

# Unfailing Grace

by Thomas Bradbury

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*The sermon emphasizes the unfailing grace of God, which provides His people with all spiritual blessings in Christ, and ensures their eternal glorification with Him.*

**Scripture:** Acts 9:4, Romans 8:32, 1 Corinthians 1:7, 1 Corinthians 12:3, 2 Corinthians 5:13, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 3:1, Philippians 1:21, 2 Timothy 1:9, James 1:5

**Topics:** "Gods Grace", "Christian Perseverance"

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## Description

Thomas Bradbury preaches about the remarkable life of the apostle Paul, emphasizing his thoroughness and unwavering commitment once he encountered the love of Christ. Paul's devotion to Jesus was fueled by a deep love for the Savior, leading him to endure trials and persecutions with unfeigned love. His life was a testament to the power of living for Christ, with love as the driving force behind his abundant labors and sufferings. Paul's writings to the Corinthians reflect his deep association with Jesus Christ, acknowledging Him as the source of all grace and blessings.

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## Transcript

"So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 1:7)

The apostle Paul was a remarkable man. In whatever part of his life we consider him, we find him thorough. He was a man with a mind of his own, and possessed a will, persevering and persistent. As a natural man he could learn to make tents. As a religious man and a Pharisee he persecuted the saints even to strange cities, and that with the ferocity of a fiend. He breathed "out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," (Acts 9:1) "and punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme." (Acts 26:11) But beyond the length of his tether he could not go. In the day of his Redeemer's power he was arrested in his persecuting pathway, and brought with godly sorrow, true repentance, and living faith to worship, adore and serve the Christ of God Whose name he had blasphemed, and to love the saints whom he had hated and despised.

From the moment our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ took possession of his heart and revealed Himself to him as his Saviour-God, Paul's course was clear his steps were decided his heart was fixed. The One Object of his spiritual affections must now be served without hesitation or wavering. Trials the most terrible with persecutions the most persistent faced him at every turn, yet he halted not. He could say, "The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself; so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry,

which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts 20:23,24) When compelled to contrast himself with the "false apostles and deceitful workers" at Corinth, he said, "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft." (2 Cor. 11:23) Then read through the long catalogue of sufferings he endured, recorded in the same chapter, in which you will see the overcoming power of unfeigned love to the Master which reigned in the experience of his heart.

It is most blessed to enjoy oneness with him in this ruling principle of his life. It was love, not to a code of rules not to a system of divinity not to a form of doctrine; but to a living and loving Person. This was the secret of Paul's unexampled toil for Christ. The first revelation he had of Christ gave him a view of Christ suffering for, and in, the members of His mystical body, and of His unwearied sympathy with them. This he would keenly feel, as the first message of redeeming love fell upon his opened ear: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?...I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." (Acts 9:4,5) Here he learned something of the Gospel of sympathy which he ever afterward preached so fully and faithfully. Up to the gates of Damascus he was Saul the persecutor. From thence to the gates of glory he was Paul the persecuted. The remembrance of the past was ever a present incentive to "labours more abundant" for One he loved so well. His Love was his Life. We learn this from the confessions of his heart: "For me to live is Christ." (Phil. 1:21) We see it also in this sweet utterance of his heart: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." (Gal. 2:20) Paul knew that he was spiritually one with Christ, by the love of Christ in his heart's experience eating up his old pharisaic existence, and constraining him to live, not to himself but to Him Who died for him and rose again.

In no portion of Paul's writings do we see more of his devotedness to Jesus than in the opening of his first epistle to his loved ones in the Lord at Corinth. He writes not a line without the mention of His Name, or, an allusion to His Person, gifts and graces. In the first ten verses he mentions Him by name ten times, with various intimations of His care and attention. He appears to be lost to everything but Jesus, Who has full possession of his heart, understanding, memory and will. Indeed, men of the world might well think him to be off his head a fool for Christ's sake beside himself. He evidently felt this when he said, "For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause." (2 Cor. 5:13) Well, if it be madness for Infinite Wisdom to rule in my judgment, and to reign in my affections, let me be increasingly mad. I look upon it as the purest wisdom to know and acknowledge that I am governed by Jesus guided by Jesus directed by Jesus and to delight in Him as my Companion, Counsellor and Confidence. In this knowledge and enjoyment of Him I love to sing,

"Here, love may meet a kindred heart,

But not a heart like Thine;

Lord, from Thy love I cannot part,

Nor canst Thou part with mine."

