

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; (2Co 3:5)

As any of you who have ever asked my guidance on something, and whoever listens when I am in the pulpit, you know I bring things frequently back to prayer, and have called it a 'no duh' sort of thing many times.

Prayer should be our first recourse on anything and everything. It should be our go-to behavior when we don't need recourse on anything. Our lips, our hearts, and our minds should be constantly engaged in it, working to draw closer to our God and make known to Him our thanks and our desire to serve Him more acceptably. I want to make a distinction here, that when I suggest we should be constantly framing up prayers, this isn't a Joel Osteen 'Lord, give me some stuff'. Our first view of prayer shouldn't be to ask God for anything, but to thank Him incessantly for our lives, His forgiveness, His mercy, His righteousness, His sovereignty, etc., etc.

There are times, though, and they are abundant, when we must ask, whether for ourselves or others, for help, for deliverance, for patience, for faith, for understanding, for mercy, for direction, for healing, for any number of things that are nuanced and personal.

A question naturally arises in this context about what to do when it seems He isn't answering? This can be put any number of different ways, but the essence is the same. You are struggling with something and when you pray, you don't receive some immediate relief from the struggle. You don't get the answer that you're looking for, perhaps.

The first thing I say is that you have to frame this the right way in your heart and mind, in that you aren't deserving of an answer. We have to remember that even as we frame the prayer – we aren't owed something here. Fulfillment of God's promises are not something we are owed. We are the debtor to Him, not the other way around. It is important in our lives that we see that fully, and when we frame our prayers we do so as humble requests to the King of All, not as petulant children with our hands out expecting precisely what we ask for.

Consider for a moment the humility of Esther in addressing King Ahasuerus. She was cautious to the point of timidity until Mordecai exhorted her to action. And even then, she was careful, cautious and respectful of the King's power.

“Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house. And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden

sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre. Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom. And Esther answered, If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him.” (Est 5:1-4)

This is a king that could have your head removed if you showed up in his presence without a direct call to come see him. She didn't approach him with haughtiness or expectation that he would receive her at all. She came in proper attire and framed up her question in the meekest way possible, without making demands.

Now, if this is an example of how to approach a human king, how should we approach the King of All, the Creator of All Things, the Alpha and the Omega?

That's not what I really want to talk about today, but it's always good to make sure we are in the right frame when we pray and remember who it is we're talking to. This isn't just an abstract activity, it is a commanded way to approach the King of Eternity, and just like any form of communication, we should approach it the right way.

How then, should we take it when it doesn't seem like He is answering us? When in the throes of an affliction or the teeth of an enemy or the anguish of our own realized sinfulness, where we pray repeatedly and nothing changes in the circumstance?

Paul, who teaches us to 'pray without ceasing' (1 Thes 5:17) also gives us guidance in this question from his own life and experiences.

“For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” (2Co 12:6-9)

Paul was in an amazing place. He had seen a tremendous vision and had things revealed to him that others had not. To temper that exultation and the real risk of his being overtaken in prideful glorying, the Lord gave him a 'thorn in the flesh' that took attention and energy away from his dwelling on how awesome he was for having the third heaven revealed to him and hearing these '*unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter*' (2Co 12:4).

What the thorn specifically was is pontificated upon by virtually every expositor to no benefit or conclusion. It was an affliction of some sort, whether something bodily, mental, or in the form of an enemy harassing and haranguing him on a daily basis, we don't precisely know. It doesn't matter, either, and spending a bunch of time trying to work it out is pointless.

It was deeply afflicting to Paul, that's all we really need to know. We know that it afflicted him because he '*besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me*'. You don't waste time making requests of the King of Eternity for a mild annoyance. And Paul spent significant time making the request.

This 'thrice' is an interesting element. It can be taken a couple of ways. First, it can mean an abundance of times, a turn of a phrase that shows it was a more significant undertaking than just one or two. The other way it can be taken is that Paul undertook specific prayerful action, with dedicated energy and focus on this issue on three different occasions. This would be something similar to what we find in James:

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:" (Jas 5:14)

It's appropriate and needful that we pray in our private pleadings and amongst our families and our friends at times of prayer for those who are suffering some bodily illness or affliction, but the calling for the elders is a specific and focused task to call on the Lord for mercy in that moment. Both result in a hearing of the petition, but the focused event draws God's attention to the specific and prevailing issue that afflicts the body at that moment. Sometimes specificity is important in prayer (you'll see why I say sometimes in a bit).

