

# THE SUFFICIENCY OF GRACE

By

Curtis Dickinson

**“My grace is sufficient for thee” (II Cor. 12:9)**

When John recorded that “Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” he was summarizing the work of Christ and the entire scope of human need. Grace and truth are essential for man to fulfill the purpose of God (John 1:16–17).

The main object of revealed truth is to show how, by God’s grace, a race of men are salvaged from sin and destruction, justified before the God of absolute righteousness, assured of eternal life, and are guided and sustained in the present pilgrimage in the world. God did not reveal truth in order to relieve man of the burden of seeking out for himself answers which can be found in the natural world. The truth Christ reveals concerns the eternal purpose of God which, in turn, involves His grace.

For all who measure themselves in the light of God’s truth, it is evident that grace is essential. “There is not a just man upon earth” (Eccl. 7:20). An honest man, upon learning the truth of God and His purpose, is compelled, like Paul, to say, “I am the least of all saints...the chief of sinners...I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing.” Yet God is holy and righteous and just. How then can any man stand before His who said, “You shall be holy as I am holy”? An honest man knows that he deserves nothing but death for his sin.

Justice is something that can be executed only once for capital crime. But when such justice falls upon a man, there is no appeal, no reprieve and no hope; such justice is final. “The wages of sin is death.” The glory of grace is in the fact that this execution of justice fell upon Christ and the death imposed upon Him will never be imposed the second time upon any of His people. It is not a death that I died, but a death that He died for my sins; therefore, it is not by works that I have done or can ever do, but by the one act of God through Christ on the cross that my death sentence is carried out in Him, so that I am saved by grace. “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24).

The application of grace is in our identification with the death of Christ “who bore our sins in His body on the tree.” Such identification is made in baptism for we are “baptized into his death” (Rom. 6:3). Still, the believer’s identification through baptism does not add one ounce of saving power to the death of Christ; the full price of sin was paid by Christ so that the believer is saved entirely by God’s grace.

Neither does one’s experiences or emotions which follow upon the knowledge of truth add up to anything to assist in the work of grace. Salvation is not something that one can work up through religious exercises however packed with rich experiences they may be. To hear the voice of God through the gospel, to see the light of truth which declares that all one’s sins are forgiven through the blood of Christ is indeed a great experience. It is an experience with overtones of joy and peace, an experience that grows and is enhanced year by year by the renewing of the mind, by the growth in the grace and knowledge of Christ, and by sharing it through our testimony. It is the climax of all

experience to know that one is saved by grace. Nevertheless it is not the experience that saves, nor has it any efficacy whatever toward our justification. The experience is the result of the justification wrought by Christ's death. God does not save me because I experience joy and peace in Christ; rather I have the joy and peace because God has saved me by His grace through Christ. Grace simply means that through Christ, God has done for us what we could never do for ourselves — freed us from the guilt and the penalty for sin.

Contrary to this Bible doctrine of grace, the social gospel of the past century offers a personal salvation on the basis of working for the good of society and of the state. It amounts to what R. J. Rushdoony says is the “worship of the state.” What many do not recognize is that the same principle is being applied in practically all evangelical churches including “conservative” ones. The emphasis is upon involvement in every phase of social activity generally labeled “church activity” since it is connected with a church group. The “faithful member” is one who is busy with all kinds of group activities. The impression, whether spoken or implied, is that the degree of his involvement indicates the degree of his salvation. Many look upon their lives as a balance sheet where the good works are weighed against the bad with the hope that their activities for the church will tip the scales to the side of good works and thus increase their chances of salvation at the day of Judgment. The emphasis is upon what men are doing rather than upon what Christ is doing. The church has thus relegated Christ to the place of spectator of man's works. One is likely to hear at most religious gatherings a great deal about what men and organizations are doing rather than hearing praise to the Christ of God who “works all things after the counsel of his will” and “who works in you both to will and to work according to his good pleasure” (Eph. 1:11, Phil. 2:13).

The cart is before the horse. Man thinks that he is adding to his salvation contract by his works. He loses in three ways. First, by trusting works to help save him and thus discounting the value and power of the cross of Christ. He is in mortal danger, for if he trusts anything other than Christ's death he is not relying upon that which alone can save him. “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; you are fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4, See Rom. 4:4–16). Second, he loses his assurance. If our works are a part of the price by which we are saved, there is no way of having confidence that we have worked enough and in the right manner to assure our standing before God. Jesus taught that after the servant has done everything there is for him to do, he is still an “unprofitable servant” for he has only done his duty. Who among us can say that he has done everything that it was possible for him to do? The result of this error is a vast number of unhappy church people with no peace and no exuberance because they cannot be sure of their salvation, having trusted partly in Christ and partly in themselves. As one man put it when asked if he were a Christian, “Well, I'm not sure, but I'm working at it.” Of course, we know that faith without works is dead in itself (James 2:17); that is, it is not true faith. The one who is truly saved by grace is the man in whom “faith works through love” (Gal. 5:6). The fruit of faith is obedience. Third, he loses the joy of working. Everyone knows that the person who does a work out of love is far happier in the work than the one who must do it out of necessity.

The sufficiency and necessity of God's grace is not limited to justifying us before God; that is, grace is not limited to our salvation. The daily provision of our needs is also by God's grace. The classic example of this is the case of Paul who prayed fervently for

God to remove his “thorn in the flesh”, but received only this answer, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” By this the Lord explained to his chosen apostle that He would supply him with that which He, in His own infinite wisdom, desired him to have, whether health, material needs, wisdom, or strength to bear his infirmities. The example of God’s continuing grace, as given by Jesus, is in the birds of the air and the grass of the field. They ‘toil not, neither do they spin’; that is, they do no work, yet God provides the birds with food, and clothes the grass with lilies. By the same sovereign grace does He give that which is needed by his children. Birds do not gather into the barns, Jesus said, meaning that they do not store up a great supply for years to come, but rather live from day to day receiving such food as the good Lord provides. In like manner we are to rely upon His grace from one day to the next. This does not discount the duty to labor diligently as we have talent and opportunity. The lesson is that, after having done what we can for the day, we rest solely on His grace for tomorrow; then when we are in circumstances of poverty or disability, by the same grace He will provide our needs. “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16).

**Christ still says “My grace is sufficient for thee.”**

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