But here we will seek to know the devoted Paul in his association with the Name and Person of Jesus. Look at the first verse; "Paul, called to be an apostle of JESUS CHRIST." He owned his commission from Christ alone. He speaks not of being sent by the Church of Jerusalem, or the Church of Rome, or the Church of Corinth; but by the Great Head of the living Church of the living God. Whatever state or condition he was in, he acknowledged his association with his Lord and Master.

Did Nero hold him in bonds at Rome? Paul soars in intelligent apprehension to regions far remote from Nero, and styles himself, "I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ." (Eph. 3:1) Paul and his Jailor had blessed times together in his prison-house. Prisons lose their gloom with the bright beams of His reconciling countenance. In the second verse we see him writing to the Church of God, "to them that are sanctified in CHRIST JESUS." All true sanctification is in Him, indeed He is made sanctification to all who were set apart in Him to salvation, grace and glory, from all eternity.

Christ is all the sanctification a sensible sinner needs in this world or in the world to come. These sanctified ones are called saints, "with all that in every place call upon the name of JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD." This is true liberality. It includes all who pray to, and invoke the name of Jesus, and excludes those who deny Him the right to supreme and universal adoration. Jesus and my soul are on such intimate terms, and He is pleased so to endear Himself to me, that when He speaks to me by His Word and Spirit, I am constrained to speak to Him in return, confessing my sins, unfolding my necessities, and asking Him for those mercies which He alone can give.

It is a spiritual luxury to hold sweet converse with Him. Paul knew it. So do I. Look at the third verse. Here we see the grace and peace of God the Father, but it is "from THE LORD JESUS CHRIST." Mark well this order grace first, and then peace. Not grace without peace. There is no true peace without grace. There is neither the one nor the other apart from Jesus Christ. This was Paul's settled conviction and daily delight, as we gather from the fourth verse, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by JESUS CHRIST."

The apostle thanks God for His grace bestowed upon His church, and here styles Him "my God." This is none other than the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the God of all grace Who makes all grace abound by Jesus Christ to His own. Notice how tenderly and carefully Paul guards against any mingling of God's grace with man's will or works. It is grace, pure grace. Grace given, and given by Jesus Christ. It would not be grace from any other hands save His. It is not grace earned, merited, bought, or acquired.

It is given by Jesus Christ, and secures against every emergency that may exercise the living children of God. In Him there is forgiving grace for the sensibly guilty, justifying grace for the feelingly condemned all sorts of grace for all sorts of saved sinners. Paul was never weary of telling out the riches of grace and of glory he enjoyed in Jesus Christ. This he sets forth in the fifth verse, "That in everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge."

Whatever may be the lot of God's children down here they can never be poor. The unsearchable riches of Christ, and God's riches in grace and glory, are all theirs by Christ. Loss is gain to them, and really the increase of the true riches in their experience, "In all utterance." The cry of the tiniest babe in grace, as well as the eloquent and elegant speech of the spiritual orator, form part of the riches of Zion, while all spiritual knowledge, however weak, gives evidence of an inalienable interest in unfailing treasures. The sixth verse teaches that the testimony of CHRIST for His people in His gospel down here, and in His intercession up yonder, was confirmed in the saints by the sealing of His Spirit.

Then come the words of the text, which we shall dwell upon at length, followed by the precious fact that our Lord Jesus Christ will confirm His own unto the end of all their trials and temptations, and preserve them blameless in Himself unto the day of His glory, and to the ages of eternity. You will thus see how Paul never wearies in mentioning and speaking well of the Name of Jesus. To Him, Jesus was Everything,

and in everything. In Jesus he knew God, and apart from Jesus he knew nothing of Him. See how He admires the faithfulness of his God in the call and blessedness of His people in that ninth verse "God is faithful, by Whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our LORD." In the faithfulness of God lies the security of His people, and the certainty of their enjoyment of all that He has made over to them in Christ Jesus. Being called by His grace and power they have fellowship with Jesus in His sufferings and in His sovereignty. They are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. They suffer with Him here. They shall reign with Him there. They must stand or fall together. Fall He cannot, neither can they. How blessed it is to know that "our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3) In this fellowship we know ourselves to be "members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones," (Eph. 5:30) and only as such are we preserved from those dissensions and divisions which rend the visible church. This Paul knew and acknowledged in the tenth verse. There is no true harmony apart from Jesus Christ.

