



A V O I C E F R O M T H E W I L D E R N E S S

His Grace Is Sufficient! Is My Cooperation Efficient?

This simple statement of truth and the question being asked in the title of this article, are having a very profound effect upon my practical Christian experience! This thought of God's grace and my cooperation is not new, rather, a deeper and more practical application of how it works in my personal life and that of my family. You will notice that the word **co-operation** is hyphenated throughout the article. This special emphasis is intended to remind us that **we work along with the operations of heaven**. Co-working with the divine agencies that **operate** for our salvation.

It began to unfold one day as I was installing our new hydro-electrical power system. Since this was an important project and outside my skills, I found myself praying for more grace so I wouldn't make needless mistakes. I prayed, "Father, you know that this is not something I'm used to doing. I need Your grace sufficient so I won't make any mistakes." It was then that the strong reply came to me from our tender heavenly Father, "My grace is sufficient, will your co-operation be efficient?" This thought or impression

was so clear and simple that I was stunned at the glimpse of what was possible. **Yes, God's grace was sufficient for me**, it always had been and would be. It wasn't more of His grace I needed, **it was more efficient use of the grace by co-operating with Him**.

So I began to ask the Lord how I could co-operate with Him in this situation. The thought came to me to take a few minutes and write down everything that I would need for this part of the hydro project. I would carefully think through each step of the process, then He would direct my thoughts so I could write down the tools and parts in the order that would be needed to successfully complete the task. I was excited as I began to realize, like never before, what it meant to co-operate or be a co-worker with heavenly agencies.

The Lord was helping me to see that by taking a few minutes of thoughtful planning, even though in my personality I didn't want to "waste" the time, I would spare myself needless mistakes, extra trips running for parts and tools and most importantly, to recognize and understand the words of Christ, "I can

of Mine own self do nothing." John 5:30.

You may be a person naturally gifted with strong abilities to plan, organize and efficiently execute a project, but have you ever found yourself so intensely absorbed and involved, that if someone or something interrupts your plans and progress, you would react in irritation and frustration? While one person departs from Christ through lack of organization and resulting frustration, another just as surely separates from Christ through over intensity and self-sufficiency. How often have we prayed for God's will be done and then by our unwillingness to co-operate with His will depart from Christ and end in failure?

While it is true that we need grace to deliver us from trials we create for ourselves, God wants to also deliver us from continuing to create those needless situations of frustration. Let me illustrate the thought.

Have you ever heard someone describe God's miraculous deliverance in keeping their car running on fumes when they should have run out of gas miles ago? It is right to be thankful to God in such an experience and undoubtedly a rare situation similar to this may occur; but the real question is how often are we creating these situations by our lack of preparation, lack of thoroughness or habits of slothfulness? Right here our minds may want to recall some of these situations and self may want to be justified, but this is not important. What is important is to realize that God is calling to us to begin co-operating with Him. He wants us to consult Him in **all** of our plans and duties of life, not only for His divine permission, but for His methods and efficiency in carrying out those plans and duties. He entreats us to become faithful stewards of our time, money, our marriage relation, our families and all the resources of His

blessing.

Friends, His grace is sufficient for us, but to make this grace our own, we have a part to act. The apostle Paul says, "... 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." Philippians 2:12-13.

Comments on Paul's words from Prophets and Kings 486-487 emphasize our need to co-operate.

"Herein is revealed the outworking of the divine principle of co-operation, without which no true success can be obtained. Human effort avails nothing without divine power; and without human endeavor, divine effort is with many of no avail. To make God's grace our own, we must act our part. His grace is given to work in us to will and to do, but never as a substitute for our effort."

Do we want **true success** in our Christian lives, in our business and our

homes? Are we **willing** to begin co-operating and acting our part in this divine formula? It is vital that we recognize the operation of grace in our practical life so that we can efficiently act our part to co-operate with the grace so abundantly offered.

God's grace works through the "still, small voice" guiding us, instructing us, warning us of temptation and enabling us to do all His biddings. This co-operation involves all aspects of our lives from our thoughts to our actions. When someone has misrepresented me and the thought comes into my mind on how unfair the statement was, God calls to me, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Philippians 2:5. Am I willing to co-operate with Him and give Him the thoughts and accept His thoughts of forgiveness and love toward that individual? At those times when I would like to speak an irritated word to my wife or child, the Lord brings to my mind,

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"A soft answer turneth away wrath." Proverbs 15:1. "Are you willing to co-operate with Me that I may give you the words that will bring healing to their souls?" He asks. How about the times when there are several things to do that seem pressing, am I willing to co-operate with the Mighty Counselor and ask, "What is your will for me right now?" and then do it in His power?

