

“SUFFICIENT GRACE”
(How God’s Strength Is Made Perfect In Our Weakness)
II Corinthians 12:1-10

Text: *“And He (Jesus) 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.” (v. 9)*

INTRODUCTION

1. Paul had founded the church at Corinth and had ministered there for a year and a half. (Acts 18:1-18)
2. When problems arose after his departure, he sent Timothy to deal with them. (I Cor. 4:17)
3. Matters grew worse and Paul had to make a painful visit to Corinth to confront the troublemakers. (II Cor. 2:1) (Still no solution.)
4. Paul then wrote a “severe letter” which was delivered by Titus. (2:4-9 / 7:8-12)
5. After a great deal of distress, Paul met Titus and got the good report that the problems had been solved. It was then that he wrote the letter of II Corinthians.

Why did Paul write II Corinthians?

1. To encourage the church to forgive and restore the troublemaking member.
2. To explain Paul’s personal change of plans.
3. To reinforce Paul’s apostolic authority.
4. To encourage the church to give a special “relief offering” for the saints in Judea.
5. To reveal how godly sorrow works deep repentance that never brings regret.
6. To teach us how to use the weapon of prayer in battle.
7. To declare that God’s grace is more than sufficient for every affliction, valley and wilderness season.

Remember

- The key word in II Corinthians is “**encouraged**” or “**comfort**”.
- The Greek word means “**called to one’s side to help**”.
- It’s a verb used 18 times (to reveal our resource in the midst of whatever).

Questions with answers: (What does it mean...)

- ◆ “My grace is sufficient for thee?”
- ◆ “Our strength is made perfect in weakness?”
- ◆ “To gladly therefore glory in our infirmities?”
- ◆ “To take pleasure in distresses for Christ’s sake?”
- ◆ “When I am weak, then am I strong?”

Three Absolutes Surrounding Paul
(That Minister Today)

I. Paul Was “Blessed” (v. 1-6)

- A. Paul was blessed with visions and revelations. (v.1)
1. Paul saw Jesus exalted at conversion. (Acts 9:23)
 2. Paul saw a vision of Ananias coming his way. (Acts 9:12)
 3. Paul had a vision when called to the Gentiles. (Acts 22:17)

4. Paul was called by a vision to Macedonia. (Acts 16:9)
 5. Paul was encouraged in Corinth by a vision. (Acts 18:9-10)
 6. Paul was assured in a storm by an angel. (Acts 27:23)
- B. Paul was blessed with going to heaven. (v. 2)
1. Paul went to heaven and back 14 years prior to writing about his experience.
 2. Paul confirms to us all the reality of eternity.
- C. Paul was blessed with hearing “unspeakable words”. (v. 4)
1. Paul overheard divine secrets while in heaven.
 2. Paul would never forget the impact of his experience with God.

II. Paul Was “Broken” (v. 7,8)

“There was given to me a thorn in the flesh.” (v. 7)

“I prayed three times that it might depart from me.” (v. 8)

Question: Why didn’t Paul’s great experience in heaven ruin his ministry?

Answer: Because God (in His goodness) permitted Satan to buffet Paul to keep him from becoming proud.

The word “**thorn**” means: “a sharp stake used for torturing”.

- Paul’s thorn was some type of affliction that brought pain and distress to Paul.
- Paul’s thorn was used of God to protect his ego from becoming inflated.
- Paul’s thorn was a blessing in disguise to a fruitful and productive ministry.

What must I remember?

#1. God permitted Satan to afflict Paul

Yes, God rules even over evil and can use it for His glory.

Satan cannot work against a believer without the permission of God.

#2. God trusted Paul to not get bitter.

Paul could have blamed God for robbing him of pleasure and comfort, yet Paul “**grew**” instead of “**grumbled**” in the will of God.

“**Buffet**” means: “to beat or strike with the fist”. The tense of the verb means that Paul’s pain was constant or recurring.

- No wonder he prayed three times for his affliction to be removed.

Question: Was it wrong to pray for a deliverance from this thorn?

Answer: Not a sin at all as long as we allow God to answer his way!!!

III. Paul Was “Bolstered” (v. 9,10) (Notice Paul’s three declarations)

#1. *“I will glory in infirmities.”* (v. 5)

#2. *“Most gladly will I glory in my infirmities.”* (v. 9)

#3. *“I take pleasure in infirmities.”* (v. 10)

(Four questions of power)

Question #1: What does Jesus mean when He says; “*My grace is sufficient for thee*”?

Fact: Paul was hoping for a “yes” answer to his thorn removed.

Fact: But Paul was allowed to keep what was buffeting him.

Question: Do you have any thorns pricking you?

