

Serving God acceptably

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[0 : 00] Let us read God's word now in the epistle. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

For our God is a consuming fire. The epistle to the Hebrews is a truly glorious epistle. It is an epistle that is so full of Christ. It has a great deal to say about Christ's person and about Christ's work.

Christ is the brightness of God's glory. He is the express image of God's person. He is the one through whom God made the world. The one who upholds all things by the word of his power. He is God. God the Son. Very God of very God. But he is man also. He is God incarnate. The Son of God incarnate.

[1 : 09] The mediator. The only mediator between God and man. He, after he had purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.

God has exalted him. After he had made that full atonement and completed his work, God rewarded him for his obedience and exalted him to the sublimest light.

Oh, what a great salvation it is that is declared in Christ the eternal work in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? Here at the end of the 12th chapter, the writer sums up his argument.

Throughout the epistle, he has been demonstrating the superiority of Christ. And now he comes and he's summing up his argument. Verse chapter 13, as I see it, is something of an addendum that he adds.

[2 : 19] He's really summing up his argument here at the end of chapter 12. And he says there in the 25th verse, See that ye refuse not him that speaketh.

Don't neglect the one who speaks. The one who speaks, of course, is God. And God speaks on earth. He is him that spake on earth.

He says there in 25. He has spoken through men. He spoke through prophets. He spoke through Moses. He has spoken on earth. And those who did not heed to what God said when he spoke on earth, when he spoke through Moses and through the prophets, those who did not listen to and give heed to what God said, suffered a terrible punishment.

But God has also spoken from heaven. He has spoken through him and through this one who has come from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ.

He has spoken in his birth, in his incarnation, in his teaching, in his death, his atoning work, in his resurrection.

[3 : 33] This Christ is God's word, the eternal word, the logos, the word of God. And God has spoken in and through him, this one who is from heaven.

God speaks in heaven. And even after this one, the Son of God incarnate, ascended back to heaven. He continued to speak to men from heaven.

He spoke to them through his apostles. And we are told here, if they escape not to refuse him that spake on earth, how much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.

He has spoken in the law and he has spoken in the gospel. And we are told in verses 26 and 27, that God has shaken the earth.

Now, there is much in verses 26 and 27, which we could say, they are rather difficult verses, but we notice that there is a kingdom which cannot be moved, which cannot be shaken.

[4 : 53] That's in verse 28. And we, we who are Christian believers, are receiving this kingdom. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved.

And that's my first point, this morning. We are receiving a kingdom. We are receiving a kingdom. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved.

There is much said in the New Testament about a kingdom. The kingdom of God. Christ is the king. He is the king of kings. And the kingdom comes with the king.

Christ, the king, establishes his kingdom. He establishes his rule in the hearts of his people. The kingdom of God is within you, is what he said.

And you, Christian believer, are in that kingdom this morning. If you're a Christian believer, a true Christian here this morning, you are in Christ's kingdom.

[6 : 00] In the kingdom of God. A person enters into this kingdom by means of the new birth. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

But once a person has been born again, he is in the kingdom. And if you have had the experience of the new birth, you are in the kingdom. You are in it now.

Yet this kingdom is also a coming kingdom. We are receiving a kingdom. In its glorious fullness. In its majestic splendor, it shall be established at Christ's second coming. At the time of his glorious second advent. And that kingdom that shall be established then is a kingdom in which there shall be no defilement, no corruption of any kind whatsoever.

The subjects of that kingdom will all be perfect in holiness. It is a glorious kingdom. Thy kingdom come, we pray, in the Lord's prayer.

[7 : 13] But there is really more to this than that. It is not just that Christian believers are in God's kingdom, that they are subjects in God's kingdom.

It is also true that they receive kingship, that they receive a kingdom itself, that they rule, that they reign, that they are possessors of a kingship, of kingly honor.

We receiving a kingdom, which cannot be moved. Let me try and show to you that this is the teaching of the New Testament.

Paul writes to the Romans, and he says to them there in the fifth chapter, for if by one man's offense death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ.

Christian believers shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ. We reign in life. The apostle Peter says that the church is a kingdom of priests.

