

Grace!

“God’s Ability & Enabling Power”



by Jason Peebles

The grace of God is HIS ability and HIS enabling power. Ephesians 3:16 says, “[I pray] that He would grant you, according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with **MIGHT** by the Spirit in the **INNER MAN**.” This is God’s will for your life. He wants to empower you with His might in the “inner man” -- *in your mind, will, and emotions*. When that happens, it is the grace of God flowing in your life. Think about it. If you’re strong on the “inside” then you’ll be strong on the “outside.” But if you’re weak on the inside then you’ll be weak on the outside. No matter how discouraged you may be right now (because of sin, mistakes, or circumstances) – or, how well off you think you are -- God wants to take you to a greater place of grace and dependency in Him. The grace of God (*His ability and enabling power*) will allow you to do what you otherwise could not do.

Sufficiency in Christ

When we talk about the grace of God, it’s important for you to realize that we are not talking about soulish confidence. In the Kingdom of God, self-confidence (which is based on your abilities, talents, education, and experience) will eventually get you into trouble. In fact, trusting in “self” will block the very ability that God wants you to have.

In some circles, it's hard to distinguish between what's being touted as "the gospel" versus a mere self-help or success seminar. **No, the grace of God is the very strength that proceeds from our union with Jesus Christ.** It is the resurrection power that flows from Him. Christ lives in the believer and He wants to work through you. It is HIS energy and HIS ability that we are called to. Christians are not called to get what "we want" out of life but to participate in what God wants. This can only occur as we abide in Him. Jesus said, *"For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me"* (Jn 6:38). In John 5:19 He said, *"The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner."* Thus, as you grow in the grace of God, keep this warning in mind. **You must learn to distinguish between self sufficiency and sufficiency in Christ.** This area can be very subtle indeed and is a common stumbling block for believers. In Philippians 3:3 Paul said *"we have NO confidence in the flesh"* (meaning "self"). He also said, *"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God"* (2 Cor 3:5).

Now as you read this, if you feel weary and near burnout, then take heart! Your point of weakness can actually become a platform for God's grace in your life. Man's weakness and God's strength go hand in hand. The apostle Paul said, *"I will rather boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For when I am weak, then am I strong"* (2 Cor 12:9,10). What is he saying? Paul had learned through experience that *"I can't"* (apart from Christ) – yet on the other hand, *"I can"* (through Christ). Whether you feel weak or strong, realize that your sufficiency is in Christ and His enabling power.

Righteousness

To properly understand grace, let's review the very foundation of what we believe. The entire book of *Romans* was written to describe two types of righteousness – "earned" righteousness and the "gift" of righteousness. Paul says, *"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets"* (Rom 3:21). What is he talking about? On the one hand

there is an "earned" righteousness that comes by perfect obedience to God's law – and then there is a "gift" of righteousness that comes by faith in God's provision. The problem with "earned" righteousness is that no one is good enough to earn it! If someone you know claims to be living a perfect life, then you can be sure they are filled with pride and self-righteousness. Romans 3:23 says, *"For ALL have sinned and come short of the glory of God."* No one can be good enough to "earn" right standing with Holy God. No pastor can, no rabbi can, no priest or mullah can – NO ONE can perfectly obey God's laws. This is precisely why God himself had to provide a sacrifice for our sins. Romans 3:24 says, *"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ."* The message of the cross is a message that says God has provided a substitute for us. While "you" cannot fulfill righteousness, *"God can."* **If you want to please God, then your only "work" is to put your trust in what God himself accomplished in Christ.** Jesus said in John 6:29 -- *"This is the work of God that you believe on him whom He hath sent."*

On the other hand, religion sets people on a course of self-effort to please God. If you pray hard enough – if you work hard enough – if you keep the rules, then you will be accepted by "us" and by God. Furthermore, no other religion even claims to provide an atonement for sin (Rom 3:25). **They all offer a system of works whereby you attempt to please God.** For example, when I've spoken with Muslims and Buddhists, I always get around to asking one simple question: *"What provision do you have for your sin?"* They have no answer. What deception for any of us to think that our pitiful religious efforts (which proceed from a heart corrupted with sin) could ever please a Holy God! No wonder Isaiah 64:6 says, *"But we are all as an unclean thing, and our righteousness is as filthy rags."*



Strong in Grace

Now, dear friend, why are these things important for you to understand? You see, if you truly know Christ (and not merely attend church), then you clearly understand that earned righteousness could never please God. That's why you placed your trust in Christ in the first place. **But do you realize that the same truth applies to your ongoing walk with Christ?** Or, like the mistaken person without Christ, are you trying very hard in your own efforts to live the Christian life?

The apostle Paul wrote -- "*Thou therefore, my son, be STRONG IN THE GRACE that is in Christ Jesus*" (2 Tim 2:1-3). Paul was not talking about "getting saved." He was telling Timothy that in order to overcome the hardships that he was facing, he needed God's ability vs. his own ability. He exhorts Timothy to be "*strong in grace.*" Obviously, if you can be strong in grace, then you can be weak in grace. **Paul was not referring to "saving grace" but rather to ENABLING GRACE.** Paul also said: "*But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, YET NOT I, BUT THE GRACE OF GOD which was with me*" (1 Cor 15:10). Paul said that he labored more than all the other apostles combined. What an amazing statement! But notice that Paul credits the ENABLING GRACE of God for his success. All the beatings he endured; the shipwrecks; the stonings; the pain and hardships – all of them were overcome by God's enabling grace (2 Cor 11:23-33).

