



*Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Savior am happy and blest;
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.*

*This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.*

Fanny Crosby

When I was but a young lad, I spent the balance of one summer with my Uncle Floyd and Aunt Estelle in Beloit, Wisconsin. Three distinct memories from this summer remain with me. The first is the memory of seeing my very first (and, as it turned out, only) major league baseball game—the Chicago Cubs vs. the Milwaukee Braves. The second, rather unpleasant memory is of scaling and gutting my first fish.

The third, and most painful memory of all is of breaking Uncle Floyd and Aunt Estelle's back porch window.

The transgression occurred after we had returned home from that momentous baseball game. I was out back, tossing a newly-acquired ball against the side of the barn. Only, in my youthful imagination, I was *really* standing on the mound, pitching for the Braves. My pitch fell squarely inside the imagined strike-zone and ricocheted back into my glove. I whipped around to throw the man out at first and the ball sailed unpleasantly through that large, expensive window.

Uncle Floyd was not at all impressed with my athletic prowess. His more pressing concern was for the eventual replacement of the window and the immediate warming of my backside. My solution to the inevitable was avoidance; if I could successfully avoid my uncle, I might avoid his punishment.

Uncle Floyd was a colorful character—especially for a young boy. He smoked big smelly cigars, had a cauliflower ear as a souvenir from his youthful boxing days, and could pepper his

conversation with words I never heard in Sunday School. And, not unexpectedly, completing the package was his sometimes-explosive temper.

Hauled back by the scruff of my neck to the scene of my crime, I felt a chill pass down through my spine. Was this to be my day of reckoning? Was this to be my last day breathing the fresh air of freedom? Was this to be my last day on *earth*?

Uncle Floyd had every right to be angry with me.

So does my heavenly Father.

The difference is grace.

Unmerited Favor

Too many Christians diminish the scope of God's grace by limiting it to His one-time grace exhibited at the cross. It is true that we came to Christ the first time utterly devoid of worth; there was nothing at all within us that would merit salvation. Because of this, our salvation required God's grace—His unmerited kindness or favor. But why would we think that after that moment of first grace we henceforth now *merit* His favor?

The relationship of grace does not change. Before we came to Christ we did not deserve God's grace, and after even decades of walking with Him, we remain undeserving.

An understanding of God's continuing, tireless, inexhaustible grace is the foundation of our relationship with Him. For we will inevitably pass through times when our heart grows cold to Him. Weighed down by the gravity of flesh, we become selfish, short-tempered, arrogant, perhaps even rebellious. When we return to God in submission and confession, acknowledging Him as Lord, acknowledging our sins before Him, what will be His response? How will the Lord answer our confession?

Grace.

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 4:14-16

Embracing an Imperfect Soul

Grace.

Let the word linger on the tongue. Let it roll and tumble around in your mind.

G-r-a-c-e.

Don't let go of it too soon. Caress it, and let it caress you, for grace is a perfect God's warm, forgiving embrace of an imperfect soul. Grace is God putting His arm around us, looking the believer straight in the eye, and saying, "I know who you are. I know what you are. I know all about your problems, your frustrations, your failures. I know it all. And I love you anyway."

Grace is God saying, "Jesus."

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 1:3-4

After our submission and confession, when our communion with Jesus Christ has been restored, all else fades into insignificance. The press of deadlines, the harried life of parenthood, tension with co-workers, personal failings that bludgeon our spirit—all these and more become manageable when they are shared with the One who envelops us in His grace.

In the eyes of Jesus we have broken many windows. We have stepped away from His righteousness, we have gone our own way, turned our back on Him. When we do return to Him, hat in hand, He has every right to be angry. He has every right to drag us back to the scene of our transgression and rub our nose in it.

But He doesn't.

And that is grace.

*Show me Thy face—one transient gleam
Of loveliness divine,
And I shall never think or dream
Of other love save Thine:
All lesser light will darken quite,
All lower glories wane,
The beautiful of earth will scarce
Seem beautiful again.*

*Show me Thy face—my faith and love
Shall henceforth fixed be,
And nothing here have power to move
My soul's serenity.
My life shall seem a trance, a dream,
And all I feel and see,
Illusive, visionary—Thou
The one reality!*

*Show me Thy face—I shall forget
The weary days of yore,
The fretting ghosts of vain regret
Shall haunt my soul no more.
All doubts and fears for future years
In quiet trust subside,
And naught but blest content and calm
Within my breast abide.*

*Show me Thy face—the heaviest cross
Will then seem light to bear;
There will be gain in every loss,
And peace with every care.
With such light feet the years will fleet,
Life seem as brief as blest,
Till I have laid my burden down,
And entered into rest.*

Unknown