# Grace to Endure

# 2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10; 2 Corinthians 12:2-10 and Mark 6:1-13

# A sermon preached at Baldwin Auditorium on July 5, 2015 by the Rev. Dr. Herbert Reynolds Davis

Regardless of who you are, life can be challenging - personal challenges, family challenges, community or society challenges.

* Goals & aspirations don’t work out as intended
* Children make life altering decisions contrary to how we raised them
* Spouses decide that they no longer want to honor the commitment both of you made years ago in front of God and witnesses
* What you had intentionally stashed for a rainy day, now seems insufficient because of the length of your rainy “season”
* LIFE IS CHALLENGING!!

The challenges of life lead to existential questions of:

* Who are you?
* What do you believe about God?
* What do you believe even about yourself?
* What will you look to achieve or accomplish in life?

As challenging as life can be, as Christians we must maintain hope! We must be like Abraham (Rom.4.18) and believe in hope even when things around us look hopeless!!

In the midst of the amalgam of events in the recent past, people of faith must yet maintain hope that God is able to transform the world. Regardless of what I see, hear or even experience, I MUST maintain hope. The Christian’s ability to maintain hope and even survive the many challenges of life is rooted in our ability to embrace the grace of God.

* I read a quote yesterday “God’s presence in my life is not proven by the problems/tragedies that are avoided, but rather by the ones I endure.”
* The ultimate question then becomes “How do I endure?”
* The answer is BY THE GRACE OF GOD

This is a fact that too often is overlooked or missed in our local churches.

Our scriptures for today all speak to some of the various challenges that may confront us - Delay, Rejection & Hindrances

* David is made King of Israel, but this event was approximately 15 years after being anointed (promised) to be King
  + Anointed (received the promise) around the age of
  + So David’s story demonstrates the challenge of **DELAY**
  + When things take longer than expected . . .
    - *Have you ever experienced what I call the demon of delay?*
  + Delay has a way of wearing on our faith, testing your conviction, & even challenging our confidence in being able to recognize the voice of God
    - David somehow is able to survive not just the physical attacks upon his life, but also the weight of waiting
    - David endures delay not b/c of his own personal greatness, but b/c of the GRACE of God
* Jesus, the Son of the Living God, very God in human flesh, experiences another of life’s challenges – **REJECTION**
  + Jesus has embarked upon his public ministry and when he comes home he is teaching in the synagogue
  + B/c the people of Nazareth knew his past, they were unwilling to accept who and what Jesus could do
    - Jesus declares that a prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown, among people who know the prophet
  + B/c of their unbelief omnipotence was limited; No miracles could take place
    - *Have you ever felt rejected in spite of your good intentions, and efforts to help?*
  + Jesus doesn’t allow rejection in Nazareth to stop his ministry
  + Or cause him to question his purpose and worth
    - Jesus endures b/c of the GRACE of God
* Paul’s thorn in the flesh presents him with another challenge
  + Challenges that he saw as **HINDRANCES** to his ability to fulfill his divine assignment
    - Paul even with all of his ministry success, yet felt that he was being hindered
  + Paul repeatedly petitions God to remove the thorn & eliminate the hindrances
    - Believing that he could be more effective w/o this hindrance
    - *God, if I didn’t have THIS, how much more could I do for you?*
  + But God responds – My Grace is Sufficient

Your ability to endure the challenges of life is not based upon your personal strength but upon your ability to grasp confidently and completely the GRACE offered by God

* God silences Paul’s repetitive petition by declaring the GRACE I have extended to you is sufficient for you to endure your challenges
* God lets Paul know, “you don’t need anything new and you don’t need anything removed. All you need to do is embrace the grace that I have already extended to you.”

The grace of God not only pulls us out of the quagmire of sin, but also empowers us to endure the difficulties of life. God has freely given grace that we must freely receive.

Noah found grace, the unmerited favor, the divine ability to do, in Genesis chapter six. The grace he found enabled him to build what no one else had ever done. The grace he found enabled him to collect the animals two by two. The same grace that enabled Noah to build the ark helped him to endure the floods. But it also enabled him to endure the delay until the floodwaters subsided. All by the grace of God.

Grace to endure!