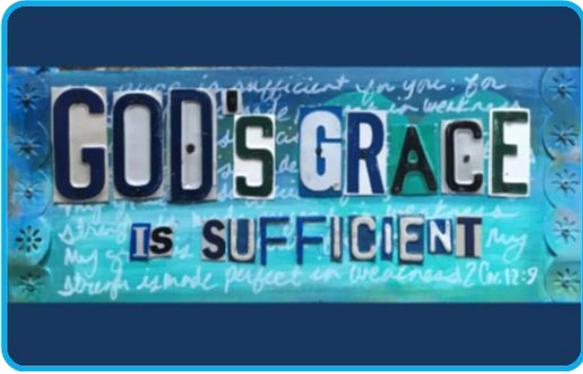


Topic: God's Sufficient Grace



And he said unto me; My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

~2 Corinthians 12:9 (KJV)~

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INTRODUCTION

We use the word grace in many different ways, being a word often spoken in our society. Children are introduced to this word as something we tell them to say before the first scoop of the fork hits the food on their plate. It's a word we use to describe a woman of age who, in our words and perception, has grown older with a special elegance or refinement (we say she has aged with grace). We use the word grace (or period of grace) as an act extended by a creditor allowing us to make payment on a debt past its due date. Grace, what is it? It is much more profound than a blessing over food or an elegant and refined woman or a few extra days to make good on a debt. Yes, grace extends far beyond finding its beginning and ending in the heavenlies. Grace goes as deep and is as significant as a Son given and as loving as a life committed.

Grace finds its truest meaning in the heart of our God and is demonstrated in the face of His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. By definition, grace is defined as God's unmerited favor; it is kindness from God we don't deserve. When God had every right to bring eternal condemnation upon every act of sin we committed against Him, he extended grace in doing for us what we couldn't do for ourselves; he sent His Son Jesus to stand in our stead receiving the judgement reserved for you and I. This is what **Grace** truly is.

A preacher once explained it this way, Grace is: "**G**=God's **R**=Riches **A**=At **C**=Christ's **E**=Expense". Christ willingly took our place and received our penalty for the sins we committed against the holiness of God and as a result, left sinful man open to God's grace in the face of Christ that is sufficient for man to be brought back into right relationship with our Creator God... "**Thank you God for your GRACE**".

OUR STUDY

The word "Grace" appears somewhere around 131 times in the King James version of the Holy Bible. We read that our blessed Lord Jesus Christ was full of grace and truth (*cf. John 1:14*). We also read how great grace was given unto the apostles who went on with great power to witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (*cf. Acts 4:33*). We also see God's greatest act of grace as the foundation of His gift of salvation unto man.

Ephesians 2:4-9 (NKJV)

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

By this scripture, we come to understand that grace is a gift given unto man and that if not given is unattainable. Man, who was born in sin and shaped in iniquity (*cf. Psalm 51:5*) could not, with his own power nor ability bring himself back into right relationship with God. So, in His great love for us, God bestowed grace when we deserved judgement. Through Christ's perfect sacrifice of his life, God removed the stain of sin from upon us. There is nothing else you and I need to be saved except to accept salvation by grace through faith; nothing more nothing less. God's grace is sufficient and settled in the birth and death of His Son Jesus. In God's unmerited favor, we lack nothing. We are well able to sustain any situation that comes our way so long as we abide in Christ and let Christ abide in us.

This is what the apostle Paul had to come to realize as he sought the Lord for relief. As we study 2 Corinthians chapter 12, we see a man who finds himself in a situation of attack (Paul calls it a thorn in the flesh). The attack or thorn is of such that it drives him to seek the Lord for relief. The Bible tells us in verse 8 of this chapter that Paul sought the Lord "thrice" (as quoted in the King James Version). While most Bible scholars interpret the word "thrice" to mean "three", in the Greek the word signifies an intense notion. In other words, this situation was of such that Paul went to extreme measures in his quest for the Lord to relieve him. The Lord's response to the apostle was ***"my grace is sufficient for thee"***. Wow...how would you or I feel if we sought the Lord in the midst of devastation and turmoil only to receive "my grace is sufficient for thee"? Would we feel as if the Lord is down playing our situation? Or perhaps feel as if the Lord doesn't care about what we are going through? Maybe we might turn it around to feeling as if we are not deserving of deliverance? I'm sure at this moment, there are a lot of thoughts running through our mind. But the word of the Lord is: I have given you all you need to make it; my grace is enough for you. Nowhere in the Bible does it record the Lord retracting this statement made to Paul. Nor does Paul receive any caveat to this statement. It stands just as it had been spoken.

What is God's Sufficient Grace?

One of the most wonderful, yet perhaps least understood principle in the Bible is the wonderful gift of God's grace. We understand it was God's act of grace that brought salvation but as we look at this 12th chapter of 2 Corinthians, we see God's grace is that and so much more. By the time the apostle Paul penned 2 Corinthians, he had been converted to Christianity approximately 19 years and by this time had established or aided several churches dedicated to teaching and preaching the message of salvation through Christ.

