
“Grace Upon Grace”

“For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace” (John 1:16).

God’s lovingkindness was present in Old Testament times, but its clarity and completion of application did not come until Jesus brought it through His life, death, and resurrection. John emphasized this truth, saying, “For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace” (John 1:16). Our hearts are greatly encouraged by this phrase “grace upon grace.”

Old Testament saints knew that God would save them through His mercy, but they did not comprehend the “how” of it. They simply had to trust in God to forgive their sins. With the coming of Jesus—with His death and resurrection and with the completed revelation of the New Testament—we can now see and understand the fullness, the all-sufficiency, of His grace. Now that the veil has been pulled back by the sacrifice of Jesus, we are able to see God’s great plan for the ages. (See Romans 3:25, 26; Hebrews 9:15.)

God, our Father, has always extended “grace upon grace” to those who trust in Him. However, His people in the Old Testament only saw it through the lens of the old covenant revelations and ordinances—those given through the law of Moses. Now, through Jesus, we can grasp far more completely the fullness of His grace and truth.

A saving grace. God initially saved us by His grace. We could call this grace a “saving grace,” for it is a grace that has redeemed us from our past sins. (See Romans 3:23–25; 5:1, 2.) Saved people are those people who have been brought into a redemptive relationship with God. They have been cleansed of their

sins and put into a right relationship with the God who made them.

A sustaining grace. God also gives us a daily grace to keep us saved. We could call this grace a “sustaining grace,” for it is a type of mercy that daily maintains us in Him. (See 1 John 1:7.) Those of us who have been saved by the Lord continue in a relationship with Him—through loving and obeying God (1 John 5:2), believing in Jesus (1 John 4:15), confessing our sins (1 John 1:8, 9), and loving the brethren (1 John 3:14). Not only has He saved us, but He also keeps us saved. In His lovingkindness, He continually cleanses us. Through our choice and His choice, His grace shelters us within the confines of His salvation. He holds on to us, and we hold on to Him.

A strengthening grace. He gives us grace to see us through our trials. We could call this grace “strengthening grace,” for it is a blessing that empowers us to face all the difficulties and struggles that come to us. When Paul confronted his thorn in the flesh, he prayed that God might take it away. When God said, “No, you must bear it,” Paul found that a special grace was given to help him bear it. He related to the Corinthians what had happened:

And [God] has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me (2 Corinthians 12:9).

God told Paul that He would not remove the thorn but would give Him the grace to bear it.

He did not get healing, but he got strengthening help.

In Romans 8:35 Paul mentioned tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword, and then said, "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37). He could say this about us because we have saving, sustaining, and strengthening grace.

In its full-orbed view, God's grace is a "sufficient" grace. (Read 2 Corinthians 12:9.) Our all-sufficient God has provided abundantly for every need that we have. His servant said, "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed" (2 Corinthians 9:8). Consequently, our confidence concerning our salvation should be strong and abiding. Knowing that we "stand" in His grace by virtue of our obedience to the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1), we can sing "with grace [χάρις, charis]" in our hearts to the Lord

(Colossians 3:16; KJV). We can rejoice over what we have, who our God is, what God has done for us, and where we are going.

In John's words, we have "grace upon grace" (John 1:16). God has bestowed upon us His salvation and His sustaining strength, a daily, continual grace that enables us to stand confidently before Him, sufficient and complete in Him, regardless of our circumstances. Paul summarized God's great, continual extension of grace to us in one short affirmation: "And in Him you have been made complete" (Colossians 2:10a).

Eddie Cloer



"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9).