

**“The Seal of God’s Approval”
 “God’s Seal of Approval”
 Acts 11:1-18
 Jerry Grey**

Introduction:

Does it matter what other people think of you? Many of you, as well as I, spend much time and energy fretting over what others think. Does the bible have a word on this? Can we disagree over doctrine and still be friends.

Luke 6:26

“Woe to you, when all people speak well of you.”

Illustration: John Wesley (1703-1791), the passionate preacher and founder of the Methodist movement in England, was riding along a road when it occurred to him that he had gone three days without being persecuted. Threats and insults had ceased. No chicken eggs or bricks had been thrown. Wesley came to a halt, alarmed, and shouted, “Can it be that I have sinned, and am backslidden?” He interpreted the lack of persecution as a lack of devotion to Christ.

Wesley leapt from his horse and went to his knees, pleading with God to show him how he had sinned. A burly man on the opposite side of the hedge heard the prayer and recognized the preacher. He picked up a brick and hurled it at Wesley, saying, “I’ll fix that Methodist preacher!” It landed gently beside Wesley, missing him by only a few inches. Wesley leaped to his feet cheerfully crying, “Thank God, it’s all right. I still have His Presence!”

Mark 12:14

“Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity, you aren’t swayed by men because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.”

Galatians 1:10

“Am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

However - Proverbs 22:1 says, “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.”

Your reputation does matter but we don't compromise truth for peace.

2 Corinthians 8: 20-21:

We have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.”

—Keep a conscience void of offense towards God and man.

Acts 24:1-21.

24 After five days Ananias the high priest came down with some elders and a lawyer^[a] named Tertullus. These men presented their case against Paul to the governor. ² When he was called in, Tertullus began to accuse him and said: “Since we enjoy great peace because of you, and reforms are taking place for the benefit of this nation by your foresight, ³ we acknowledge this in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with utmost gratitude. ⁴ However, so that I will not burden you any further, I beg you in your graciousness to give us a brief hearing. ⁵ For we have found this man to be a plague, an agitator among all the Jews throughout the Roman world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes! ⁶ He even tried to desecrate the temple, so we apprehended him [and wanted to judge him according to our law. ⁷ But Lysias the commander came and took him from our hands with great force, ⁸ commanding his accusers to come to you.]^[b] By examining him yourself you will be able to discern all these things we are accusing him of.” ⁹ The Jews also joined in the attack, alleging that these things were so.

Paul's Defense before Felix

¹⁰ When the governor motioned to him to speak, Paul replied: "Because I know you have been a judge of this nation for many years, I am glad to offer my defense in what concerns me. ¹¹ You are able to determine that it is no more than 12 days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem. ¹² They didn't find me disputing with anyone or causing a disturbance among the crowd, either in the temple complex or in the synagogues or anywhere in the city. ¹³ Neither can they provide evidence to you of what they now bring against me. ¹⁴ But I confess this to you: I worship my fathers' God according to the Way, which they call a sect, believing all the things that are written in the Law and in the Prophets. ¹⁵ And I have a hope in God, which these men themselves also accept, that there is going to be a resurrection, ^[c] both of the righteous and the unrighteous. ¹⁶ **I always do my best to have a clear conscience toward God and men.** ¹⁷ After many years, I came to bring charitable gifts and offerings to my nation, ¹⁸ and while I was doing this, some Jews from Asia found me ritually purified in the temple, without a crowd and without any uproar. ¹⁹ It is they who ought to be here before you to bring charges, if they have anything against me. ²⁰ Either let these men here state what wrongdoing they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin, ²¹ or about this one statement I cried out while standing among them, **'Today I am being judged before you concerning the resurrection of the dead.'**"

Romans 15:1-2

The strong please not themselves, we please our neighbor for his good and edification.

1 Timothy 3:7; 3:2

Deacons/Elders are to be approved and well thought of by outsiders.

Resolve this problem by blending the two – Is it possible to please God and to please man at the same time?

Quote: Piper - ... “With Paul we do care – really care – about what others think of Christ.” * You are a representative of Christ and must act like it.

Illustration: *A dog could beat a skunk in a fight, but it ain't worth it.*

1 Thessalonians 2:4

“As we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.”

