

# Truth and Presumption

Neil Girrard

One currently popular song assures us, “If our God is for us, then who could ever stop us – and if our God is with us, then what could stand against?” This exhortation is very true – yet it also exposes out the weakness of music and songs in general even as it points out a very human tendency that has plagued men since God graciously descended into our midst.

The song is accurate. The exhortation is true. The music is even uplifting and, some might even say, exhilarating. But it is not the whole truth. The whole truth in this matter is far too complicated to compact into an emotionally charged song composed of less than 100 words and 10 short, pithy, poetical sentences. And it is popular music’s inability to present the whole counsel of God that is perhaps its greatest weakness, seconded by its ability to cause its hearers to think that listening to and singing along with truth is the same as knowing and obeying truth. This is no reason to jettison music or even this song entirely from one’s life, but we must recognize that, no matter how good a song may be, truth can sometimes require more than a few words to convey its profound depths. But certainly it can be said that music is a dangerous “power tool” – heaven help the one who handles it ignorantly or carelessly!

So what is missing from this exhortation to recognize the awesome and transcendent power of God? When the twelve scouts returned from spying out the land of Canaan prior to invading it, Joshua and Caleb exhorted the people, “If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them.” The people disregarded this exhortation and called for Joshua and Caleb’s execution. (Num. 14:8-10) As a result of this rebellion, God refused to allow that generation to go in to the Promised Land but instead consigned them to one year in the wilderness for every day the twelve scouts had been on their mission, promising them that their bodies would fall in the wilderness. (Num. 14:32-34)

After this pronouncement, “the people mourned greatly. And they rose early in the morning and went up to the top of the mountain, saying, ‘Here we are, and we will go up to the place which the LORD has promised, for we have sinned!’ And Moses said, ‘Now why do you transgress the command of the LORD? For this will not succeed. Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the LORD is not among you. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned away from the LORD, the LORD will not be with you.’” But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop. Nevertheless, neither the ark of the covenant of the LORD nor Moses departed from the camp. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah.” (Num. 14:39-45)

The question of whether God is with us or against us is a question that should not be lightly and summarily dismissed. Peter wrote, “For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.” (1 Pet. 3:12) The question is not whether the Lord is able to save or overcome or conquer the adversaries and hindrances that stand before us – the question is whether our own hearts are pure before the Lord. The Lord has arranged to have these very adversaries and hindrances set before us at this time for the very purpose of exposing some hidden flaw within our own hearts and nature which He must oppose until we bring them under obedience to Christ.

It is the devil’s primary strategy to get men and women to do evil – in the name of Christ and God if at all possible – so that God cannot bless and protect and provide for them. It is the devil’s delight to lure men to presume upon God’s grace by ignoring their own sins and neglecting to diligently attend to the salvation God has given them. Such as these are then astonished that “God has failed them” and their lives are riddled with defeat and powerlessness to do the things they believe God has placed before them to do.

Yet whether these have presumed to walk in sin or presumed to build some sort of “ministry” that is not of God’s design for their life, the result is the same – God is *not* with these people. Further deception enters in for some as the devil then steps in and provides for them. Money suddenly appears to build or improve the “church” building for these people – and God is credited with a “victory” even as the orphans, widows and poor are ignored as the people’s resources are thrown into yet another real estate money pit. (see Jas. 1:27) A job promotion or a “ministry” opportunity that draws a parent further out of the lives of their family and children is hailed as “the blessing of God.” Routine “church” and “Bible study” attendance is presumed to be obedience to God and the subtle shift from righteousness to lawlessness (2 Cor. 6:14) is overlooked and being asked to teach Sunday school is confirmation that God is pleased. These – and more – are the ways in which the devil takes things that outwardly seem to be the things of God and uses them to derail God’s people from their divine heritage in Christ. And all of this is accomplished on a strictly volunteer basis! No one is involved in this without having chosen to step out of the way of Christ and into the way of Cain (false religion – Jude 11, Gen. 4:3-5, etc.)

There is yet another side of this question of whether we are presuming upon God’s grace that needs examined. On another occasion, Moses was instructed to strike the rock and water gushed forth. The place was then called both Massah (“Tempted”) and Meribah (“Contention”) “because of the contention of the children of Israel [against Moses], and because they tempted the LORD, saying, ‘Is the LORD among us or not?’” (Ex. 17:2, 6-7) In this instance, God was actually moving among the people and the people murmured against what He was doing.

Presumption is a sin that strikes in both directions. A person who is in actuality receiving from the flesh or the demonic can presume that he is enjoying the provision and protections of God. Or, a person who is truly receiving the blessings of God can presume that he has been abandoned to his own fate and resources. This is the duplicity of our fallen human nature and Satan is all too happy to capitalize on our weaknesses.

None of this takes away anything of the awesome power of God. Rather it points out the dangerously lethal deceptions which the enemy has laid out before us and which most of those who claim to follow Christ have blundered into in their drowsiness, laziness or blindness. It is a wake up call that we cannot presume upon the grace of God while we remain unwilling to live up to the responsibilities God has placed upon us so that we might become true recipients and genuine participants in His grace.

Indeed, let us purify ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor. 7:1), and we will be able to stand “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” (Eph. 6:10) But let us not confuse the energy of our soul or the deceptions of the devil and the demonic to be the way of the Lord. The schemes of the devil are not the way by which we accomplish the will of God – they are those things designed to lure unwary and negligent souls out of the way that leads to life. (Mt. 7:13) It is by doing the will of the Father that we enter into and remain in His kingdom (Mt. 7:21) and that we will then be enabled to shine like the sun in that realm where He alone is King and Lord. (Mt. 13:43)

Let he who has ears hear.

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