"When Grace Speaks, All Protocols are Suspended." Grace in the Letters of Paul Cannot Be Overemphasized

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Introduction

Grace is cardinal as far as the Bible is concerned. It is not out of place to posit that grace is an important doctrine in Christianity and it has been held in high esteem by all denominations. The importance of this theme has made it one of the mostly discussed topics among scholars and lay Christians inclusive. It should be noted however that grace is not given to engender pride and not given to live anyhow. The grace made available to man must be expressed within the limit of the scriptures. According to Kaylor, grace is a key word used in the Bible time and among Christians today.[1] James Hastings posits that, "Christianity first made grace a leading term in the vocabulary of religion."[2]

On many matters, as relating to ecclesiastical and doctrinal resolutions, Apostle Paul was outstanding in his time. No wonder Godwin posits that; "Apostle Paul's theology remains imperative to solving some of the ecclesiological challenges in the twenty-first century Nigerian Church."[3] The focus of this

[1] R. D. Kaylor, "The Concept of Grace in the Hymns of Nammaḻvar" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *44*(4), 1976): 649-660.

[2] James Hastings, *Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 313.

[3] Godwin Oriyomi Adeboye, *The Relevance of Pauline Theology Of Charismata And Sumpheron In 1 Corinthians 12:1-7 To Christian Ecumenism In Nigeria* https://www.biblicaltheology.com/Research/AdeboyeGO02.pdf, Accessed on 09/06/2024.

paper is to look critically at the concept of grace as it relates to Paul's letters and life. The life of Paul himself is a true reflection that "when grace is at work, protocols are suspended.

Grace Conceptually Defined

Grace is viewed as "a favorable disposition on the part of God, usually without reference to any merit or desert in the object of the favor… even when the object is entirely lacking in merit or desert."[4] Hastings sees grace as "God's unmerited, unconstrained love toward sinners, revealed and operative in Christ."[5] This is in line with Watkins *et.al.,* who see grace as 'unmerited favor of God.'[6] It is also defined theologically by Revell as "God's free and spontaneous action that is taken to meet the needs of humans, especially in the provision of salvation and enabling the believer."[7] These suggest God's involvement in the bestowing of grace.

Furthermore, Grace is the favor of God in giving His Son and the benefit to men of receiving that Son.[8] Torrance advanced that Grace in the New Testament is the basic and the most characteristic element of the Christian gospel and the one has believed that gospel is impelled to live a life of grace, concerned

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[4] Madeleine S. Miller and J. Lane Miller, *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 236.

[5] James Hastings, *Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible*, 313; Andrew H. Trotter, "Grace" in Walter A. Elwell, (ed.), *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 312; the researcher notes this also in William Evans, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 158, 159.

[6] Morris Watkins et.al., *The Complete Christian Dictionary for Home and Schools* (California: All Nations Publishers, 1992), 285.

[7] Fleming H. Revell, "Grace" in *The Revell Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1990), 450.

[8] P. T. Menzel, "Divine Grace and Love: Continuing Trouble for a logically non-dependent Religious Ethics" *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, *3*(2), 1975): 255-269.

only with the doing of the will of God.[9] This is true about the Grace of God. According to Watson, 'Grace is often related to mercy.'[10] While mercy is sometimes applied to lower creation, grace is used in relation to men alone just as in Romans 8:20-23. Mercy implies pity whereas grace includes the idea of favorable action toward sinners which comes from God's own prerogative.

Because grace is viewed as an act of God, Christians attribute every miracle to the grace of God. Mostly, the concept of grace is understood in the context of New Testament teachings; this is probably because the writers of the New Testament, especially Apostle Paul, use the word more often and they present it more explicitly in their writings.

Grace: A Theological Overview

The Doctrine of Grace lies at the very heart not merely of all Christian theology but also of Christian experience. If every Christian has an incorrect or inadequate understanding of the biblical teaching on grace, the whole grasp of the meaning and purpose of Christianity will be deficient in consequence. There is, accordingly, no subject that is more vital for this paper than this subject of Grace of God.