[8 : 38] We are priests to God, but we are kings as well. The apostle John had that great vision in the Isle of Patmos. He saw the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, the glorified Lord Jesus Christ, and he sang a hymn of praise to him, a great doxology of praise to the Lord Jesus Christ, unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God.

To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. He has made us kings and priests unto God. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, and he said to him, if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.

Again, in the fifth chapter of the book of the Revelation, we have the vision of the redeemed in heaven. They're singing the praises of the Lamb, and they're singing praise unto the Lamb who has made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign upon the earth.

In the very last chapter of the Bible, in Revelation chapter 22, we have that great vision of the holy city, the new Jerusalem.

And there shall be no night there, we are told, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign forever and ever.

[10 : 14] They shall reign forever and ever. I trust I've said enough to show you that this is the strand of teaching which we have in the New Testament.

Christ's people receive a kingdom. They receive kingship. They rule. They reign. We receiving a kingdom.

Now this surely is something that is truly breathtaking. What does it mean? In what sense can we understand those words, we receiving a kingdom?

Kingship. It speaks of authority. It speaks of rule. It speaks of power. It speaks of influence. A Christian believer are people who possess the Holy Spirit of God.

And by God's Spirit they rule their own Spirit. They have the Spirit of God dwelling within them. And we're told in the Scriptures that the fruit of the Spirit is temperance.

[11 : 21] What is temperance? Temperance is self-control. Temperance is self-discipline. Those who are not Christians are at the mercy of their life.

Though they may be able to exercise, some of them, some measure of outward control as far as outward behavior is concerned. But all is depravity within.

There is, of course, indwelling sin in Christian believers also. But they are people who have been renewed in nature. And by the power of that indwelling Spirit they are a mortifying sin day by day. And they are advancing in holiness. They die more and more to sin and live more and more to righteousness. By the power of the indwelling Spirit the Christian rules his own spirit.

And then too the true Christian is a man of prayer. He prays for himself. He prays for others. He prays for the church.

[12 : 33] He prays for the nation. He prays for the world. God and by means of his prayer he exercises a tremendous influence. A worldwide influence for the one to whom he prays hears his prayer and gives an answer to them.

It is not that there is power in the prayer itself. The power is in the one who hears the prayer. It is in God himself. He is absolutely sovereign.

But in his sovereignty he has ordained that he will act, he will work in response to the prayers of his people. And those prayers of course true prayers are themselves inspired by this God himself.

Sometimes we hear people say prayer changes things. I don't like that phrase. I don't like that phrase. It's not prayer that changes things.

It is the great prayer hearing God who changes things. But I repeat he has ordained in his sovereignty that he will work in response to the spirit inspired prayers of his people.

[13 : 57] Shall not God avenge his own elect which cry unto him day and night though he bear long with them? Christ takes the prayers of his saints on earth and in heaven he presents them before God perfumed with the incense of his own intercession and an abundant answer is given.

Study the history of any of the great revivals of history and you will discover that there were always saints who were burdened for the call and who were pleading for divine intervention.

God hears the prayers of his people. His praying people exercise a worldwide influence greater by far than that of a most powerful politician.

Then too we have to say that a kingship has been regarded down the centuries as the epitome of honour and of dignity and of happiness.

So many have regarded kingship in that way perhaps sometimes mistakenly that nonetheless that has been the general view. And when the Bible says that we are kings unto God, that we are receiving a kingdom it is indicating to us that tremendous honour and dignity and blessedness is given to the people of God.

[15 : 33] God's people, Christian believers, enjoy the special favour of the great God himself. They have communion with Jehovah.

They have a personal knowledge of the great Jehovah and of his beloved son, the Lord Jesus Christ. They inherit the world, the meek shall inherit the earth, the whole universe, all things in the universe are theirs.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians and he said to them, all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come, all things are yours and you are Christ and Christ is God.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Peter tells us that God according to his great power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.

In the knowledge of him was called us to virtue and glory. Oh, the felicity, the dignity, the honor, the blessedness that God just put upon his people, kings indeed.

