

## **Grace, Mercy, And Favor (Part One): To The Beaten**

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We receive hundreds of letters every month. Some are just short emails expressing gratitude for some of the resources we provide, like the Daily Berean, sermons, sermonettes, Bible studies, etc. Others are various comments on things we have written, along with what we believe and teach. God has blessed us with the ability and opportunity now to reach more people through the internet than the Worldwide Church of God ever did, even at its peak.

We also get many commentaries and opinions from all over the world regarding the things God has given us the privilege to provide. Many are no more than blogs from people wanting to push their own opinionated agenda, while others are serious questions or comments, asked in humility to help them direct their walk following Jesus Christ, seeking to understand the truth.

We certainly do not have all the answers, but we consistently pray that God will give us the discernment and ability to know how to answer appropriately those whom He may very well be sending to us, while at the same time properly recognize the “time wasters.” But one of the richest blessings God gives us in this process is learning how to expound in a better way, the hope that is within us and to consider things that we may have merely just skimmed over in the past within His Word that is a veritable gold mine full of nuggets of truth.

So today, God willing, this split sermon will be the first in a series of messages on what I consider a particularly important subject that we need to carefully consider as we go through the Passover, the days of Unleavened Bread, and into the count to the Feast of Firstfruits.

I was originally scheduled to give this as a sermonette two weeks from now, but I am filling in for our good friend Mike Ford, who by the grace of God safely awaits with the faithful that resurrection of firstfruits, while the rest of

us continue to move forward, by the grace of God. I mention this because in Mike Ford God gave us a good reference point regarding what I will be speaking to you about in this and the other three speaking assignments I have culminating with this sermon on the first Sabbath in the seven-Sabbath count to the Feast of Firstfruits.

You see a couple of months ago a very simple question came in that I think we may all find profitable food for thought as we go into the spring holy days. We all have been given the opportunity to share these very important gifts with Mike and all of the faithful firstfruits that have gone before us to have an awesome part in the work that only God can do.

The question was this: “To the beaten, what is the difference between grace, mercy, and favor?” As I said, we receive emails from all over the world and sometimes they are difficult to completely understand because English is not necessarily the emailer’s principal language. But I think as we go along, you may see the introductory phrase, “to the beaten,” is actually an integral part of the answer to the question.

The question was posed as a response to a Daily Berean that we had sent out in November as a commentary by John Ritenbaugh on Luke 18:9-14, “the Pharisee and Publican that stood side by side before God.”

**Luke 18:9-14** Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

John’s comments on these verses is a very good place for us to start to look into God’s Grace, mercy and favor toward us.

John wrote in this excerpt cited from his Forerunner article on [“Pride, Humility, and the Day of Atonement”](#):

Notice Jesus' teaching in verse 9: “Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.” This specific problem is religious egotism. The Pharisee despised others. Despised means "to count as nothing" or "to be contemptuous of." Can one have a good relationship with someone he despises? Pride finds fertile ground in our process of evaluation and begins to produce corrupt fruit.

This parable reveals the Pharisee to possess a misguided confidence that caused him to magnify himself by comparing himself against someone he felt to be inferior. It fed his own opinion of himself, causing separation from his fellow man. While that was happening it also brought him into war with God. The Pharisee became separated from God because, as the parable says, he was not justified. We need to take warning because, if we begin to feel contaminated in the presence of a brother or if we begin to withdraw from him or are constantly finding fault with him and being offended by almost everything he does we may well be in very great trouble. The sin of pride may be producing its evil fruit, and the division is strong evidence of it.

This parable features a self-applauding law keeper and an abased publican. One is not simply good and the other evil; both are equally sinners but in different areas. Both had sinned, but the outward form of their sins differed. Paul taught Timothy that some men's sins precede them and others follow later.

