

THE SCROLLS

Grace is Greater Than | 2 Corinthians 9:8

Life Lesson

Grace is not just the entrance to the Christian life—it is the air you breathe every moment afterward. You do not graduate from grace into effort. You do not start with grace and then keep going by striving. The same grace that saves you is the same grace that sustains, shapes, and carries you all the way home. Because God is able, you are free from the burden of trying to be enough. Because His grace is sufficient, you are never without what you need. So, the Christian life is not about trying harder but trusting deeper—resting in a God whose grace never runs out and whose power never diminishes.

Examine Scripture

8 And God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work.

- Circle “God” and write “The source of grace” above it.
- Underline “is able” and write “sufficiency” above it.
- Circle each occurrence of “every” in the verse.
- Bracket “you may excel in every good work” and write “purpose= glory to God.”

Living Grace

There is a story about C.S. Lewis attending a conference on comparative religions. Several professors and scholars debated what was unique about Christianity. After many suggestions were rejected, Lewis walked in and, knowing he was a Christian, they asked him. Lewis responded, “What’s unique about Christianity? Oh, that’s easy. It’s grace.”

Grace is the hallmark of Christianity. It separates our faith from those that require followers to adhere to rituals or rules to earn the favor of their gods. In these false religions, worship does not flow from thanksgiving but from fear or an attempt to manipulate the gods to receive their favor. Christianity, however, relies on the grace of God. A simple definition of grace is “unmerited favor.” Louis Berkhoff provides a more detailed explanation: “It is God’s free, sovereign, undeserved favor or love to man, in his state of sin and guilt, which manifests itself in the forgiveness of sin and deliverance from its penalty.” In other words, grace is not just unmerited favor; it is unmerited favor extended to us in the midst of our sin and guilt. It is impossible to earn the favor of God because there is absolutely nothing in us that would turn His eye of blessing toward us. Our sin and guilt prohibit us from taking even the smallest step toward the favor of God, where even our pleas would go unheard, except for the grace of God. Martin Luther wrote, “The most damnable and pernicious heresy that has ever plagued the mind of man is that somehow he can make himself good enough to deserve to live forever with an all-holy God.” Without the grace of God, Christianity, as with other religions, falls short, and we are left hopeless in our sin and guilt.

In theology, there are two main types of grace: common grace and redemptive grace. Common grace refers to the everyday blessings that God gives us. It is God’s undeserved kindness and goodness extended to everyone, regardless of faith, such as basic needs like food, water, and clothing. Common grace is enough to recognize God’s goodness, but it is not sufficient for salvation. The second type of grace is redemptive grace. This is the grace needed for salvation. It is the

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specific, saving work of Christ that forgives, saves, and transforms sinners. Within redemptive grace, there are three subcategories: saving grace, sanctifying grace, and sustaining grace. Saving grace is the grace necessary for salvation (Eph. 2:8-10). Sanctifying grace is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit to conform believers into the image of Christ (Titus 2:11-12). Sustaining grace is the grace that provides all we need to live the life God calls us to live. It is the providential grace that supplies for us (2 Cor. 12:9).

It is this sustaining grace that Paul is writing about in 2 Corinthians 9. In his instruction on giving, Paul refers to the grace of God as the providing factor that allows us to give sacrificially for the good of the Kingdom of God: “And God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work” (2 Cor. 9:8). Though nestled in his teaching on sustaining grace, this verse unfolds the whole concept of the grace of God.

And God . . .

First, Paul reveals the source of grace. Grace comes entirely from God. However, grace is not just something God gives; it is part of His nature. It is a crucial attribute of God. If He is grace just as He is love, then He will always extend grace, not based on worthiness, but as His love dictates, to the unworthy if they respond in faith to the Gospel.

Grace is solely from God, or it is not truly grace at all. In other words, adding anything to grace nullifies it. Grace cannot be corrupted by sinful humans. The problem with people is that it is always “grace and.” We tend to believe we must supplement grace for it to work.

In 1510, Martin Luther was sent to Rome on a mission for his monastic community. During this trip, he visited the Scala Sancta, known as “The Holy Stairs.” According to tradition, these marble stairs are the same ones Jesus ascended and descended before Pilate. They were supposedly moved from Jerusalem to Rome. Priests taught that anyone who climbed these steps on their knees would be forgiven of their sins. Luther knelt on each of the 28 steps, reciting the Lord’s Prayer at each one and kissing the step before moving on. When he reached the top, it’s said he looked down the stairs and asked, “Who knows whether this is true?” Tradition states that this moment prompted Luther to reconsider the biblical view of grace: “For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift” (Eph. 2:8). Since the beginning, people have sought to add to the grace of God.