"One in Jesus, oh! how sweet,

Saviour, in Thy love to meet!

In Thyself alone to be

Joined in blessed unity."

It is interesting to notice the variety exhibited in the apostle's manner of naming his loved Lord and loving Saviour. In the first verse the style is, JESUS CHRIST. JESUS, Paul's Saviour and only salvation. CHRIST, in whose anointing Paul was anointed and graciously taught and qualified for his apostleship. And all this by the will of God in the appointment and anointing of Jesus to the work of salvation. In the second verse He is set forth as CHRIST JESUS in Whom the people of God are sanctified. Christ comes first because in Him the church was appointed to salvation, grace and glory. The Father gave Him as a Head to the church, and gave the church as a body to Him the Head. In the same verse His name is, JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD, upon Whom all true worshippers in every place do call. How suitable. None but He Who is Lord could have such honour shown to Him. None but those who by the Holy Ghost can call Him Lord (1 Cor. 12:3) will thus honour Him. In each of these ten verses Paul places the crown upon the right Head the Head which alone can wear it. Read these verses again and again at your leisure, and in so great a privilege, may the Holy Ghost bless you with like love to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as that which exercised, energized and cheered the heart of Paul through all his toils to death to glory.

It is now high time we looked at the text. What a gracious fullness reveals itself to faith throughout the whole. The heart that knows and enjoys its secret treasures can honestly and joyfully say with John, "Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." (John 1:16) The grace of God in Christ Jesus is not simply up to the brim, but overflowing from the fount of Eternal Love. In Christ all kinds of grace are found whenever they are wanted. Helpful and all-sufficient grace are wanting everywhere but in Him. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." (Col. 1:19) The Father in the overflowings of His love in covenant, knew it was necessary that the Head should ever be communicating abundant grace to His members. Christ in covenant received grace, not as an individual from the Father, but as a Public Character. He received it, not for Himself, but for His people, according to the saying of Paul, "grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. 1:9) "He received gifts for men," (Ps. 68:18) and in the sight of Him in His resurrection and ascension glory, the apostle was compelled to say: "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith,

When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." (Eph. 4:7,8) The grace He gives, answers to the grace given to Him by the Father for all who are blessed with the receipt of it, and those who shall be so favoured to the end of time.

Let us look at the necessity for the bestowment of this grace and gracious gifts. Our first father Adam was blessed with a good estate and earthly affluence before he fell. But the dread moment arrived when Satan by his craft and subtilty succeeded in bringing man from his state of creature perfection and happiness to one of bankruptcy and beggary. "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. 5:12) The entrance of sin into the world left all men empty of all good, and full of all evil. Such we find ourselves to be, when the blessed Spirit convinces us of sin, and through the discovering operation of the law, brings us in guilty before God. Here we are without God, without Christ, without hope. (Eph. 2:12) In this state we should be left to perish were it not for the provisions of grace a loving Father has made for is in the Son of His love. And what a mercy it is that we can say with the apostle, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." (1 Cor. 2:12)

In the gospel of His grace, God is revealed to us in all His gracious liberality and beneficence, and is seen blessing His people with all spiritual blessings in Christ, and that according to His choice of them before the foundation of the world. His design in His choice and blessing of them was, that they should be holy and without blame before Him. Full provision of grace was thus made for the accomplishment of this desired end. Security from failure in the conveyance and communication of every gift is discovered in the wisdom and faithfulness of the Steward of the Father's house. The Father knows Him and He knows the Father. There is a perfect understanding existing between them both. It is our delight in knowing that our Covenant Sponsor holds Himself responsible for the safe delivery of every gift and grace entrusted to Him for every elect vessel of mercy. The Father's donation and the Son's dealing out of the same are the delight of the church.

"Richest stores of heavenly blessing

God hath giv'n in Christ His Son,

With the Holy Spirit's power,

Safe to lead His children on:

Abba, Father, makes all certain,

E'en by Word, and oath, and blood

Abba saith, They are My people,

And they say, The LORD our God."