Basically, the Greek word for Grace is χάρις (*Charis*) which means goodwill, loving kindness and favor without punishment. Charles Ryrie in his book *Handbook on Bible Doctrine* says it also means that which awakens pleasure or secure joy.[11] Thus the word can cover a wide range of meaning and is actually used in reference to bodily beauty, works of art, beautiful words, the

[9] Phillip Torrance, *Grace and the Law: Seeking a Balance* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009), 48.

[10] Peter Watson, *The Concept of Grace* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), 67.

[11] Charles Caldwell Ryrie, "The Grace of God" in *A Handbook of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 20.

charm of a song, the sweetness of slumber, the sweetness of life, the glory of victory, the glory of nobble death, the grace of a person and the grace added to virtue. To this sense of *charis* as the quality which gives pleasure is added the idea of the pleasure or joy itself, so that from *charis* one derives the English word "*hedonism*."[12] Further, there is added a psychological aspect to the Greek concept of *charis*, so that it also means the disposition or personality which is graceful, gracious or attractive. Thus, the word comes to have the meaning of graciousness, amiability, or favor, while *charis* is generally used of the relations of men to each other, it is also applied to the attitude which the gods adopt towards men. *Charis* then according to Charles Ryrie in his book *Handbook on Bible Doctrine* is sometimes used to connote "divine favor towards men."[13] This favor is prayed and hoped for, and sacrifices are offered to obtain it.

The term grace combines ideals in tension that point to profound mystery in the Bible. Metzger and Coogan in the book *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* explained that "grace named the undeserved gift that creates relationships and the sustaining, responding, forbearing attitude-plus-action that nurtures relationships."[14] Grace concerns the interaction between gracious person and graced recipient, involving the wills of both. The motives of the grace giver; the acceptance, rejection, or forgetfulness of the recipient: the forbearance of the giver; the entire dynamic of forgiveness; the life-renewing impact of the gift – all these are at issues. To buttress this, Vine went further in *Vine's Expository Dictionary of the Old and New*

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[12] Hedonism is from the Greek word □□□□□□which is "pleasure." It is the belief that pleasure, or absence of pain is the most important principle in determining the morality of a potential course of action in other word, an hedonistic man is one who places more value on pleasure." In Fred Feldman, *Pleasure and Good Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 24), 74.

[13] Charles Caldwell Ryrie, "The Grace of God" in *A Handbook of Bible Doctrine*, 420.

[14] Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 259-260.

Testament to say that "*Charis"* has various uses. He puts them as thus;

> Grace on the objective has to do with that which bestows or occasions pleasure, delight, or causes favorable regard; it is applied. Subjective: 1. **on the part of the bestower**, the friendly disposition from which the kindly act proceeds, graciousness, loving to the Divine favor or grace. In this regard there is stress on its freeness and universality, its spontaneous character, as in the case of God's redemptive mercy, and the pleasure or joy He designs for the recipient; thus it is set in contrast with debt; 2. **On the receiver,** a sense of the favor bestowed, a feeling of gratitude, (Rom. 6:17) (thanks); in this respect it sometimes signifies to be thankful.[15]

From Vine's exposition, grace can be both divine endowments bestowed and a way to express gratitude. As earlier stated, the use of the word "grace" in the New Testament is a translation from the Greek *charis*. This word appears over 170 times in the Greek text.[16] Vine further explained that when used, *charis* represents a quality that adds delight or pleasure, a favorable attitude. It is also described as an experience or state resulting from God's favor, as verbal thanks offering rendered to God.[17] Objectively, *charis* may denote the impression produced by "gracefulness," as expressed in 3 John 1:4 where many

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[15] W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of the Old and New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Reveil Publishers, 1981), 169-170.

