

THE SUFFICIENCY OF GRACE

Scripture Reading: II Corinthians 12:8, 9

The power of God's grace is inestimable, limitless and complete in its scope. Though its range of effectiveness is determined by God alone, the potential effectiveness of His grace knows no bounds. Our finite conception of its appropriate application must yield to the absolute judgment of God Himself. The apostle Paul was left in no doubt of this inescapable truth. When he pled with the Lord to relieve him of his physical affliction (having requested three times) the Lord simply and directly replied, "MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE." Our apostle is our example in every aspect of our walk in the faith. It comes as no surprise, then, when we read in his letter to the Philippian saints, "Unto you is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to *suffer for His sake*; having the same conflict which ye saw in me" (Philippians 1:29, 30).

Paul further emphasizes this declaration as he describes what afflictions he had experienced: "What persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*" (II Timothy 3:11, 12). Our own strength cannot see us through; only God can spiritually empower us to walk pleasing to Him. "For the love of Christ constraineth us" (II Corinthians 5:14). "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me (Philippians 4:13). Our portion is to gladly yield to the will of God and rejoice in the privilege of suffering for Him. Again, Paul is our example as he responds to the Lord's answer to his plea, "My grace is sufficient for thee." The apostle's humble acceptance: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities [weakness]."

REH

Notes:

THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Scripture Reading: II Corinthians 8:9

An old favorite hymn begins, "Marvelous grace of our loving Lord." True, pure grace is from Him alone. How shallow are those who claim to live by their own self-sufficiency. Natural man can in no sense generate the spiritual strength required to survive human existence victoriously. Our victory was purchased, and "we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Romans 8:37). "For ye know *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

The work of God's grace is unfathomable to our limited capacity to understand. He was under no obligation to pay the penalty for our guilt; it was a voluntary act of His grace. "Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, *even the death of the cross*" (Philippians 2:5b-8).

Man finds it difficult to comprehend that he can do literally and absolutely nothing to earn or deserve salvation. He ponders Job's question: "How should man be just with God?" (Job 9:2) Our apostle explains, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that *being justified by His grace*, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:5-7). Such is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ!

REH

Notes:

GRACE GIVEN BY JESUS CHRIST

Scripture Reading: I Corinthians 1:3-8

The apostle Paul constantly rejoiced in the grace of God, sharing his joy with the churches. Exaggeration of the scope of the grace of God is not possible. One of our greatest privileges as believers is to glory in the knowledge of what grace has wrought in our lives. Paul frequently reminds us, in his letters, of the work of grace and of its source. In our textual passage, we find a most complete and blessed salutation, directed to the Corinthian church:

“Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God *which is given you by Jesus Christ*; That in everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

What wonderful assurances are herein embraced! Paul first affirms that grace and peace are proffered by God and Christ. Then he offers thanks to God for the saints in acknowledgment of His grace and expresses his desire that their spiritual capacities be fully governed by their confirmation in Him. He desires for the believers the richest of blessings as they anticipate the glorious appearing; and finally, the best news of all—“Our Lord Jesus Christ...shall confirm you *unto the end*.” Grace is given by Christ. It brings us the confirmation of our destination, strength to endure as we await our departure and the assurance that we will be presented perfect before Him at that day. Amazing grace!

REH

Notes:

GRACE THAT BRINGETH SALVATION

Scripture Reading: Titus 2:11

“By grace are ye saved...not of works!” (Ephesians 2:8, 9). What a profound and glorious declaration is this! Paul affirms that “the grace of God *that bringeth salvation* hath appeared to all men.” The contrast between salvation under the law and salvation under the dispensation of the grace of God according to the revelation of the mystery is the key to understanding our relationship with God in this present age. The apostle John wrote, “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). We know that Jesus Christ made this possible by the shedding of His blood at Calvary. “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Romans 10:4).

It is true that grace came by Jesus Christ through His finished work on the cross, but the announcement of this great good news of the gospel of the grace of God (salvation by grace through faith without works) was not published until Saul the persecutor became Paul the apostle of the Gentiles, revelator of the secret, minister of reconciliation, and ambassador for Christ.

Thus Paul can boldly announce: “Unto me, who am the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles *the unsearchable riches of Christ*; and to make *all men* see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God [not in Scripture, but in God], who created all things by Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3:8, 9). Paul has revealed to us this wonderful truth, “According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust” (I Timothy 1:11).

REH

Notes:

ACCORDING TO THE GRACE OF GOD

Scripture Reading: I Corinthians 3:10

The apostle Paul affirms, "I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office" (Romans 11:13). William R. Newell has stated, "He who knows not Paul's gospel is ignorant of what God has to say in these times of the Gentiles." This is no exaggeration! Without the letters of Paul, we would have no knowledge of our position, condition or destination in the plan of God.

Only through Paul do we know "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same Body and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel" (Ephesians 3:6). The apostle speaks of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust...and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 1:11, 14). Whenever Paul makes reference to his commission and ministry, he makes crystal clear the fact that none of his labors are to his egotistic credit as a person, but that all is because of God's grace. "For I will not dare to speak of any those things *which Christ hath NOT wrought by me*" (Romans 15:18).

Thus as he writes of his responsibility to the Church the Body of Christ, he states, "*According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation.*" True grace encourages humility such as exemplified by our apostle. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5:22, 23). Humble Paul reemphasizes, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14).

REH

Notes:

THE GRACE OF GOD WAS UPON HIM

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:40

When Christ came into the world, He came as a newborn babe. He developed through childhood as the obedient ward of natural parents. "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: *and the grace of God was upon Him.*" It could not be otherwise! How could the Beloved One possibly fulfill His mission, were it not for the grace of God being upon Him? "For the law was given by Moses, but *grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*" (John 1:17).

Paul writes to young Timothy, "Who [God] hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought, life and immortality to light through the gospel" (II Timothy 1:9, 10). He saved us according to His own purpose and grace; and that grace was given us *before the world began!*

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul sums it up well: "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (I Timothy 1:14, 15). The grace of our Lord! "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16a). See what God hath wrought: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:5,6).

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THIS GRACE WHEREIN WE STAND

Scripture Reading: Romans 5:1,2

We are assured by our apostle that we are “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). Knowing this, we can rejoice in many blessings which would otherwise be unknown to us as heirs of God. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Having access by faith enables us spiritually beyond our wildest imagination. We are encouraged to “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6, 7).

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). What a privilege is this! How far removed we are from the need to plead and beg, in the faint hope that we might be heard and mollified by the pity of a distant divinity! When we pray, we have full assurance that our petitions will be heard, because “the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26b, 27).

REH

Notes:

THE GRACE OF GOD IN TRUTH

Scripture Reading: Colossians 1:3-6

To understand intellectually the sovereignty of God and the dispensing of grace, is one thing. To have heart-knowledge and spiritual confidence in His finished work accomplished at Calvary, is quite another. Being secure in the hope of Heaven and at peace in this present world of strife and turmoil – this is the rich return enjoyed by the faithful saints of God. Nothing delights the heart of the servant of Christ as does the evidence that his hearers have fully accepted and are faithfully upholding the blessed gospel of God’s grace.

The apostle Paul joyfully expresses this pleasure in the salutation of his letter to the church at Colosse. Despite his sufferings and persecutions, hardships and rejections, Paul never fails to take delight in the fruits of his labors as he ministers the word of reconciliation. Addressing the Colossian saints, he writes, “We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of truth of the gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.”

To know the grace of God in truth is to know the grace of God in its fulness—in all its significance and power. Hence Paul’s prayer for the believers, “that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord” (verses 9b & 10a).

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