1. Grace and Religion - This is nothing new. We see this with the Jews in the New Testament. In (Rom. 10:1-4), Paul writes: “Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God concerning them is for

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their salvation. I can testify about them that they have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Since they are ignorant of the righteousness of God and attempted to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." Today, this kind of thinking sounds like: "I am accepted by God because I am obedient," "I obey God to get from God," or "My maturity is based on how hard and how much I work at being a Christian."

2. Morality - At some point, the modern Church shifted from guiding people toward holiness in Christ to focusing on simple morality or goodness. For many, following Christ is just doing good works. We are tempted to think that if we think positive thoughts, try to be good, seek self-improvement, find strength within, and so on, then we can be good enough to convince God that He needs us and must save us. We say things like: "I have to get right with God," "I am a good person, and I love Jesus," "Look at the good I do," "I just have to try to be better," or "I have to simply accept who I am."

3. Effort—We see this in the Catholic Church's use of penance and indulgences, which require effort from someone seeking forgiveness and salvation. But effort alone is not enough for salvation and forgiveness. This started with Adam and Eve in (Gen. 3:6-21): "The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves... The Lord God made clothing from skins for the man and his wife, and he clothed them." Man's effort seems simple and logical (at least to us). The grace of God, however, is bloody, messy, and makes no sense! Yet, it is the only way!

And God is Able . . .

To say "God is able" is to make a profound claim about the nature of God. In a world defined by "cannot"—where we cannot save ourselves, cannot sustain our own joy, and cannot manufacture peace—Paul directs our gaze toward the One for whom "cannot" does not exist. With God as the source of grace, Paul reminds us of His sufficiency. God is able to extend all grace to us because He alone is the source of grace. God is all-sufficient. He is able because He alone is both the source and the sufficiency of grace.

Notice that Paul does not say "God was able" (focusing only on the Cross) or "God will be able" (focusing only on Heaven). Instead, he uses a present-tense statement: God is able. This reflects the theology of providence. It means that during a crisis or when facing a daunting "good work" for which you feel completely unqualified, God's power

Personal Reflection

1. Do you truly believe that God's grace is there for you at your lowest, or do you act as if it only covers you at your best?

2. How has disappointment in life gradually shifted into disappointment with God—and how has that affected your perception of His grace?

3. Are there areas of obedience where you feel drained because you're depending on your effort rather than His sustaining grace?

4. Do you find it more difficult to receive grace or to give it to others? What does this reveal about your understanding of the Gospel?

5. If grace is genuinely abundant and constantly flowing, why do you sometimes act as if it is limited?

Commentaries

Expositor's Bible Commentary (Abridged Edition): New Testament
 Edited by Kenneth Barker

New Bible Commentary Edited by D. A. Carson

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Mt. Zion Baptist Church exists to
MAKE, MATURE, and MULTIPLY
disciples of Jesus Christ.

remains unchanged. He is actively and sovereignly capable right now of tipping the scales of the universe to ensure you have exactly what you need to fulfill His will.

The all-sufficiency promised in the rest of the verse does not come from our effort to "tap into" God; it is the natural result of God's ability, directed toward a people in need. When we face a task too big, a grief too heavy, or a requirement of holiness too high, we do not look inward for a hidden reserve of strength. Instead, we look upward and declare the foundational truth of the Christian life: My God is able. His grace is not a stagnant pool; it is a pressurized fountain, ready to burst forth because the Source is an Almighty God.

Every Grace . . . Every Way . . . Everything

Paul writes that God is able to make "every grace overflow to you." This is a deep comfort. It shows that grace is not a one-size-fits-all thing, but a variety of specific gifts. God does not just give us grace in general; He provides the exact grace needed for each moment. That is why we see different categories of grace: common, saving, sanctifying, and sustaining. There is no circumstance that falls outside the scope of "every grace."

"Every way" points to the unending nature of grace, promising sufficiency in all things at all times. The grace of God is not affected by changes. It remains steady and certain, no matter the circumstances. No situation can drain the source of grace; it is always flowing in every way.

The weight of "everything" can feel burdensome when we try to carry it alone. But Paul reminds us that "everything" is in God's hands, not ours. If He has promised grace for every challenge and for everything you face, then hopelessness is forever gone. You are not just barely surviving; you are being supported by an all-sufficient God who specializes in the "all" and the "every."

To what end? Why would God show us such incredible, sustaining grace? It is so, "you may excel in every good work." God's grace enables us to excel in every good work, which in turn brings glory to God (2 Cor. 9:13).

Ultimately, the theology of 2 Corinthians 9:8 encourages us to shift from a stance of spiritual panic to one of radical rest. If grace is truly "unmerited favor" given to us in our "sin and guilt," then its presence in our lives does not rely on our performance but on God's unchanging character. Because God is able, we no longer have to be. Because He provides every grace for every need, we are never left to face a single moment in our own strength. We are the beneficiaries of divine superabundance, a grace that meets us in our bankruptcy, fills us to the point of complete sufficiency, and flows through us into a world hungering for the same grace.