

# Abundant Grace

By Paris Reidhead\*

Will you turn, please, to 2 Corinthians, Chapter 9. I want to read much of this Chapter, and shall comment on the verse that has been pressed upon my heart for this evening. I will read the chapter first, however. 2 Corinthians 9:

“For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many. Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting. Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness. But this I say, He which soweth sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all thing, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift” (II Cor. 9:1-15).

Now, the verse that I am presenting to you tonight to encourage your faith is 2 Corinthians, Chapter 9, and verse 8. I have made reference to this verse in the past, but I do not believe I have ever endeavored to speak to it, or to seek to present it in the fashion that is before me tonight.

Years ago, as a student in Bible School, now it would be the Fall of 1935; some of your memories serve to remind you that those were rather difficult days, difficult indeed in our house, and in our part of the country. It was during the depression, and that summer my father had come to me and said, Son, I just can't send you to High School next year. It is just more than we can do. We have no crop, and no funds, and no prospects of any. I was 16 that summer, and he said, If you want to go to school, you are just going to have to go on your own. I just have not anything to share with you to send you to High School. He said, Maybe the Bible School would take you.

And so I had written to Dr. Riley<sup>1</sup> who was President of the Bible School and who used to come several times in the Fall, hunting, on our farm, and he passed the word on to the registrar, and I was invited to come. He said, We are making an exception in your case. You go to Bible School. And so I was delighted, just elated. My uncle, who was a mason, gave me two weeks work, and for the two weeks, 8 hours a day, I received the munificent sum of \$14 which paid my registration fee, and gave me two dollars extra. My father cleaned out his bank account and gave me a check for everything that was there. I'll never forget it, \$13.27. And with that I went to Bible School, that and the promise of friends they would pray. A cousin had a pair of shoes that he had used as an usher in the theatre that fit me; a friend had found a pair of trousers in a dry-cleaning plant and taken the spots out. Somebody else had coat sweater. I didn't have a suit. And I went to Bible School, knowing God had called me. Back in 1935.

Well \$13.27 the day I cashed it seemed like a sum that would never be exhausted. But you know it is amazing how rapidly it goes, even in depression. And there came a time when I had about 70¢ left, and I bought a quarter's worth of apples. That was a big bag in those days, about a peck if I remember correctly. By the end of the week, I wished it had not been quite as bit a bag, I'm afraid, for I had apples and water for breakfast, and as a change of diet at lunch I had water and apples. And supper

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1 Rev. Dr. William Bell Riley (1861-1947) Pastor of the First Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN. and educator.

made a meal out of it; it was apples and water, and another apple. I had two apples at night. And did not tell anybody, because I was determined to fight this thing out with the Lord.

Well it was about the end of my bag of apples when I went to chapel, and there was a speaker there, Carlton Null, I think his name was. And he testified how God had given him a ministry on the road. He just hitchhiked across the country, stopping in in the various camps. For in those days, you remember, there were multitudes of people, young people especially living in jungles along the railroad camp. Left home and family. He would go in among them, and he would have meetings, and he would testify and witness in turn. And I will never forget as long as I live when I felt impressed. All the other students went out, and I could not go out, and I just waited in my seat. And finally he came by, and he said, Were you waiting to see me? I said, Yes, I am. He said, Why? Well I said, I think you have something for me. I have been blessed by this. I have been just trusting the Lord to help me through school, and I think the Lord wants you to give me something. He said, Yes, I do, too. Let me put this in the front of your Bible, so you will have it when I am gone. You won't try to remember it. So he opened the front leaf. I never ask anyone for autographs, and he is the only man in my life who ever asked to write in any Bible of mine. But he wrote his name, and he put down a reference, and he said, Now you go home and read it. Don't just read it and memorize it. He said, Don't just read it and memorize it, but make it your life verse. So I went home to my bag of apples for lunch, and I read this, and ate an apple, and drank my water, and you know as I read it just seemed to be completely transformed. It seemed as though it had become almost incandescent on the past, and illumined in my heart. It leaped to life, and I suppose more frequently than any other verse in the Bible through the years in times of spiritual need I have been driven back to this as though God somehow had linked it to me in a way that He wanted me to recognize. And the verse was 2 Corinthians 9:8.