The publican's sins were obvious, the Pharisee's generally better hidden. The Pharisee's pride deluded him into thinking he had a righteousness he did not really possess. His prayer is full of self-congratulation, and like a circle, it keeps him firmly at its center. He makes no lowly expression of obligation to God; he voices no thanksgiving for what God had given him; he gives no praise to God's glory. He asks for nothing, confesses nothing, and receives

nothing! But very pronouncedly, he compares himself with others. He is filled with conceit and is totally unaware of it because his pride has deceived him into concentrating his judgment on the publicans, sinners who were contaminating his world.

The humble publican did not delude himself into thinking he was righteous. What made the difference? It was a true evaluation and recognition of the self in relation to God, not other men. The basis of their evaluations, pride or humility, made a startling difference in their conclusions revealing each man's attitudes about himself and his motivations. The one finds himself only good, the other only lacking. One flatters himself, full of self-commendation. The other seeks mercy, full of self-condemnation. Their approach and attitude toward God and self are poles apart. One stands apart because he is not the kind of man to mingle with inferiors. The other stands apart because he considers himself unworthy to associate himself with others. One haughtily lifts his eyes to heaven; the other will not even look up! How different their spirits!

Anyone who, like the Pharisee, thinks he can supply anything of great worth to the salvation process is deluding himself! Against whom do we evaluate ourselves? Pride usually chooses to evaluate the self against those considered inferior. It must do this so as not to lose its sense of worth. To preserve itself, it will search until it finds a flaw. If it chooses to evaluate the self against a superior, its own quality diminishes because the result of the evaluation changes markedly. In such a case, pride will often drive the person to compete against and attempt to defeat the superior one to preserve his status. Pride's power is in deceit, and the ground it plows to produce evil is in faulty evaluation.

Brethren, we are starting off this series of messages on grace, mercy, and favor here because I want to look at how abundantly blessed we are in these things as we approach the Feast of Firstfruits. But we need to do so wary of the distinct possibility that we could find ourselves, because of our carnal nature, in possession of these gifts with an attitude more like the Pharisee, than the man who was beating his breast.

Without a doubt, we need to be absolutely confident that we have an incredible privilege to be an integral part of the work God is doing throughout His creation by His grace, His mercy, and His favor. But we must be careful not to let our privileged responsibility within the Family of God to do His will swell the misguided self-confidence of pride.

I found it interesting in doing a word study on Luke 18:13, where Christ says, “And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” In the Greek “beating one’s breast” has a meaning of repentance and contrition, while in other languages the expression “to beat the breast” may constitute a symbol of pride or self-flattery. I only mention this because within the juxtaposition of these meanings we also can see the attitude problem that could arise within our carnal nature regarding the grace, mercy, and favor God is generously giving to all within the Body of Christ to serve His purpose.

How many times in dealing with those outside the Body of Christ, who have not been gifted with the grace, mercy, and favor God pours out on us have we said something like, “There but for the grace of God go I.”? And in pride rather than grateful repentance and contrition, recognizing in all of our dealings with others, whether in or out of the Body or out, that our privilege is to serve with the same outgoing concern as our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. We must never forget what God very clearly tells us there in Isaiah 66 regarding everything.

**Isaiah 66:1-2** Thus says the LORD: “Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist,” says the LORD. “But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.”

It is also good for us to take note at this point what Jesus Christ tells us a few chapters back in Luke 12.

**Luke 12:42-48** And the Lord said, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household,

to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."

We have been separated from this world in order to fulfill a privileged responsibility and to whom much is given, much is required in humility. That concept should lie at the base of our absolute confidence in our walk in the grace, mercy, and favor of God.

Brethren, in the carnal mind of man, there is much talk today of privilege as a vile and contemptuous thing that requires contrition and restitution. But to God, whether privilege is within or outside the Body of Christ, privilege is a God-given responsibility. Within this world, more often than not, we see abuse of privilege but that certainly does not give us right to have the "Pharisee to publican" attitude.

This is the reason we are spending our time today on the Pharisee/Publican attitude! Our privilege through the grace, mercy, and favor of God that we will be looking at over the next few messages is such an overwhelmingly magnificent gift, but it could actually end up being a trap if we do not stay tightly bound to the living Word of God in all our interactions in and out of the Body of Christ.

