

## **“My grace is sufficient for thee” Jamae Wolfram Richardson (van Eck)**



Paul certainly understood God’s message in terms of His unfailing grace. As a result, he took “pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.” (II Cor. 12:9, 10. The title of this article is taken from verse 9.)

Wouldn’t we all like to know that when we’re weakest or feel most inadequate, when we seem personally least able to do the good we would do, then we can be strongest in our reliance on God, firmest in our trust in His power, most steadfast in our recognition of His purpose being fulfilled.

I’ve come to the conclusion that we can feel this assurance as we understand more about grace. Paul must have understood it well. He refers to grace in his various epistles dozens of times. Perhaps he felt his vision on the road to Damascus and subsequent conversion gave him a special grasp of God’s grace or unfailing love. He no doubt felt his life proved his words to the Romans: “Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” (Rom 6:14)

What is grace? Among many interesting dictionary definitions are: favor, kindness, mercy; a sense of right; temporary exemption from penalty; attractiveness, charm; ease of movement or natural harmony; a state of being pleasing to God. When applied to Deity, grace is generally understood to mean divine mercy or assistance or blessing, often unearned and sometimes unsought.

Christ Jesus showed what divine grace really is. Not only did he furnish humanity with remarkable evidences of God’s blessing, His loving favor, His merciful kindness, His loving favor, His merciful kindness, but Jesus himself was gracious. The Master lived according to God’s good will. Such living brings exemption from sin and its penalty. It overcomes friction, alienation, anger, tension, and distress. It is manifest in harmony of all kinds – even in a natural ease of movement – and in the inevitable working together of all things for good for those that love God, as Paul wrote (see Rom. 8:28)

What enabled Jesus to remain calm in the midst of storms and to still the turbulence for others? What kept him free from bitterness toward his unfaithful disciples? What gave him unshakable confidence in divine goodness and power, even in the face of cruel injustice, even when he was presented with evidence of crippling disease or of death? What enabled him to forgive even from the cross?

Wasn't it his constant awareness of his spiritual status as the Son of God? He never forgot who he was. He never lost sight of the fact that – despite the hostility and rejection of the world and its discomfiture with his unfailing goodness – he was God-appointed, set under divine authority and endowed with divine power. He never betrayed his mission: to do God's will, to bear witness to Truth. He never lost his humility, his recognition that of himself he could do nothing. He never stopped loving.

If we remember who we are – that we too are loved of God as His children and capable only of love; that our nature is spiritual and our destiny noble – then we can experience that same “amazing grace,” that same unmistakable divine blessing. Spiritual man is always “approved of God” even though disapproved by the carnal mind. Spiritual man, graced by God, can't be disgraced by human circumstances. He can't be removed from God's ever-presence, love, or care. He actually is the expression of God's very being, not merely an object of His attention. Thus spiritual man can't fall from grace or lose divine favor, since he is incapable of sin, of acting in disobedience to the divine will.

This is the eternal fact of being, and even a glimpse of it, coupled with the earnest effort to live in accord with it, brings healing and regeneration. Such was the experience of a friend of mine.

She had been an active church worker and a dedicated practitioner of Christian Science. But some years ago she began to experience great difficulty moving about. The situation grew steadily worse until she was in constant pain and almost helpless – unable to dress or take care of herself. In desperation and concern for the burden she was placing on her husband, who was nearing retirement, she consented to medical diagnosis and treatment. In so doing, she withdrew from her branch Church of Christ, Scientist, and the public practice.

She felt as if everything she held dear, every truth she loved, her very purpose in living, were threatened. The medical diagnosis was degenerative osteoarthritis with no hope of a cure. There was the threat of radical surgery, but even that would leave her crippled and helpless for the rest of her life. The pain-killing medications left her dazed and unable to think clearly – until one day she utterly rebelled at the whole sorry state of things and returned to Christian Science, determined to demonstrate it.

My friend asked for help from a practitioner, and together they began reestablishing a clear understanding of the spiritual facts of being. Many fears and hurts were uncovered and dealt with, including longstanding disagreement with a member of her branch church and some painful discord among family members.

She began to reason from the standpoint that God's ideas are united by divine law and that they can only work together harmoniously. God's children don't

rub each other the wrong way – there isn't friction between them, nor can one inhibit the freedom or interfere with the right activity of another. In the deepest spiritual sense, she saw Church and her identity as God-constituted and governed, functioning perfectly, free from rigidity, malformation, or deterioration.

Improvement was steady. This statement of Mrs. Eddy's was a constant guide: "A little more grace, a motive made pure, a few truths tenderly told, a heart softened, a character subdued, a life consecrated, would restore the right action of the mental mechanism, and make manifest the movement of body and soul in accord with God." (*Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 354)

Within less than a year the healing was complete. She and her husband were able even to take a long-desired trip and do white-water rafting. Recently, in connection with his retirement, she and her husband moved to a new home. My friend is active in a branch church there and is again active in the healing practice of Christian Science.

Such a restoration evidences the grace God bestows – the exemption from penalty and the entitlement to harmony and blessing inherent in being obedient to His law. Nor is this experience reserved for a few – there's no exclusivity to divine Love or to Love's law of harmony.

Man, created by God in His image, is naturally blessed with His favor. As Mrs. Eddy writes in *Science and Health*: "Deity was satisfied with His work. How could He be otherwise, since the spiritual creation was the outgrowth, the emanation, of His infinite self-containment and immortal wisdom?" (*Science and Health*, p. 519) Man lives in God's grace.

Recognition that what appears to be a discordant, mistaken, suffering, desperately unhappy, disgraced, and deprived mortal isn't anyone's true nature acts to save us from believing in and being victimized by such a lie. The one entangled in such a misconception of being must inevitably awake. And it is Christ that brings the awakening – that reveals man blessed and beloved of the Father.

Through our own Christliness we come to recognize man's true status and increasingly express it. In fact, the measure of one's spiritually based graciousness is the measure of his Christliness. As we strive to be invariably good, to be guided by an unerring spiritual sense of right, to be imbued with genuine sweetness and gentleness, to be free from personal pride and personal condemnation, we are growing in grace. We are progressing in our demonstration of true selfhood. And we have no greater need.

True growth is unfoldment. It is a bringing out, a disclosing or revealing, of what is already present – as a bud unfolds into a blossom. It isn't something added on. Each of us can humanly grow in grace because we are already and eternally graced of the Father. We can be gracious – poised, calm, free of discord, anger, and strife – because that divine influence abides in our hearts, is inherent in our being.

To know this spiritual truth makes us sufficient to any need. Such knowledge of God and our unbreakable relationship to Him makes us adequate to any challenge. As Paul assured, “God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”  
*(II Cor. 9:8)*

With spiritual grace we can adhere quietly to good in the midst of even raging evil; we can keep poised and steadfast in the face of stubborn and unjust resistance. Grace gives us the alert, unafraid, inner strength that shuts the door to mental trespassers seeking to rob us of dominion and poise through emotionalism, vanity, and reaction. It gives us an unlabored, unfrustrated, unrestricted sense of moving in accord with God, at the impulse of His love, in response to His command. This is truly pleasing to God, and it is His gift to us – a gift that is ours forever.

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