[16] Burton Scott Easton, *Easton Bible Dictionary* (electronic edition)

[17] W. E. Vine, Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), 277. Easton explains that in secular Greek of all periods it is also a very common word, and in both Biblical and secular Greek it is used with far more meanings than can be represented by any one term in English Primarily the word seems to denote pleasant external appearance, "gracefulness" "loveliness"

manuscripts read *chara*, "joy"[18] These various meanings naturally tend to blend into each other, and in certain cases it is difficult to fix the precise meaning that the writer meant the word to convey, a confusion that is common to both New Testament and secular Greek and in secular Greek the word has a still larger variety of meanings that scarcely concern theologians. Despite this variety of interpretations, Mitton in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* states that the prominent meaning of *charis* in the New Testament is "favor".[19] Revell further posits that "it is summed up in God's provision of salvation when we deserve His wrath."[20]

In the Gospels, *charis* is used in the words of Christ only in Luke 6:32-34; 17:9. As Christ spoke in Aramaic, the choice of this word is due to Luke, probably under the influence of its common Christian use in his own day. And there is no word in Jesus' recorded sayings that suggests that He employed

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[18] *Charis* may be translated by "graciousness," or, when directed toward a particular person or persons, by "favor." So in Luke 2:52, "Jesus advanced .... in favor with God and men." As the complement to this, *charis* denotes the emotion awakened in the recipient of such favor, i.e. "gratitude." So Luke 17:9 reads literally, `Has he gratitude to that servant?' In a slightly transferred sense *charis* designates the words or emotion in which gratitude is expressed, and so becomes "thanks." Concretely, *charis* may mean the act by which graciousness is expressed, as in 1 Cor. 16:3, where the King James Version translates by "liberality" and the Revised Version (British and American) by "bounty." The writers of the New Testament inherited the important key concept of "grace" from the Old Testament. This concept anchors the New Testament message in salvation history. "The many facets of the concept of "grace" are rendered by the word "*charis*" in the New Testament. "*Charis*" has even more meanings than "hesed." Depending upon the context it can be translated by "favor", "good will", "lovingkindness", "unmerited favor", "goodness", "mercy", "grace", or "gift." "*Charis*" occurs 155 times in the New Testament, mainly in Paul's letters. New Testament "grace" refers in particular to the unmerited gift of redemption through Jesus Christ. God, the Father is the source of this saving grace which is manifested in the sacrificial death of his Son. Christ the Savior gives the gift of salvation. The richness of God's grace manifests itself in his lovingkindness shown to people, in the forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7), the gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23), and in spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 1:7)."

[19] C. L. Mitton, "Grace" In George Arthur Buttrick, *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), 468.

[20] Revell, *The Revell Bible Dictionary*, 450.

habitually any especial term to denote grace in any of its senses. But the ideas are unambiguously present. That the pardon of sins is a free act on God's part may be described as an essential part of Christ's teaching, and the lesson is taught in all manner of ways. This concept of grace is present in His parables, his teachings, his healing acts, and his ministry in general. The New Testament expression of the concept of grace reveals that it is fully disclosed by Christ, and it also finds complete expression in him (Eph. 2:4-9). Christ is viewed as the chosen means by which God shows his favor to sinful man. Thus, the Christian who exercises faith in Christ has free access to God's grace (Romans 5:1-2).[21] This explains why many of the expressions of grace relate to Christ. This also makes the concept of divine grace in the Old Testament a concept worth studying since Christ is not expressly mentioned in it.

Grace and Its Usage in the New Testament Context

There is a rampant usage and exhibition of grace in the New Testament. Jesus is presented in the New Testament as the bearer of God's grace (Luke 2:40; John 1:14; 1:17; Acts 15:11; Romans 1:5; 3:24; 1 Corinthians 1:4). There is also the constant use of the expression "the grace of Jesus Christ" making Jesus the possessor of grace (Acts 15:11; Romans 16:20, 24; 1 Corinthians 16:23; 2nd Corinthians 8:9; 13:14; Galatians 6;18; Philippians 4:23; 1 Thessalonians 5:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:18; 2 Peter 3:18; Revelation 22:21). Thus, he is presented both as the bearer and possessor of grace. The epistles of Paul and several other passages in the New Testament have a lot to say about grace. In the epistles of Paul, grace appears as the opening greeting and the last in his farewell. Generally, he views grace as a blessing of God that comes through Christ.[22] In

[21] Revell, 451. The researcher notes the expression of Miller which state that "It is to be taken in two different ways: the grace of Christ means not only his own personal attitude toward needy and sinful men; it means also that Christ is Himself the sacrificial expression of grace. This suggests that it is not earned by human labour.

