

Why We Can Be a People of Action

by John McGregor

The sermon emphasizes that through God's grace, we can confidently engage in action and fulfill His purpose in our lives.

Duration: 39:29

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 9:8, 2 Corinthians 9:8, Jude 1:24

Topics: "Action"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the idea of being a people of action in the church. He emphasizes that the church is not a place of boredom, but rather a place where believers actively work with the living God. The preacher encourages the congregation to have confidence in their actions with God, citing 2 Corinthians 9:8 as a source of encouragement. He also addresses the overwhelming nature of modern life and how it can hinder our ability to be active for God. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the importance of being engaged and working with God in all aspects of life.

Transcript

I want to speak to you about four verses of Scripture this morning. The first one is found in 2 Corinthians chapter 9 and verse 8, and so if you have a Bible and you like to turn there, and we'll just read it and think upon it a little bit. We've been doing a series of messages entitled, A People of Action, thinking about the church and how we are to be a people who are actively engaged and working with the Lord, and it struck me, you know, we never really have identified or specified, why is it that we can be a people of action? Now you know, some people think the church is kind of a place of boredom, and so you come and sing a few songs and sit and listen to a message and it's kind of dull, but actually as a people of action, we are working together with the living God.

And I want this morning, just in these four verses, to encourage you to recognize that there's something that Scripture says that ought to give us every confidence as we are in action with God. Now there are all kinds of things we could say, you could think about missions for instance, and the fact that missionaries go to strange places where there's no reason why they should ever prosper, but they do, and I think in these four verses we'll see why they do. And you and I work in difficult circumstances sometimes, and we sometimes think, well how could I ever have an impact on a place like this? But you know you can, and these four verses I think will reinforce that.

And sometimes maybe you have a week like I had this week, it was glorious to be at that conference, but it was so busy. And you know, as I rolled into town on Friday night, late late, and got to my emails early early, I have four email accounts, and the first one had 70 emails in it. So we sort of went on from there.

You know there's a tendency when you look at those kind of things to say, this is overwhelming. How can anybody deal with all this stuff? Now all this is supposed to help us live life more streamlined, and have more time for ourselves, and recreation, and all that stuff to enjoy. But actually you know most of the gadgets just kind of keep us busier and busier, and how can we possibly be a people of action for God? So let's look here in 2 Corinthians chapter 9 and verse 8. Often people get nervous when the preacher says we're going to go to 2 Corinthians 9, because it talks a lot about money in this chapter.

But please let me set your mind at rest, we're not going to talk about money this morning. As you think about verse 8, let me just read it here in my version. It says, and God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you always having all sufficiency in all things may have an abundance for every good work.

You notice how many times it says all in that verse? Look there again, God is able to make all grace. Now I'm going to focus in these four verses on this little statement, God is able. Because there are times where in problems and difficulties in life, we think this can never be overcome.

And I want you just to zero in on these three words, God is able. There are times when people can't help, there are times when counseling can't help, there are times when money can't help, there are times when human strength and wisdom cannot help. But I want you just to see these three little words, and you'll find them over and over again.

I'm just taking four examples this God is able. And that's why we can be a people of action. Not because the strength is in us, or there's anything great that you or I could do, but God is absolutely and infinitely able.

And there's so much emphasis today on what we can do, and so on, that often we forget this, it's God who is able. And so as we focus in on it this morning, let's just take that little section even. People always say, as you get older, you can't memorize.

Well, I don't care how the mind might have slipped. Keith's having problems remembering names, we'll have to work on that with him. How old are you, brother? He's almost 17.

Okay, we'll take that under advisement. But anybody can memorize God is able. So, let's just look then at this verse and walk through it together.

God is able to make all grace abound toward you. So, here's a question for you this morning. This is the interactive part of the sermon.

How much is left when you have it all? Al says, nothing, nothing's left. You have it all, nothing is left. So, He is able to make all grace.

How much is left? Nothing. He is able to make all grace abound to you. All grace, everything of His grace.