Read text: Acts 11:1-18

- What was it that caused this enormous problem between the Jews in Jerusalem and Peter the Apostle? The answer is right here in verse one. Look at the word **heard**.
- Jerusalem is in Judea. The experience of the Gentiles had now reached Jerusalem and all of Judea. From the Jewish brother's comments in Jerusalem you can imagine how much gossip and misinformation had been relayed to the leaders there. All the way to Acts 24 the Jews in Jer. Are still hounding Paul.
- Problems come from the things that people have heard. I'd say 80% of the problems with which I deal come from things that people have heard. And what they heard *ain't* so.
- The translation to “I heard something” is “I heard something, and I'm going to help spread the lie that I heard.” If you love gossip and spread gossip, your sin will find you out. God will put a worse thing upon you.
- In Acts 11, what they heard was correct. They just didn't like it. People will either lie or misrepresent the truth.

“God's Seal of Approval”

~ The seal of God is the Holy Spirit. You are sealed at your new

birth.

~ If others think you unworthy to be a Christian, minister, teacher, or whatever - they don't have say so in the matter. You can do all things with the Holy Spirit in you. God's seal of approval in your life is the baptism of the Holy Spirit at conversion? Do you think a few Jewish leaders in Jerusalem could stop the gospel from going to the Gentiles?

I. God's Seal Means Protection: Charles Billingsley was at a pastor's conference singing. After the service, he got into an elevator going to his room and two women entered the elevator too. They were discussing how they were going to seduce a man they saw in the hotel. The man was also a pastor. He had no idea that Satan was working his ruin through two women he had never met. People will come after you with deception. Nothing you can do but walk with Christ. Faith that is not tested is not faith.

Illustration: The Ryan family said I never went to the hospital to visit Judy. Richard Huff called me while I was in the room. I also had my hospital pass to get into the ICU.

Stalvey's Restaurant and Lisa. This girl was found to be the biggest liar in Loganville. Just give God time to reveal the truth.

However, God protects us from what people hear. Get the facts straight. Even if its good facts don't repeat it. If you have a problem, follow biblical guidelines. ***Most of the difficulties I deal with are due to the fact that people don't have the right information.***

Verses 2-3: Thank God that Jesus protects us from people like this. Peter and Paul were accused of doing some vile, disgusting, nasty things (**Acts 24:6**). From the perspective of the Jews. This is why Peter took people with him that were Jews (Note 10:23). When he went to the house of Cornelius he had witnesses.

Peter gets criticized! **How did I know that was coming?**

διακρίνω– to decide – to judge; decide or distinguish. To discriminate or make a distinction. To doubt or be divided in one's mind. Two judgements.

- * The whole world is getting saved and the Apostles and lay people in Jerusalem, and Judea are upset at the Gentiles getting saved. This is always in the picture when people are being very critical. They ignore what God is really doing and concentrate on insignificant matters.
- * Here is the blessing of protection – when you are in His will you only need God's approval. Try your best to get along with people, but in the end, you have to obey God.
- * The Gentiles are coming into the kingdom – Oh no! They have access to God. The Catholic Church confronted Martin Luther When they found out he was translating the Greek text into German. They said to him, what shall happen if the common man gets the scriptures in his own language? Luther replied. *Sir, then men might be saved.* In that day, most people couldn't read or write. And that's how the Catholic Church held sway over so many people. Information and education have always held great power. The priests were the record keepers in the cities. They had control. The protestant reformation was about people having access to God by faith.

2 Kinds of People Here

1. Those who criticize
 2. Those who get criticized
1. If you are in the first group you might be jealous. Critical people hate it when others work harder than they do and do well. They get threatened; change is coming.

2. Critical people usually need to put others down to build themselves up.
3. 99% of the time, critical people do not have all the info. And they don't care to get it.

~ If these people had been going to the uttermost parts of the earth, they would have known what was going on. The critical people were still in Jerusalem, where God had told them to leave. ***Make certain that you never take advice from people who are out of the will of God.***

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16:

¹³ This is why we constantly thank God, because when you received the message about God that you heard from us, you welcomed it not as a human message, but as it truly is, the message of God, which also works effectively in you believers. ¹⁴ For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, ***since you have also suffered the same things from people of your own country, just as they did from the Jews*** ¹⁵ who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets and persecuted us; they displease God and are hostile to everyone, ***¹⁶ hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles*** so that they may be saved. As a result, they are always completing the number of their sins, and wrath has overtaken them at last.

