**“Stewards Walking by Grace”**

**Sermon: Week 1**

Text: 2 Corinthians 9:8

God’s grace, His mercy, His peace are yours through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and I pray He opens our hearts and minds as we hear His Word.

Today we begin a three-week Stewardship emphasis **Everyday Stewards.** Our theme for this week is “Stewards Walking by Grace.” The Bible verse that we are going to focus on is from 2 Corinthians 9:8 which reads, *“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.”* This is our text.

There are three parts to this verse, and we will look closely at each part of this verse. The first part, *“God is able to make all grace abound to you.”* A text that talks about all grace abounding to you gives me an opportunity to talk about what grace means. Ephesians 2:8-9 is a great place to go for our foundational shared definition of the word grace. We are saved by grace through faith and not by works so that no one can boast. Grace is a gift that God gives to us without merit or rank. We receive it by faith. One way I have remembered grace and helped to explain it to people is with an acrostic of the word “grace”: God’s riches at Christ’s expense. Grace is costly. It is free to you and me, but it comes at the cost of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This gift is given to you through the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. Receive Jesus and all of His grace by faith in Him.

Today I ask you to trust that this wonderful gift of grace has been present in the world from the very beginning. In Genesis 1, *“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”* He did not have to. There was nothing in this world that required him to do this work of creation. Grace is something that God does freely and with joy for you. Creation was an act of grace. Creation continues to be an act of grace as God provides. It is by grace that God made us stewards to care for his creation.

The foundation upon which we stand in a right relationship with God is His grace. Psalm 19:1 describes it this way, *“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork.”* In Romans 1:20, *“For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made…”* The truth for each day is that we depend on God’s grace. Stand on the grace of God.

While God’s grace remains strong and persistent in our lives, we are weak and sinful. We sin; we knock down this pillar of grace. When we try to stand in the world without God, without grace, we knock over the pillar of grace. What pillar do we try to stand on instead of grace? We try to stand on our own confidence, our own glad gifts that we think by which we can accomplish everything we desire. But it is an illusion that we have enough, and that we are good enough, and that we have accomplished enough. Instead of standing on our confidence and moving forward on the basis of this, we end up standing, I think, on the pillar of fear. We are worried that what we have will be taken away. We stand on a pillar of anger because resentment in us grows as we look at the unfairness of what someone else has versus what we have. Instead of standing on a pillar of grace, trusting God gives gifts according to grace, in sin we try to stand on another

kind of pillar that is of our own doing. And if it is our own doing, then it is something we must keep and protect and preserve, so it becomes something we fear and worry about.

I want you now to think about how the Apostle Paul walked by grace. Philippians 1:12 is a spot we can see what it means for him to walk by grace. Paul had been arrested. He was in jail and was trying to encourage the churches that he started. He cannot visit them. He cannot walk to them. But he was asking them to still trust that God is with them. He wrote in verse 12, *“I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.”*

Paul looked at the world that others would believe is collapsing, and he went forward trusting that these were moments that have been anointed by grace. For you and me, to be faithful stewards of the gifts and blessings that God has given to us. We walk every step, even when the steps are unknown, trusting that the length and the breadth of our days are measured in God’s grace. The undeserved love and favor of God.

The scriptures are filled with promises that make sense only when you know you do not deserve it or earn it. Our lives are entirely given as a gift beyond what the world would recognize as obvious or clear. As Christians, we walk by grace trusting the promise of God. Even in the midst of our weaknesses, we believe that this grace will be sufficient for us. As Christians we have the long view of what it means to walk by grace. By grace, God has made us stewards of His creation.

The second part of our theme verse 2 Corinthians 9:8 is that God’s grace is sufficient. God’s grace equips us with serving and giving hearts. From the abundance of God’s grace, we have been given everything we need to participate in the ministry of Jesus Christ. In 2 Corinthians 9:8, Paul affirms that God provides everything needed to advance His kingdom. Everything that we need to be people of grace is given by God in sufficient measure with abundance so that we may love and care for others. The challenge today as we think about this word sufficiency are questions about the object of our confidence. What do people measure to figure if God has given in abundance and sufficiency for these times? If we value God’s gifts by the bank account, land holdings, or food in the pantry, we may be left in doubt and feeling empty. Living in the kingdom of God and joyfully serving our neighbors in need becomes a challenge when we measure our glory and strength by the measures of the world. The glories of this world will always be scarce. When I look around at what others have and measure the strength of myself, I will feel ashamed and awkward. I never have enough if I compare myself to others in this world.

I think we can understand the people that Paul warns us about when he talked about the people who sow sparingly and reap sparingly. Uncertain if there is enough, we become guarded. It is hard to share with others when we feel threatened. It is hard to be a part of the expanding work of the kingdom when we feel like the world around us is contracting or shrinking. When the world shrinks, I find myself shrinking. Sin breeds in me worry and fear. When I sow seed sparingly, the devil is plentiful in planting temptations in my heart.

As God’s people, we do not measure glory in the strength of the flesh but in the promises of the Spirit. We believe that the grace of God continues to abound in all times and in all places. We trust the Holy Spirit to be at work in the Gospel leading us to see Jesus. The grace of God is sufficient for this day and all that God allows for this moment. Our own strength will falter and struggle in trying moments, and so we must trust in the sufficiency of God’s love and favor for every moment.

Filled with the sufficiency of God’s grace, we are abled to abound in good works which is the third part of 2 Corinthians 9:8. When our deeds and actions are done through faith, they are good works.

The relationship among faith, grace, and good works is often summarized by the phrase, “We are saved by grace, through faith, for good works.” Just as the morning follows night, our good works follow our salvation by grace. Good works are an important part of our lives as everyday stewards. Paul wrote, *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:10). As we ask the Lord to enable us to submit to His will, He will put those good works that He has prepared for us to do before us. God may not tell us in advance what good works He wants us to do, but this verse tells us that they exist and that He has equipped us to do them. Every day we are given opportunities to do good works. Some may be as small as opening the door for others, or they may be as big as spending the entire day or several days helping someone in need.

Paul states that we are *“God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus.”* God does not create junk. We are His masterpieces filled with the Holy Spirit. With the same power that God used in the beginning to create man from dust and later to resurrect Jesus from the dead (Ephesians 1:19-20), He raises us out of spiritual death and makes us new people—His workmanship, transformed stewards—whose works give evidence that we are new creatures. By the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament, we are brought into God’s kingdom. We are no longer part of or in union with the world. As new people living under the power of the Gospel, we desire to honor God and obediently do the good works He has planned for us to do. Because Christ has redeemed us from all wickedness and purified for *“Himself a people for His own possession,”* we are zealous to do good works (Titus 2:14).

Jesus lived the perfect life in our place, and He makes our impoverished good works acceptable to our Heavenly Father. Our good works, made acceptable through Jesus, give glory to our Heavenly Father.

By grace through faith, we can be ready and willing to be **everyday stewards** who are willing to surrender their will to God’s will. May God’s blessings be with you as you strive to please Him and give glory to Him through your good works.