I take this 'thrice' to mean the latter of the two. Paul, perhaps on his own, perhaps with others, held a specific and dedicated session of prayer above and beyond his moment by moment inner pleadings with God to rid him of this thorn. He did so three times, perhaps for some protracted period of time, perhaps going into his closet, perhaps having other elders or even an Apostle or two assist him. We aren't told, and it is actually quite irrelevant. But at the end of the third specific prayer, he is told

"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness"

There are a number of things wrapped up in this I want to tackle today, any number of which could probably be its own sermon.

Answering of Prayer

The first thing I want to address is the answering of prayer. How God chooses to answer our prayers is solely in His domain. This is where specificity can get you into a

tight spot, I think. It's good to be specific in some ways. Asking for relief from a specific affliction is fine, and being properly specific in that regard can help you to put a proper frame and focus on a matter. Being specific on HOW that gets addressed is not the place you want to go, though.

This is one of the key elements to learn from this. Paul wasn't just generally asking for removal of this thorn, as I take it. He saw it as a hindrance to his work, and that he couldn't do all that he knew was needful if he had to deal with this thing, too. As if he were asking "help me to do my job, Lord, by taking this thorn away from me".

That shortens the arm of the Lord. What if God chooses to help you by giving you more strength instead of taking the thorn away and you can do both – get the work done effectively AND have the thorn in your flesh?

That's a difficult thing to grasp in a moment of affliction and duress. There's this thing bugging you, and all you can see in that moment is nothing gets better if that thing isn't gone. We begin to think our prayers aren't answered because we are myopically focused on the thorn being removed. When in fact, the non-answer (as we perceive it) IS an answer to be considered.

There are two things to consider here. First, if you believe a prayer isn't answered, don't blame God or lose faith. Ask yourself what you've been praying for? Are you seeking His glory or your own? Are you limiting what God can do with what you're asking for? Take careful stock of that question and you'll likely find you're being so narrowly focused that what you're asking for ultimately isn't what you should be.

Second, not all prayer is going to be answered when it works against the divine providence of God. That doesn't make the prayer inappropriate, it just means you need to subvert your will and submit to God's. I'll give you two good examples of this.

First, David.

"And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and

came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.” (2Sa 12:15-23)

Even when it is our own foolishness and sin that brings an affliction upon us for teaching and reproof, it is appropriate and necessary to pray to the Lord our God for His grace and mercy. As we well know David’s prayer, as it relates to the life of the child, was not answered.

And so it is with us from time to time. When we have made a mess of things for ourselves, whether in a public or a private way, when we’ve allowed ourselves to be lifted up in pride and need a course correction, the Lord is under no obligation to fix what we broke or make our mess just go away. He doesn’t have to answer that prayer in the affirmative. His silence is His answer.

As David shows us, at some point, when it is clear that the matter is not going to go away, that we aren’t going to just slip out of whatever tight spot we put ourselves into, we have to get up, dust ourselves off, and move forward. Deal with the mess as best we can and walk in this knowledge

“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.” (Rom 8:28)

If you are called according to His purpose, what has happened has been ordained to your learning and betterment. It is painful at the time, probably humiliating in some form or fashion, embarrassing and leaves you full of shame. But in the grander scheme of things, which remember you cannot see, whatever has befallen you is for your good.

That doesn’t excuse the behavior or what you did. You must repent of the folly. But look again to David

“And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the LORD loved him. And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD.” (2Sa 12:24-25)

David doesn’t wallow in self-pity and bemoan his sinfulness. He tends to his business, and the Lord rewards him for returning to Him. Who knows what other folly David may

have done had the Lord not corrected him here? We know that he delivered to him a son who did great things in God's name on the backside of it. You can't be cavalier in your sins thinking you'll come out smelling like a rose as they say, but once you've submitted yourself to His chastisement and His will, your prayers should be turning to thankfulness for His mercy and glorifying Him for His steadfastness toward His chosen elect, not dwelling on the sin.

My second example in this analysis of prayers being answered is Christ.

