

JESUS CONSTANTLY SUSTAINS

By Rev. Chris Meier

Recently, I experienced the joyous reality of what it means to depend on Father, God for everything. The Holy Spirit teaches us, and Jesus quickly becomes our sustainer, but quite frequently we can forget our total dependence on Father, Son and Holy Ghost. I was raised with this saying in my ears: “God helps those who help themselves.” It was always said in relation to some work my parents thought I could use encouragement in. Growing up like that, you can forget when you accept Christ as your Savior, He must be the one we depend on totally for everything. Coming to Him morning and night, all through the day in practicing the presence of God, He enables us to move in His grace.

Is Godly Grace Unmerited Favor, Divine Enablement or Empowerment?

The definition of grace is God’s unmerited favor. We deserve death and destruction, yet He gives us life, and life more abundantly. You can also see grace as God’s divine enablement, though it is impossible to separate God’s unmerited favor from a definition of grace. Recently, I heard someone term it as God’s empowerment. Let me share the difference between enablement and empowerment and why we must be careful when defining theologic terms with everyday language.

If you define empowerment properly, it can be a result of grace, but it is very different from enablement. What’s the difference between enablement and empowerment when we talk about grace? Let’s give an example. When you accepted Jesus, what happened to you? I can say from my experience and from my reading of the New Testament that immediately a great exchange took place. Immediately, you are removed from the curse of the law and are placed into the kingdom of heaven where grace produces faith and faith, hope and hope, love (1 Corinthians 13:12-13; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21). In that place, you are saved and you are healed and you are delivered. Now, we walk all that out because of grace, by faith in the One who sustains us.

Let’s look at Romans: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein (Romans 6:1-2)?” Here is the definition of empowerment: authority or power given by someone to do something. On its surface that seems okay. So what is **enablement**? Here is its definition: the **action** of giving someone the authority, power or means to do something. So the view for empowerment becomes you being able to do something. But **enablement** is God’s act or action of giving you authority and ability. You and I aren’t even able to lead ourselves to repentance. Salvation is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:1-9). It is the goodness (some translations, loving kindness) of God that leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). When we receive salvation, we are immediately brought to the reality of a supernatural

grace that performs a miracle. All of a sudden, you don't want to sin. You want nothing to do with sin. This is the enablement I'm talking about. We can live in that kind of grace. That kind of grace, or undeserved favor, makes it possible for you to receive the miracles God has for your life.

So I would define grace in theological terms this way: the undeserved, unmerited favor of God, which continuously keeps and sustains by His enablement to bring us through all of life's hurdles and into God's eternal presence. Ephesians 3:20: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." The power is His and it's in us, but it was the action of giving us the ability and authority above all we ask or think. What action is *this* action of conveying His miraculous working grace? **Christ's action** of sacrifice on the cross.

You can see this action or enablement in the two-sided Scriptures of Philippians 2:12-13: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." I've often asked folks when reviewing this Scripture, "Who is doing the work, you or God?" From a natural, human perspective it is both, we work and He works. It is a perfect definition of a theological antinomy. But in real terms, it is God doing the work as He enables us through His grace to literally walk out the salvation He has already obtained for us by Christ's death, burial and resurrection.

His Fulness is an Endless Supply of His Grace, Which Sustains

Stay with me as I take us through the Scriptures the Lord took me through to explain how Jesus sustains us by His grace. I believe we are all going to need to understand how to be sustained by Jesus in ways Americans are not so accustomed with. In other countries or rural areas where electricity, supermarket chains and hospitals are not so easily available, Christians the world over have had to know how to call on the Name of the Lord in ways many pastors no longer teach their congregations to do in America. This is a shame, and it wasn't always that way. I can remember the elders of the church leading us in prayer meeting weekly and our pastor teaching us the Scriptures, line upon line and precept upon precept. Prayer and receiving from God's endless supply was a prominent doctrine walked out by faith as we learned the ways of Christ through the actions and teaching of the elders.

JOHN 1:14-18: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth. John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. ***And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.*** For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

Fulness is the Greek word *pleroma*, like something being filled up. It has a passive sense as in something being filled with something. In Ephesians 4:13 and 3:19, we see the real intent of its usage for the New Testament believer. Its meaning is in the body of believers who are filled with the presence, power, agency and riches of God and Christ. Or, in Ephesians 3:19, that we may become a body wholly filled and flooded by God. It was a word used in ancient Greek in understanding a ship filled with goods and merchandise or people. In this tense of the word, *pleroma* can carry an understanding of completeness or continuing fullness, like in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4 and Ephesians 1:10).

Other places where the word is used in conjunction with a concept:

Romans 11:25: “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the *fulness* of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.”

Philippians 4:19: “But I have all, and abound: I am *full*, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Look at what Christ’s fullness has produced:

Colossians 2:9: “For in him dwelleth all the *fulness* of the Godhead bodily.”

Receive His fulness and Be Reconciled

Colossians 1:16-22: “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all *fulness* dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprieveable in his sight.”

