

Elder Gene R. Cook

My dear brothers and sisters, I bear witness this afternoon of the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and specifically of the doctrine of grace that He extends to all mankind (see Jacob 4:6-7). In so doing, I humbly recognize the great gift the Father has bestowed upon us because He "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16).

Seeking the gift of grace

Perhaps some of us have not received or known how to use the great gift of grace the Father has given to us through the Atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ. "For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift?" (D&C 88:33). The prophet Zenock even said, "Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people, because they will not understand thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son" (Alma 33:16).

How many of us, at times, try to resolve life's challenges ourselves without seeking the intervention of the Lord in our lives? We try to carry the burden alone.

As some are faced with trials and afflictions, they ask, "Why won't God help me?" Some have even struggled with doubts about their prayers and their personal worthiness and say, "Perhaps prayer doesn't work."

Others who have suffered with sickness, discouragement, financial crisis, rejection, disappointment, and even loss of loved ones may ask, "Why won't the Lord heal me or help me with my son? Why didn't He prevent my daughter's death? Does life have to be this unhappy?"

Yes, one might even cry out: "O God, where art thou? . . . How long shall thy hand be stayed?" (D&C 121:1-2).

Jesus taught that we pass through all these trials to refine us "in the furnace of affliction" (1 Nephi 20:10) and that we should not bear them unaided but "in [the] Redeemer's name" (D&C 138:13).

In spite of our feeling, at times, that He has forgotten us, He testifies: "Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. . . . Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands" (1 Nephi 21:15-16).

I testify that the Lord, through His grace, can continually assist us in our daily lives and in our physical and mental sicknesses, pains, transgressions, and even in all of our infirmities (see Mosiah 14:5; Alma 7:11-13; 34:31).

Centering our eyes and hearts on Christ

However, to pass successfully through the trials we encounter, we must keep our eyes and our hearts centered on the Lord Jesus Christ. "Since man had fallen he could not merit anything of himself" (Alma 22:14); therefore, we needed an advocate, an intercessor, a mediator to assist us. "And it is *because of thy Son* that thou hast been thus merciful unto [us]" (Alma 33:11; italics added).

We should have great hope in knowing, however unworthy we may feel or weak we may be, *that if we will do all we can*, He will come to our aid and provide for us whatever we may lack (see 2 Corinthians 12:9). That statement, to some degree, defines grace.

Understanding grace

Grace is a "divine means of help or strength, given through the bounteous mercy and love of Jesus Christ." It is "an enabling power" (Bible Dictionary, p. 697). The doctrine of the grace of the Father and the Son and how it affects us is so significant that it is mentioned more than two hundred times in the standard works.

If we can obtain the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that divine enabling power to assist us, we will triumph in this life and be exalted in the life to come.

Let me share with you five principles that may help us obtain that divine intervention in our own lives or perhaps vicar-

iously assist in the life of another. These principles are simple to understand but most challenging to apply. You already know all of them. However, you may not have considered how directly related they are to obtaining grace.

Faith: our access to grace

The first principle is *faith*. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace” (Romans 5:1–2).

It is evident that this grace, or enabling power, is accessed by faith. No wonder faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel.

How clear Christ’s question was to a sinking Peter, after he had walked on the water: “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” (Matthew 14:31). The moment Peter doubted and took his eyes off the Savior, he severed himself from the power of Jesus Christ that had sustained him on the water.

How many times, likewise, as we have prayed for assistance or help with our problems, have we severed ourselves from the power of God because of doubt or fear, and thus could not obtain this enabling power of God? (see D&C 6:36; 67:3).

Repentance: being restored unto grace

Repentance is the second principle. The grace of the Lord through the Atonement can both cleanse us of sin and assist us in perfecting ourselves through our trials, sicknesses, and even character defects. We are both sanctified and justified through the grace of the Lord (see D&C 20:30–31). Truly, “as a man his sins confesses, Christ, in mercy, manifests” (Gene R. Cook and Holly Cook, “I Am a Healthy Man” [unpublished hymn]; see also Alma 24:10). Remember, Christ can repair our flaws and failings that otherwise are not repairable (see Genesis 18:14; Mark 9:23–24).

That great truth ought to fill us all with hope, as long as we are quick to remember that the effect of grace in our lives is conditioned upon repenting of our sins.

“Therefore, blessed are they who will repent. . . . And may God grant . . . that men might be brought unto repentance and good works, that they might be restored unto grace for grace, according to their works” (Helaman 12:23–24).

A repentant heart and good works are the very conditions required to have grace restored to us. When someone pleads fervently in prayer for an answer, the answer may be more conditioned on repentance of personal sins than on any other factor (see D&C 101:7–8; Mosiah 11:23–24).

Humility: an essential condition

The third principle is *humility*. “But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6).

“And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me” (Ether 12:27).

Humility is an essential condition of obtaining this divine assistance.

Works: doing all we can do

Doing all in your own power is the fourth principle. Truly did Paul teach, “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” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Yes, works alone cannot bring that divine gift, but they are a key condition upon which the gift is received (see 2 Nephi 10:23–25). “For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23).

