

# The Message of 1 Peter

by G. Campbell Morgan

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*The central teaching of 1 Peter is the sufficiency of once, which is the idea that God's grace is sufficient for all our needs.*

**Topics:** "Christian Conduct", "Sufficiency of Grace"

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## Description

G. Campbell Morgan emphasizes the central teaching of 1 Peter, which is the sufficiency of God's grace in the lives of believers. He explains that grace is the source of confidence, conduct, character, and courage, urging Christians to stand firm in this grace, especially during trials and suffering. Morgan highlights that the grace of God is not only a theological concept but a practical resource for daily living, enabling believers to endure hardships and reflect Christ's character. He concludes with a call to recognize the preciousness of Christ and the communal identity of the church as a royal priesthood, showcasing God's excellencies. The message is clear: grace is essential for a thriving Christian life.

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## Transcript

### A. THE PERMANENT VALUES

#### I. The Central Teaching. The Sufficiency of Once

##### i. The Fountain and the River. 1, 2.

Grace, interpreted by i. 1.

Multiplied, interpreted by the Letter.

##### ii. The Secret of Confidence.

Foretold by Prophets. i. 10.

Supplied by the Advents. i. 13.

##### iii. The Secret of Conduct.

Servants. ii. ,19. 20.

Enduring wrong.

Enduring patiently.

Husbands and Wives. iii. 7.

Joint Heirs.

iv. The Secret of Character.

The Resource for Communion. iv. 10.

The Crown of Humility. v. 5.

v. The Secret of Courage. The Guarantee of God. v. 10.

vi.. Emmanuel's Land. This is the true Grace of Glory. V. 12.

II. The Abiding Appeal. "Stand ye fast therein"

i. The inclusive Thought.

In the Country watered by the River. Cf. i. 2. v. 12.

ii. The Application.

When Faith is tried.

When Circumstances are difficult.

When Suffering for Conscience, Sake.

When assaulted by the Adversary.

## B. THE LIVING MESSAGE

### I. To the Individual

"For you ... is the Preciousness." ii 7.

### II. To the Church

"Ye are . . .the Excellencies of Him." ii. 9

The final paragraph of the first letter of Peter is one of salutation, but in the midst of it occurs this statement: "I have written unto you, briefly, exhorting, and testifying, that this is the true grace of God; stand ye fast therein." This closing affirmation of the writer, inserted parenthetically, startles, demands attention, and compels a consideration of the message in the light of what it says.

In these words the apostle first described his method: "I have written unto you, briefly, exhorting and testifying." The word translated "exhorting" suggests all the qualities of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, coming from the same root and having the same values as the word Paraclete. In the word translated "testifying," we find the same values as in the word of Jesus describing the work of His disciples, witnessing; and the root from which the word comes is the same as that from which our word martyr is derived. The methods of the apostle then were those of exhortation, that is such teaching as was for

instruction and encouragement; and testimony, that is, witness out of personal experience.

Then he declared his theme, "That this is the true grace of God." That is to say, the real subject of all his exhortation and testimony was the grace of God.

Finally, he made his last appeal in the words "Stand ye fast therein" ; that is in the grace of God, which had been the theme of his exhortation and testimony.

The central teaching of the letter then is that of the sufficiency of grace; while its abiding appeal is that we stand fast therein.

Now it must be admitted that this is a startling statement, for at first it does not seem that the grace of God has been the definite, specific theme of the letter. Let us therefore first read a selection of passages;

"According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ; Grace to you and peace be multiplied" (i. 2).

"Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you" (i. 10)

"Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (i. 13).

Thus in the first chapter this great word grace occurs three times.

"For this is acceptable, if for conscience towards God a man endureth griefs, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye sin, and are buffeted for it, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God " (ii. 19, 20).

In these verses we must substitute "grace" for "acceptable" ; and thus we find it twice in the second chapter,

"Ye husbands, in like manner, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honour unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel, as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life " (iii. 7).

"According as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (iv. 10).

Thus we find the word once both in chapter three and chapter four.

"Likewise, ye younger, be subject unto the elder. Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another: for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." (v. 5).

"And the God of all grace, Who called you unto His eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall Himself perfect, stablish, strengthen you " (v. 10).

"This is the true grace of God: stand ye fast therein " (v. 12).

Thus we find it three times in chapter five.

That very simple exercise at least reveals the fact that the word is found in every chapter of the letter.

In considering the content of this letter, we found that the thought is ever that of the establishment of Christian people, and the word grace is in every division. The first great statement of the letter is the expression of desire, "Grace to you and peace be multiplied" ; the final declaration of the apostle is, "I have written unto you briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God : stand ye fast therein " and in every division the word appears not by some studied arrangement, but incidentally, naturally; it is the central word of the argument, and the appeal finds in it its value and force.

