

## Saved by Grace, Empowered by Grace: The Life Force in our Parenting

October 27, 2021

“Bad” News: God doesn’t call people to be parents because they are able.

Good News: God never calls us to a task without giving us what we need to do it

### Biblical Definitions of Grace

#### 1) Undeserved favor

“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup>All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. <sup>4</sup>But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup>made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup>And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – <sup>9</sup>not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup>For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

--Ephesians 2:1-10

What does this passage reveal about our condition before God rescued us? What do we learn here about God’s grace for us? Jot down some notes.

#### 2) Power, practical helpfulness from God for daily living; or “supernatural enablement” by the Holy Spirit who lives within us; His very presence in us

“And God is able to make all *grace* abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.” --II Corinthians 9:8

“I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s *grace* given me through the *working of his power*. <sup>8</sup> Although I am less than the least of all the Lord’s people, this *grace* was given me:

to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ . . . . <sup>16</sup>I pray that out of his glorious riches he may *strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being* . . . . <sup>20</sup>Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, *according to his power that is at work within us*, <sup>21</sup>to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!  
--Ephesians 3:7,8,16,20

“I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses . . . . in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. <sup>8</sup>Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. <sup>9</sup>But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. <sup>10</sup>That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”  
--II Corinthians 12: 5b-10

Where does the thorn come from?

What advice might a counselor or therapist without a biblical perspective offer to us at a moment like this? What makes this passage so counter-cultural?

Take a moment to reflect on the verse, “My grace is sufficient for you.” Read it with emphasis on each of the words within the sentence. What insights do you gain?

How would you describe Paul’s tone of voice in saying, “When I am weak, then I am strong”?

### Prayer Requests/Small Group Time

“This God who has . . . perfect wisdom and unlimited strength, right now lives inside of you. This means that God is with you in the morning when you dread getting out of bed and facing another hard parenting day. He is with you when you have to break up the seventeenth squabble of the morning . . . . He is with you when your children are in your face and disrespectful . . . . He gifts you with his presence. He really does live inside you. You really aren’t left to yourself” (Tripp 38).

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then approach God’s throne of *grace* with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and *find grace to help us in our time of need.*”

--Hebrews 4:14-15

What moments are especially hard for you to believe that God is with you in your parenting? Think about your current circumstances or daily/weekly patterns, and share with your small group where you particularly need his timely grace.

How does grace change the way that we parent? (From Paul Tripp’s *Parenting*, Ch. 2)

**“God’s grace works to open your eyes to see yourself as a parent accurately.”**

We can be self-righteous, regard ourselves as mature law-followers. But he uses our marriages and our parenting to expose the sinfulness, the lawlessness, in our own hearts. We need his forgiving and transforming grace just like our children do. Instead of approaching them with self-righteous outrage, we can move toward them as sinners in need of grace, confronting another sinner in need of grace.

**“God’s grace frees you from having to deny your weaknesses.”**

“It never works, as a mom or dad, to act as if you’re more righteous than you are . . . . But if you are a parent who quickly confesses wrong to your children, you will endear yourself to them and present yourself as someone who will be approachable when they have failed. Humble, confessing parents encourage their children to be humble and confessing too, and the result is that they have many opportunities to talk about the rescuing love of Jesus.”

**“God’s grace rescues you from you.”**

“When we are shaken by the sin, weakness, rebellion, foolishness, or failure of our children, what comes out of us (words, actions, attitudes) is what is already inside us . . . . My children are simply the occasion where my heart reveals itself in words and actions. So I need much more than rescue and relief from my children; I need rescue from me. This is why Jesus came, to provide us with the rescue that we all need but that we cannot provide for ourselves.”

**“God’s grace grows and changes you as a parent.”**

God uses the pressures, opportunities, griefs, and joys of parenting to sanctify us, to make us holy. “As we seek to parent our children, the heavenly Father is parenting everyone in the room. Like our children, we need to grow and mature. Like our children, we haven’t progressed beyond the need for a Father’s care. . . .

**“God’s grace works to make your heart tender.”**

Hard-hearted parents are unable to see the sin in their own lives, even as they call out the same sins in their children: the parent who shouts, "Stop yelling at me!" The difficulties that you face in parenting are God's way of tenderizing your heart.

If you walk down the hallway mad because your children need correction again, you're mad because at that moment they need what every human being needs: a parent's care. But if you walk down that hallway confessing your need of the Father's care, it is more likely that you will embrace the need of your children for the same care, and you'll be tender as you give it" (37).

**"God's grace liberates you from the prison of regret."**

God's grace brings us new starts over and over again. We don't have to be debilitated by our mistakes and failures. Because the blood of Jesus was sacrificed for our sins (past, present, and future), we can "boldly come to him in our failure, receive his forgiveness, deposit our regret at his feet, and move on to new and better ways" of parenting.