

GRACE

2 of 3 | Empowered by Grace for Service

SLIDE 1 Introduction

Last Sunday we started a three-part series looking at the grace of God in our lives. Although grace is one of the largest topics in the Bible, I am focusing on the aspects of grace that we need to walk through difficult times ahead. When we struggle we begin to doubt ourselves, we feel like we are letting God down, and we begin accusing ourselves of all sorts of sins and failures.

In short, we lose faith in what God has said to us.

SLIDE 2 I Trust In Me!

All this shows that we have begun depending on our own abilities and resources, rather than the grace we have been given in Christ. Like I said last week, *"We need to focus a little more on what God is willing to do for us, rather than all the things we want to accomplish for the Lord."*

Yes, many see God as just an avenue to a better life and call upon him to do many things for them. This includes forgiveness of sin, but it is still focused on our own pursuits, instead on the things of the kingdom of God in the earth. This "bless me" mentality is what hinders us from God's true blessings, which are found in serving his purpose by serving others.

A life of service is the greatest destiny we can fulfill. Jesus said it this way:

SLIDE 3 Matthew 20:26-28 (KJV) *"²⁶ Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. ²⁷ And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave – ²⁸ just as **the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**"*

When I shared from 1st Corinthians 6:1 last Sunday, I said we must focus on why God has poured such an abundant supply of grace upon us. To *"receive not the grace of God in vain,"* we must put that grace to good use. That means not just *"consuming it upon our own lusts,"* (James 4:3) but using it to serve others for kingdom purposes.

To reveal this a little deeper, even the gifts of the Spirit that we will begin studying tonight are called "grace gifts." This is the Greek word "charisma," which means gifted. In olden times a person who had special abilities was considered gifted by God. We use the word today to speak of a person who has unique attractiveness or charm. Or even someone who can inspire the devotion of others to themselves.

We talk of actors or leaders who have had a great impact on the world as having charisma. Yet, in biblical usage it means to have a special power or talent divinely conferred upon you for service.

SLIDE 4 I Am Graced

Along with the understanding of a unlimited, abundant supply of grace, we need to also recognize that this grace is divine ability. As we will see in our Sunday night book study of *Fully Equipped*, the Holy Spirit is divinely empowered with gifts which he manifests in the church for our benefit. These are outlined in 1st Corinthians 12. On top of that, we have had bestowed upon us "grace gifts" for us to use to benefit the body and empower our ministries. These are found in Romans 12.

You have been "graced." That's why in the '80's the term charismatic was coined. This was a more acceptable word for Pentecostal then, which had taken on a charlatan's stain. To be charismatic meant to flow in the manifestation of gifts of the Spirit.

SLIDE 5 Grace Empowers Through Teaching

Now let's look at a passage that will make up the bulk of what I need to share today. When Paul was writing to his appointee Titus in Crete, he gave him a lot of instructions and conveyed a lot of things Titus needed to pass on to the believers there on the island. In chapter two he gives this instruction:

SLIDE 6 Titus 2:11-15 (KJV) *"¹¹ For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, ¹² Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; ¹³ Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;..."*

Here we see that one of the empowering things grace does for us is that it teaches

us to live right. Our lifestyle has a lot to do with our witness and our wholeness. If it's not working for you, how can you proclaim that it will work for others? If it's not evident in your life, how can others be drawn to the grace you say you have?

We have to get past this idea that God is just covering our sin, like the Old Testament sacrifices did. No, God is cleansing us from sin by the power of his blood. We are washed in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore we are new creatures in Christ.

Therefore we are the righteousness of God in Christ. God does not allow corruption within his administration. If we live *like* the world, then we are *of* the world.

After Paul states what grace is teaching us, then he tells us why we need to listen. He reveals God's intent in pouring out this abundant grace upon our lives.

Speaking of Jesus, Paul continues by saying:

SLIDE 7 *"¹⁴ Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, **and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.** ¹⁵ These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee."*

God is purifying a people who abound in works of service to others. Jesus loved us and gave himself for us. In the same way, we ought to love each other and give ourselves as a sacrifice to serve each other.

It is imperative to discern the body of Christ in this, because there are a multitude of people who will say, "Oh, you want to serve, Serve me!" Beware of them, they will creep in and take over, bringing you into bondage to their will, not God's. Yes, even ministers sometimes are nothing more than wolves, preying on the sheep of God.

Nevertheless, that is why we need to hold fast to the things we are being taught by the grace of the Lord.

SLIDE 8 And Another Thing

When we begin to understand grace in its fullness, there are a few other things that come into play. The greatest of these is the realization that you are a child of God. Not only are you responsible to God—you answer to him as his child, God, in turn, is responsible for you. Children receive discipline for this reason. We also receive

discipline from God, not as condemnation, but as a loving father corrects his children so they will live right and be blessed.

When you allow the Holy Spirit to work in you this way, you begin to realize the depth of this relationship—you are his heir!

Paul told this to Titus just a little later in his letter:

SLIDE 9 Titus 3:7 (KJV) *"That being justified by his grace, **we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.**"*

Being heirs of God, we inherit all that he is and all that he has. He has an eternal life. We inherit an eternal life. No one could earn this right, you have to inherit it from your Father.

It is beyond the scope of this series to talk about our inheritance, but you need to be aware that *"all things are yours"* because of the grace he has bestowed on your life.

Paul was talking about the ministries of the Apostles in this following passage, but look at what it says about what is ours in Christ:

SLIDE 10 1st Corinthians 3:21-23 (KJV) *"²¹ Therefore let no man glory in men. **For all things are yours;** ²² Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; **all are yours;** ²³ **And ye are Christ's;** and Christ is God's."*

God has placed no limits on the things we can receive from him. Ultimately the less you ask him for things that pertain to this life the more you will possess of the things that make up the life to come—spirit life, eternal life.

As Hebrews says, you need to *"humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."* (1st Peter 5:6) When we have prepared ourselves and are mature enough to handle it, God's grace will empower us to do greater things in our service for him. Think of yourself less, and of him, more.

SLIDE 11 1st Peter 1:13 (KJV) *"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and **hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of***

Jesus Christ;..."

Also, be humble with the things God empowers you with by his grace. Stay in the range of grace, stay in the day of grace, and stay in the power of grace. Depend on him more and yourself less.

God not only will not empower your pursuit, he actually resists those things of our mortal lives. Just like a kid when our parents won't give us what we want and we demand, "Why?" "Because I said so." is acceptable to the humble, but not to the proud, who think more highly of themselves than they ought.

Remember this:

SLIDE 12 James 4:6 (KJV) *"But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."*

Be humble and you will receive more than you ever thought possible. It does not make you special or gifted in your own ability. You will be gifted by God, and that is by his grace alone.

SLIDE 13 Altar Time

May God humble us to accept the life he has given us as our place of service to him. Maybe it's a season of preparation, but it could also be what you are called to.

Wanting more is damaging to the soul. Acceptance mingled with trust is a healing balm for our souls.

Do you feel frustrated when things don't go your way or it seems God is not answering your prayer the way you think he should? Then we want to pray for you.