Look at it now. It begins right. It begins right. It begins with a conjunction. In other words everything in this book has to be connected to God. Your problem is in God, your need in God, your difficulty, your sin in God; everything that ever touches you is in God, always coming right back. So it begins right. And God... You add the first part. What is it? My heartache and God, my frustration and God. Well there is something that happens. The problem is, you see, my frustration, my heartache. But if you do not put, and God into it, well you are all alone in the midst of the difficulty. So the verse begins right. Normally you would not think so.

One of my dear friends said, You know every sentence you ever speak begins with an and. Well, I said, it is all tied into what has gone before so why not. It is very poor syntax, I recognize. Perhaps this influenced me. I do not know. And God. And God. You know, this is a wonderful equation.

Well here it is, And God is able... Well if you cannot go that far, do not go any further. If you have any questions about God being able, let us stop. Let us get your theology straight, let us get your understanding of the nature of God settled, because if you have any questions about it... And God is able... Everything I have learned about God in all these years as a Christian in His service could be comprised by those first four words of this verse, And God is able. You cannot go beyond that. You cannot go below it. You cannot go above it. You cannot go around it. Everything that you ever will touch, or ever will touch you is involved in those first four words, And God is able.

But notice, it is not just an abstraction. It is not God in His elevated eminence on the throne in the universe, able in some sense of distant beauty as we behold Him. No, No, it is not that. God is able to make all grace... You know I am so glad He did not say, All reward. What reward would I ever have gotten. Wages, what have you and I ever earned? If He had put any other word in there but grace, it would not have been of one fraction or fragment of encouragement to my heart. But when He put grace, He met my need, because I tell you when you are 16 years old in a big city, and at the bottom of your sack of apples, and you do not know where the rest is coming from, and the only thing to do is to admit defeat and crawl back home to the farm, you can eat good, but you do not get on with what God has put in your heart to do. And you know, you have not anything to offer, you haven't a thing to present, and you've nothing to give. The only thing you have... Well, it has got to come as free, unmerited favor. And thus when you see this, God, oh we have no question about Him, in all His exalted power, His infinity, His eternity, His omniscience. This we have learned. And God is able; unquestionably He has ability. But you know, we have got to get another word there somehow. There has got to be another section in this equation. God is able to make grace. If it is not grace there is no encouragement, because I have earned nothing, I deserve only wrath, and so it has to be grace. God is able to make

all grace abound toward you. I tell you it even makes an apple taste good when you read "toward you." God sort of illumines that word "you," and of all the "you's" that are inconsequential and insignificant, and undeserving, you are the youngest you of the lot you know. There is not a thing that could give you the slightest fragment of encouragement, now a thing to say, me? me? of all people, me? And He says, And God is able to make all grace abound toward you.

You sort of stop there, you stop. You just cannot go any further, Toward you. Of all the people that are unworthy of grace, unworthy of anything but wrath, You, You. God is able to make all grace abound toward you. That you. You see He did not want you to misunderstand it. He put that you right back in again. So it would be personal, every breath.

He is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you... He did not want you to think that this was just a onetime matter. That you always, always, having all sufficiency, in all things... My by the time you finish all those alls there is not much left, is there? Look where you go. God is able to make all grace bound toward you, that ye, always, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good word.

They say John Glenn and his fellows, are going to explore space. They are way behind. Some of us have been exploring space for a long time, trying to get beyond all the alls of 2 Corinthians 9:8. Just trying to pass it. You cannot do it, you know. You cannot go beyond this, because when you have gone out to the south just as far as you can and try to discover how much all grace is; then you go to the north as far as you can, trying to discover what always is; then you go to the east as far as all sufficiency; and you go to the west as far as all things, you know you have just spread out so far that you will never find your way home again. You have gone into sort of a spiritual orbit. You just cannot get beyond this. Every way you want to go you have been pressed out beyond usual, limits.

