

God's Grace

This past week I had the opportunity to meet with an individual who had visited our church a little while ago. We met at the Culver's in Newton for lunch and had a fine visit. I then asked him a question I often ask in trying to discern what a person believes. I said, 'If you were to die tonight and found yourself standing before God in heaven - and He were to ask you, "Why should I let you into My heaven?" - what would you say?'

I have probably asked that question hundreds of times over the years. and have received many and various answers. This individual was not surprised by the question. He simply responded that he didn't deserve heaven but he believed that God would let him in by grace and through believing in Christ as His Savior.

You can always tell that someone has given careful thought to what the Bible says about heaven when their first response is, 'I don't deserve it.' It is so easy to point to one's religiosity, good works, church attendance and think, 'I'm good'. The fact of the matter is that God says there are none who merit heaven. There are none who 'deserve' it. When we consider the prospect of God letting us into heaven - our first thought should be what this gentleman told me, 'I don't deserve it'. But - God in His grace welcomes us through the blood of Calvary.

Musician Bono of the music group U2, once discussed his faith in an interview with a writer who was skeptical of Christianity. Bono stated: 'the thing that keeps me on my knees is the difference between grace and karma'

The interviewer asked: 'What's that?'

Bono: 'At the center of all religions is the idea of karma. You know - what you put out comes back to you: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, or in physics - in physical laws - every action is met by an equal or opposite one'.

'And yet, along comes this idea called grace to upend all that . . . love interrupts, if you like, the consequences of your actions, which in my case is very good news indeed, because I've done a lot of stupid stuff.'

Bono added: 'I'd be in big trouble if karma was going to finally be my judge. It doesn't excuse my mistakes, but I'm holding out for grace. I'm holding out that Jesus took my sins onto the cross, because I know who I am, and I hope I don't have to depend on my own religiosity.'

Attempting to merit God's heaven is a futile endeavor indeed. But those who recognize their sinfulness before a holy God find a door of grace held open by a Savior who beckons us to come follow Him.