

Living the Great Commission:
His Grace is More Than Sufficient

Carlos and Liliana Llambes

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Preface

THIS book began after many conversations with like-minded pastors and lay leaders from the United States of America who have visited the Dominican Republic on mission trips throughout the years. They have come to join God in what He has been doing in this country among the two million Haitians who live here.

The Lord brought us together to show that His Grace is more than sufficient for obeying the Great Commission. These gatherings allowed us to see over eighty-one churches planted and more than five hundred people become engaged in a Spiritual Formation and Church Planting Institute over the last five years.

I am indescribably grateful to our Lord for the invitation that He brought to my family and church family at that time, which extends from as far as Kenya, to help us in the task for which we feel inadequate.

Special thanks to my partners: First Baptist Church of Pompano, Mill Creek Baptist Church, Everglades Baptist Church, Dr. Graham and his teams from Madison Baptist Church, First Baptist Church Huntsville, First Missionary Baptist Church, Fort Caroline Baptist Church, Royalton Baptist Church, Cross Church, Living Hope Community Church, Global Church Planting Partners, Dr. Hoyt Lovelace, and our National Partners, to include the Dominican Baptist Convention, Dr. Steve Wilkes of Mid-America Seminary, Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Plantation, Iglesia Bautista Estrella de Belen, Scott and Dory Nelson.

A super special thanks to the prayer warriors scattered all over the world who have faithfully prayed on my behalf.

To my wife Lily and our great teens, Sara, Charles, and Bianca for truly loving God with all their hearts. My love

to Lily for putting up with me all these years and spending many silent nights on her knees praying for the work and the places to which the Lord guided me to start new churches.

Thank you to my Godly friends who took the time to read and correct my writings and make contributions to the testimony in this work. God used men like Dr. Hoyt Lovelace, Doug Nickalson, Shawn Bergen, Hopson Boutot and Dr. Tom Ascol to make me a better man. My love in Christ to each of you.

My gratitude to Don Worden and Charles Cibene, Godly men who stayed glued to me from the early beginnings. I was a missionary, and they helped me become a visionary.

A very special gratitude to the supporters of the Lottie Moon Offering and the International Mission Board. These groups believed in my calling and gave me the opportunity to serve among them. If you have supported them, then you have supported and partnered with my call and mission, as well.

*That your way may be known on earth, your saving
power among all nations.*

*Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples
praise you!*

(Psalm 67:2-3)

Introduction

I THANK God for giving me the opportunity to write something that has been in my heart for some time. I also thank you, my readers, for studying this simple and practical book on the Grace of God and the sufficiency of that Grace for everything that we do, especially in carrying out and participating in the Great Commission.

A question I often ask myself as a missionary is, “How is it possible that many people believe God’s Grace is sufficient for salvation, but not for the missions? How could a God so mighty to save be so small for the mission?” At least, that is how some Christians see His Grace.

We believe that the God who saves should be more than sufficient for the mission; that God himself is mighty to save; and that He is also the great God who does the mission. We simply come alongside in obedience.

Many people try to limit the extent of God’s power and plan. In our home we say, “You cannot put God in a box.” How great God is for our salvation and how small we see Him for the mission, but the God of Grace is more than sufficient to do both. The problem may be that we think we play an integral part in our own salvation and, therefore, we also have an integral part to play that is necessary for the mission.

We pray that this book will help you develop a God-centered perspective as to the mission and see that His Grace is far more than sufficient to obey the Great Commission that Christ left us. He descended by Grace for us to enjoy familial participation in His Grace.

During the last ten years, we have seen many works God has done through His ministry in the Dominican Republic. Sometimes we wonder what we did to deserve salvation in the first place and what we did to deserve His blessing in

the mission. The answer is: nothing. The reality is that His Grace is more than sufficient. There is nothing in us but obedience, dependence, and a willingness to move to action. As William Carey said, "Expect great things; attempt great things." I believe that means we can expect amazing things from Him because of His Grace.

We hope that you will discover the riches of His Grace and that they move you to missionary action. You may ask, what does it take or how do I do it? Remember that He saved you by Grace, and by Grace He will do the missionary work using you as His tool. There is an abundance of life when you get involved in what brings the greatest growth to the expansion of the kingdom, which is planting new churches. Everything we do as people of God has eternal value, but nothing compares to church planting.

Dear Brothers and Sisters... trust that His Grace is more than sufficient.

As a missionary family serving with the International Mission Board (IMB), we can safely say that we have experienced His Grace in a transformational way. After seeing what He has done for the last ten years, especially the last five among the Haitians, we have come to the conclusion that His Grace is more than sufficient.

