

Unspeakable Consolation

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God did not choose you as his child because of anything in you. In eternity, long before the first clock ever sounded, he did not look into the future to see what your response would be when you opened Snapchat, clicked on the three dots in the bottom right corner, and browsed through the Discover section. He was not waiting with bated breath to see if you would actually click on *that* link and plunge yourself into sexual filth.

Neither did God look deep into time and determine you were worthy of everlasting life because you deleted the app in a fit of righteous anger at having fallen into that temptation again.

Not only do you know that your election was due to “mere grace” and proceeds from “God’s eternal decree,” but you give thanks for that truth every day. You understand that out of all the people “equally involved in ruin” you were chosen by God in Christ and that you were by nature “neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery.” This is an intensely humbling and life-altering truth. Studying this truth causes you to delete Snapchat (which is to say, to flee fornication), to decline the offer of beer or drugs, and to fight the temptation of sexual impurity, not to earn or merit, but as “grateful returns of ardent love to Him, who first manifested so great love towards [you].”

Neither were you chosen to belong to God in time and eternity because God simply turned a blind eye to your sin, whereas when your unbelieving co-worker commits the same sin, God brings down his hammer of judgment. You should ask yourself, what makes you to differ from your co-worker? From an outward appearance, there is not much difference. You wear similar clothes, you face a lot of the same struggles with employment and school, and you can talk about the weather, politics, and sports with no problem. And yet, there is a chasm between you that only the God of heaven and earth can bridge. God’s justice demands that sin be punished, and he will have his justice satisfied. This satisfaction took place not because of your tears of repentance, or your faithful church attendance, but because of the “death of the Son of God,” the “only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sin.” What a humbling thought that you belong to the company of the elect, “solely to the grace of God, given [you] in Christ from everlasting, and not to any merit of [your] own.”

This should give us pause when we catch a hint of pride in our voices when we talk to, or about that co-worker. The reaction of the child of God who knows, truly knows the truth of election is to cry out, “Why me, Lord, why me?” As sons and daughters of Adam we know that we too “derived corruption” from our parents and brought on ourselves “blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity, and perverseness of judgment.” Would we trumpet that fact that we think we are different by nature, or perhaps were more open to the gospel of grace than our unbelieving neighbor or co-worker? Not only this, but if this great salvation were somehow offered to you as you were in Adam, you would have, in your “bondage” rejected it immediately. How can someone who is “dead in sin” accept anything? The knowledge that we were “neither able nor willing to return to God” is almost crippling. How this should shape our interactions with others,

in the church and without! How can we be proud when “faith is therefore to be considered as the gift of God...because He who works in man both to will and to do, and indeed all things in all, produces both the will to believe and the act of believing also.” Small wonder that armed with this knowledge you find in your soul “a ready and sincere spiritual obedience begins to reign.” This shows itself (as faith always does) by putting away the drugs, alcohol, sexual immorality, Netflix binge watching, and the time-wasting behavior on your phone that you engaged in for so long. You are thankful to God and determined to show it.

But then the invite came. When you heard the parents were going to be gone for a long weekend, and when the message finally came, and the date was set, it was inevitable. You knew you shouldn't go, but you went anyway.

Not only was there going to be alcohol, but you knew *she* was going to be present as well. And after a few drinks the inhibitions would be gone, along with the clothes.

You didn't count on the drugs, especially those drugs, but when that invitation came, you were ready to take the next step. Just another way to get a rush, is how you looked at it.

The problem is the next morning. It always comes. Bringing with it a sense of horror that wells up in your heart. “*What have I done?*” The doubts come raging in, the sense of hopelessness. You have lied to your parents, sinned against your God, and driven away your friends. You are alone, so terribly *alone*.

The “daily sins of infirmity” and the effects of “indwelling sin” come crashing down on you like a tidal wave. There have been consequences, and not just from your parents. It's the “deadly guilt” that you cannot shake. Your conscience tells you, “Now, you've gone too far. Your parents are sick of you, your God is disgusted by you, and the friends that you laughed so hard with the night before, are gone. End it. Even *that* is better than this kind of life.”

Have you forgotten? God is “rich in mercy!” He did not choose you because he saw anything in you that he liked. He didn't condition his love on your obedience. He demands obedience, but God is not helplessly watching while you make a mess of things, wondering what he is going to do now. He will not allow you to plunge yourself “into everlasting destruction.”

You have tried the way of sin and found it wanting. The manic laughter and flashing lights of the alcohol infused party have brought you misery, time and time again. The devil is a damnable liar, and he has you convinced that although it didn't work out this time, next week's party will bring you joy!

I know you don't feel it. You don't feel loved by God at all. “How could he love *me*?” You don't blame it on God, because you know you have only yourself to blame. You were not “constant in watching and prayer.” Again, you have forgotten that God is the “Father of all consolation” and will not allow you to be “tempted above that [you] are able.”

You have been “drawn into great and heinous sins by Satan, the world, and the flesh” but that is not the end of the story. You will repent of those sins, and in the way of “watching and prayer” you will resist the temptations that you know are coming. You will have a “renewed confidence

of persevering” and this will make you “much more careful and solicitous to continue in the ways of the Lord” because the thought of God withholding his countenance from you is “more bitter than death.” You will decline the invitation to the party. You will put your phone away and pick up a good book. You will date in a way that brings glory to God. You will crush your devilish pride by studying the truths of unconditional election, limited atonement, total depravity, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints. The reason is not your own strength of will or a powerful support system. “But God is faithful, who, having conferred grace, mercifully confirms and powerfully preserves them therein, even to the end.” What peace, tranquility, and contentment this brings to the child of God! Truly, this is “unspeakable consolation.”

It is here that the heart of the child of God takes the doctrine found in the Canons of Dordt and turns it into a doxology of praise to God, exclaiming; “Now to the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be honor and glory forever. AMEN.”

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