Thus, unless one has done all in his own power, he cannot expect the grace of

God to be manifest. What a glorious principle to understand: the Lord's assistance to us—whether we have strong faith or weak faith; whether a man, a woman, or a child—is not based just on what we know, how strong we are, or who we are, but more upon our *giving all that we can give and doing all that we can do* in our present circumstance. Once one has given all he can, then the Lord, through His grace, will assist him (see D&C 123:17).

Clearly, the Lord's role and our role in our receiving divine help come into clear perspective in these inspired words: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

Obedience: then is his grace sufficient

The fifth principle, *keeping the commandments*, surely is a condition for receiving the grace of the Lord: "If you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness . . . ; therefore, . . . you shall receive grace for grace" (D&C 93:20; see also 93:28).

To obtain grace, one does not have to be perfect, but he does have to be trying to keep the commandments the best that he can. Then the Lord will allow him to receive that power.

Moroni sums up the doctrine of grace succinctly:

"If ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; . . .

" . . . Then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ" (Moroni 10:32–33).

Hope through Jesus Christ

What glorious gospel news is an understanding of this doctrine of grace, which persuades us to more fully center our faith and hope upon Jesus Christ. Through the grace of the Father, we will better know how to come unto the Son. (See 1 Nephi 15:14–15.)

Let us be submissive to the Father's will, recognizing that it is preeminent. How thankful we ought to be to submit to His will because He and His Son will never do anything "save it be for the benefit of the world" (2 Nephi 26:24).

By seeking the intercession of the Lord more fully in our lives—

- We will "grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth" (D&C 50:40).

- We will "teach . . . diligently and [His] grace shall attend [us]" (D&C 88:78).

- We will, for our labor, "receive the grace of God, that [we] might wax strong in the Spirit, . . . that [we] might teach with power and authority from God" (Mosiah 18:26).

- We will not "fall from grace" (D&C 20:32).

- We will "receive grace for grace" (D&C 93:20).

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

I bear witness that if we will seek the grace of God, He will come to our aid and the aid of our loved ones in times of need. Let us obey the Lord in all things and offer to Him the ultimate sacrifice of "a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:20; see also 3 Nephi 12:19).

"Seek this Jesus"

Now, as one of the Lord's Seventy and as an especial witness of Christ to bear witness of His name in all the world and "to prepare a way before [His] face" (D&C 124:139), I bear witness of the majesty of the Father and of the Son.

I testify that Jesus Christ lives, that He is as capable of intervening in the lives of men today as He was in the days of old when He walked among men.

I bear personal witness before the Church of the touch of the Master's hand in my own life in healing me from an incurable illness. I bear testimony also of His personal direction in my life, through

a loving and yet chastening hand of correction, to refine my soul, deepen my feelings, grant a remission of my sins, and fill my soul with the love of God.

Let no trial or affliction, my brothers and sisters, ever separate us from the love of God and the true love of Christ (see Romans 8:31, 35–39).

May we “seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in [us] forever” (Ether 12:41). May the grace of God always be with you (see Romans 16:20). I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Gene R. Cook of the Seventy. Thank you, Elder Cook, for that message.

Elder Neil L. Andersen

A prayer for support

My dear brothers and sisters, words are so inadequate to express how humble and overwhelmed I feel at receiving this special calling. Throughout my life, as I have heard the General Authorities speak and felt the power of their messages, I have gained a great reverence for the sacred role they perform in the Church. Now to be invited to sit with them and assist them in building the kingdom of God is a privilege I feel faint in accepting. I pray for your support, for your faith and prayers that I might measure up. I ask for your patience and for the patience of my Brethren who will be my tutors. More than anything, I pray for the help of our Heavenly Father and his Son, for without their help and direction I will surely fail.

Thanks for family and Saints

I am grateful for my wonderful companion, Kathy. She makes goodness look

On Saturday, March 13, 1993, following a four-stake regional conference in Colorado Springs, Colorado, Elder Marvin J. Ashton experienced a nasal hemorrhage requiring medical attention. It has been deemed wise at this time not to burden him with delivery of his conference message. Our prayers are with you, Brother Ashton, and our suggestion is that you keep the message you prepared in a handy place for October conference.

We shall therefore be pleased to hear testimonies from our new General Authorities—Elder Neil Linden Andersen, who will first speak to us, followed by Elder David Todd Christofferson—who were sustained yesterday as members of the Seventy. Elder Andersen and Elder Christofferson, if you will take that first long walk now.

easy, and the purity of her spirit keeps our family focused on the simple yet saving truths of the gospel. I’m so thankful for the valiant and precious children that have been entrusted to us. I love them dearly and appreciate so much their willingness to support me in this new calling. I have been blessed with goodly parents. My parents are now serving as proselyting missionaries in the Georgia Macon Mission. Even before I knew the Church was true, I knew that they knew. I am so appreciative of Kathy’s parents and their example of unselfish giving and for our brothers and sisters who live the gospel in quiet yet dedicated ways.

Our family returned nine months ago from a mission in southern France. I want to express my great love for the members in France. It was in France twenty years ago that I began to glimpse what seeking first the kingdom of God really meant. And living among these French Saints during the last three years has motivated