In our verse for this article, John uses the word *received*: “***And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.***” *Received* is the Greek word, *lambano*. It is a specialized word. Two other words could have been used, but John chose this one. It carries a fullness of receiving in and of itself. It is objective or active and carries a sense of getting hold of.

John uses these two words as an additional thought. Not just to receive all of His fullness in a continuing and past tense active way, but to receive grace for grace with it. So not only does God expect us to receive all of Christ and what He is and what He does, but He expects us to receive the grace (*charis*) necessary to receive the grace of the gift of all the fullness God grants! Wow!

In light of this understanding, see if these few portions of Scripture make far more sense of God’s intent for us as we function through and in the grace Father provides for us in having the Holy Spirit reside in us. I will explain the final point the Lord took me through in highlighting all this to me. But first, the Scriptures:

John 4:14: “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Romans 8:26-32: “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 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?”

Job 33:4: “The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.”

2 Samuel 22:30-33: “For by thee I have run through a troop: by my God have I leaped over a wall. As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all them that trust in him. For who is God, save the LORD? And who is a rock, save our God? God is my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect.”

All of what I'm sharing is enacted the moment we realize our dependence for a savior, and believe that Jesus died, was buried and rose again. God draws us with grace, which flows as loving kindness toward us. Faith is produced and it enables us to ask Christ to come into our hearts. This is the understanding of grace, that we depend on God for all. This is why we must have a complete understanding of grace. Trust me, His unmerited, undeserved favor in saving us is enough. But we can't even live without Him enabling us through His grace to do so. And I believe this is where we forget grace. Quite often, we think it's for salvation or if we do something wrong. I believe it's only when we understand how, by Christ's action, we are enabled by His continuing grace, that we will be able to overcome in every area that He sustains us in. This is the understanding that Father took me through in the Scriptures. To understand that it is a continuing enablement of His grace, by the action of His power and sacrifice on the cross. This is one understanding of how He reconciles us through the cross (Colossians 1:20). This is why the Holy Spirit must dwell within us.

Reconciliation

Let me share the connection of His fulness with our dependence and His reconciliation with you. Hebrews 4:15-16: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

In Romans 3:24, the two words, *being justified*, have a very direct meaning. Romans 3:20-24: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; **Being justified** freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:"

The two words in the previous portion of Scripture contain one concept in the Greek. I've often said the Greek is sometimes Greek to me! But those two words are not a final point in time as the word *justified* was used earlier in the above passage. In Romans 3:24, (the highlighted portion) it conveys a continually imputing righteousness to us. While in other places it says we are justified, but it is a past tense in the Greek. Here, the KJV translators had to use two words, *being justified*, to describe the ongoing nature of God's conveyance to us.

So God justified us in the past because of Christ's sacrifice. But when we screw up He imputes a continuous action of righteousness to us. This reconciles us even when we don't know we need reconciliation. Christ fills us so that we know our need for Him, and we depend upon Him.

When we are enabled by the action of Christ on the cross to live the lives God gives us through His grace; that is totally different from being empowered. As I said before, it may encompass the action of empowerment to no longer sin. It also may help us to recognize the word of the Lord in a situation and move according to the grace He enables us to accomplish or move with the word He sent. This is for everyday life. Sure, it may include a pastor preaching or another minister in the sharing of a word from God. But it is what helps you when you're traveling down the road and the Holy Spirit tells you not to go this way, or gives you a word of knowledge concerning your children or a business deal. His grace in divine enablement can then send a word of wisdom to show you how to walk out the word of knowledge you were given. But again, I have to ask the question, whose action is this grace of divine, unmerited favor and enablement accomplished by? Not ours; His action is based on the finished work of Christ on the cross. This is the miraculous life the early apostles lived in.

While our justification is complete, we live in space and time and God lives past, present and future (Hebrews 13:8). So God, because He can live in and out of time at the same time, is everything we need whenever we need it. This is the totality of the grace that sustains us. This is why He gave us, as the church, the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We are in need constantly, and God is constantly able. This action He did on the cross finished everything we need, but because He is past, present and future, this action enables us to do everything He asks us to do in every time span we live in. This is why we cannot fail when we follow Him. He is ahead of our time, in our time and has healed and delivered us from our sin, making us righteous at a certain point in our past but continuously filling us with everything Christ has already fulfilled. He is awesome!

***Jesus, The Word Made Flesh,
Sustaining Always***

Let's look at some other things that God fills and we receive because His grace enables:

Zephaniah 3:16-20: "In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden. Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD."

His people Israel have come a long way through history to regain control of their own land. But, it is only Father God that can sustain them in that land. He took a series of events in history to enable His people Israel to lay hold of their land again. It is no different for us as Americans, or Christians in any other place or position He wants them to have. Many Christians the world over have, and are experiencing, the cruelty of persecution. Only a miracle working God can sustain His people through such hideous times. But there is a difference between the two covenants in the Bible. Under our New Covenant, we receive a blessing and a sustenance because of God's enabling and unmerited grace that was not well understood under the Old Covenant. Under the Old, it was do and you will be rewarded. Under the New Covenant, it is believe on Jesus, who did, and who will sustain you by His grace. We don't even know our own need, yet Jesus still sustains us. Paul highlights this in so many places, but this one Scripture is quite succinct. Paul quotes Isaiah 64 as he writes 1 Corinthians.