And some people, you know, hear the word grace, and you might think, well, why do I need it anyway? I'm not sure I even want to be gracious, or I don't want to be let alone have grace. But the Bible says in

Ephesians 2, 8, and 9 that you have to be saved by grace. You can't be saved by works.

You can't be saved by tradition. You can't be saved because your parents were, or your grandparents were. You can only be saved by grace.

And it is through faith, says Ephesians 2, 8 and 9. It's not by works that we have done. It is by placing faith in Him who is the gracious God, who in His grace died on Calvary's cross to extend an invitation to you and to me. That's why we need grace.

Because without it, we are unsaved, and we'll spend eternity lost in a place called hell without hope and without Christ. We must have His grace. We must be saved by His grace.

So there is saving grace. He is able to make that kind of grace abound toward you. And if you're here this morning, and you need to be saved, or you wonder about where will I spend eternity, let me just read a couple of verses from Romans chapter 5 for us this morning.

And I'm thinking about Romans 5, 6 through 10. For when we were still without strength in due time, Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die.

Yet perhaps for a good man, someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more than having not been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. There is saving grace. And did you notice that we are delivered from wrath? Now, people often get on my case, and they say, John, you know, God is a God of love.

And that's true. In 1 John chapter 4 and verse 8, it says God is love. And His love is perfect.

But my friends, so often people forget that His wrath is also perfect. And those who are not in and under His love are under His wrath. Don't take my word for it.

Check out what Jesus said in John chapter 3. And after that great verse 16, He talks about how those who are without Him are lost and in darkness and have chosen to be. And so, you see, He's able to make saving grace abound to you. It's not because you earned it, not because there's anything in you or in me.

In fact, the Bible teaches us that we are sinners by birth and sinners by choice. But He extends saving grace. And that's why on the 13th of August 1969, when Jesus walked into a little bedroom in a little house in Ireland and came across a wretched man, angry and frustrated with a gun and a Bible on the bed in front of him, that's why when he cried out--I'm talking about myself--when I cried out to the Lord and said, God, if you're real, save me, it was grace.

I didn't deserve anything but to go to jail or to go to hell, but it was grace that saved me. He gives saving grace. And oh, you know, the problem with having an evangelist in the pulpit most Sundays is that you get to hear the gospel over and over again, and you can get bored with it and you can get tired with it.

But as long as I live and have breath, I'm going to preach it because there's a lost and dying world out there. We need to be a people of action because we know the touch of his saving grace. He's able to make all grace abound towards you so that you're always having all sufficiency.

Oh, all sufficiency. Wow. Do you ever feel that you don't have enough sufficiency? That's about like me looking at all those emails and stuff.

Man, where does the sufficiency for things in life come from? It comes from all of his grace. And you know, he gives us not just saving grace but living grace as well. And I could get downright excited thinking about living grace because there's things that I find very hard to face and to deal with.

How about you? And there are other issues that come into life from time to time, but would you look at what this verse says God does? Not only does he give us all grace and it abounds toward us, that means there's plenty of it, and you're always having all sufficiency. Oh, all sufficiency. So it's not about me and what I can do, it's about his grace working in my heart and in my life.

And this living grace, you know, is what helps us in all of those kind of difficult situations. Slip back again to Romans and I'm just going to read again a couple of verses from Romans chapter 6 and verses 11 and 12. Likewise, you also reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey its lusts. The life of grace is a life that is different. It's a life that knows his strength in living it.

And oh, even this past week I prayed with so many people at that conference who were able to say, I can't live the Christian life. And one guy stopped in the middle of his prayer and looked at me, because when he said that I said, hallelujah. And he looked at me and thought, are you going to interrupt me some more or what? I said, you know, that's the essence of all truth when you're at the place where you know you can't do it.

That brings you back to the place where you know that God will and must and can. And this sense of reckoning ourselves dead to sin, it doesn't control us anymore. We have victory over it because of the indwelling Holy Spirit and Christ's work in us by his grace.