The Path of Works vs. Grace

Once we come to Christ, it seems that nearly 100% of us drift down the path of works. We don't plan to do this, mind you, but we do. I think it's almost inevitable. Why? Because when you love God the subtle tendency is to "try" to please Him. Sooner or later, though, you realize *that you can't*. You can't defeat sin, you can't always love the unlovely, and you can't be the person that God wants you to be. Thus, in your frustration you determine to redouble your efforts and "try" harder. Or, you may become so entirely defeated because of your failings that you walk away from God for a season. Like the unsaved man, who goes

about to "earn" his own righteousness, we err in trying to live the Christian life apart from the enabling grace of God. Like Paul, we desperately need a revelation of God's enabling grace. But take courage! It is precisely at our moments of frustration that God becomes the most hopeful. How so? He is praying (*He ever lives to make intercession*) that you will awaken to GRACE and realize that HE is your sufficiency. He has called you to a life of *abiding, trusting, and yielding – not one of striving.* **You see, grace is not merely the basis on which you come to Christ, but the very "engine" of how you are to live and operate in Him.**

Engines of the Heart

What kind of "engine" do you have? I've been a pilot for many years and I've been around a lot of different airplanes. I've flown all over North America and in other countries. Through my experience, I can tell you that different type engines have different potentials. All of them may get you there but the "ride" will be very different indeed! For instance, a piston engine has very limited power. It can take an airplane to about 15,000 feet and 200 mph. On the other hand, a turboprop engine will give you more power and take you to 25,000 feet and 300 mph. But a jet engine (completely different technology) is better yet! A jet engine will launch you to 40,000 feet above the weather and speed you along at 400 mph! **THE DIFFERENCE IS IN THE ENGINE, NOT THE PILOT.**

The Christian life is a lot like that. You can try to run everything with a piston engine (self-effort) – or, you can swap your engine for God's jet engine of GRACE. Most of us (let's be honest here), have spent a lot of time "trying" really hard to live the Christian life only to end up frustrated. We "try" to overcome sin. We "try" to be patient. We "try" to love others. My friend, it will be a new day indeed when you finally stop trying altogether and ask God to replace "your engine" with "His engine" of GRACE – *His ability and enabling power.* You must learn to abide instead of strive. Instead of trying to be like Jesus, you must allow the Son of God to live His life through you (Gal 2:20,21). After all, He IS alive and living IN you! Grace, abiding, walking in the Spirit -- they are all part of

the “jet engine” that God has for you. It will be a wonderful day when your eyes are finally opened to the fact that grace not only saves you but is the very “engine” that can empower you.

Grow in Grace

At the risk of sounding entirely vain, I want to suggest that you consider reading this Study Guide through several times. Place it beside your bed and devote several nights in a row to it. Why? Because grace is something that’s “caught” more than “taught.” Here are four simple keys to help you grow in the grace of God –

1. Humility - This is the starting point for everything that God offers, and the very thing that our flesh resists. First, let’s identify what humility is NOT. It is not the religious version of putting on a long face and dressing in a pitiful fashion. It’s sad how religion can take a precious truth of God and ruin it with outward observances. The truth is that you can be filled with complete arrogance while appearing to be humble. On the other hand, you can be a very humble person riding down the road in an expensive Mercedes with lots of money in the bank. You see, humility is a matter of the heart, not some outward appearance.

Authentic humility is when you admit your need for God’s help. It’s when you recognize that even on your best day your efforts fall woefully short of what God could do. **Humility is when you surrender your will to His will; when you say, “I can’t but Christ can.”** 1 Peter 5:5,6 says, *“For God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”* Yes, God wants to exalt you! He wants to make you strong and give you victory over the enemy. But the starting point is when you humble yourself and recognize your need for God’s enabling grace -- day by day, moment by moment.

2. Faith – Hebrews 4:16 says, *“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”* This is both a command and a promise. Either it’s true or it’s not. Which is it? Your job is to come before God in humility, asking for His grace. **And once you do, then receive it by faith!**

Stop asking and start “thanking Him” that it’s yours. Like with any promise in God’s Word, lay hold of it by faith. Let your declaration throughout the day be – *“Lord Jesus, I thank you for your enabling grace to help me in time of need.”*

3. Yielding - Once you start thanking God throughout the day for His grace, take the next step and “yield.” **Yielding is when you give way to God’s influence.** Yield your eyes, your hands, your thought life, your speech, your plans, your relationships – everything must be yielded over to God. Romans 6:13 says, *“Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”* Allow the Holy Spirit’s influence to take charge and “move” in you and through you throughout the day.

4. Prayer - Paul spent a great deal of time praying for the believers of his day to have the *“eyes of their heart”* opened to the grace and power of God. Let me encourage you to take your Bible and pray the same prayers that Paul wrote. **Don’t just read them -- “pray them” aloud.** As you do, you will be giving the Holy Spirit permission to take you into the treasure house of God’s rich grace. **Start praying these prayer: a) Ephesians 1:15-23 b) Ephesians 3:14-21 c) Colossians 1:9-14.**

Dear friend, I pray that you will have an explosion of revelation knowledge in your life regarding the **grace of God. This is my sincere desire for you.**

■ -- Jason Peebles



Key Memory Verse:

“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

Prayer for Enabling Grace

“Father, thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for my sins. I accept His sacrifice and commit my life to Him. Teach me to be strong in grace. Show me how to yield to your ability. Forgive me for trying to do things on my own. I choose to YIELD. I choose to yield to YOUR strength and YOUR influence. Empower me to be what I cannot be and do what I cannot do. Take me beyond “self” by your strength. Thank you for your love and your help in my life. In Jesus Name – Amen.”

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