*“Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, **and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.** And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. **He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.** And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. **And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.**” (Mat 26:36-44)*

I must admit this scene has intrigued me for a long time trying to understand the sense of it. We have the Son of God, a party to the covenant, asking for a changing of the terms to that covenant on the eve of its payment. Doesn't He know that the terms of the agreement can't be changed? Of course He does, and that's not the point.

Here we have on display for us the multi-natured element of Christ. As God, He knew there was no changing to the immutable decrees of God the Father and the terms of the covenant. The wrath of God and His justice must be satisfied. For all those whose names are written and sealed in the book, only the Lamb can provide that satisfaction. But as a man, a creature of flesh and blood, he struggled with the knowledge of what was to come. This was a more in-depth knowledge of what was to befall Him than any had ever experienced. It included a complete knowledge of the reason for what was to come, what was being paid for, and why it was so necessary. It came with a complete understanding of the depths of God's wrath. Facing that wrath plunged him into heaviness and sorrow.

Knowing the infinite mercy and wisdom of God, He asked the only reasonable question to ask in that hour – if there is any other way within your will for your justice to be fulfilled, for the debt to be paid, please let the lamb of sacrifice be made known as was done for Abraham.

It's the same fundamental belief as David – God's mercy is infinite and His ways past finding out, and in our hour of extremis and trial, who else can we possibly turn to for relief of the sorrow and heaviness that falls upon us? What other reasonable behavior is there to commit to than to fall on our knees, to prostrate ourselves before our King and seek His mercy?

But if the answer we seek is not forthcoming, if the hour of trial is not to be prematurely ended, we must submit and move forward. We cannot just simply ask the same thing over and over again until we move from pleading to demanding. That's not the position prayer puts us in. We aren't there ordering from the drive-thru all our wishes and wants. That is not what is meant to 'pray without ceasing'. We must pray with a spiritual maturity and discernment, putting the glory of God front and center.

You'll notice that Christ didn't say 'provide another lamb' or 'don't let them crucify me'. No, He was interested first and foremost in the will of the Father being done. Pay special attention to the second iteration of the prayer

"He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." (Mat 26:42)

If the only way to be done with a thing is to get through it, then let the will of God be done in the matter, and all glory and honor be given unto Him. There's the place to get to, not a repetitious and ultimately vain demand that your way, your will is done.

I'm not telling you that you have to pray for relief from a dire strait three times or only three times and then stop. I've said many times you must avoid rote nature to your prayers. That's not the lesson to learn here. What I'm telling you is that there comes a point when under an affliction where you have to move aside your desire to have the specific affliction, removed the specific way you want it, and look to how your enduring it might glorify Christ. And if you come to that honest conclusion, then buck up and do it. Shift the prayer from 'remove this' to 'help me to glorify you'. That is a prayer that, if earnestly made, is worthy of offering up without ceasing.

And here's the hope in that – His grace is sufficient for us. His grace is so much more profoundly capable of delivering us from anything we encounter in ways that are more magnificent and glorifying to Him than we can comprehend, it should be obvious to us that our simple-minded ways we want to be delivered are child's play in comparison.

His grace is sufficient for us. That's a nice phrase. It rolls off the tongue, and I've heard some silver-tongued false preachers say it in such hissing ways it makes you want to vomit. Don't bumper sticker this. Don't turn it into a quaint little answer to a person in trouble or under affliction. These are serious words that require some serious understanding.

Grace

What is grace, anyway? This is a topic that unfortunately feels tortured by many of the expositors. I believe that they make it too hard, and are too busy trying to put labels on it, that they over-complicate it. They talk of saving grace, merciful grace, common grace and special grace. There's forgiving grace, convicting grace, accepting grace, habitual grace, presence grace, free grace, complete grace, sanctifying grace, serving grace, miraculous grace, sustaining grace, actual grace, living grace and dying grace.

These are all labels that try to split this thing into a bunch of tidy little buckets. Many of these are earnest attempts to make this more understandable, though I think if you start with the premise that grace is a complicated thing that needs the minds of men to explain, you've already lost the battle. I don't mean to be dismissive, and if labels help you make more sense of things, that's fine, there's a time and a place for that. Grace is a thing of beauty from God that doesn't need a bunch of labels from men to make it better or more understandable. How is your vision narrowed if you try to capture the things of the infinite and eternal God with temporal and mortal ideas? What happens to your labeling schema when you can't successfully put a label on a thing and explain it in your terms?