Question: Any sharp things cut your heart lately?

Question: Any distress, irritations or pain at present?

Question: Has a thorn in life brought you low or weighted you down?

(If so, God has good news for you, what is it?)

“My grace is sufficient for you.” What’s it mean?

- **“Grace”** means: *“divine support”* and *“provision as needed”*.
- **“Sufficient”** means: *“there is never a shortage”* and *“it can never run out”*.
- Put the two words together and you get **“sufficient grace”**

(Jesus is saying)

1. “I will not only be your divine support and provision”, but
2. “I will prove to be sufficient (or) never in shortage of what you need at the time you need it.”

Question: Ever doubt this in the wilderness?

Question: Ever feel you cannot bear up under trial?

Question: Ever believe you’ll sink under the load and burden? (Then remember these words)

“My grace is sufficient for you.”

Question #2: What does it mean when Jesus says, *“My strength is made perfect in weakness”*?

Ask: Aren’t we supposed to be self-sufficient?

Ask: Aren’t we supposed to be self-confident?

Ask: Aren’t we supposed to be self-made?

(Jesus is saying)

#1. “The strength which I give is manifested when My people feel their weakness.”

Fact: It’s not imparted to those who feel they are strong.

Fact: It’s not given to those who feel no need of divine help.

Fact: It’s not poured out to those who believe they can make it without God.

“My strength is made perfect in weakness.”

(Means)

#1. That when I am conscious I am feeble,

#2. That when I know my flesh is weak,

#3. That when I acknowledge I am zero without God. **(It’s then and only then)**

- That Jesus manifests His power to uphold you (and)
- Imparts His strength to sustain you!

(In other words)

1. God's power is increased continually as my weakness is admitted.
2. The more I see my own weakness, the wider the door of God's grace is opened.

(Two great illustrations)

Psalm 84:7 *"They go from strength to strength."*

Fact: Korah's family had to travel through the wilderness to get back to the Tabernacle for worship.

Fact: In their journey (v. 6), the valley of weeping was encountered.

Fact: God promised that they would go "**from strength to strength.**"

(Which means)

1. The farther you travel, the stronger you become.
2. As you spend your strength in God's will, new strength will arrive and increase!
3. As you overcome in your wilderness seasons, every difficulty produces a greater strength to overcome the next difficulty.

John 1:16 *"Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace."*

The phrase: "**And grace for grace**" means:

- That when one blessing is used up, a fresh one is substituted to take its place (repeat)
- Thus: in our weakness, Jesus imparts His strength to us (if we depend upon Him).

Question #3: What does it mean to *"Glory in my infirmities?"*

(It doesn't mean)

1. That Paul preferred pain to health.
2. That Paul was psychologically unbalanced.
3. That Paul had some "poor me" martyr's complex.
4. That Paul was praying like some spiritual space cadet "inflict me, inflict me".

(It does mean)

- That Paul had discovered a secret (a secret that enabled him to glory (not grumble) in his wilderness, affliction, trial and test).

Paul discovered:

1. That the grace of God was proving sufficient day after day.
2. That his weakness was being replaced (or compensated) by God's strength.
3. That the presence of God was more than adequate for what he must endure.

Can we glory in infirmity?

Fact: To grumble reveals a lack of humility.

Fact: To grumble reveals I'm not living in II Corinthians 12:9.

Fact: To grumble reveals I'm not experiencing the grace that God provides.

“Most gladly I glory in the wilderness.”

(or)

“I count it a privilege to be here.”

(How can he?)

- Because (in prayer) Paul received God’s strength and enabling grace to glory (not resent) his infirmities, injustices, afflictions and thorn.

Question #4: What does it mean pastor, “*that the power of Christ may rest upon me?*”

Fact: “The power of Christ” means:

- The strength of the Lord He imparts to me.
- The enablement of the Spirit He endues me with.

Fact: “May rest upon me” means:

- “To pitch a tent upon”
- “To overshadow as the Shekinah glory of God overshadowed the mercy seat.”

(How does this work out?)

1. Paul knows that God’s grace is sufficient,
2. Thus, Paul believes that Christ’s strength will be revealed when we are weak,
3. Thus, Paul can glory in his infirmities as Christ’s power will rest upon him.

“The power of Christ resting upon me” means:

1. We have access to the fresh grace that God pours out.
2. We have access to the very provision which enables us “to glory in infirmities.”

Fact: We don’t glory for our infirmities (that’s foolishness).

Fact: We glory in (or in the midst of) our infirmities.

(How?)

- Because God’s grace will always be equal to what touches your life.
- Because Divine power will assist and support us through every season!

Amen
Bill Kirk