

(Clip) When You Think of Grace, Do You Think of Power

by Tim Conway

This sermon emphasizes the powerful connection between grace and God's enabling power, highlighting the need for grace to produce tangible effects in our lives. It challenges the notion of defining grace solely as unmerited favor, emphasizing the transformative and empowering nature of God's grace. The speaker urges believers to seek a demonstration of power in their lives as evidence of God's grace at work, drawing from biblical examples like Paul's ministry and the early church's experiences.

Scripture: Ephesians 3:8, 1 Corinthians 15:10, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Romans 5:3

Topics: "Transformative Grace", "Empowerment through Faith"

Description

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Transcript

This grace is to preach to the Gentiles. Do you see it? To me, though I'm the very least of all the saints, this grace was given. What grace are you talking about, Paul? To preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

What I particularly want you to notice is what Paul says in v. 7. This is the point. When Paul reflects on grace towards himself. Of this Gospel, I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, now watch this, which was given me by the working of His power.

I think Mark Webb hit it right on the head. May great grace fall upon me. You know how many times the word power came up in that song? You might want to notice it the next time we sing it.

Great grace and continuous references to power. I wonder, do we think, again, Paul's the example. Just stick with me, this is the last point here.

Paul, what do you think about grace? When you think about grace and it's personal, given to me. See, Paul didn't leave that word power out of his sentence. If you're asked to define grace, I would just ask you

this, do you imitate Paul this way? When you're asked to define grace, do you put power in the definition? I remember years ago, out at Community Baptist Church, Pat Horner preached a message.

Grace and power. I looked it up to see if there was any record of that message anywhere. I don't even remember what he preached on specifically, but I remember he was saying if you're going to properly define grace, you need to speak of power.

Listen to this. The Freeberg Greek Lexicon. Here's the definition of grace.

The exceptional effects produced by God's favor. See, we like to say unmerited favor. But even when you look at the lexicons, the exceptional effects produced by God's favor, by God's ability, by God's power, by God's enabling.

I'll tell you this, honestly, when I hear grace defined as unmerited favor, I immediately think to myself, and every time it comes from this pulpit, I think to myself, you left power out. I think every time that way. Simply defining grace as unmerited favor, in my estimation, is a rather bland definition.

It's lacking something of the fullness of the enablement that God gives to His favor. The power. The fullness and glory of grace is missing.

Now listen. Listen. This place here is not the only place where Paul speaks like this.

Just listen. In 1 Corinthians 15, we've mentioned this verse already, but listen to it again. Verse 10, But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain.

Listen, Paul has an idea in his mind that grace is vain unless it produces something. And he says grace isn't vain, and the way you can know it's not vain is because of this. He says on the contrary, it wasn't vain.

On the contrary, it was effectual. I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. You see what he's saying about grace? Grace caused him to run harder, to work harder, to advance beyond others.

He doesn't see this as somehow grace can be defined as just unmerited favor unless you say that that favor has some kind of powerful effect in your life. Unmerited favor? Yes! Absolutely! It is that. But what sort of favor, brethren, do we want? Do we want powerless favor? Do we want that which doesn't do anything? Do we want a favor that has no expression? Do we want favor that doesn't accomplish anything? I don't want that! Brethren, you know as well as I do, prayer meeting after prayer meeting after prayer meeting, what are we asking for? God, help us! Help! What's that? Do we want His favor? Yes! But not a favor that's indistinct, undiscernible, ambiguous, that nobody can define or see or measure? That isn't what we want, is it? Aren't we praying that God would give us such responses that when His grace comes, it would be great grace and there would be demonstrations of power and the Spirit? Is that not what I... Oh, that's what I want.

Is that not what you want? We want that. We want that. Do we want favor that's without energy? Do we want favor that's without strength, without change, without force? Look, grace manifests itself in demonstrations of power.

It always does. We can say that we're saved by grace through faith. But the evidence of God's grace is that there's a demonstration of power.

Scripture over and over ties these two things together. Listen to this. 2 Corinthians 12.9 You remember, Paul has a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan.

And what does he say? He asked three times for it to be removed and the Lord came back and said this, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness. You see that? Power. Paul, I'm going to give you grace.

And if you want to know a synonymous way of saying that, power. 2 Timothy 2.1 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Or this, that goes right back to may great grace fall upon us.

And then with great power, the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all. Paul said that God's grace came to him by the working of God's power. Is that not what we want to see? Look, many imagine themselves to be recipients of grace.