It is also remarkable that in every case the word grace occurs, not in the earlier part of the division dealing with doctrine, but in the application.

There is first the introduction, in which the writer introduced himself as the apostle, and described his readers as elect ; but it was when he came to the explanation of the word elect, and breathed the desire of his heart that these people might come to practical experience of what it is to be elect, that he said " Grace to you and peace be multiplied."

The second occurrence is in the latter part of the first division; not in that section describing the life of faith, the statement of doctrine; but in that section in which doctrine is related to duty.

So also in the second division, the word is found; not in the first part dealing with the doctrine of holiness, but in the section dealing with the practice of holiness.

In the third division, the word occurs, not in the part dealing with the theory of victory, but in that showing the process of victory.

So also in the last case ; not when the apostle was describing the life of conflict or the fellowship of conflict, but when he wanted men to understand the secret of strength for that conflict did he use the word.

All that may seem technical. It does, however, help us to realize that throughout the letter the fact of the grace of God was present to the mind of the writer; and it serves to explain his concluding word, "This is the true grace of God."

As we saw in studying the content, the main purpose of the letter is that of the establishment of such as were passing through suffering and difficulty and testing. The writer established his brethren by showing that all that was needed for strength was provided in the grace of God. Indeed, I should be inclined to say that, if we want a perfectly accurate sub-title for the message of this letter, we may quote from Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee." That, as I understand it, is the living message of this letter.

In the essential message then the central teaching is that of the sufficiency of grace. That we may divide into six parts suggested by the passages to which we have referred.

First, The Fountain and the River. 1:2

Secondly, The Secret of Confidence. 1:10, 13

Thirdly, The Secret of Conduct. 2:19, 20 ; 3:7

Fourthly, The Secret of Character. 4:10; 5:5

Fifthly, The Secret of Courage. 5:10

Sixthly, Emmanuel's Land. 5:12

The waters of the river, to quote the figurative language of Ezekiel, come by the way of the altar; that is the river of the living grace, the river of which Ezekiel declared, everything lives whithersoever it comes.

"Grace is flowing like a river,

Millions there have been supplied,

Still it flows as full as ever

From the Saviour's wounded side."

Go farther back than that, and we find that the river proceeds from the very heart of God. "Grace unto you and

peace be multiplied." "This is the true grace of God."

The central teaching of this letter is that of the sufficiency of grace. It opens not by a doctrinal statement or by argument; but with a great expression of the apostolic desire for those to whom he wrote, " Grace unto you and peace be multiplied."

Then it proceeds to show how forevermore grace is the secret of maintained confidence, the secret of triumphant conduct, the secret of holy character, the secret of victorious courage. It is grace the whole way through, until at last the apostle wrote, "I have written unto you, briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God. All that experience, the true Christian experience of triumph, is the experience of the Christian in Emmanuel's land. Do not forget that this is Emmanuel's land. Do not postpone Emmanuel's land to heaven; we are already in Emmanuel's land by grace;

"I've reached the land of corn and wine,

And all its riches freely mine;

Here shines undimm'd one blissful day,

For all my night has passed away."

Only the man who lives in the land fertilized by the rivers of grace can sing that hymn, and understand its meaning.

In the opening passage the word "grace" must be interpreted by that which immediately precedes it. "To the elect . . . according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." In those words we see the great fundamental verities of our faith homed in the being of that one triune God who is Himself Father, Son, and Spirit. We must interpret "grace" by these phrases, and by these doctrines of the faith. " Grace unto you and peace be multiplied."

Recognizing the source whence this river springs, we see how it is the secret of confidence. Take the whole passage in the first chapter and let me summarize it thus. There are two things to notice in the operation of grace. First; it was foretold by the prophets, " Concerning which salvation the prophets sought

and searched diligently." Secondly; it is supplied through the Advents of Jesus, "Set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." What were the prophets looking for? They were searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit testified when it testified the suffering of Christ and the glory which should follow; these are matters into which the very angels desire to look. The prophets foretold that grace. For the interpretation of that fact we need the four, and the twelve. Their theme was ever that of grace which was to come. It came by the suffering of Jesus, and assures the glories that follow His suffering, those glories which will have their full outshining at His revelation. The two Advents are in view. Thus Peter shows that our secret of confidence is the certainty of that grace to which all the prophets bore testimony, and which became operative in human history and life through the work of Christ.