Here we will notice a few of God's gifts to His people as so many tokens and pledges of His grace and love. His first, choicest, and unspeakable gift was His own dear Son. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) This is the Love of all loves and the Gift of all gifts. It is love inexpressible and inconceivable. It is a gift stupendous and unparalleled. It was the Gift of the Father's Son to all His elect brethren and sisters the Gift of the Head to the members of His mystical body the Gift of the Husband to His bride the

church. This Son given became the Child born. The Child born grew into all that the church can desire, or the Father can delight in. He is the Remover of all Zion's sin, and the Deliverer of Zion from all wrath and evil. In the enjoyment of, and eternal delight in, this Gift, not a soul, for whom He so willingly gave Himself, shall come behind. And then notice, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32) Having given Him for the salvation of His people, with Him He has also given everything to secure their enjoyment of that salvation, and to ensure their eternal glorification with Him.

Bless God, He does not descend to barter. Our God does not sell His blessings to the highest bidder, or to any bidder at all. He gives. Yes, and that without stint. Look at that precious word by James "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." (James 1:5) This apostle had no groveling views of his God. He knew how willing and delighted God is to give to the impotent, indigent, and importunate. God in Christ does not rebuke the frequent caller, neither can He upbraid the infirmities of those who know not what to pray for as they ought. His munificence is fully set forth here, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17) This has respect to the gracious manner of His giving, as well as to the goodness, perfection, and certainty of His gifts. There is no evil in the giving or the quality of His gifts. They are good in the highest degree spiritual blessings for a spiritual people absolutely and infallibly sure to those for whom they were designed all of God secured in Christ ours by the indwelling, witness, and seal of the Holy Ghost. Thus we see that the children of God can "come behind in no gift" entrusted to Christ for them, and ensured to them by His Faithful Spirit.

These gifts are innumerable, continuing from the commencement of grace in regeneration to its consummation in glory. The Holy Ghost is the Earnest and Pledge of all the rest. He is the Father's Covenant Gift to His enquiring and hungering children. How graciously Jesus states this fact to His short-sighted disciples, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." (Luke 11:13) The gift of the Holy Ghost is no transient matter. It is like all the rest of God's gifts abiding eternal according to the promise of the Master: "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever." (John 14:16) That is a delightful title suggested by the Redeemer's promise: "THE ABIDING COMFORTER." According to the purpose of the Father, revealed in the promise of the Son, and by His own power, the Holy Ghost will see to it that in the case of all to whom He is given they shall come behind in no gift.

Without this prime Gift of the Father and the Son, all other gifts are hidden from our view. By His gracious and sovereign energy, the gifts of God treasured in the Head are distributed to all the members of the one body. "All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." (1 Cor. 12:11) No one member excels in all the gracious gifts of God by Christ Jesus, but each according to the Spirit's special bestowment. Abraham excelled in faith. All the living family of God are blessed with him in this rich grace, yet not in the same measure. Though failure and infirmity characterize them, they cannot come behind in any gift entrusted to their Head for them. His faith He exercises in them, which is the fruit of His Spirit, (Gal. 5:22) and the gift of God. (Phil. 1:29) This faith overcomes the world, (1 John 5:4) yet Peter, who possessed it, was overcome by the world. Did Peter's faith then fail? No. His loving Saviour had said unto him, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." (Luke 22:32) There was no more failure in the faith of the apostle than there was in the intercession of his Master. The two stood together firm and

invincible, so that Peter lacked not the faith of God's own giving in the times of God's appointing, but could write in after days for the comfort of God's weaklings. "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Pet. 1:5)