Oh yes, by grace, I've been saved. Listen, if that grace doesn't turn your life upside down, it isn't God's grace. Why? Because there's always a demonstration of power there.

That's why Paul could look at somebody and say you need to examine yourselves. If you're yet trapped in your sin, there's a problem. Examine yourselves.

You can't be saved. Don't be deceived. You see, brethren, when it talks about tearing out the eyeball and chopping off the hand, or you don't go enter the kingdom, that isn't works.

What that's saying is that grace gives an individual power to be radical in the fight for sin. That's what it's all about. It's power.

And we say, oh, I'm saved by grace. But your life hasn't changed. You're not a new creation.

You're still the old dead thing going along in the old dead ways, following the old dead path, the course of the world, and following the Prince of the Power of the Air. Look, you may convince people around you, but it's going to be very unconvincing in that day. The only kind of Christianity that holds any weight in Scripture is that where there is power.

Paul talked about it. Paul talked about his preaching. He talked about the kind of preaching that raised people from the dead.

He talked about preaching that Gospel and that there was a demonstration of the Spirit and power. That's what we want in the preaching. That's what we want in the praying.

That's what we want in the evangelization. That's what we want in the church life. Craig was talking about.

What do you think it takes to take an old, dead, unforgiving, hard-hearted, stiff-necked wretch and make them able to forgive one another and bear up one another's burdens? That doesn't happen by man-made means. That happens by the power of God. That's the kind of grace we need.

We need grace that turns people's lives upside down. Isn't that what we want? Isn't that what we want? Not where we have to get out the magnifying glass and look at everybody like, well, are they saved? We barely see any fruit. That's not what we want.

We don't want, well, you know, they come to church once in a while and they walk through the back door ten minutes late and well, you know, they don't give. That's not it. Great grace fell upon the early church.

There was power. They went to pray and the place shook. What do you think brings that? It's power.

That ought to be the desire. That ought to be what we want. And brethren, think with me here.

Look, we've got people that are deceived because there's no demonstration of power in their life. There's no demonstration of transformation. But on the other hand, just remember this.

Just because you suffer more greatly in this church than others do, you say, why am I made to bear this when other people aren't? That is no evidence that you are graceless. Scripture's very plain. You know, there's a place in Scripture, well, you think of the Apostle Paul.

Jesus said to him when he asked that that thorn be taken away, he specifically said, my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Do you know His power flows through us when we're not strong? We think of it the other way around. We want to feel strong.

But you know what? So often it's when we feel weak and we know we're weak and we're desperate with God. But He makes His power flow through weakness. And you know, there in Romans 5, He says we stand in grace.

It's like we stand in the realm of grace. And you know what He says there? He takes us down this path and He says that we rejoice in our sufferings. See, this is standing in grace.

We rejoice in our sufferings. Why? What happens? Well, because they produce endurance. What's that? What's endurance? Endurance is what you call it when you suffer longer without complaining.

You have more endurance. You know how it is. You suffer, you complain.

Greater endurance is you don't complain as fast. Greater endurance, you don't seek a way out of the suffering that's sinful. You don't seek a way out that's going to dishonor God.

Now, we're never told to suffer if there's a way out, but you only want to take the way out if it's a righteous way out. But you see, endurance. But how does that work? That's the power of God.

You see, suffering. Oh, we all know it. Christians for 2,000 years know it.

Our greatest growth, our greatest refining has always been when we're in the fire. And how does that work? Power. Because think about this.

You take a lost man and you put him under suffering and it doesn't make him more enduring. It doesn't produce character. What's character? That's the proven worth.

And then what follows out of that? Hope. Why is there hope? Because when we suffer, we look and see, I didn't give way. I endured.

Somehow God held me up. And I continued going. I continued trusting Christ.

And I see that there was a proven quality and a proven worth that was worked in me. How does that happen? How does suffering produce that? Because God is doing something that man can't do. And that

doesn't happen in the lost man.

You put a lost man under suffering, he will curse God. You put a man under suffering, he will seek all manner of unlawful ways to escape that suffering. It's supernatural.

It's power. Power. Our greatest advantages and our greatest purifying have always occurred in the fire.

And there's no other way to explain that than the power of God. So Christian, don't believe yourself graceless simply because God calls you to suffer more. In fact, you may find in the end, you have to remember, there's actually kind of a tying together.

This momentary light affliction is working for me. It's the eternal weight of glory.

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