

Words of Encouragement: Abundance of Grace

We have seen before that the men and women on whom the knowledge of God rests, the sons and daughters of the Kingdom, have access to the boundless resources of heaven. As Peter says, God has “granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness.” (2 Peter 1:3) God’s kindness is simply amazing.

When we first grasp these truths we are easily transfixed, like kids in a candy shop. Our minds immediately begin writing checks against God’s limitless account. Events, plans, labors, plantings, helps, relationships, movements.... We quickly jump to a list of projects, not realizing that the limiting factor in our endeavors may likely be *us*! We might become tired and bitter. Or we may find ourselves overwhelmed, lacking the wisdom to bring our plans to fruition. Despite our lofty aspirations, our undertakings have lost their savor and we have succumbed to a works mentality. We’ve bumped into a truth that people have been rediscovering for centuries: In order to serve God’s purposes faithfully, we need not only God’s resources but also his enablement. We need God’s empowering presence. We need God’s grace.

Thankfully, God has made abundant provision in this regard:

For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one [Adam], much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. (Rom 5:17)

More than just resource, this verse tells us that there is abundant provision of *grace* to accomplish God’s purposes. Those who receive grace will be those who reign. Resources alone (money, buildings, food, supplies, etc.) are insufficient. Instead, it is on the basis and strength of what we have received from the Spirit of God that we will serve him most effectively. We will reign by grace.

While concept of “reigning in life” may be simple in principle, reigning by grace sometimes proves harder to accomplish. Reigning in life is us ruling life instead of life ruling us, freely expressing fruit and actions that are in keeping with God’s nature and his word. But what does it mean to reign *by grace*?

Foremost, it is not achieved by human strength. In the gospels Jesus commissions his followers to “disciple the nations.” But before they have opportunity to do anything about it, Jesus tells them to wait for power, for enablement from heaven. (Acts 1:4) He said that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them, and then they would become effective witnesses. The disciples were told explicitly to *wait* for the divine enablement of the Holy Spirit to accomplish God’s purposes. Let’s face it; left to our own devices, you and I simply don’t have what it takes to order our own lives according to God’s highest intentions, let alone the world’s affairs. The purposes of God are accomplished “not might nor by power, but by my Spirit.” (Zech 4:6)

Paul was well familiar with this principle, as is clear from 1 Corinthians 15:10:

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

I’m sure Paul had a sense of accomplishment for the things he had done in the Kingdom. But his great rejoicing was not over the deeds but over the grace of God that enabled him. That was the wonder, the marvel of it all. Paul knew his weaknesses. He knew his former way of life. Yet he could see behind him an increasing harvest of seed that he had sown or tended. Paul’s unparalleled stamina was not sourced in his own strength, but in the enablement of the Holy Spirit and his certainty of the things God had shown him. Paul was reigning in life through the overflow of grace and the gift of righteousness that he had received.

So it must be for us. It is those who receive the grace that God has multiplied toward us in Christ Jesus that will realize the purposes of God in their generation. It is these who will rule in life—not with an authority of their own invention, but a delegated authority of the Lord Jesus himself, who has been granted all authority in heaven and earth. They will reign, after all, not in their own name but in his. (Col 3:17) They will persevere in his strength, not their own. And such are we, if we are willing...

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Eph 2:10)