

All the Grace You Need—for Today

I only spent one week sitting at the feet of Dr. Oscar Thompson, but it was a memorable week. Dr. Thompson was a seminary professor, but he was speaking for a week in Houston, where I was in my last year of college. Every night I went to hear him speak, and I even skipped classes on a few days to hear him in the morning.

Oscar Thompson was in his last year of life. He was dying from cancer. But he was not in town to talk about cancer; his focus was on preaching about Christ. Yet on one occasion, he talked about the grace God had given him for what he was undergoing—and his words have stayed with me for almost 40 years.

Oscar Thompson can tell you better than I can what he said. His most well-known book, [Concentric Circles of Concern](#), was published after his death. The book is a classic and is still widely read. The book includes this epilogue which captures what I heard him say so many years ago.

“In 1976 ... I experienced excruciating pain in my right hip. I was taken to the hospital, sedated, and later flown home and hospitalized with a preliminary diagnosis of a slipped disc.

“Weeks passed while I lingered in traction, alas, to no avail. In desperation, a spinal fusion was performed. Another two months passed with no relief. Two months later exploratory surgery was performed on the hip.

“After surgery I was advised that an inoperable malignant tumor had grown out of the bone. A bone scan later revealed that the malignancy had metastasized and spread to my foot, knee, hip, rib, shoulder, and cranium.

“After the doctor left my room that night, a deep, sweet peace from him who is our peace surged within me. It was simply inexplicable and ineffable. I reached for my New Testament on the nightstand and said, ‘Father, if I am not going to live, I want to count. I need a word from you.’ There surfaced in my mind a passage of Scripture that I had memorized years before. *‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God’* (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

“‘Oh, Father, I understand. You are going to send me through the valley so that I can comfort others with your comfort when they walk there.’

“Then came that inner nudge that said, ‘Read on.’ Verses 8 through 11 revealed this promise to my heart: *‘We were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, ... you also joining in helping us through your prayers, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed upon us through the prayers of many.’*

“I put down the Testament, rejoiced in the Lord, and later slipped into a peaceful, refreshing sleep. Was I rejoicing because I felt I would live? No! I was rejoicing because it really did not matter. My life was under his control. I rejoiced because of a wonderful awareness of his love. Verse after verse that I had memorized began to surface. First John 4:18 exploded in my consciousness: *‘There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.’*

“I knew that nothing could come into my life without God’s permission. If it came with his permission, then I knew that it surely came with his grace to deal with it. ...

“The joy of living is permitting God to do through us whatever he has in mind for each day. Most people’s lives are crucified between two thieves, yesterday and tomorrow. God can only give forgiving grace for yesterday. He stores no provision of grace for tomorrow. Tragically, most of us live in yesterday and tomorrow, in that devastating land of ‘What if?’ God has adequate grace to deal with yesterday if it is put in his hands. **But his grace is poured out one day at a time.** The person who has not learned this will never live victoriously. He will always be vulnerable to circumstances.

“In other words, I learned that God does not give dying grace on non-dying days.”

There it is. God gives us the grace we need for today.