How many times, because of the vision God has given us have we thought: "There but for the grace of God go I," but not with the humble, appreciative mind of the publican who in comparison to the Great God is nothing, but we do it with the mind of the Pharisee who knows he has been privileged but

does not see it up against the measuring stick of Isaiah 57, verse 15 where our Great God tells us,

**Isaiah 57:15** For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

This is why it is so important in this sermon we focus first on the “beaten,” or the one who beats his breast in repentance and contrition regardless of any extraordinary privilege he has. Hopefully in the next few messages we will focus on the extraordinary gifts we have now as firstfruits but this needs to be our starting point today.

Brethren, are we really using God’s grace, mercy, and favor with the absolute humility of the “beaten”, producing what God expects from us or are we sliding into the trap of proclaiming, “There but for the grace of God go I”?

Privilege, whether in the world or within the body of Christ, requires the appropriate attitude and action in line with the way God sees circumstances and the use of the gifts He has given to accomplish His carefully measured work. They are God’s gifts to be used in humility to have a small part in His work to eventually bring all to repentance, salvation, and knowledge of the truth.

At this point it might be good to remind ourselves of God’s perspective. So Please turn with me now to II Peter 3.

**II Peter 3:9** The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

And now let us turn to I Timothy 2, verses 1-6.

**I Timothy 2:1-6** Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,

for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

Remember that we are looking at God's perspective on all of this.

**I Corinthians 15:19-26** If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

Now turn to I Corinthians 1.

**I Corinthians 1:19-20** For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

**I Corinthians 1:23-31** but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has



chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.”

We have been given the privilege to have an awesome part in this right now but only with the absolute gratitude of the “beaten.” Now I want to go back to II Peter 3:1-9 and see our Great God’s patient work, with His intention to bring all men to repentance.

**II Peter 3:1-7** (J. B. Phillips) This is the second letter I have written to you, dear friends of mine, and in both of them I have tried to stimulate you, as men with minds uncontaminated by error, by simply reminding you of what you really know already. For I want you to remember the words spoken of old by the holy prophets as well as the commands of our Lord and savior given to you through his messengers. First of all you must realize that in the last days mockers will undoubtedly come—men whose only guide in life is what they want for themselves—and they will say, “What has happened to his promised coming? Since the first Christians fell asleep, everything remains exactly as it was since the beginning of creation!” They are deliberately shutting their eyes to a fact that they know very well, that there were, by God’s command, heavens in the old days and an earth formed out of the water and surrounded by water. It was by water that the world of those days was deluged and destroyed, but the present heavens and earth are, also by God’s command, being kept and maintained for the fire of the day of judgment and the destruction of wicked men.

**II Peter 3:10-14** (J. B. Phillips) But you should never lose sight of this fact, dear friends, that time is not the same with the Lord as it is with us—to him a day may be a thousand years, and a thousand years only a day. It is not that he is dilatory about keeping his own promise as some men seem to think; the fact is that he is very

patient towards you. He has no wish that any man should be destroyed. He wishes that all men should come to repent. Yet it remains true that the day of the Lord will come as suddenly and unexpectedly as a thief. In that day the heavens will disappear in a terrific tearing blast, the very elements will disintegrate in heat and the earth and all that is in it will be burnt up to nothing. In view of the fact that all these things are to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be? Surely men of good and holy character, who live expecting and earnestly longing for the coming of the day of God. True, this day will mean that the heavens will disappear in fire and the elements disintegrate in fearful heat, but our hopes are set not on these but on the new Heaven and the new earth which he has promised us, and in which nothing but good shall live. Because, my dear friends, you have a hope like this before you, I urge you to make certain that such a day would find you at peace with God and man, clean and blameless in his sight.

Brethren, in this critical time in history are we really living and learning the Word of God, by His grace, mercy, and favor as the Publican? Or as the Pharisee? Are we really the “beaten” from the inside out learning to live as Christ lives in us? Or are we in fact the ones that possess a misguided self-confidence that is causing us to magnify ourselves by comparing ourselves against others we find inferior because we have been overwhelmingly blessed by the grace of God and they have not yet been given the same opportunity? Are we looking at not only those within the Body of Christ but those in the world with a self-righteous mindset that is not in line with the Word and will of God?

