

The Power of the Grace of God

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HOW does the power of the grace of God manifest itself in the deliverance and salvation of a lost soul who is under the reign and dominion of sin? Rom. 5:20-21 tells us: “But where sin abounded, GRACE DID MUCH MORE ABOUND: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might GRACE REIGN through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” Here we see that God’s grace must be powerful, to abound over sin, and to reign where once sin reigned: it is powerful because it is *sovereign*, reigning where sin and death once reigned in the heart of the sinner.

When we see what grace has to overcome to save sinners, we can begin to understand how powerful grace must be. What is it then, that the power of grace must overcome?

First —It must overcome OUR SPIRITUAL DEADNESS. Eph. 2:1 reads: “And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” You see dear friend, by nature we all are spiritually dead; that is the condition of the whole human race apart from the grace of God in Jesus Christ. We have all died in Adam (Rom. 5:12-19); so we are born into this world spiritually dead, without one ounce of spiritual life! What this means is that we are dead to the interests of our own souls; we are dead to the life of God and to spiritual things, for they do not interest us at all. And that is the condition of the vast majority of people in the world today, both in and out of so-called religion. They give no thought to the things of God, and easily dismiss them if they are mentioned. Though they are religious, they are spiritually dead! They have no spiritual awareness, no spiritual understanding, no conception of the things of Christ at all. So grace has to overcome this state of death; and nothing but the power of the grace of God in Christ Jesus can do it!

Second —Grace has to overcome THE STATE OF ANTAGONISM TO THE TRUTH AND TO GOD, which is the tragic state of the natural man, that is, of every sinner outside of Christ. Not only does he fail to respond to spiritual truth, but he hates it, spurns it, and opposes it. In Rom. 8:7 we read: “The carnal mind, [the natural mind of man, the fleshly mind] is *enmity* against God.” It not only does not respond to truth, but it is also an enemy, hostile against God; the natural mind and heart are “not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

Again in I Cor. 2:14 we are told: “The natural man *receiveth not* the things of the Spirit of God.” And why not?—“for they are *foolishness* unto him: neither can he know them, because they are *spiritually* discerned.” He laughs at the things of the Spirit of God; he does not receive them because they are nonsense, folly and utter rubbish to him. It is not only that he cannot receive them, but he is actively, bitterly opposed to them; he rejects them altogether. This is the Biblical truth of the awful and fearful condition of natural man! How then is this man going to be saved when he is in this condition? There is only one answer: it is by the ***power of the grace of God***. It is because the power of the reign of grace is altogether greater than the power of the reign of sin!

Third —The power of the grace of God must overcome SATAN. “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12). Satan does not want to lose his citizens, his slaves. He is the strong man of Luke 11:21, armed, that keepeth his goods in peace. He holds them captive at his will (II Tim. 2:26), guarding and surrounding them with mighty

fortification; so they must be delivered from the “*power of Satan*” (Acts 26:18). How then can anyone ever be redeemed? Nothing less than the power of the grace of God can do it as the Scriptures so plainly declare, and I praise the Lord that His grace is so powerful!

Let us go further! For grace to do this then, it must be POWERFUL AND IRRESISTIBLE. For if grace were not irresistible, no one would ever be saved. You see, grace does not merely help or assist us, it comes in and actually reigns where sin once reigned. It will not take “no” for an answer! By the power of the Holy Spirit, the antagonistic will of the dead sinner has been overcome and he is now made willing in the day of God’s power. And being overcome by grace in the power of the Holy Spirit, that sinner cries like the apostle Paul in I Cor. 15:10: “By the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain.”

If grace only presented to us the love of God in Christ as the way of salvation and reconciliation back to God, and then left the final choice with us as to whether or not we were going to take advantage of it, it would leave us worse off than we were before. Why? because being dead spiritually, we would never respond to the claims of the gospel. Apart from the irresistible grace of God not only to bring us to salvation (Titus 2:11), but also to teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil world (Titus 2:12), we would die and go to hell! In other words, if God did not take the initiative by His grace, subduing our depraved wills and making us willing in the day of His power, then we would never be saved!

