



God of Grace and God of Glory

Harry Emerson Fosdick wrote these words in 1930 from New York City, “. . . Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the facing of this hour . . .for the living of these days.” Those certainly were terribly difficult days, as the Great Depression had begun to take hold and the stock market crash was still a fresh memory. The financial collapse must have been on Fosdick’s mind, but certainly more was as well.

“Lo! The hosts of evil round us scorn Thy Christ, assail His ways.” It is not clear precisely what evils Fosdick has in mind (there are so many to choose from!), but a later line, “. . .the fight to set all free” suggest that Fosdick’s concern is not just for the bitterness of economic collapse, but also social injustice at home and abroad.

This prayer to the God of grace and glory has as much urgency today as it would have had in 1930 or 1830 or any time in human history. Fosdick’s poetic genius is in pulling together the attributes of God that too often are separated. Grace and glory are not obvious opposites like we might think of grace vs. law or glory vs. humility. But functionally, these attributes of God seem to appeal to different people. Some people focus on the grace of God and see God primarily as a benevolent, forgiving, kind, loving deity. Others see God primarily as glorious and think first of God’s sovereignty, power, righteousness, holiness. It is the rare worshiper indeed who can hold these images together to sense God’s fullness.

In the first line, Fosdick pulls these together, “. . .on Thy people pour thy power.” The prayer is for a glorious God to graciously share His power with His people who are in need of such power to perform the acts of grace and mercy of setting people free. Again, in stanza three, “. . .the search for Thy salvation be our glory evermore.” Salvation, God’s gift of grace, becomes our glory. So again, God has given us by grace what is His by nature.

In times of trouble and fear, let this prayer be our prayer, that the all-powerful God would draw near and see us through the dark days. This is exactly the gospel story, that God chose to come near, gifting us with the Son for all time, that by grace we may know and enter God’s glory. All around us are hurting people who need to know that God has not abandoned them, but is near and that God is not unable, but powerful to answer prayers, work miracles, and give us the inner strength and courage to face whatever challenges are in these days.

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