I am giving this introductory message this way because we are going to spend the next several messages trying to focus on the privileged blessings we have now, through Jesus Christ and God’s grace, mercy, and favor, as firstfruits with Him, but we need to be well grounded in the fact that everything we are and will be must be understood as a privilege of God that demands a much greater accountability.

God is using these days and these circumstances to bring us to the measure and stature of our Elder Brother, which we will never do unless we are actually living by God's every word in humble submission to Him and not measuring ourselves among ourselves.

It was at this point last week I came to a roadblock in this sermon and I was absolutely frustrated because I could not understand how to drive home the point that I thought needed to be made today until God showed me exactly what He wanted, and He used Nancy to point it out. So I now need to confess to you one of my own faults, among many, that I think clearly illustrates how difficult a problem we may all face within this wonderful privilege God has given each and every one of us by His grace, mercy, and favor.

Nancy and I were discussing this sermon over breakfast, along with the incredible privilege that God has given each of us within the body of Christ now to understand what is unfathomable to the world at this time. We were discussing that only by the grace of God do we see the tidal wave we are witnessing as directly in line with His Word. But instead of getting caught up in it we need stay obedient to God's Word just as we read back there in I Timothy 2, about submitting to those in authority and actually praying for them, because God has given us the privilege and responsibility to do so.

During our discussion we began to talk about a conversation I had with someone, not in the church, the previous evening and the person was really getting into an area where it was making me angry. But I did not want to let this cause a split in our relationship and in trying to be peaceable I carefully listened, prayed, and kept my mouth shut to maintain peace. I sincerely tried to follow God's admonition to us to maintain a peace with all men and be a light while striving to have the mind of our Elder Brother, dealing humbly and in patience with those who have not yet been given the understanding that God has graciously given to us to achieve His purpose.

However, it was at this point Nancy really brought things into a clear, but humbling, perspective for me. She reminded me that after I got off the phone the previous evening, and in citing parts of my phone conversation to her and one of our sons that was present following the phone call, I had actually done

what I am telling you today we must not do. In relating part of my conversation to them I had in reality placed myself in the “Pharisee to Publican” role of superiority over the person who was on the other end of that phone conversation. Suddenly it was very humbling moment but one that added another layer of understanding for me regarding what I am speaking to you about today, and how difficult our task and our responsibilities are. I had applied godly principles throughout the phone conversation, by the grace of God, but when I got off the phone I blew it. Apparently, in retrospect, I patted myself on the back and I became the proud Pharisee rather than the one who beat himself on the breast.

We have been given an incredible gift from God to begin to clearly see in faith the things that He sees, even in those who have not yet been given what we have been given, with eyes to see in faith. But if we are not careful it can be another trap by not carefully considering and submitting ourselves to God’s every Word, every minute of every day. Now please turn with me to I Peter 5, verses 5-11.

**I Peter 5:5-11** Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Brethren, we are, by the grace, mercy, and favor of God, very soon going to be recommitting ourselves to Him with the Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, and into the Feast of Firstfruits and we will be looking at just how incredible the opportunity is that we all share right now, by the grace of God. But we need to start off on the right foot in realizing God has allowed the Adversary to be in the picture and the only way we can fight the

good fight is with the same attitude of the humbly repentant publican who beat his breast rather than the proud Pharisee who lorded his position over others.

We must never allow our privileged position within the Family of God, by His grace, to become a badge of superiority over anyone whether in or out of the Body of Christ. If we maintain the attitude of the “beaten,” we can be assured of what God tells us through the apostle Paul in Romans 8 and we will end this introductory sermon here in Romans 8.

**Romans 8:27-30** Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

**Romans 8:31-39** What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

May we all continue on this road together, with the mind of Christ, a faith driven and humble attitude of service to all men by the grace, mercy, and favor of God, as it pleases Him for His glory!