It is also the secret of conduct. This is illustrated in the simplest relation. In all the apostolic writings, the most radiant, beautiful things of the Christian life are spoken of as being exhibited where the world would be least likely to look for them. The grace, that is the glories and beauties flowing out as the result of this life communicated by Christ, is most radiantly revealed in the most trying and difficult circumstances. Servants, if you endure wrong patiently, this is grace. Conduct can have its most beautiful manifestation of the power of this grace in circumstances the most trying and most difficult. Conduct can be manifested most perfectly and beautifully, as Paul suggests, by that most sacred union between husband and wife, the most perfect revelation of the union between Jehovah and all trusting souls; for we are "joint-heirs of the grace of life" ; and in the power of that grace we are to meet all the difficulties of every-day life, that our prayers be not cut off, or hindered. Servants whose masters are ungodly and unjust have a great opportunity to reveal the grace of God. That is the point you miss if we read "I acceptable with God," when the word is the same, and we should read "This is grace with God." If to-day in some house of business, for Christ's sake men and women have suffered wrongfully, and patiently; God has there plucked the fairest flowers that have blossomed in London. This is grace with God. The commonplaces of home-life may be sanctified, glorified, and made to flame with the beauties of the grace of God. This is the true grace of God.

Yet again, grace is the secret of character.

Peter urged those to whom he wrote to use "hospitality one to another without murmuring, according as each hath received a gift ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." What a strange and wonderful merging of the commonplace and the sublime according to the measurements of men. Hospitality, and the ministry of the Word in the assembly of the saints! The grace of God is the secret of such character. Or again, " All of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another: for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." Grace is not only the source of hospitality and communion, it is the ground of humility. These are the things of high character. The Christian character is revealed in beauty in these commonplaces of life. What is at once the inspiration of character that is filled with hospitality and with love; and the ultimate crown of beauty upon that character! The humility that girds itself for service. The Greek word there will bear translation by a phrase; Gird yourself as with a slave's apron of humility. Peter was surely thinking of the day when Jesus took a towel and girded Himself and washed the disciples' feet. He was remembering that the towel, the sign and badge of slavery, was made by Jesus the insignia of nobility in His Kingdom. The secret of such character is the grace of God.

Then we come to the question of conflict. "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. . . . The God of all grace, Who called you unto His eternal glory in Christ,

after that ye have suffered a little while, shall Himself perfect, stablish, strengthen you." Grace in the conflict is the guarantee of the glory which will be perfect, and of final victory over the forces of evil that are against us.

The inclusive thought of the abiding appeal is that we are to live in the country watered by the river of grace, and that the apostle expressed in the charge "Stand ye fast therein."

Go over the four thoughts again. When faith is tried, remember that in grace there is perfect resource which being appropriated will make us strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

When faith is trembling, let us come into new understanding of the sufficiency of this grace of God, and faith will triumph.

When circumstances are difficult-and do not let us be afraid of the simplest illustrations-in the place of service which is not appreciated when it ought to be, in all the constant difficulties of the home, if we would manifest that conduct which is in harmony with the will of God the resources are in grace. When we fail, it is because we neglect the grace of God.

When suffering for conscience' sake, being persecuted because we bear the Christian name, how shall we bear it, how shall we still manifest the Christian character? Only in the power of this grace.

When assaulted by the adversary who goeth about like a roaring lion seeking; how are we to overcome ? Only by remembering that our God is the God of all grace; and that through suffering and the assault of the adversary, He will perfect that which concerneth us.

The abiding appeal I can venture to make in no other way than by using the great words, "For you therefore which believe is the preciousness." Link that very carefully with the teaching which goes before it; living stones coming to the living Stone, and the living Stone, "elect, precious." Then follows the declaration, "For you therefore which believe is the preciousness." When we come to Him He communicates to us those virtues which constitute His preciousness, and we become precious also. Preciousness is the result of having the elemental forces compacted together into consistent strength. Peter was an elemental man, lacking preciousness until Christ gave him His own nature, His own life; then he became precious. What is a precious stone ? It is the embodiment of passion mastered by principle. That is the thought in the figurative language of one of the old prophets, "the stones of fire" ; the diamond is a stone of fire; it is precious, solidified, mastered by principle. This is the great truth about grace. Grace communicates to us the preciousness of Christ; all that which in Him was precious to the heart of God, that which made Him the one supreme and lonely glory in the diadem of Deity, is made over to us.

If we take the individual stones that thus receive His preciousness, and build them into the whole assembly, what then? Then the description follows, "Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." The preciousness of Christ being communicated to individuals, the whole company of such individuals will reveal the excellencies of God.

Grace is the secret of all establishment in the Christian life. It is the river that flowing through the desert makes it blossom as the rose until it becomes Emmanuel's land.

"All the rivers of Thy grace I claim.

Over every promise write my name.

.....

Grace there is my every debt to pay,

Blood to wash my every sin away,

Power to keep me spotless day by day."

"This is the true grace of God: stand ye fast therein."

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