Now we will notice another gift, of which faith is a gracious evidence. "The gift of God is eternal life." (Rom. 6:23) "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (1 John 5:11,12) Life is God's gracious gift and not the wages of righteousness. It is not ours by our own works, or fancied worthiness, but God's free gift, all of grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. It abides secure in the purpose of God, for, as many as were ordained to eternal life believe and thus enjoy it. (Acts 13:48) It remains sure in the promise of God, for, "This is the promise that He hath promised us, even, eternal life." (1 John 2:25) It continues certain in the command of God, "for there "in Zion" the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." (Ps. 133:3) It is sure to all the seed-royal of grace in the Christ of God, Who could say to the Father, "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." (John 17:2) See how certain the utterances of the Shepherd are concerning His sheep. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Again, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish." (John 10:28) But there are times when this life, graciously experienced and highly prized, is at a very low ebb. The assaults of Satan, the sinful lusts of the flesh, and the cruel cares of the world, seem to crowd and crush the very life of God out of our experience. We faint we fail we are feelingly ready to die; but die we cannot. He is ready to save. Are we left half dead? The Good Samaritan comes where we are with His gracious restoratives. Are we sinking chin deep in the chilling waters of spiritual death? The arm of the Almighty Restorer is prompt for the rescue. Do our flesh and heart fail? Even then He proves Himself the Strength of our heart and our Portion for ever. "So that we come behind in no gift," not even in the life which seems almost gone...

"Without Thy sweet mercy I could not live here;

Sin soon would reduce me to utter despair;

But, thro' Thy free goodness, my spirits revive,

And He that first made me still keeps me alive."

There is yet another gift which must not escape our attention repentance. This is a wholesome grace, and is always associated with the faith of God's elect. It is that grace by which the redeemed and regenerate sinner's heart is turned right round from the service of Satan, sin and self, to the enjoyment of God Himself. It is always accompanied with godly sorrow, unto salvation, not damnation, and cannot be repented of. (2 Cor. 7:10) It grows and flourishes in Gethsemane's gloom, and in view of Calvary's cruelties. This precious grace is the gift of God conveyed to us through the pierced hands of our once suffering, but now exalted Lord and Saviour. "Him hath God exalted with His right hand a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5:31) Such is the hardness of our obdurate hearts, that whatever period may be granted, or whatever means may be given us to repent, repentance never will be ours except it be given us from the hands of Jesus. Indulged with a taste of the Paschal Lamb, the bitter herbs will not be wanting. Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is ever accompanied with repentance toward God, which is styled, "repentance unto life." (Acts 11:18) Blessed with this wholesome grace we shall never "come behind," or fail of the life and glory in store for Christ's loved ones. This is all included and ensured to us in that exceeding great and precious promise, "And I will give them

one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever." (Jer. 32:39) The beloved disciple knew it, prized it, and enjoyed it, when he wrote, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 5:20)

But there is one gift which has been the life and joy of my heart ever since Jesus Christ revealed Himself to me as the All in all the Sum Total of my salvation. You will find it in Rom. 5:17, "They which receive abundance of grace and of THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ." What a glorious state! What a privileged standing! Receiving abundance of grace resting in the gift of righteousness reigning in Christ our Life. Well might the apostle say, "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7) Taught by the same Spirit, and blessed with the same Jesus, in our affections we can say individually, "By the grace of God I am what I am." (1 Cor. 15:10) A full, free, overflowing fountain is ever giving. Empty vessels are ever receiving, and emptiness we often feel, while we rejoice in the receiving of a dear Redeemer's fullness. Yes, we rejoice in receiving Christ the Gift of God, and the Righteousness of God. He is ours in the glory of His Godhead in the purity of His Manhood in the perfection of His obedience in the preciousness of His blood in the prevalence of His intercession. He is made of God righteousness to us. (1 Cor. 1:30) "We are made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. 5:21) Here we find ourselves, and all by the continued action of a Giving God, coming behind in no gift which He in covenant put into the hands of our Surety for us. By His blood we are cleansed from all sin clean every whit. (1 John 1:7) In His righteousness we are justified from all things. (Acts 13:39) In His intercession we are saved to the uttermost. (Heb. 7:25) In His perfections we are accepted. (Eph. 1:6) In His Person we are complete. (Col. 2:10)

O, the bliss and blessedness of oneness with Jesus! Peter knew this when he breathed this sweet request for those who had obtained by gracious allotment like precious faith with him through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue." (2 Pet. 1:2,3) When we shall have done sinning, suffering, and sorrowing, His gift will be a crown of righteousness to all that love His appearing. (2 Tim. 4:8) We love His appearing now, That is the reason we are here, "waiting for the coming, or, revelation, of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"TO HIM BE GLORY AND DOMINION FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN."

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