We pray that His Grace is manifested in your life, as it is in ours, and that you glorify Him in all that you do.

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Chapter 1

Amazing Grace

*Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found, Was blind, but now I see.
T'was Grace that taught my heart to fear, and Grace, my fears relieved.
How precious did that Grace appear, the hour I first believed.
Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come;
'Tis Grace that brought me safe thus far and Grace will lead me home.
The Lord has promised good to me. His word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be, as long as life endures.
Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail, and mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil, a life of joy and peace.
When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun.
We've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first begun.¹*

I PRAY that, in this short chapter, you will learn more about God's Grace toward us. Remember that His Grace is *more than* sufficient to live the Christian life and share it with others. Many who misinterpret Grace believe they can do whatever they desire because they partake of that Grace. Do not fall into that error.

If you truly consider yourself to be the object of the Grace of God that has given you a new life, then it follows that you should live according to His word; such is a life led by the Spirit and not by the desires of the flesh. Paul even cautions those who would mistakenly consider otherwise:

*For sin shall not have dominion over you, since you are not under law but **under Grace**.² What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under Grace? By no means!
(Romans 6:14, 15)*

Defining Grace

MANY have attempted to describe Grace over the years, and together, we will explore some of those meanings from different perspectives. We will begin by examining a portion of what has been said about Grace by some of the most prominent theologians throughout history and today.



“Grace is equally as important when considering expansion of the Kingdom”

The perspective of several of the following definitions will be the primary point of discussion throughout this book. They provide a contrasting comparative mainly because the typical

perspective of Grace that people hold applies only to salvation and/or the forgiveness of sins. What we will stress herein is that Grace is equally as important when considering expansion of the Kingdom of God, particularly after the individual believers have been justified before God.

Sola Gratia

OFTEN considered the father of the Reformation, Martin Luther defined salvation as “sola gratia,” or “by Grace alone.” That phrase became the central cry of the Reformation and, although the Roman Church has consistently taught that Mass is a “sacrifice [that] is truly propitiatory” and that through Mass “God gives us the Grace and gift of penitence, remission of our sins and even our enormous sins,” the Reformers returned to the Biblical Doctrine of salvation by Grace through faith; that is, “by Grace alone.”

The Biblical truth presents that salvation involves imputed justification before God by Grace because of faith in the work of Jesus Christ our Lord. This lies in stark contrast to the doctrine of personal merit that was taught by Rome. Sola gratia, and the doctrines of Grace, to include Martin Luther’s total depravity, unconditional election, particular

redemption, and the perseverance of the saints, were preached by many or most Protestant reformers.

The perseverance of the saints is particularly at issue here. This teaching tends to focus on the eternal security of the believer based upon God's ability to complete what He started. However, we must recognize that such perseverance impacts our present life, as well as the eternal.


"the Reformers returned to the
Biblical Doctrine of salvation...
"by Grace alone"

With this being true, the doctrine of perseverance of the saints tacitly argues that we are empowered by Grace to complete the Great Commission just as surely as we are empowered by such Grace to endure to everlasting life. Grace for one, I would contend, is simultaneously Grace for the other.

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

*7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding,
(Ephesians 1:3-8)*

"Prince of Preachers" Charles H. Spurgeon said,

Grace is the soul of the gospel; without it the gospel is dead. Grace is the music of the gospel; without it the gospel is silent as to all comfort.³

The problem with using the term Grace is not in understanding its power to change; the problem is misunderstanding

its duration and coordination throughout Christianity. We readily rejoice in the power of Grace to change the life of the lost, but we also often fail to realize that the duration of the power goes far beyond the moment of salvation. Grace moves the saved into the Kingdom of God in order for them to participate in and with the Kingdom of God in coordination with others who are likewise changed.

“For by Grace are you saved through faith and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. So it does not depend on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy”

(Ephesians 2:8)

Grace begins to save and then perseveres until completion. From start to finish, from "A" through "Z" of the heavenly alphabet, everything is by Grace.



“Natural man desires to earn His reward and receive the glory... Grace, however, strips man’s glory and claims it for God.”

As soon as this doctrine is exposed under a bright light, men begin to criticize it. Unregenerate minds never liked it and never will because it is so humiliating to human pride and bestows no nobility upon human nature. Natural man desires

to earn his own reward and receive the glory for that reward. Grace strips man’s glory, claims it for God, and magnifies God’s love by showing mankind the extent to which He will go in His relationship with man. The one who lives in Grace experiences the abundance of the continuance of God’s love.