Grace is a gift from God. It is, I believe, any way that He exerts His influence upon us to put our feet in straight paths, call us to serve Him, provide us faith, deliver us from temptation, take us out of the enemy's hand, teach us through affliction and a multitude of other things. The gift of grace can come in any and many different forms. It comes in forms we have no ability to truly understand or explain. It comes at times we most need it and times when we least expect it. It does anything and everything for us that we need. It is visible and invisible.

Consider this delivery of grace from God

"Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp. And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel? And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber. And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. And when the servant of the man of God

was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” (2Ki 6:8-17)

This is a three-fold manifestation of God’s grace. First, the presence of the armies of God to protect Elisha and his servant from harm. Second, the understanding through faith that Elisha had of their presence and the courage it afforded him; note that I don’t rule out Elisha actually saw them, but seeing something like that as a course of normal events and not freaking out is in itself an act of faith and a grace, I think. Third, the sight that was afforded the young man to see what Elisha’s faith afforded him knowledge of.

You see here how the grace of God is a broad and far-encompassing thing. God provides us many delivery mechanisms, if you will, for His grace. There are many examples of God’s grace around us, that should give us pause when we get despondent over God’s lack of an answer to a prayer. Consider some examples of how His grace manifests itself for us

- He has preserved His word for us. We don’t have to wonder what His standards are on any matter so that we would accidentally displease Him.
- He sent the Comforter to work upon our hearts, to influence us and provide to us the unction necessary to serve God.
- He has an entire created race of creatures going to and fro in the earth looking into the affairs of men and tending to His decrees. The angelic host and their ministrations to mankind are an element of God’s grace.
- Prayer is a gracious gift He has given us, so that we are not separated from Him entirely, and can communicate to Him for help and communicate our thanks.
- Those of us with spouses, having a help meet for us to walk with, who is by God’s promise perfectly suited and situated to help us. Those of us without, having the constitution to walk this life without the need of one is a grace.
- The local, visible church body, so that we don’t walk through this harsh wilderness alone having souls who can relate to our challenges upon whom we can draw for help and support along the way.
- The ease of our ministry getting to the whole world. Consider how the early evangelists had language barriers, distance and time constraints, travel difficulties, etc. Some days we say something on one of these platforms or to a member of the media and in seconds it has traversed the globe. That is due to God’s grace.

These are just simple examples of how I see His grace. There are multitudes more and ones that are deeply personal to each of us, I think. To be sure, we know there is at least one common attribute to them all – they are sufficient for each of us.

Sufficiency

The idea of sufficiency is very powerful to me. In it I find possibly the most comforting of concepts in Scripture.

In English, the word ‘sufficient’ is an adjective, meaning enough or adequate. While the idea that God’s grace is enough for us is good, it doesn’t capture the full sense because it implies that something is being added to make it sufficient and then it stops. You put a sufficient amount of gas into your tank to fill it, for example. In the Greek, this word translated sufficient is a verb. It’s Strong’s number 714, *arkeo*, and by his count, it’s only used seven times in the Bible. It is notated as

“Apparently a primary verb; properly to *ward off*, that is, (by implication) to *avail* (figuratively *be satisfactory*): - be content, be enough, suffice, be sufficient”

That ‘ward off’ implies diligent monitoring and action to address a thing in any moment. Think ‘head on a swivel’, though it carries with it more than just observation, it includes action.

This same word is translated differently in another place that I think gives us a foundation of understanding

“*And having food and raiment let us **be therewith content.***” (1Ti 6:8)

Contentedness is a state of mind we should aspire to be in every second of every day. It is a place we are repeatedly told to seek in Scripture. I think here we have the other side of that coin, as it were. We can be content because God’s grace is active at all times to provide us precisely what we need at the exact moment it is needed.

Paul, and by extension, we, are not being told that in this one situation, regarding this specific issue, God’s grace is sufficient to help him deal with the thorn. The Lord doesn’t specify to Paul, ‘I’m good enough for you in this situation’. He is told that in all ways and in all things God’s grace is sufficient by this blanket statement. And in this simple phrase, Paul is provided not a source, but **the** source of hope for God’s people.