Paul had a great love for the ministry and felt it was his call to ensure the church of Christ remained a chaste virgin prepared for the coming of the Bride Groom. He knew the importance of Christians understanding the power of God's grace. So, in chapter 12, the Apostle shares an encounter experienced by a man that brought this man into a life changing understanding of the grace of God. Let's explore the first nine verses of 12th chapter so we too can understand just how blessed we are as recipients of God's sufficient grace.

2 Corinthians 12:2-9 (NKJV)

2. I knew a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven.
3. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows.
4. How he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

5. Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities.
6. For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me.
7. And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.
8. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.
9. And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Paul here shares his testimony in an attempt to teach the value of affliction in the life of the child of God. While this second book written to the Corinthian church deals with much more than this, it is in this portion of scripture that the apostle shares his story of affliction, prayer and prayer answered. Paul starts this chapter with giving a narrative of the favor God had shown him, and the honor he had done him; for doubtless he himself is the man in Christ of whom he speaks yet in the New King James and King James Versions, Paul speaks in the third person. Of the honor itself which was done to the apostle: he was caught up into the third heaven. In describing this encounter, the Apostle says whether this man was in the body or out of the body, he cannot tell. He goes on to share how this man was caught up into paradise and there heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter. He tells us in verse 7 that this man (whom he now addresses as himself) was given a thorn in the flesh so that he would not be exalted above measure. Because of the abundance of the revelations given unto the Apostle, there was assigned to him a messenger of Satan to buffet him and keep him from a level of self-exaltation. Not having revelation of this blessed experience, the Apostle shared in verse 8 how because of this thorn, he sought the Lord intensely that it might depart from him.

We like, the apostle Paul at this time, do not really understand the magnitude of the gift of grace we have in God. Like the apostle Paul, we too seek God’s face in our attempt to get Him to remove us from a hard and difficult trial or tribulation. Like the apostle Paul, God has given us a grace that is sufficient for our continued walk and life in Christ. God’s sufficient grace even shows up when what we are experiencing is the direct result of our own behavior and doings. God’s unmerited favor upholds us even during these times.

The Lord then goes on to say something profound in what is truly taking place in the inner man of the Apostle. The Lord tells Paul that the strength of God is made perfect in weakness. Some may be a little confused as to why God would say such to the Apostle. It sounds like God wants us to be weak, but weak how? Surely God wants us to be spiritually strong, resilient and optimistic in dealing with all types of situations and circumstances that we may encounter. So, what does the Lord mean exactly in making this statement? In the Greek, the word weakness and infirmities bear the same meaning “without strength”. In the context of this portion of scripture in 2 Corinthians, Chapter 12, the statement is used to illustrate the apostle Paul’s inability (lack of strength, or weakness) in that he could not rescue himself from the distress he was experiencing. What Paul perhaps hadn’t realized is that it was in this place that God’s strength could be made manifest in him that the thorn was given to him in the first place. Paul specifically tells us in verse 7 that this thorn was given so that he wouldn’t be exalted above measure from all that God was revealing to him. Clearly this messenger was given because God wanted to keep the man of God grounded and of a meek and humble spirit. But we can also say that God wanted to perfect Paul’s ability to depend on God thereby being strengthened in his walk with God. When we get to the place of total reliance upon God to lead, guide, and direct us, the Spirit of God within us becomes greater than any force external to us. The Bible makes this very clear to us.

1 John 4:4 (NKJV)

You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

From this passage of scripture, we see that it is God's intent that we be overcomers in the world. This can only be realized as we allow the strength of God to be made perfect in us. We mustn't deprive the Lord this opportunity by continuing to keep our hand on situations wherein we know we are not able to overcome. We simply need to let go and let God. God's grace is able to uphold us while His strength is able to up build us. Joyce Meyer once said that "Grace is the power of God made available to meet all our needs". If we are struggling with issues of life, God's power is available because His grace is sufficient. When we are too weak to do what needs to be done, then God's power or strength is made perfect in that area of weakness. God brings us to a place where we are forced to rely on Him. This is where our greatest blessing comes. Check out what the apostle Peter says about God's sufficient grace.

1 Peter 5:10 (KJV)

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

As we can see, Peter understood the message of 2 Corinthians 12:9. I'm sure like Paul, Peter too had the testimony that he would most gladly therefore glory in his infirmities (weaknesses) that the power of Christ may rest upon him. God's power is greatest when we are at our weakest. What we need most in our weakness is God's sufficient grace, not more strength and not a dramatic deliverance. This is so backward from how the world operates. We like to show off our strength. To act like we've got it all together. But this is the opposite of God. His power is made perfect and shines brightest in our times of weakness.

Conclusion

In closing, there are four things God's sufficient grace will do for us: (1) God will restore us. If our life is falling apart, God can restore it; (2) God will establish us. No matter what comes against us, we can be established because of God's sufficient grace; (3) God will strengthen us. Our weaknesses are the prime environment for the strength of God to be made perfect. We can take comfort in knowing our weakness are not meant to harm us but are instead meant to raise us to another level in serving and living for the Lord; (4) God will support us. God promised to never leave nor forsake us and this includes even during our times of suffering and weaknesses. He promised to be a very present help in these times. Be encouraged my brother and my sister in knowing that you walk in God's unmerited favor continually.

God's peace and blessing be upon you....

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