Motivated by Grace

I RECALL a case in history involving half a dozen boys, some of whom had very strict parents who would whip them, as we say, until they were half-dead. There was, on this occasion, another boy with them who was dearly loved by his

parents and was not beaten, but instead disciplined by other means.

These young men came together for a “council of war” to rob an orchard. All were eager to participate except the young man favored by his parents, who did not like the idea. One of the others exclaimed, “You have no reason to be afraid. If our parents catch us in this work, we will be half dead, but your father never puts his hand on you.”

His responded earnestly, “What do you think my father deserves from me? I will not do anything that my father dislikes; he is so good to me that I do not want to dishonor him.”

The argument from his friends would not convince the young man to do that which would displease his father. His conclusion was completely logical, especially from a Biblical perspective, and exemplifies the way we should view our Heavenly Father. If God is good to those who do not deserve it, some men will be given to sin, but there are others to whom the goodness of God leads to repentance. We should have brutal contention against the argument that the more love we are shown from God, the more rebellious we are allowed to act.

When one authentically partakes in the love of God, his desire to do evil is voided. As a good brother said, “I can do all the cocaine I *want to*, but God’s love has removed my *want to*.” If we are to put down social evil, it must be by the proclamation of the Grace of God because the power of His Grace travels far beyond the act of salvation. Spurgeon surmised this sentiment well,

“The gospel alone supplies men with motive and strength, and therefore it is to the gospel that we must look as the real reformer of men. Suppose we preach salvation as this... you who have lived wicked and evil lives can enjoy your sins and simply escape punishment. Now that would surely be evil.”⁴

Unfortunately, the Gospel is all too often used to solely proclaim that Grace is sufficient for salvation of the individual sinner. The truth is that such Grace is also the empowerment for his ongoing sanctification, as well as his witness within his community, which thereby leads others to Christ. Grace for salvation is only the beginning, and yet many theologians fail to move beyond the “starting line-up” to fully describe its all-encompassing nature.

Grace, Underestimated

THE following is a short list of definitions of Grace which are found in a variety of theological dictionaries. They are presented as an example of the limited nature normally attributed to Grace, despite its all-encompassing nature.

1. Unmerited favor; mercy; compassion
2. Undeserved blessing; a gift
3. God’s love; mercy to mankind
4. A favor; Grace; goodness; beauty; sympathy
5. God’s willingness to pursue the good will towards His creatures
6. In harmony with the gospel of God’s unmerited gift of salvation in Jesus Christ
7. A favor or kindness shown without regard to the value or merit of the person receiving it and despite what that person deserves
8. The acceptance and love received from another undeserved, especially the characteristic attitude of God in providing salvation to sinners
9. The gift of God as expressed by the extension of mercy; loving kindness and salvation to the people

10. Unmerited divine assistance given man for his regeneration or sanctification
11. The power and equipping for ministry
12. Grace, we all know, is God's unmerited favor
13. **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**

What good do these definitions do for us?

Many Christians often make the obvious connection to salvation, but it is crucial to understand that such narrow vision is only the beginning of the awesome transformational and sustaining power of Grace. The primary question remains, however... What does Grace do for the believer?

Until that question is answered and understood in the fullest sense, many believers will continue to live an anemic life that is void of the substantive nature of the fullness of God's riches



“The primary question remains, however... What does Grace do for the believer?”

through His Grace. Without such an in-depth look into this unadulterated view of Grace, we will forever be unable to fully comprehend the compounding forces of what, exactly, Grace is able to do.

Grace Destroys Pride

For it is by Grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.
(*Ephesians 2:8-9*)

Grace Empowers Good Works

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
(*Ephesians 2:10*)

Grace Destroys Guilt

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.

(Romans 8:1)

Grace Empowers Obedience, to include Witnessing to the Nations

Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received Grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of His Name among all the nations.

(Romans 1:5)

Grace Destroys Sin

For our sake, (God) made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

(2 Corinthians 5:21)

In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His Grace.

(Ephesians 1:7)

This final verse demonstrates that everything has been “a divine conspiracy” for our new life by His Grace. Grace means that God moves heaven and earth to save sinners who are not able lift a finger to save themselves. It has been a part of His plan since before the beginning of time.