Isaiah 64:4: "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him." Here is what Paul writes:

1 Corinthians 2:9: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

It is only by love or His loving kindness that leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). He reconciles us to Himself by His fulness in all that He does. Because of grace, we receive and He draws us and shows us His love and then shows us how to love His way. All blessings have come through the cross. When we view God this way, we understand our weakness in being able to love. We become so conscious of our weaknesses that it forces us to look and depend upon the Lord. That's when we receive His fullness in grace and receive all we need in our time of desperation or want.

I was talking with a friend not too long ago and I said something about the fact that we can't even let communion be about Jesus. I went on to explain how we incessantly talk about grace in one breath but then tell everyone to take communion so we get healed. Please don't misunderstand me. I'm all for the reality of grace in taking communion— that there is an awesome exchange when we take communion— and one of the results of it is healing in our own bodies. Taking communion daily, weekly or monthly is a sustaining miracle pastors don't always teach their congregations about. But we should never forget why we take communion. Jesus told us to do it in remembrance of Him. That we show forth His death until He comes again (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Can you see how we sometimes subtly shift our focus from Jesus to our healing, even in the spiritual action of taking communion? Oh, my, how we need His continuing action of graceful enablement!

About ten or fifteen years ago I was sitting before the Lord, studying the word and I sensed the Holy Spirit say to me, "The same way you received salvation, is the same way you are

healed.” Well, I received salvation because Jesus came to me and supernaturally showed me hell and told me I was going there if I didn’t accept Him. It was during that period of time a friend shared the gospel of Jesus Christ with me. I was pondering what she was saying when I had a supernatural experience with the Holy Spirit. The next day I asked how to be saved and she shared Romans 10:9-11: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.”

Jesus wants to sustain us in all we need. In every aspect of our lives: in our spiritual lives, physical bodies, our emotions and our relationships, our jobs and our joys; Father, Son and Holy Spirit want to enable us through His miraculous, undeserved and unmerited favor. I know what it is like to wait on the Lord, wondering when He will release me or send me where He will each and every day. With every passing day, I am more aware of my dependence on Him in every way. This is His sustaining grace. Galatians 3:13 says this:

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written cursed is every one that hangs on a tree. That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

What is the blessing of Abraham? It’s faith, healing, deliverance when you and I don’t deserve faith, healing or deliverance. In fact, we can’t even believe good enough or perfectly enough. All we can do is receive what Jesus did. Abraham was a first type in the Old Testament. We see so many firsts with Abraham. We see faith, trust, sustenance, healing, deliverance, giving, and much more. This is where we need Christ to fulfill our dependence. My point is that Christ is the fulfilling of all, and so in every area of our lives, we receive that fulfillment through His awesome, sustaining grace. He wants to do so much more than we can ask or think. We must learn to depend on Him.

The Unsearchable, Amazing Aspect of His Reward Toward Us

Here’s something crazy: When we depend on Him, we get rewarded. Let’s go to the Scriptures.

Psalm 3:2-4:1: “Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah. But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah. I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the

teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah. Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.”

Psalm 26:6-7: “Blessed be the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.”

Psalm 84:11: “For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

These Scriptures are from the Old Testament, before Christ’s sacrifice. The New Testament is more specific of the reward we receive when we trust in God and His gracious act of salvation:

Ephesians 2:1-10: “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

1 John 5:10-12: “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. 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. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”

As I was writing this article, I sensed that the Holy Spirit wanted to add a song with it to lift many of you up as you read it. He didn’t tell me what song it was, so I spent no time looking for one. Quite often it will take me a week or more to write something He wants shared. So last night I realized I had missed worship and communion two days in a row.

Life had become quite busy, and my communion dish had sat there all day. It was late night and frankly, I was too tired to go to the piano to worship. When I'm like that, I just go on "the tube" and pull up a favorite worship leader and I sit before the Lord. Well, I was so lazy that I just kept letting "the tube" pick the next song up. They were all good and I sensed the Lord was in it. Well, all of a sudden, another song was up and as I heard it, I knew instantly that was the song the Lord wanted shared with you. The title is "Ways For Me" (featuring Dante Bowe) TRIBL: Maverick City Music. Here's the link:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=eTbr1zANROo>

Ask for those needs you have. Seek His wisdom each day, whether for work or relationships or in child-rearing, business or your everyday life. He hears and He will answer. Look for it. You can depend on Him. If you have never asked Christ in your heart, or if you have a need where His grace must sustain you, ask Him into your heart. Ask Him to come and lead and guide you into all truth. If you have a prayer need, please contact us. The contact links are on the website you found this article on. Blessings to you all by and through Christ Jesus, our Lord.