

ACCEPTANCE (3)

There are two questions that every believer must settle as soon as possible. The one is, Does God fully accept me? and, If so, upon what basis does He do so? This is crucial. What devastation often permeates the life of one, young or old, rich or poor, saved or unsaved, who is not sure of being accepted, even on the human level.

Yet so many believers, whether "strugglers" or "vegetators," move through life without this precious fact to rest and build upon: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:5-6).

Every believer is accepted by the Father, in Christ. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). The peace is God's toward us, through His Beloved Son -- upon this, our peace is to be based. God is able to be at peace with us through our Lord Jesus Christ, "having made peace by the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:20). And we must never forget that His peace is founded solely on the work of the cross, totally apart from anything whatsoever in or from us, since "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Our faith becomes a fixed attitude, once it begins to rest in this wonderful fact. Then it can be, if necessary, "rejected indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious" (1 Peter 2:4 ASV). This is the steadying influence most believers are in need of today. A century ago, J.B.Stoney wrote: "The blessed God never alters nor diverges from the acceptance in which He has received us because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Alas! we diverge from the state in which God can never be toward us as recorded in Romans 5:1-11. Many suppose that because they are conscious of sins, that hence they must renew their acceptance with God.

"The truth is that God has not altered. His eye rests on the work accomplished by Christ for the believer. When you are not walking in the Spirit you are in the flesh: you have turned to the old man which was crucified on the cross (Romans 6:6). You have to be restored to fellowship, and when you are, you find your acceptance with God unchanged and unchangeable. When sins are introduced there is a fear that God has changed. He has not changed, but you have. You are not walking in the Spirit but in the flesh. You have to judge yourself in order to be restored. 'For this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins' (Matthew 26:28). But if your sins are not met there, where can they be met? 'Now where remission of sin is, there is no more offering for sin' (Hebrews 10:18). God has effected the reconciliation; He always remains true to it. Alas! we diverge from it; and the tendency is to suppose that the blessed God has altered toward us. He certainly will judge the flesh if we do not, but He never departs from the love which He has expressed

to the prodigal, and we find that when the cloud, which walking in the flesh produced has passed away, His love, blessed be His Name, had never changed."

God's basis must be our basis for acceptance. There is none other. We are "accepted in the Beloved." Our Father is fully satisfied with His Beloved Son on our behalf, and there is no reason for us not to be. Our satisfaction can only spring from and rest in His satisfaction. It is from God to us, not from us to God. J. N. Darby was very clear on this: "When the Holy Spirit reasons with man, He does not reason from what man is for God, but from what God is to man. Souls reason from what they are in themselves as to whether God can accept them. He cannot accept you thus; you are looking for righteousness in yourself as a ground of acceptance with Him. You cannot get peace whilst reasoning in that way.

"The Holy Spirit always reasons down from what God is, and this produces a total change in my soul. It is not that I abhor my sins; indeed I may have been walking very well; but it is 'I abhor myself.' This is how the Holy Spirit reasons; He shows us what we are, and that is one reason why He often seems to be very hard and does not give peace to the soul, as we are not relieved until we experientially, from our hearts, acknowledge what we are.

"Until the soul comes to that point He does not give it peace -- He could not; it would be healing the wound slightly. The soul has to go on until it finds there is nothing to rest on but the abstract goodness of God; and then, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' (Romans 8:31b).?"

Sad today, most believers actually reason just the opposite -- from themselves to God. When all is going well, and God seems to be blessing, then it is that they feel He loves and accepts them. But when they are stumbling, and everything seems dry and hard, then they feel that He does not love and accept them. How can this be? There is nothing about us to commend us to God, our acceptance being in Christ, plus the fact that most of our true spiritual development comes through the dry and hard times. Thank God, He has accepted us in His Son, and upon this FACT we must rest our faith. As in justification, our acceptance is by GRACE alone. In his classic, ROMANS, VERSE BY VERSE, Wm. R. Newell presents some penetrating thoughts regarding this grace:

"There being no cause in the creature why grace should be shown, the creature must be brought off from trying to give cause to God for His care." "He has been accepted in Christ, who is his standing!" "He is not on probation." "As to his life past, it does not exist before God: he died at the cross, and Christ is his Life" "Grace, once bestowed, is not withdrawn: for God knew all the human exigencies beforehand: His action was independent of them, not dependent upon them."

"To believe, and to consent to be loved while unworthy, is the great secret."

"To refuse to make 'resolutions' and 'vows'; for that is to trust in the flesh."

"To expect to be blessed, though realizing more and more lack of worth."

"To rely on God's chastening (child training) hand as a mark of His kindness."

"To 'hope to be better' (hence acceptable) is to fail to see yourself in Christ only."

"To be disappointed with yourself is to have believed in yourself."

"To be discouraged is unbelief -- as to God's purpose and plan of blessing for you."

To be proud, is to be blind! For we have no standing before God, in ourselves."

"The lack of Divine blessing, therefore, comes from unbelief, and not from failure of devotion."

"To preach devotion first, and blessing second, is to reverse God's order, and preach law, not grace. The Law made man's blessing depend on devotion; Grace confers undeserved, unconditional blessing; our devotion may follow, but does not always do so -- in proper measure."

Have we been afraid to really believe God? Have some even been afraid to allow others to really believe Him? We must never forget that "God's ways are not always man's ways. To some men constant peril is the only spur to action, and many religions and psychologies are dependent on fear to keep their disciples in line. Fear, too, has a place in Christianity, but God has higher and more effective motivations than fear, and one of these is love. Often fear after a while produces only numbness, but love thrives on love. To promise a man the certainty of his destiny may seem, on the human level, like playing with fire; but this leaves God out of the picture. Those who have the deepest appreciation of grace do not continue in sin. Moreover, fear produces the obedience of slaves; love engenders the obedience of sons." --J. W. Sanderson, Jr.

"For if the trumpet gave an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (1 Corinthians 14:8). Until the Christian is absolutely and scripturally sure of his standing, he is not going to do much standing." "Stand therefore" (Ephesians 6:14a).

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work" (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17).