Grace means that God sent His only Son to descend into Hell and die on the cross so that we, who are guilty, might be reconciled to Him, reckoned within His mission, and received into heaven. It means we are invited to participate in His mission here on Earth.⁵

One of the most prominent theologians of our day, Dr. Dallas Willard, defines Grace as God “acting in our lives to accomplish what we cannot achieve on our own.” Such a definition



“Have you ever thought about how the Grace of God has affected your life?”

shows Grace in everything we do. God acts in us, as well as through us, to accomplish that which we cannot accomplish on our own.

The great reward in seeing and understanding Grace in this way is that it gives us proper perspective on what we can achieve and concludes that everything is the product of His Grace. This perspective takes us well beyond the moment of our own salvation into the realm of Kingdom activities.

Christ, The Manifestation of Grace

THERE are those who would foolishly contend that, after the fall, God launched plan B. We consider it absurd to say such a thing about an all-knowing God because His plan A is everlasting. The outpouring of His Grace in Christ was predestined before the foundation of the world, and it is a work of art so grand that only a great and masterful God could conceive.

Have you ever thought about how the Grace of God has affected your life? When you understand God’s Grace, you can rest in Him and not feel the peer pressure to conform to the world. If you truly know the Grace of God, and how it affects your life, your view of the world will transform as you enjoy a better relationship with our Creator. All that exists was His work, and no detail escaped Him.

It may be helpful to look at the definition of “disGrace” to see Grace in a more convincing light.

disGrace - loss of honor, respect, or reputation; shame; the condition of being strongly and generally disapproved.

In Christ, and with His Grace, we are the complete opposite of disGrace. We have honor, respect, and pride through Him.

The Problem with Misbelief

UNFORTUNATELY, many people who regularly attend church never think of God's Grace at all. James Innell Packer, a Christian theologian, used the arresting term "misbelief" to describe the problems Christians have in this area. He says that because we do not fully understand who we are in the sight of God, we "misbelieve" in God's Grace. In short, we have a sub-Christian view that is less than fully biblical.



"Unfortunately, many people who regularly attend church never think of God's Grace"

I would ask you to consider that such a condition is actually worse than it sounds because to be wrong about God's Grace is to be wrong about the heart and the core of our faith. Packer

posits that the Spirit of this Age adamantly opposes the doctrine of Grace⁶, and in this view he is surely correct.

When we understand the following truths about Grace, we cannot help but be energized.

- Grace found us.
- Grace will keep us.
- Grace will never let us go.
- Those whom God saves, He saves forever.
- Not one of God's children will ever be lost.
- All His sheep will eventually find their way home.
- Grace compels and leads us to those who are, like we were, in need of Grace.

Cheap Grace

HOW have you stood in the way of Grace? That question has the potential to haunt every believer who is brave enough to ask it. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Lutheran pastor, theologian, anti-Nazi resistant, and founding member of the Confessing Church said,

"Cheap Grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance; baptism without church discipline; communion without confession. Cheap Grace is Grace without discipleship, Grace without the cross, and Grace without Jesus Christ."

Costly Grace, on the other hand, boldly confronts us as a glorious call to follow Jesus. It comes as a word of forgiveness to the broken spirit and contrite heart, and it progresses as a word of encouragement and confidence. Grace is costly because it compels us to submit to the yoke of Christ and walk along with him; it is sufficient because it enables us to do so. It remains the epitome of Grace because of the fact that Jesus gave His life freely that we might have it.

A word to the wise: cheap Grace is one of the deadliest enemies of our church. It is perhaps the greatest cause of our neglect to engage in the Great Commission. Cheap Grace prevents us from living the Great Commission in the manner in which we are called.



"Grace is costly because it compels us to submit to the yoke of Christ and walk along with Him."

So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

(James 4:17)

We should never forget that Grace is the enabling, equipping and compelling component within.



Contemplating Grace

Questions:

1. As a believer, how do you define the work of grace in your life?
2. As a citizen of God's Kingdom, does your perseverance focus solely on your life? How do you see perseverance impacting the lost world?
3. As a leader in the Kingdom, how do you teach the purpose of Grace? Does your teaching proclaim Grace solely as the incredible means to salvation, or do you impart knowledge that Grace supplies strength to live and witness? What actions in the church would this expansion of thought encourage?
4. As God's ambassador to the world, what is your perspective of Grace's impact on the lost world? What is your perspective of Grace's impact on your activity involving the lost world?

Charge:

Walk willingly alongside Jesus within His yoke of Grace as He works the field of His harvest.

Prayer:

Oh God, would you show us the length, breadth, and depth of the extent of Your Grace? Please allow us to expand our vision of Your Grace beyond its incredible impact on our own lives so that we can see the impact it has, through us, on a lost world.