[16 : 51] need. And the kingdom this people receive is a kingdom that cannot be moved, it cannot be shaken, it abides forever, it is everlasting.

God's people, Christ's people will reign with Christ's eternity. We shall reign with him forever and forever, the scriptures tell us.

The glory that awaits the people of God in the world hereafter is something beyond our ability now to begin to comprehend.

His saints reign with Christ forever. Oh, why? Why should we who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ ever allow ourselves to be intimidated and pressurized him to compromise by the world and its people?

Why should we fear man? We are kingdom to God. We've given kingship. We must be humble, humble certainly. But let us remember, we are receiving a kingdom, a kingdom which cannot be moved.

[18:02] We are receiving a kingdom. And secondly, we notice this, we are to serve God acceptably. We are to serve God acceptably. Our texts say, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

Have grace. Let us have grace. Now there are two ways in which we can understand this phrase have grace. We can take it literally as we have it here.

What we have here in our authorized version is a literal translation of the original Greek. Have grace. And put like that, it makes perfect sense.

If we are to serve God acceptably, we need the enabling of his grace. We need his grace for every spiritual duty.

Let us seek God's grace that we may serve him acceptably. That may well be the thrust of what we have here in that phrase, let us have grace.

[19:10] grace. But elsewhere in the New Testament, the phrase have grace is given an idiomatic meaning. It was obviously a Greek idiom, an idiom which meant let us be thankful, let us be grateful, let us express our gratitude.

Our Lord himself used the phrase in that way. You remember how in Luke, one chapter in Luke, he talks of the landowner whose servant was out in the field, digging the field and feeding the cattle and so on and he comes in and he had to serve the landowner as he sits there at his table.

Does that landowner ask Jesus, does he thank him for coming and serving him with his food at the table? Of course he does not. It is duty to do so.

But does he thank him? And the words used there are exactly the words have grace. literally translated here have grace. It was a Greek idiom and sometimes was used with this idiomatic sense.

You have it again in the Apostle Paul in his first letter to Timothy he says I thank Christ who has enabled me for that it counted me faithful putting me into the ministry.

[20:33] I thank and it's exactly the same phrase that is here rendered literally have grace. Again Timothy in his letter second letter to Timothy he says I thank God whom I serve from my forefathers with a pure conscience.

The same phrase. And there are many commentators who take the view that here in Hebrews chapter 12 it has been given that same idiomatic sense.

Let us be grateful. If we are to serve God acceptably we must be grateful to him. Only service to God that is acceptable is service that comes out of a devoted heart a heart devoted to God and grateful to him.

The phrase can be understood in that way too. We are to serve God acceptably we are to serve him. And this word that is here rendered serve has to do with religious worship.

Yet I do not believe that it is meant to be confined to the actual formal acts of worship whether in private or in public in the sanctuary.

[21:49] Out every duty is to be done for God. Out every duty must have a religious character about it.

every duty should be done for him and for his glory as in worship as it were to him.

Whatever we do or whether it be our secular work or whatever we're doing throughout the day our family duties or whatever we are doing should be done for God and for his glory as offered in worship to him.

If what we are doing cannot be done to the glory of God then we ought not to be doing it at all.

Horatius Boner has expressed the idea that here I believe very well so shall no part of day or night from sacredness be free but all my life and every step be fellowship with thee.

The apostle Paul expresses it even better. He says I beseech you by the mercies of God there's the idea of gratitude again by the mercies of God that he presents your bodies a living sacrifice holy acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service this is our reasonable service that in all we are and in all we do we are presenting our all as a sacrifice to God by the mercies of God out of

gratitude to God for his great mercy for what he has done in Christ for the great salvation he has given to us for putting this honor upon us giving to us a kingdom let us serve him let us consecrate our all to him the only proper response is wholehearted consecration wholehearted service to him our all must be upon the altar as

