

REJECT OR RECEIVE?

You would think a visit from the popular rabbi Jesus would be cause for celebration in His hometown synagogue in Nazareth. But in Luke 4:20-30 the crowd turned against Him and His words. He announced that "*the year of the Lord's favor*" had come, in Him, with the age of the promised Christ. But the people didn't like God's plan to bless both Jews and Gentiles.

"When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath." Their true hearts were exposed. Religious bigots harbored ill will toward Gentiles. Generations worth. They want to be set free from foreign oppressors who did not know the true God. Good ole hometown boy Jesus suddenly became the kid from the wrong side of the tracks. *Persona non grata*.

1- People Reveal Their Dis-Grace. - Jesus had announced God's grace for all people, but they wanted to dictate what God would do. "Of all doctrines of the Bible, none are so offensive as the doctrine of God's sovereignty, that He will have mercy on whom He will," notes JC Ryle. Luke continues, "*they rose up and drove Jesus out of town, and brought Him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw Him down the cliff.*"

You've seen out-of-control mobs in the media. Not good. Roman law required that only through official legal proceedings, with two or three eyewitnesses, could someone be put to death. These people were going to pitch Him and stone Him in their wrath. They were sure He could not be the Christ. "*But passing through their midst He went away.*" It was not His time. Many more trials were to come before Jesus would voluntarily give His life to pay for sins.

Jesus never set foot in Nazareth again. He was "*the stone the builders rejected*" as "*He came to His own, and they would not receive Him.*" Furious about grace, all the religious facade of these synagogue-goers was going right over the cliff, even on the Sabbath day.

2- People Reject God's Grace. - Those most in need of God's mercy and grace often know it the least, even in church, observes RK Hughes. In their spiritual pride, they could not overcome their emotional bias against Jesus' truth. In His hometown synagogue, Jesus offered them forgiveness, but they preferred their fury, he notes. Nothing so grieves the heart of God as pride in the hearts of His people, as Jesus offers liberty.

Jesus was rejected other times. And He said His apostles also would be. Acts13:38, "*Let it be known to you brothers, that through this man Jesus Christ, forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. And by Him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the Law of Moses.*" This is the favor Jesus proclaimed in Luke 4. Do you reject God's grace? Beware, and be not scoffers who do not believe the work of God in your own day!

"Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, God has commanded us, 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.' And the Gentiles heard and began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed." Inward resentment became outward aggression against the Lord's servants, as they stirred up persecution and drove out the apostles. His "chosen people" rejected Him, but God chose many others for salvation.

3- Are YOU Receiving God's Grace? - As Jesus proclaimed in Luke 4, He has come to set people free from captivity to sin. All sin. And all people, any ethnicity, whoever will receive Him. You and me. How is God's favor at work in your life? Ephesians 2:12 reminds, "*remember you were at one time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.*"

God's promises throughout the Old Testament gave glimpses of the grace that has now come in the Savior Himself. Verse 13, "*But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. He has broken down the wall of hostility to create in Himself one new man, to reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross.*" This is the good news Jesus has given to ALL who receive Him, to proclaim to everyone around you! ☐