I was sharing Jesus with a girl outside of Solomon's porch one evening. And her best friend, who was a Christian, saw this young lady get very nervous and bothered. She came under deep conviction. And she took her away from me. And let me say, she was uncomfortable. Because the Holy Spirit was convicting her of her sin. If you're **not** gonna witness, at least don't hinder me, so that I can do it; and please don't take your friend away from me when they're about to get saved.

We never should pick and choose who comes into the kingdom.

* You might hear about me going into the house of Gentiles – It’s okay. Jesus ate and drank and visited sinners. I’ll do the same. And so should you.

To Those Who Are Criticized:

- a. Stop getting your self-esteem from others – grow up.
- b. Know that the critical will always be with us. They are like the poor – for whatever reason – they never go away – no matter how much God does or people love and care for others, *the critical think it could have been better.*
- c. **Verse 4:** Be mature – Peter explains without anger. Those who answer to God have no problem telling what He is doing. **καθεξῆς**- orderly sequence. Peter answered in an orderly sequence. Get your Ducks in a row ahead of time. Don’t let them fall into a cement mixer. You will get quacks in your cement. Ha!

Bible Hub: Same word used in these passages.

Examples- **Luke 1:3** – “it seemed good also to me to write an **orderly account** for you, most excellent Theophilus”

Acts 11:4 – “But Peter began and explained to them the matter point by point.”

Acts 18:23 – “After spending some time there, Paul set out again and traveled from **place to place** throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.”

The adverb translated “in orderly sequence” or “successively” signals deliberate arrangement—whether of narrative events, geographic movement, or prophetic testimony. Its appearance is confined to the writings of Luke and establishes his concern for an accurate, sequential presentation of God’s redemptive work.

Prophetic Continuity in Acts 3:24

Peter's sermon at Solomon's Portico wields the adverb to link Samuel "and those who followed in succession." In a single stroke, Luke ties the entire prophetic corpus to the arrival of Messiah. Far from isolated predictions, the prophets form a divinely orchestrated chain pointing to "these days."

Transparent Accountability in Acts 11:4

When called to justify table fellowship with Gentiles, Peter recounts the Caesarean vision "point by point." His systematic testimony convinces the Jerusalem believers that God has indeed granted repentance to the nations. The church's unity is preserved through an ordered recounting of God's Acts.

Methodical Shepherding in Acts 18:23

Paul "traveled from place to place" throughout Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening "all the disciples." The missionary does not roam randomly; he revisits congregations in a measured circuit, illustrating the value of systematic discipleship and pastoral oversight.

(You are under His protection)

II. God's Seal Means Provision and Proof:

Verse 15 says the spirit fell – (Aorist Active indicative) This refers to past tense filling at a single point in time. Peter goes on to say this is exactly what happened to us at the beginning, referring to Pentecost. Pentecost happened one time. It does not happen multiple times. Filling of the spirit happens multiple times.

Verse 16 says the Spirit would baptize and fill. Peter says he remembered. I love this. Scripture is fulfilled while we are looking at it.

John 14:25-26: “I have spoken these things to you while I remain with you. ²⁶ But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit—the Father will send Him in My name—will teach you all things and **remind you** of everything I have told you.

I have seen this with my very own eyes. I have seen it. This is the most miraculous event in history. The lost person that is depraved has an encounter with holiness. This is the promise of God fulfilled in reality. The filling of the Holy Spirit happens to you when you're saved. Every individual in history that has been saved has been baptized in the spirit. As Paul grew in the spirit, he understood that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was a **seal**.

Baptism and Filled = Sealing. What does the baptism of the Spirit signify?

- Ownership
- Authority
- Down Payment – An Earnest, deposit – Would baptize
- Spiritual Gifts
- Ability
- Conviction
- Encouragement- counselor
- Revelation – v. 16 – Peter remembered.
- Illumination- for interpretation of scripture
- Cleanses/ Sanctifies/ Separates/ conviction

Eph 5:18 And don't get drunk with wine, which leads to reckless actions, but be filled (**Present Passive/MP Imperative**) by the Spirit:

Ephesians 4:30

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were **sealed** for the day of redemption.

Verse 17 - Notice the word gift – **δωρεά, Dorēa From doron**; a gratuity -- gift. freely, needlessly, without a cause, without charge, without cost, without paying. The Charismatics are lying about the Holy Spirit. You can't do anything to get it. The Holy Spirit is given by grace as a gift. There is no merit involved in the reception of the Holy Spirit. **You are baptized once in the Spirit. With many fillings.** We are actually commanded to do something That's impossible without the help of God.