[22] James Hastings, *Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible*, 313.

Paul's theology, grace supplies "the one and sufficient means of deliverance from sin, holding objectively the place which faith holds subjectively in man's salvation." In most of the New Testament references, grace is understood as an element of divinity. Hence one will often read phrases like "grace of God" (Luke 2:40; Acts 11:23; 13:43; 14:26; Romans 5:15; 1 Cor. 1:4; 3:10; 15:10; Gal. 2:21; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:6; Titus 2:11; Heb. 2:9; 1 Pet. 4:10; 5:12; Jude 1:4) and other statements that link grace with God.

Grace in Pauline Letters

It becomes clear merely from a count of the occurrences of *Charis* in the different books of the New Testament how predominantly it is a Pauline word. Colin Brown, in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* revealed that grace is not used at all in Matthew, Mark, 1 John, 3 John, and Jude. In 2 John it occurs once only, and in James, 2 Peter, and Revelation twice each; 3 times in the fourth Gospels (all in the Prologue), 6 in Luke, 8 in Hebrews, 10 in 1 Peter, and 17 in Acts.[23] In all these non-Pauline books the word appears only 51 times, and of these occurrences 27 are in Acts and 1 Peter, which on other grounds have been thought to have close links with Pauline teaching.

According to Buttrick et.al., in *The Interpreter Dictionary of the Bible,* there is a distinctive application of the word *Charis* within the New Testament, more predominantly in Pauline writings, but not exclusively so.[24] It is further noted that:

> One hundred and one instances of its usage occurred in the Pauline letters, twice as many as in all the rest of the New Testament together, and in a

[23] Colin Brown, Gen. Edt., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), 112.

[24] George A. Buttrick et.al., "Grace" *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia,* 464.

> much smaller compass. The 101 instances in the Pauline writings occur in 156 pages, and the 51 instances in the rest of the New Testament in 512 pages.[25]

Objectively analyzing the above, the numbers alone prove that *Charis* must be regarded as a characteristic word of Pauline writing. But over and above the significance of the numbers, the word comes to bear a special meaning in the letters of Paul.

It is made the vehicle of an important element in Paul's understanding and proclamation of the gospel. Here, the researcher considers *Charis* in the following regards:

1. "The Grace of God,
2. The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
3. Grace as it relates to human need,
4. The quality of Grace,
5. "Greetings" and "thanks" still within the Pauline usage.

The Grace of God*:* Pauline phrase about grace which is most familiar to us is that which occurs in the commonly used benediction, derived from 2 Cor. 13:14 "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ." Almost every letter of Paul opens with the greetings: "Grace and peace from God," and grace is frequently spoken of as a gift bestowed by God, both upon Paul himself (1 Cor. 15:10; Eph. 3:7) and upon others (2Cor. 6:1; 8:1; 9:14). According to Wetter in his book "*Charis" in the New Testament,* it is true that the means by which the grace of God is mediated to men is pre-eminently Jesus Christ – his incarnation, death, and resurrection.[26] What God has done and still does for men in Jesus Christ, his Son, is God's outstanding act of grace. The grace of Jesus Christ, therefore, is not to be thought of as other than the grace of God, but rather as an expression of it. Indeed, Paul speaks in one continuous phrase of the "grace of our God

[25] George A. Buttrick et.al., "Grace" *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia,* 465.

