, with the wind blowing through the high grass. Jesus was standing off in the distance and He began walking toward me. As He got closer I began pleading once again, "I am so sorry, please forgive me, I know I can do better . . ." Jesus never said a word in response. He just kept walking toward me, looking straight into my eyes. When He got near me He lifted me up from the ground and hugged me. For the next five minutes I was hugged by God. No words were spoken, but a feeling of warmth and love and acceptance penetrated my lonely, restless heart.

The above experience occurred eight years after I became a Christian. Though life with God did not begin in this place, my life was changed by this. I had expected and feared God's disappointment, but I was shown God's love.

PRAYER

Friends, Jesus is longing for us to be free so we can, without reservation, approach His throne of grace with **boldness**, in order that we may receive His mercy and find His grace to help us in our time of need. And not only Jesus, but the Father, too, bids us to come, as Jesus said . . . *Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father* (John 14:9 NIV). Will you run there with us? He is waiting with welcoming, open arms!

We invite you to pray the following prayer with us: "Father, I realize that I am in need of a deeper work of Your grace in my life. I have, by faith, invited Your Son Jesus Christ into my heart, and as a result, I no longer live under the curse of the law of sin and death. Yet at a deep level, the law is still alive in me. Father, I also realize that I don't experience the love, joy and peace that I know is available to me as one of Your children. I want to be able to love You with all of my heart and to be able to deeply know Your love and give it to others. I want to be free! By the power of the Holy Spirit, would You take down any walls of protection that exist around my heart? Would You show me any past hurts in my life that have caused me to believe things that are not true about You, Lord, about myself, and about others, and how I have responded to these lies? I want to forgive and be forgiven. Lord, forgive me for my lack of trust in You and for not coming freely to You due to my fear. Jesus, You say in Your word that Your power or strength is made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9), so please make me weak so that I can live in Your strength and not my own. Lord, please give me a broken and contrite heart (Ps. 51:17) so my heart can be broken over the things that break Yours. Father, I am not capable of healing myself, but You are able and willing. I surrender my will to Yours. And Lord, as You heal me and allow me to experience more of Your grace, teach me to extend the grace and acceptance to myself that You so extend so awesomely to me. Father, please also empower me to stand and fight against the evil one who seeks to rob, kill and destroy (John 10:10). I love You, Father, and I thank You for Your Son, Jesus Christ. In His Name I pray. Amen."

From the Father's Heart,

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