In Romans 5:15 But the **gift** is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!

The "gift" refers to Christ's ("imputed"), = Transferred righteousness.

* Though closely related to the Holy Spirit, it probably includes the full range of experiences which are connected with salvation.

Verse 17: - "I do not want to oppose God. His seal of Provision means you are fighting God if you deny the gospel." **"Oppose"** here is to forbid.

Illustration: Read a story about Corrie Ten Boom That happened to her after the war as she was sharing a gospel on a street corner in Germany. While they were in the concentration camps. And barely avoiding death in the gas chamber, many of the soldiers sexually abused her sister. And nearly starved them to death. A crowd had gathered to hear her share the gospel of Jesus Christ. And she looked up and saw one of the soldiers who had sexually abused her sister standing there looking at her. He was obviously under conviction. As she began Dealing with an enormous battle within her heart. She wanted to stop sharing the gospel and walk away. In her flesh, she felt that the man deserved to go to hell for what he did to them. But as she pondered this the Holy Spirit dealt with her heart. Then and there, on the spot, she had to forgive the man. Then continue to share the gospel with them.

III. God's Seal of Perpetuity (Protection Provision)

Verse 18 –

After explanation and information, the Zealots calmed down, for a while. They praised God – a natural response to salvation.

ἡσυχάζω- KJV: cease, hold peace, be quiet, rest

NASB: fell silent, kept silent, lead a quiet life, quiet life, quieted down, rested. Bible Hub

The verb behind Strong's Greek Number 2270 appears **five times** in the New Testament and consistently conveys a deliberate quietness—either of speech or of activity. Whether describing the **calm acceptance of God's will**, Sabbath rest, or orderly daily living, **the term points to an inner composure that expresses trust in the Lord and consideration for others.** Bible Hub

When Peter recounted the conversion of Cornelius, the Jerusalem believers “quieted down and glorified God” (**Acts 11:18**). Their cessation of objection signified a surrender to God's redemptive plan that included the Gentiles.

Likewise, after repeated pleas failed to deter Paul from journeying to Jerusalem, his companions “remained silent and said, ‘The Lord’s will be done” (**Acts 21:14**). **The verb underscores a holy resignation: once the Lord’s purpose became evident, debate ceased and worshipful acquiescence followed.**

This is a magnificent statement that we see in the text. Wouldn't it be great if God's people would quit arguing, be silent, and glorify God. **δίδωμι**

What God gives. no man can take away. Glorify – ἐδόξασαν
-to have a good opinion of one. Recognizing what is heavy.

*** They Got Life: The Gentiles received salvation and life.**

Unlimited – Eternal, perpetual care. Now and later.

*** Greek Life:** Means source of life.

Closing:

To live above, with saints we love will certainly be glory. To live below with saints we know – well, that’s another story.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-20, many parts.

Tell fake story about an ugly, stupid half-brother. He is slow, can’t get a date, can’t keep a job – He is stupid - I think if he was not so ugly, he could probably get help but he’s just pitiful.

If that makes you uncomfortable, think what God feels like when we reject those who have been approved by him and entrusted with the Gospel.

Mark Hall, "If we are the body."

"If We Are The Body"

It's crowded in worship today
As she slips in trying to fade into the faces
The girls' teasing laughter is carrying farther than they know
Farther than they know

But if we are the body
Why aren't His arms reaching?
Why aren't His hands healing?
Why aren't His words teaching?
And if we are the body
Why aren't His feet going?
Why is His love not showing them there is a way?
There is a way

A traveler is far away from home
He sheds his coat and quietly sinks into the back row
The weight of their judgmental glances
Tells him that his chances are better out on the road

But if we are the body
Why aren't His arms reaching?
Why aren't His hands healing?
Why aren't His words teaching?
And if we are the body
Why aren't His feet going?
Why is His love not showing them there is a way?
There is a way

Jesus paid much too high a price
For us to pick and choose who should come
And we are the body of Christ

If we are the body
Why aren't His arms reaching?
Why aren't His hands healing?
Why aren't His words teaching?
And if we are the body
Why aren't His feet going?
Why is His love not showing them there is a way?
There is a way

If we are the body
Why aren't His arms reaching?
Why aren't His hands healing?
Why aren't His words teaching?
And if we are the body
Why aren't His feet going?
Why is His love not showing them there is a way?
Jesus is the way