

THE SECRET OF GROWTH -- The Divine Provision

I Cor. 15:10-- "By the grace of God I am what I am..."

It is the grace of God that has made Paul what he is -- that is the secret of his life, his devotion, development. If a man is to amount to anything, it will be by the grace of God.

The grace of God is not merely a benevolent attitude that God has toward man. He is the activity of God for man and in man. Titus 2 speaks of the grace of God appearing to every man, bringing salvation, etc. It is active, an expressed power.

(1) There is what we may call SAVING GRACE. cf. titus 2:11. This is the grace that brings Christ to man as Saviour and brings man to God. It is the Divine initiative without which man would never have come to God.

(2) There is what we may call ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ ENABLING GRACE, which is God's continued activity in and for man...enabling for service, holiness AND growth.

- a. This enables man to go on with God
- b. And insures God's glory for what happens.

Rom. 12:3 -- "For through the grace given to me I say to every man..."

Rom. 15:15,16 -- "...because of the grace that was given me from God, ~~xxxxx~~ to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles..."

Rom. 1:5, "Through whom we have received grace and apostleship...."

I Cor. 3:10, "According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise masterbuilder I laid a foundation..."

Gal. 2:9, "And recognizing the grace that had been given to me... gave to me...the right hand of fellowship."

Eph. 3:7, "Of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power."

"To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ."

Eph. 3:2, "If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given me for you."

Eph. 4:7, "But to each one of us ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift."

II. GOD HIMSELF IS PRODUCING THE GROWTH, SOURCE OF GROWTH, CAUSE OF IT. ALL GROWTH COMES FROM GOD AND IS CAUSED BY GOD, PROMOTED BY GOD.

He gives both the desire and the power.

1. I Cor. 3 One man waters another plants, but God gives the increase

2. Phil. 2:12,13, "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for IT IS GOD WHO IS AT WORK IN YOU, BOTH TO WILL AND TO WORK FOR HIS GOOD PLEASURE.

Points: (1) Remember it is God who is doing it...
This gives us motivation: not limited by my weakness or ability, and assures of success.

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I. WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT IT IS BY GRACE WE GROW. That we grow by the gracious act of God, that it is nothing we do ourselves (I Cor. 3 -- one man plants, another waters, but it is God who gives the increase) This is important less we (1) Struggle in vain to grow by self-effort, waste much time in the energy of the flesh; (2) become discouraged at difficulties, failures and setbacks, thinking we will never grow, that it is beyond us, that we are doomed to a life of defeat. If it is by grace, then like salvation, our weakness is no hindrance and our strength is no help. We are assured of growth since it comes from God; (3) we will rob God of the glory due Him. "He that plants and waters is nothing." "It was not me, but the grace of God." (4) *Place too much emphasis on the instruments, Every thing in your life by grace from faith* (5) *Growth comes from the Scriptures on God working within us. Work & O = 14% training*

nothing need: motivation & power
II Peter, those who don't grow forget *See Phil: Two Sides - Human responsibility - cooperation*
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II. WE MUST RESPOND TO THE GRACE WE RECEIVE.
 The grace of God can be received in vain (II Cor.6:1) All Christians are heirs of grace, under grace, received grace through Christ. Why then do so many remain babes and turn carnal. They received it in vain...They didn't use it, respond to it, exercise it.

Notice that all the references to God's ~~grace~~ enabling grace and God working in us also emphasized human response and activity.
 Phil. 2:13; Eph. 3:7; Rom. 1:5; 15:15; TEXT... I laboured the more...

~~Matt 23:13; 23:23; 23:25; 23:27; 23:29; 23:31; 23:33; 23:35; 23:37; 23:39; 23:41; 23:43; 23:45; 23:47; 23:49; 23:51; 23:53; 23:55; 23:57; 23:59; 23:61; 23:63; 23:65; 23:67; 23:69; 23:71; 23:73; 23:75; 23:77; 23:79; 23:81; 23:83; 23:85; 23:87; 23:89; 23:91; 23:93; 23:95; 23:97; 23:99; 24:1; 24:3; 24:5; 24:7; 24:9; 24:11; 24:13; 24:15; 24:17; 24:19; 24:21; 24:23; 24:25; 24:27; 24:29; 24:31; 24:33; 24:35; 24:37; 24:39; 24:41; 24:43; 24:45; 24:47; 24:49; 24:51; 24:53; 24:55; 24:57; 24:59; 24:61; 24:63; 24:65; 24:67; 24:69; 24:71; 24:73; 24:75; 24:77; 24:79; 24:81; 24:83; 24:85; 24:87; 24:89; 24:91; 24:93; 24:95; 24:97; 24:99; 25:1; 25:3; 25:5; 25:7; 25:9; 25:11; 25:13; 25:15; 25:17; 25:19; 25:21; 25:23; 25:25; 25:27; 25:29; 25:31; 25:33; 25:35; 25:37; 25:39; 25:41; 25:43; 25:45; 25:47; 25:49; 25:51; 25:53; 25:55; 25:57; 25:59; 25:61; 25:63; 25:65; 25:67; 25:69; 25:71; 25:73; 25:75; 25:77; 25:79; 25:81; 25:83; 25:85; 25:87; 25:89; 25:91; 25:93; 25:95; 25:97; 25:99; 26:1; 26:3; 26:5; 26:7; 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Connect verse 9 with verse 10. Proof that Paul did not receive the grace of God in vain and testimony to its enabling power is this: Paul, the least and latest of all the apostles, because of the magnitude of his sin not fit to be an apostle, laboured more abundantly than all the other apostles.