God’s grace, and therefore the sufficiency of it is an active thing. It isn’t something static that we come into contact with just in a singular moment. It isn’t something we carry in a bucket and God adds some more to it at opportune times after some sloshes out. It’s a surrounding and changing thing, which moment by moment addresses our

needs – whether that's by the answer to a prayer or another mechanism. At times it may be proactive, others reactive.

This is perhaps a subtle, but I think a critical point to understand if you're going to draw hope from this idea. Unlike the use of the word as an adjective, which implies that at one point there wasn't enough of something, but more got added until it was sufficient, God's grace is sufficient in every moment because it is actively shifting to address our needs. It doesn't add or subtract, per se, because it is an infinite thing, with an infinite number of sources and an infinite number of ways to address the needs of His people. There is no reserve because it is all the reserve, and all of it is in use at all times, dispensed at the King's pleasure in whatever manner He chooses.

And just because we don't see that grace in any given moment doesn't mean it isn't there. Remember Elisha's young servant. The horsemen were there whether the young man saw them or not. The grace wasn't absent while Paul prayed. Sometimes that grace which we need to draw upon isn't obvious and visible. Sometimes our pride and faithlessness get in the way of seeing the source sitting right in front of us – a spouse, a parent, a member of the body, the Scripture itself.

Consider this idea as well. While you pray for a specific outcome to a matter, how much more perfect is God's solution to the problem going to be? When it seems as if He isn't answering you, is it worth your consideration to step back and say 'thy will be done' and submit yourself to the outcome God has ordained?

It is hard to see this when you're praying day after day for relief from a thing and that relief doesn't come – but we should still try. In particularly difficult situations this may be a literally impossible thing to grasp, but as we consider it more in our daily ministrations and appeals to God, it should become easier to do. We are the recipients of God's grace, and it is sufficient to support and carry us through this life.

As we wrestle with the submission the patience of 'thy will be done' requires, consider that Paul is told by God '*for my strength is made perfect in weakness*'. That is a powerful statement. This dispersal of grace and our relief from distress, anguish, and affliction glorifies God! It is a reminder that His solutions are perfect, and ours are not, which should drive us to seek His solutions all the more. I say this is especially true when He gives you the strength to serve Him acceptably **and** endure the thorn and who are we to question that?

That doesn't mean you don't pray for relief. But it should help you frame your prayer into something that is more humble and accepting of God's will over yours. Keeping the glory of God in your view can help you to endure affliction or whatever it is you're praying for relief from with greater patience. Paul goes beyond just enduring the difficulty saying

“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

If we are thinking spiritually, we can glory in these weaknesses by having faith in our Savior, letting His grace be our strength, so that the power of Christ rest on us.

The idea of glorying in infirmity is so against the flesh that it's difficult to put into words how that really looks. But I believe that when the power of Christ rests on us because we have truly submitted ourselves to His will being done in a matter, and indeed in every matter, our rejoicing is more ready. Regardless of the circumstance of the moment, we find our view not toward the thorn but toward Christ and in the weakness of the flesh, we are made strong by His strength. I see an example of this in Stephen at his death.

Our frames are weak, our minds are weak, our faith is weak. We have to use armor to defend ourselves from our enemies, because we are inherently *insufficient* to deal with the fiery darts of our adversaries on our own.

And that's okay.

If we look at that weakness properly and don't wallow in it. If we seek to address the weakness in the appropriate way, that weakness does indeed make us strong, because it is not our strength that bolsters us. The strength that holds us up and comforts us in our hour of trial, when we face the beasts of the arena or the howling of the mob is not our own; it is infused in us by the grace of our Lord and Redeemer, and that strength is infinite. It is on that strength that the very universe is held and it is upon that strength that the church is built such that the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

The grace of God does many things for us, to us, and in us. It is sufficient for His purposes and for our deliverance. It is a gift from our Maker and cannot be refused, manipulated or modified by us. It is a glorious and mysterious thing that doesn't require us to understand it, it only requires us to be thankful for it and receive it as it comes.

Let us face this week with this thought in our hearts

“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.” (Psa 84:11)