Let us see now how this irresistible grace of God in Christ Jesus operates. *First* —IT SEEKS US OUT. “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). So the irresistible grace of God the Holy Spirit seeks us. John 10:3 tells us that Christ by His Spirit through this irresistible, reigning grace “calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.” In vv. 27-28 He says, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish.” Yes, if grace didn’t seek us out and find us as we are, lost, we would never be saved.

Second —Grace by the power of the Holy Spirit CONVICTS US OF OUR SINS; and oh what power is needed to do that, to convince the natural man of sin! You may say that it’s easy to convict and convince a drunkard, or a dope fiend, or a whoremonger of his sin. But is it? Well, try it; and you will find that he defends himself and rationalizes his sins, explaining them away with the utmost ease. But that is not all! What happens when you come to a proud Pharisee such as Saul of Tarsus? What can possibly convince and convict such a man of his sin? Again, there is only one power that can do it: it is the *power of grace* that can strike him down and make him cry, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). You see, only the irresistible grace of God that reigns through righteousness can so convince a man of his sins that he forever despairs of self, cries after God for mercy, and rests only in the righteousness of Christ and His precious blood to cleanse and clothe him.

Third —Grace reigns and shows itself to be powerful IN REGENERATION. A man can no more give himself the new birth or regenerate himself than he could produce himself in his mother’s womb. Dear friend, a man is not born again or regenerated because he believes; he believes because he is born again! This is so clearly set forth in John 1:12-13: “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: *which were born*, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but *of God*.” This takes place by the grace of God in the power of the same Holy Spirit that raised our blessed Lord Jesus from the grave (John 3:3-8; Eph. 1:20; I Pet. 1:23).

Fourth —Grace reigns and shows itself powerful IN ITS RESTRAINING POWER. Praise God for that restraining grace! You see, the restraining power of grace is manifested in God's people even before their conversion. They are not allowed to sin to such a degree that they put themselves outside the scope of salvation; they are never allowed to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. They may say many things they should not say against Him; but they are never allowed to blaspheme. And the power of restraining grace is necessary *even in the Christian*, the child of God, surrounded as he is by temptation, and often tempted from within. Oh how I thank God for the power of restraining grace, the grace that holds us back, the grace that prevents us from doing things that would harm and damage our immortal souls! We are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Pet. 1:5).

Fifth —Grace reigns and shows itself powerful IN OUR SANCTIFICATION. You see, in salvation we are saved from the penalty of sin (which is the second death), as well as from the **power** of sin. And one day we shall be saved from the very presence of sin. But now we are being saved from the pollution of sin by the power of sanctifying grace. Here we see the power of grace manifesting itself daily against indwelling sin: sin in the flesh, and sin in the body. Thank God for the power of sanctifying grace in our lives that reigns over the power of indwelling sin, delivering us daily from its pollutions (Rom. 6:14; 8:4)!

Sixth —Grace reigns and shows itself powerful IN SUPPORTING GRACE, of which all are constantly in need. For what is going to keep us when sin, the flesh, the world and the devil come against us with their combined forces? These are ever threatening and attacking us, so how are we going to overcome them? James 4:6 tells us: "He giveth more grace;" and II Cor. 12:9 tells us: "My grace is sufficient for thee."

Seventh —Grace reigns and shows itself powerful IN ITS ENABLING AND PERSEVERING EFFECT. Here again is something we constantly need. We have seen how we are brought out of the bondage of sin and antagonism toward God and His Christ, and are delivered from the second death in hell. We have seen how we are restored, sanctified and supported. But, how are we to continue on the rest of our journey? How are we to hold out in the Christian warfare and the fight of faith? The answer is still the same! It is the *power of reigning grace* alone that makes possible and guarantees the final perseverance of the saints. Phil. 1:6 tells us how: "He which hath begun a good work in you *will perform it* until the day of Jesus Christ." This means that what the grace of God starts, *it will finish*. Grace so works in our hearts by the Holy Spirit that we are enabled to persevere to the end (Jude 24)!