You see, "Christ is ever sending messages to those who will listen for His voice." Ministry of Healing 509. As we are willing to listen and co-operate with His guidance we understand more practically the sufficiency of His grace - that it is made perfect in weakness - my weakness. 2 Corinthians 12:9. This co-operation is responding "yes" to all His biddings, aware that we can do His will only as we remain connected with the enabling power of His grace.

God's part in this simple equation has never been lacking, but without my co-operation on a practical, not just a theoretical basis, the equation is not complete. This co-operation begins with the first decision of my day. If my heavenly Father wants to meet with me at 5am - will I co-operate? Or what if He awakens me at 4am, am I willing to say, "Yes Lord?" My co-operation will depend on at least two things: was I temperate and co-operative in going to bed the night before, and will I act from principle - not feeling - when He calls? If I will co-operate here, in the first decision of the day, I will be much more inclined to co-operate throughout the day.

God longs to have us co-operate with His grace for those that are nearest us within our own families. We may not know of the burdens or temptations that our spouse may be under - but God knows - and He invites you and I to co-operate with Him in uplifting

and encouraging the faith of the one we have vowed to love and cherish.

I remember one morning as I was spending time in prayer and God's Word, the thought was impressed on me that I should ask my wife to take a walk and see how things were with her. I began to reason that I really needed more time with the Lord, but I quickly recognized that I needed to co-operate with the prompting even though the thought didn't

necessarily seem reasonable to me at the moment. So I went to my wife and asked her to go for a walk with me. As we walked, I told her of my earlier thoughts and asked her if there was anything she wanted to share with me. She quietly began to express to me that she was aware of Satan's attack upon her, trying to bring thoughts of inadequacy and discouragement. As she confided in me I had to realize that she did not need me to tell her what she might be doing wrong or what she needed to

do right, at least not right at that moment. The "still, small voice" was reminding me to continue to co-operate with the divine agencies for my wife's restoration. She needed me to first put my arm around her, and to sense my tender concern for her and just listen for a few moments. Then, as I listened to her, she became open and ready for me to give her words of encouragement and exhortation in the Lord. In this situation to co-operate meant more than just giving my wife a text of Scripture and praying for her, it meant **giving of myself - my time - my concern** - then the way opened for the Word of God and prayer to have more practical significance. God wanted to use me as a tool in His hands for my wife.

Friends, it is imperative that we know whether or not we are co-operating with God's grace in light of the effect it is having on our own Spiritual welfare

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and our own families. For us as husbands to co-operate with grace for our wives salvation might mean: setting aside scheduled time just for our wives, time just to talk without being in a rush or under pressure. Where will we get this time? This is where we demonstrate our love for our wives, as she sees us setting aside the newspaper, television, magazines, hobbies or whatever consumes our time because we want to care for and nurture her. Now she begins to understand what is meant by, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ **loved** the church and **gave** Himself for it." Ephesians 5:25. As our wives see us co-operating with God by faithfully taking up the work of "priest" and "houseband" in the home circle; they are encouraged to heed the counsel, "Wives, submit yourselves therefore unto your husbands as unto the Lord." Ephesians 5:22.

As my wife saw me making decisions in my business, social and personal life for her sake and our families, she was encouraged in a practical way to listen to and obey the "still, small voice" and co-operate with God in the use of her time, the education of the children, the family finances and many other areas of her life personally and as a family.

Does this co-operation cost something? **Yes!** Frequent collisions against self and selfish habits. To truly co-operate with the divine agencies of heaven is to be at war with the adversary of our souls. In this warfare with self and Satan, wearing as it is, will be found the **only true rest** for the soul. Co-operating **efficiently** with God's grace will bring true success in business, in our personal Christian walk and will develop families whose lives bear, "the greatest evidence of the power of Christianity that can be presented to the world." Adventist Home 32.

God will have a people who know His voice, follow His will and so fully co-operate with His grace that the world will know that **His grace is sufficient**. As they behold the character of Christ reproduced in

you and I, as they see the practical, life-changing power of the Gospel in our families, in the way we do business and how we manage **all** our resources, they will be encouraged to believe that they too can enter fully into the life "hid with Christ in God." Colossians 3:3

Is this your experience today? Do you want this experience? Dear friend, go to God on your knees, admitting your failures, asking Him to show His will for you personally and to put within you a willingness to co-operate with Him. Covenant to be sensitive to His leadings, and quick to obey His promptings. Your life will take on new meaning and growing commitment to co-operate with His grace.

What an opportunity we have! Will we pass by so great a salvation that God is providing through grace?

Let us be reminded continually: **His Grace Is Sufficient! Is My Co-operation Efficient?**

A Voice From The Wilderness

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Restoration International

(928) 821-6315

Email: office@rionline.org

Web: www.rionline.org

Office: Mon-Thur. 9-5