

The kingdom of God is filled with numerous paradoxes: To live we must die, to receive we must give, and to be strong we must be weak. It is only when we find ourselves without strength that the grace of God allows the power of Jesus Christ to be strong through us.

It has been said, "In this life you're either headed for trouble, in trouble, or heading out of trouble." Trouble is part of life, and the Christian who does not realize this is setting himself up for terrible disappointment. To experience trouble in this life is to prove your humanity (Job 5:7)

- I. The Requirement of Grace for the Christian life – vs 4:7-9
 - God is in us (we are not God, but He lives in us through the Spirit), in our earthen vessels – literally "clay pots"
 - Their value was determined by their contents
 - We are common clay pots made valuable by the presence of God in us.
- II. The Resource of Grace for the Christian Life – 12:8-9
 - Paul prayed due to affliction
 - God's answer: "My grace is sufficient for you; My strength is made perfect in weakness."
 - "Sometime He calms the storm, sometimes He calms the child"
 - Grace is the resource God provides for living the Christian Life in a world of trouble
- III. The Result of Grace in the Christian Life – 12:9-10; 4:7-10, 17-18
 - Two primary results of the Grace of God:
 - A. The grace of God produces power – 12:9-10 Paul: "I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.....For when I am weak, then I am strong."
 - B. The grace of God provides perspective – 4:17-18
 - Yes, our afflictions hurt when we are going through them. But when we put them in proper perspective, they look different. "for a moment" compared to "eternity"
 - C. Four ways our afflictions help us maintain proper perspective in life:
 1. Afflictions help us anticipate glory
 2. Light things help us appreciate heavy things
 3. Temporary things help us appropriate eternal things
 4. Outward pain helps us accelerate inward progress.
 - D. The grace of God promotes perseverance – 4:8-9
 - There were four kinds of trouble Paul experienced, and four evidences that he persevered through each one:
 1. He was pressured, but never defeated
 2. He was perplexed, but never despairing
 3. He was persecuted, but never deserted
 4. He was pounded, but never destroyed
 - A.B. Simpson wrote: "The Christian life is simple. It's falling down and getting up, falling down and getting up, falling down and getting up, all the way to heaven."

E. The grace of God promotes praise – 4:7 & 10: 12:9

1. So that the power may be of God and not of us
2. So that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh
3. So that the power of Christ may rest upon us

- Point: it's all about Jesus, not us. Life is not about my problems or difficulties, it's about Jesus ability to walk through them with me and give me grace to endure while I watch Him give me power to overcome. If you know Him and trust Him, be of good courage. He will give you strength in your day of need.

Ques: Read II Cor 6:3-10

1. What does patience reveal about a Christian? (vs 4)
2. What does willingness to suffer tribulations reveal? (vs 4)
3. Our commissioning by Jesus is indirect via the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20). Should we be prepared to endure the same hardships as those commissioned directly? Why or why not?

Happy Studying