I feel one of those things coming on, but because we have gas, I won't do it. But you know, you Glencure Knights know what I'm thinking about, right? Living grace. What are the things and the issues that come at you and that you have to face, and yet his grace is just right there.

And you know, we forget it all the time. I remember flying into Toronto years ago, my first day of work with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Get on a plane and go to Toronto.

And I got into Toronto's Terminal 2, or Canada at that time, and the place was bugged with people. And I had to rent a car from National Rental Car. And I walked over eventually to a policeman and said, excuse me officer, could you tell me where the National Rental Place is? And he looked at me sort of up and down and he smiled and just pointed over his shoulder.

Now over his shoulder was a sign about five feet deep and 40 feet long in bright green that said National. And I thought, oh, talk about stupidity. So I got a car, no map, just a car.

And I got out onto 427, headed toward who knows where. Oh God, I'm supposed to go to Walker's Land. Where's that? Living grace.

And the Spirit of God spoke to my heart and said, follow that car. You know, that car took me down onto the Queen Elizabeth Way and on it. And I saw the big sign, Walker's Land.

And I'm crying by now because I'm saying, Lord, not only do you know my need, but you know how to drive me there as well. And then in my panic, I'm saying, Lord, which way do I turn? Left or right? Where am I going to find a relax in here, Lord? And it's right across the street. You see, he gives us living grace, doesn't he? And he gives us enduring grace to keep on keeping on.

And there are times when we feel like giving up, if we're really honest. But he gives us enduring grace to persevere and to follow on after him so that we'll have all sufficiency in all things and have an abundance for every good work. So it's not just enough to keep you and me going, but it's enough that we can have an abundance for every good work.

Now, I used to get in a panic about, Lord, what is it that you want me to do? You ever been there? Lord, could you show me your will for me? But in Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 10, it says, we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which he foreordained that we should walk in them. You know, when I thought about that, why am I panicking about what is God's will when he's already set that up? All I need to be is close to him and listening to the voice of the Spirit. My friends, is it not exciting when you think about this thing called grace? Let's think about what that enduring grace means in relationships and problems and so on.

When there are difficulties in relationships and you don't feel like going on, where does the strength come from and the ability to work in that? It's his grace. When you feel so pressed that there's no room to move, it's his grace. Ruth Graham used to be asked all the time by the media, do you ever think about divorce? And she always said, no, never thought about divorce.

His belly was gone all the time, sometimes six months at a time. So she'd say, I never thought about divorce. Murder, I've thought about.

But what is it that causes endurance? It's grace. All grace abiding. Now, you know what happens in grace is that God softens our hearts.

Because when somebody hurts us or offends us or whatever, our hearts get hard toward that individual or those circumstances, and we find great difficulty in looking them in the eye, let alone working with them. But grace is that sufficiency that softens the heart and that allows me to come and say, I'm genuinely sorry. See, part of being Irish is that sometimes you only see half of the story, my half.

Grace is what keeps us in balance, causes us to endure, causes us to have that heart that is so soft before the Lord and sometimes so broken before the Lord. And we know His fullness. You know what happens in His fullness? There's never an agenda.

It's no longer about what I want, and it's no longer even about what I need. It's just about Him and His grace and His sufficiency. I have a friend, Ron and Sandy know him well too, Gerard Dutoy.

He's a South African preacher, a great man of prayer. And in a CRF conference one time, he was supposed to preach on Sunday morning, and he has a heavy accent. And the preacher said, I don't think we should use him on Sunday morning, you know.

Nobody's going to be able to understand him. And so another preacher, Joe Hamricus, good American brother, was asked to step in instead. Here's what grace does.

The natural thing would be to be offended and just to split. But grace in Gerard took him over to Joe on Sunday morning to say, oh my dear brother, I'm so blessed that you're going to preach this morning. Would it be all right if I prayed for you? Do you hear what the Spirit of God is saying to hearts? His grace and all sufficiency of it.