Paul is quick to add that all this labour was not him, but the grace of God. Paul is boasting, but boasting of the grace of God, not his own abilities and accomplishments.

Probably a more accurate interpretation of I Cor. 15:10 is this: The grace of God was not vain. It doesn't say that Paul's receiving it was not in vain. The grace of God CAN be received in vain (II Cor. 6:1). But this is not what Paul is saying here. He is saying that the grace of God he received was not an empty thing, devoid of any content. On the contrary it enabled him to labour more abundantly than all the other ~~apostles~~ Apostles...for all he did was really the grace of God doing it.

I am what I am by the grace of God
I accomplished what I did by the grace of God.

The grace of God not only transform the character, it enables and energizes for service.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF GRACE.

I Peter 4:10..."the manifold grace of God..." various kinds of grace.

Saving Grace, Eph. 2:8; Titus 2:11
Sustaining grace, II Cor. 12:9
Giving grace, II Cor. * 8:7-9

II Cor. 9:8, "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency ~~in~~ in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed."

Grace that saves, sustains, strengthens, sanctifies, and makes us sufficient for anything at anytime.

INTRO: Success ~~XXXXXX~~ stories always interesting. ~~THE~~ Learn the secrets of the pros! What made them great, the secret of their life.
PAUL: "By the grace of God I am what I am." If ever salvation reached its goal in a man, it was Paul.

Paul is writing years after conversion, a mature, spiritual man. By the grace of God I am what I am doesn't simply refer to the initial act of salvation. How did he become such a holy man, a great Christian, faithful and fruitful servant, etc.? "BY THE GRACE OF GOD..."

To you who long to grow, mature, etc. Here is the secret..."By the Grace of God."

Oh undeserved favor - O doing a favor we wouldn't do.
GRACE is one of those Biblical words we dwarfed, one ~~xxxx~~ dimensional view. If you think it refers only to the loving activity of God that gave His only Son to die for our sins...that initial act of salvation, you have an emaciated view of grace. I Peter 4:10 speaks of the MANIFOLD grace of God, the various kinds of grace.

THE VARIOUS KINDS OF GRACE; that saves us, that sustains us, supplies our every need, enabling grace.

ALL GROWTH COMES FROM GOD and the AGENT HE USES IS GRACE.

II Peter
1:11, 12

~~XXXX~~

Not only does this give us motivation, it gives us the manner in which we're to work: fear and trembling. It is serious business.

(2) How God does it...By willing and working...He gives us the desire and the dynamic

(3) The goal of God's working, or the measure, guideline, blueprint. "FOR HIS GOOD PLEASURE."

3. I Cor. 12:6, "And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons."

4. Heb. 13:21, "Equip you in every good thing to do His will~~m~~, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight...."

5. Col. 1:29, "And for this purpose also I labour, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me."

6. I Thess. 4:3 & 5:23, 24,

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification..."

m "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you ~~xxx~~ entirely; and may your spirit, ~~xxxx~~ and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. FAITHFUL IS HE WHO CALLS YOU, AND HE WILL ALSO BRING IT TO PASS."

III. THE GRACE OF GOD IS GIVEN TO EVERY CHRISTIAN...WHY, THEN, DOESN'T EVERY CHRISTIAN GROW?

1. They receive it in ~~xxxx~~ vain.
2. They fail to receive more.

Two things, then, are essential. We must profit by the grace we receive, and we must receive MORE grace. II Peter 1, as a prelude to the exhortation to grow, says, "May grace and peace be multiplied..." In James 4 and I Peter 5 we are told that God gives more grace to some while opposing others.

(ADD to list of SCRIPTURES UNDER POINT II: I Peter 4:10-"As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, AS GOOD STEWARDS OF THE ~~GRACE OF GOD~~ MANIFOLD GRACE OF GOD.")

II Cor. 6:1, "And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain"

1. To keep from receiving it in vain..."But I laboured even more than all of them..." The human responsibility. "WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION..."

2. To receive more. Matt. 13:12 -- "For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him."

ILL. of this. Parable of ~~xxx~~ talents in Matt. 25;

James 4:6 & I Peter 5:5 -- we receive more grace by humbling ourselves.