[26] G. P. Wetter, *Charis in the New Testament* (London: SMC, 1999), 254.

and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:12; Rom. 5:15). It must be noted that God is the source from which grace comes to man. Jesus Christ is the God-ordained means by which this grace most effectively reaches man in his need.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*:* for the believer, therefore, the grace of God is actualized and made effective for human need in Jesus Christ. Paul speaks of the "grace of God and the free gift in the grace Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:15). The context where the "grace of Christ" most frequently occurs is the closing benediction of the letters, once in the familiar threefold benediction of 2Cor. 13:14 but usually as a complete blessing in itself (Rom. 16:20; I Cor. 16:23). The context, however which gives the surest clue to its meaning for Paul in II Cor. 8:9, where it is used to interpret the significance of incarnation: *"you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.*" The grace of Christ is seen in his obedient fulfilment of his Father's gracious purpose, first by becoming man at all; by the humble courtesy of his lowly birth; by the compassion and dauntless courage of his life and ministry; by the steadfast faithfulness which led him to the Cross; and by the mighty power of his resurrection and ascension – and all accomplished "for our sake."

Grace as it Relates to human need: according to Hawthorne *et.al.* this is the grace related to salvation which is the basic need of man.[27] Pauline message of grace in this regard is summed up in Ephesians 2:5 *"by grace you have been saved*." Grace is offered by God unto man to achieve good things which he cannot achieve for himself. It is quite the reverse of a reward for good conduct; it is rather a means of rescuing him from his own deep failure and from his helplessness to overcome it. In Paul's teaching it is particularly related to justification – i.e., God's acceptance of man as "righteous" and free from guilt. By

[27] Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters,* 372-373.

the grace of God sinful man may be forgiven, and, in spite of his obvious and, indeed, acknowledge wrongdoing, treated by God as if he were innocent; this relates to justification. In Judaism it was normally believed that a man gained acceptance with God (i.e., was justified) by sustained obedience to his commands. Paul, however, had proved the futility of this. Man could not by his own endeavors fulfil the whole, perfect will of God, especially when that will was applied to inward desire and motive as well as to outward act. Moreover, even if present obedience were possible, how could one atone for the sins of the past? For Paul the Jew, the guilt of past sin had become an unendurable, and yet an irremovable burden. Part of the utter wonder of what Christ did for man was that when he (man) yielded himself to Christ in trust and willingness to be commanded, this deep misery of guilt, and aching hopelessness of moral failure, was banished. Its removal was not due to anything that he or any other man had done or could do. It was all God's doing through Christ. One would ask; why had God so acted? Only because it must be his nature so to act. He was incredibly generous and compassionate, far beyond what man could have ever dreamed possible. This is what Paul tries to express when he speaks of the **"grace of God in Christ**." *We are "justified by His (God's) grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ "Jesus"* (Rom. 3:24). By inference, all that God had done for man in Christ was, according to Paul, brought to a sharp focus in Christ was, for the cross. The grace of God is more than ever evident there. So Paul is able to speak of our being justified "by his blood" (Rom. 5:9), as well as by his grace. The grace in Christ not only brings salvation to sinful man, but also assigns to those who are saved special tasks in the service of God. It was by the grace of God that Paul was appointed an apostle; the grace of God that Paul was appointed an apostle and commissioned to carry the gospel to the Gentles. There was nothing in him, he knew, which made him suitable for it or deserve it. It was a commission of which he felt utterly unworthy. But the spiritual and moral equipment which he needed for the fulfilment of the task was supplied to him as the

gift of God's grace. God had chosen him, commanded and equipped him. "His grace was bestowed upon me," writes the apostle (I Cor. 15:9-10, Rom. 1:5). My grace is sufficient for you" is the promise he received from the Lord (II Cor. 12:9)

The Quality of Grace*:* grace is, first, a free gift. It is never man's due, nor is it conferred as a reward but more usually in this connection the stronger word "*δωρεα"- dorea* ("free gift") is used (Rom. 5:15; II Cor. 9:15; Eph. 3:7; 4:7). The phrase "the grace which was *given* to me" recurs constantly which means grace is abundant. In connection with grace, Buttrick in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology,* posits that there often occur words which emphasize the unlimited extent of the gift.[28] It "abounds" (Rom. 5:15; II Cor. 4:15). It exceeds expectation (Eph. 2:7). This overflowing abundance is suggested also in the phrase "the riches of his grace (Eph. 1:7; 2:7). Grace is frequently associated with faith, that response in man which accepts the offer of God's grace (Eph. 2:8). Theologians differ about the extent to which faith is a response of the will, for which the man concerned may be held responsible, and how far even faith itself was the gift of the grace of God, as Philippians 1:29 suggests. Something of a paradox marks Christian experience at this point. The believer is utterly sure that "it is all God's doing," but he also knows that at some point he has had to say "yes" when he might have said "no." Paul's writings confirm this paradox of belief. There is much in his letters to emphasize how from beginning to end the Christian life is the work of God's grace. There are, however, significant warnings, which make it clear that he knows that there is that in man which can accept, and which can refuse and withstand God's proffered grace.