For instance, all grace. Now there is no need you're ever going to encounter along the way that will not be encompassed by all grace, because everything that God is, He is willing to make available on the basis of His great love through the Lord Jesus Christ. So we have got groundless grace that there might be under all circumstances, always, there is no situation into which you are ever going to come that is exempt. You will never be put into a problem that does not have with it this grace. For it is all grace always, in every situation, every difficulty. And then it is not just that His grace is boundless, but His sufficiency. You know this is one of the names of God. El Shaddai. He is the mighty One. But it is translated, the One, the God who is enough, who is always sufficient, and in all things.

Well I found that this worked. I went through school on it. When I was 18 went into a pastorate, and had nothing, absolutely nothing. There never was a greener Preacher. I worked all week, all week long to get a sermon, the way I thought sermons ought to be. They had asked me to come to Leslie Presbyterian Church between Osakus and Long Prairie, Minnesota on the 4th of July 1937. I had been out of school for a semester, and had had my appendix out in May, and was recuperating, and a practical worker... I thought he had forgotten all about me. He called me up, the Practical Work Director, Frank Basse who was here a couple of years ago, and he said, Paris, I have been trying to send some other boys, but every time I go your name comes before me. God wants you to go, son. I said, Mr. Basse, you are awfully nice, but I think you have got the wrong man. I've never preached. He said, There always has to be a first time. So I went up and they met me at the bus, and took me out to that country home, and the next day I preached. Nobody in this world ever knows a thing I said. I did not, certainly. I just knew what was on my heart to say, and I figured that I would have enough to keep me going all day, and I finished in about 15 minutes. I had gone all the way from Genesis to Revelation and back a couple of times, and there wasn't a thing left in the Bible. I didn't see any reason for calling me. I had preached everything in the Bible in those 15 minutes. When I finished they said, Well you heard him preach. He's not much of a preacher, he said. Someone said, No, that's true. And I was sitting right there. And they said, But we liked the way he prayed. And so they said, Well I guess we can stand to hear him preach if he'll pray like that. And they said, Well we want him to come. All right he is here. They didn't send anybody else. And I'm listening to this. Well where is he going to stay. Well, before we know where he is going to stay, how much are we going to pay him. Someone said, Can't pay him very much. I think we could give him \$50. No, that is too much. Better make it \$40. If he doesn't hold us responsible for what we can't pay him. We won't go into debt. And so they agreed on \$40 if they had it. That was a month, not a week mind you. \$10 a week. And they said, Well now, where will he stay. Albert, you got a room. I've got a room but it's inside our bedroom. If he doesn't mind he can stay there. It on the other side of ours. How much will you charge him

for it? Well \$4 a week board and room, is that too much? So without my asking, they said, You are going stay, and you are going to stay at Albert and Laura's and they are going to charge you \$4 a week, and we are going to pay you \$10 a week. And I was 18. I told some one, I have never been a young people. Jumped out of being a boy into being a... minister.

But you know I found all grace includes the impossible situation. All grace, all grace, always, all sufficiency, all things. You see, this is a verse you can live with. Probably I am derelict not having given it to you before, because you have probably needed it. Look at it again before we go to prayer. And God is able... God is able, not your Bible School, not your Board, not your society. God is able. Not your parents, or your friends, but God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you always, having all sufficiency in all things may abound unto every good work.

Now I would like to have you write that down in front of your Bible, sort of put it in there as cash in the bank, resources to call on, check to cash, promise to run to, rock in a weary land. It is not the verse, it is God. Cannot add to it, cannot take away from it. It is there. And everything you will ever learn about God will not go past it. Well I think everybody that has ever proven anything of what this verse says to be true ought to just take an opportunity to thank Him.

\* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Wednesday Evening, April 24, 1963 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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