He also gives us dying grace. Most of us in this room wonder what it's going to be like to die, but there's all sufficiency in His grace. Corrie Ten Boom, when she was young, asked her dad, her father, what's it like to die? And he said to her, Corrie, when you came with me to Amsterdam, when we got on the train, when did you get your ticket? And she said, just before we got on the train.

And he said, well, dying is just like that. When the time comes, there will be sufficient grace for it, because that's part of just journeying on to eternally be with Jesus, the Savior. And this grace, in 2 Peter 3, 18, it says this, but grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

So I want to ask you this morning, in fact, I want to get downright Irish and nasty and get right in your face with this question. Are you growing in grace? We have no problem growing in knowledge. God knows we are overwhelmed with knowledge, but dear church, we need to be full of the grace of God.

How else will people see Jesus in you or in me? God is able to make all grace abound. Lord, smite me with more of it. Cause there to be an explosion of your grace in our hearts and in our lives.

I get the privilege of traveling, and I want to say this as graciously as I can, but I don't think I've ever seen a time when the church of the Lord Jesus and Christian organizations in general are so devoid of the grace of the living God, so determined with our own agendas and so on, so bound that we're going to win, and we cannot without his grace. Forgive me if I'm stepping on toes. It's not me.

It's him. There's a fellow one time who said to me as I was shaking hands with people at the door, he said, you made me feel so guilty, and I said, friend, if you're feeling guilty, it has nothing to do with me. It has everything to do with the spirit of God, and it's time to meet with him.

I said we'd look at four verses, and I've used already a great bulk of preaching time on one, so I better get my skates on here and get going. There is a second verse in Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 20, and this is my life first, so forgive me for slipping it in here. It's just that it says the same thing, that God is able.

It says, now to him, God, who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us, he is able to do what? More than I ask. So what are we asking? And more than I think by faith in prayer, and how does he accomplish it? By the spirit of God in us. He's able to do more in providing what we need.

He's able to do more in healing us. Now, you don't have to answer this question, but it struck me earlier as I was worshiping the Lord how guilty I am of often coming to church and not expecting the Lord to touch somebody and save them or heal them. I need that explosion of grace.

How about you? He's able to guide us. He's able to do more than we ask or think. Now, because it's my hobby horse verse, I'm not going to say anything much more about it except just to ask you, what are the things that you're looking to him for that are beyond the ordinary and in the supernatural rather than just

the natural? Slip over with me to number three in Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 18.

Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 18. Speaking about Jesus here, and it says, for in that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to aid those who are tempted. And there's those words again, God is able.

He is able because he himself has suffered He understands all of that that comes with suffering and with temptation. And because he has suffered, he's able to help us. In 1 Corinthians 10, 13, it says, no temptation has taken you, but such as is common to man.

And at the end of that verse, it says he's able to provide a way of escape. And he really is. I could give you testimony after testimony of how that is so.

Mark Greening was one of the preachers in the conference where I just came from, and we were talking about this very thing, how the Lord is able sometimes to intervene in things because he knows and he understands. Now Mark is one of these technological guys that is streets ahead of me. He can stand and have a conversation and text four people at the same time.

My thumbs don't work that way, neither does my brain. But Mark said to me, he said, you know how good our God is? He said this last week, a guy called me and he said, you just called me, your number came up on my cell phone. Mark said, no, I'm sorry, sir, you have it wrong.

I didn't call you. I'm very sorry, but I didn't do it. So he hung up on him and the guy called a second time, a few minutes later, and he said, look, man, he said, you called me again.

And Mark said, no, no, sir, I didn't. I don't know if it's some kind of glitch in the phone or what's going on with this, but I did not dial your number. I said, okay.

And about five minutes later, the guy called him a third time and he said to him, I don't know what's going on, but your number keeps coming up on my phone. So what is it that you want to talk to me about? Now, Mark is a preacher and after three times we might get it. And so he said to him, what were you doing when these calls came in? The man said, I was planning on getting onto my balcony and just jumping off.