[24 : 02] Moses said to Pharaoh not an hoof shall be left behind the apostle Peter has the same idea he says we're a kingdom of priests priests and kings as well that we might show forth the praise of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light we must so live that our whole life is showing forth is praising the excellences and the virtues of this great God of ours who has worked so marvelously for us and in us showing forth the praise of him who has called us our whole life is to be a sacrifice of worship to him and if we serve him acceptably it will have to be with reverence and with godly fear says our text lightness and frivolity and vanity should have no place in a

Christian life there is a seriousness a certain gravity a quality a sublime quality that would mark the life of a Christian everything to do with god is awesome the Christian joins trembling with his mercy the fear of god is an important part of Christian character this fear of course is not at all inconsistent with decided confidence in god's mercy and with abounding joy in the lord this fear does not at all impair joy in the lord it is complementary to it true joy true Christian joy is not the superficial effervescent kind of a something superficial and something that is effervescent and that so often passes today for

Christian joy it is deep and it is pervasive the joy of the lord and it is something that invariably goes hand in hand with reverence and with all we are to serve God acceptably and thirdly we notice our God is a consuming fire our God is a consuming fire this is why we are to serve him with reverence and with godly fear for says a writer he is a consuming fire now the writer here is very certainly recalling words that were used by Moses in speaking to the Israelites in the wilderness as recorded for us in Deuteronomy chapter 4 there Moses is warning the people that they should not forget God's covenant the covenant that God made with them at Mount Sinai and he says to them you are not to make to yourselves any graven image for the Lord thy God is a consuming fire even a jealous God our God is a this God we have not come to Mount Sinai the mountain of the law we have come to Mount Zion the general assembly and the church of first of the first born the right of the first born the right the right of the gospel and he tells us of the law we have come to Mount Zion and the God who has given to us this gospel is the same

God who has given who gave also the law he is the same God the God of Mount Zion is the same God as the God of Mount Sinai we live in the gospel age but the God who has given us the gospel is the same God as the God who gave the law the gospel has superseded the law the ceremonial law with all its rituals and ceremonies and rules and regulations has passed away the moral law of course remains binding upon us but the ceremonial law has passed away it has been superseded and we live in the age of the gospel but we need to remember that though this is so the God of

[29 : 12] Mount Zion the God who has given us this gospel is the same God who gave the law our God is our consuming fire the God of Sinai is the God of infinite holiness and inflexible justice God the thunders and terrors of Mount Sinai indicate that but this God is the same God and the God was given us the gospel will not clear the guilty unless his broken law the honors of his broken law are satisfied fully satisfied our God is a consuming fire that he is a consuming fire is seen not just in the terrors and thunderings of the law at

Mount Sinai but it is seen too in the gospel in the gospel certainly his mercy shines the beams more brightly but his holiness is seen too in the gospel startlingly brilliant he gave his son and his own beloved son stood in the sinner's plain died the just for the unjust and as he stood there the father did not spare him as he made himself responsible for the law breaking of his people here to bear the penalty the vials of divine wrath due to ask for our sins hell upon him God did not spare him he put his people hell into that cup that he gave them to drink our

God you see had to punish sin severely our God is a consuming fire and that he is a consuming fire is seen to in the punishment the severe punishment that is meted out to those who despise or who neglect his gospel this so great salvation the punishment is more severe than was the punishment under the Old Testament dispensation we're told in chapter 10 that he that despised Moses law died without mercy under two or three witnesses of how much sore punishment suppose ye shall he be sought worthy who are trodden under foot the Son of God and have counted the blood of the covenant where whiz he was sanctified an unholy thing and have done despite unto the spirit of

grace sometimes people say the

God of wrath is the God of the Old Testament in the God of the New Testament there is no wrath only love nothing could be further from the truth God is light as well as love and there is no wrath like the wrath that will be endured by those who have despised his mercy and who have neglected and rejected and despised his great salvation that he has spoken in Christ the writer here is warning the Hebrews against the sin of apostasy turning away from and abandoning the faith that they once professed if they should do that there is nothing for them but a fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries our God is a consuming fire let that produce in you and me reverence and godly fear

Christians are people who are receiving a kingdom and that we shall receive it in its fullness is absolutely certain let us therefore have grace that we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear for our God is a consuming fire love for love for love for the