[28] George A. Buttrick et.al., "Grace" *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia,* 465.

"Greetings" and "thanks": in addition, Paul uses *charis* as the normal greeting with which he begins his letters ("grace and peace unto you"), and "grace be with you", is his farewell greeting. Paul, indeed, may have been the originator of this use of *charis* as a Christian greeting. Certainly, he used it regularly. In origin it was an adaptation for Christian purposes of the ordinary greeting of secular letters, familiar to us from the papyri: *charis* or *chariete* ("rejoice").[29] The similarity of the verbal form *chariot* to the noun *charis* made the change easy and understandable. Superficially it is a slight change; in significance it is an enormous one.

Types of Grace

Philip Scarf in his work, *Examining Kinds of Grace,* has a major enumeration which is very cardinal for review in this work. To him, there are different notable types of grace which are scripturally based. They are here discussed:[30]

Common Grace: God loves everyone. So, there is a common grace that He gives all people whether they acknowledge Him or not. Matthew 5:45 tells us, "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

Saving Grace: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith–and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God." (Eph. 2:8) By His saving grace, God has paid the ransom for everyone who will receive His gift of salvation. This alone is overwhelming as it shows that no one has the qualification to earn salvation save that it is bestowed on man by God.

Sanctifying Grace: There is power in God's grace and immediately after we are saved, it goes to work to purify or

[29] George A. Buttrick et.al., "Grace" *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia,* 466.

[30] Philip Scarf, *Examining Kinds of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 45-48.

sanctify us. You play a part in your purification through obedience, but ultimately you have to count on His sanctifying grace and know that "he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion" (Philippians 1:6).

Provisional Grace: Through His provisional grace, God provides for all our needs. As James 1:17 says, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights." Since creation, this grace has been at work and it can only be the act of God in action.

Miraculous Grace: Looking at what was happening in the early church, "Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people" (Acts 6:8), one would see that through His grace, God did the miraculous then and till date God does it every day. God is not under any obligation to do this yet, He does it because He is full of grace.

Serving Grace: Every believer is freely given spiritual gifts to serve others and bolster their faith. 1 Peter 4:10 tells us, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." As Christians, each one receives serving grace.

Sustaining Grace: Finally, in those times of trial and suffering, Jesus said to Paul in a verse of the periscope for this work, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need"; it is the grace of God that sustains humanity.

Contextualization / Conclusion

Apostle Paul among several other New Testament characters was a testament of God's grace and this is evident in his life from conversion. This paper submits that:

1. God's choice of a man is not subject to any human interference; this is evident in the lives of many Bible characters
2. God's grace saves, cleanses and commissions – Ananias "reminded" God who Paul was but God told him, I have chosen him (Acts. 9:12-15). This is an attestation that when grace speaks, human protocols are suspended
3. God's grace does not make anyone immune to challenges of life – this is seen in the experience of Paul as he depended on grace to cope with the "thorn" in his flesh (2 Cor. 12:7-9)
4. Certain privileges in life are not dependent on human efforts but effrontery of grace
5. God's grace should not be seen as a license to indulge in sin because the same grace that saves, teaches us to say NO to ungodliness.
6. "Grace" and "hyper grace" preachers should learn nuances of interpretation before application and therefore, this work recommends biblical studies for every preacher with keen attention to major biblical languages (Hebrew and Greek) and rules of biblical interpretation.

The researcher therefore concludes that the practical manifestation of the grace of God is what everyone must keep coveting as it distinguishes anyone who enjoys it.

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