Who put the phone number in? Mark said to him, I do want to talk to you. And he had the joy of leading that man to Jesus across the phone because he is tempted. And because he has suffered, he understands all the things that you and I face and he is able.

I love this little word. Now I'm sick this morning, but I feel an unusual enabling because you're praying for me and thank you. He is able.

He is able. Well, if we're going to do those soup and sandwiches, John better hasten along. Go to a book that's just one chapter, second last book in the Bible, the little book of Jude and verse 24.

Sometimes you hear me quote this in a benediction prayer. You're going to find it says the same thing now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy to God, our who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. He is able to keep you.

A lot of people say to me, I can't really come to Jesus because I couldn't keep it up. You don't have to. You just have to put your trust in him.

He will keep you. There have been so many times in my life when I couldn't keep myself and he is so able to do just that. Earlier this year, when I took my tumble and collapsed on the 20th of February, I was lying on the floor of our dining room thinking, is this it? This one little word came into my mind, faultless.

You see what it says? Now, you know, old John well enough to know he is far from faultless in so many ways. But look at what it says, God is able to do. You know, there are so many lies that the devil throws at you, dear church, and we believe so many of them, and it stops us from being a people of action.

God is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you faultless before his presence. Our part is just to walk with him in obedience, in softness, in tenderness, in listening and trusting. Notice one last thing before I wrap it up this morning.

How is the Lord Jesus going to do this? It's his joy. It's with exceeding joy that he's going to do that. And I bless his name, don't you? When we're in Christ Jesus, it's his ability that matters, not yours or mine.

Now, some of us in here this morning are facing impossibilities. Perhaps we're facing fractured relationships. Perhaps we're facing health issues.

Perhaps we're facing a lot of other things as well. And this morning, I just want to close with this little thought. God is able to make all grace abound toward you.

Yes, in the midst of that struggle, in the midst of that trial, in the midst of that hurt, he is able. So, let's look to him in prayer for a few moments. As we bow our heads and close our eyes, if we were honest, we'd have to confess this morning that unbelief lingers in our hearts and minds and very souls.

We don't know how to fix ourselves and we don't know how to fix relationships. And we're not sure that God can either. But the truth is, he is able.

And the truth is, it's not about the other person. It's about that grace of God in your heart and mine. It's about that grace that's all sufficient.

That grace that even in woundedness can turn to the one who has wounded you and say, I'm sorry. I love you. I need you.

It's that grace that so softens the heart, that encourages us to know that he's able to do exceeding abundant life above anything that I can ask, anything I can think, anything I can imagine. It's that grace because he has suffered and been tempted. It's that grace that allows us to go to him this morning.

And, oh, friend of mine, this morning, I want to encourage you to go to Jesus. Run to Jesus. He alone is the author and finisher of our faith.

He is full of grace and truth. And in all the overwhelming circumstances of life, he is sufficient. Just while we're in the attitude of prayer, perhaps there are needs in your heart this morning.

I want to close in prayer by praying for you. You have a need this morning. Just quietly for a second or two, slip up your hand.

I want to remember you in prayer. Thank you. God bless you.

Thank you. God bless you. Lord, you know the needs of every one of our hearts this morning.

You know the aches and the desires. You know the woundedness and the struggle. Father, we're just coming to the cross to set all that down because we can't carry it.

So, we're asking for your abundant grace to just explode in our hearts. Forgive us, Father, for our unbelief and grant us faith to walk with you, faith to lean on you, faith to trust you beyond every area that overwhelms us. Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on us.

Fall fresh on us. Melt us. Mold us.

Make us into the image of Jesus. For it is in Jesus' name that we ask it. Amen.

I'll ask Mark and the team to come back and lead us in a closing song and then we'll have our closing prayer. Amazing grace. Isn't it great to have Pastor Tom with us week by week? I'm going to ask him just to close in prayer.

Don't forget about the Plan to Protect seminar and also if you're a guest, just feel free to come and enjoy soup and sandwiches and God bless you.

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