

## 2Corinthians (Quality: Average)

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Date: 28 March 1993

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Second Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 12, verse 9. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

This is a blessed word the Apostle Paul was favoured to receive in a sense in answer to his prayer. Although the prayer was not answered as Paul desired, yet the Lord was pleased to appear for him.

The chapter reminds us that Paul had been wonderfully favoured. He had been exceptionally favoured by God.

How he was caught up into paradise, as it were, in that vision that God gave him. And it must have been a very wonderful, outstanding experience for the Apostle to have.

But how we see in the Lord's dealings with the Apostle, as it were, the balance in the clouds. And while there was this wonderful blessing that God was pleased to bestow upon the Apostle, he had to experience something else.

[ 1 : 2 9 ] And he tells us here in this chapter, he says, And Paul could write in this way, as he had seen the hand of the Lord in the matter.

And he had been favoured to see something of God's all-wise purpose in this. It was one of those times that passed over Paul's head that he was called to pass through.

We tried to consider this morning, the psalmist, in a statement of truth, my times are in thy hand. And the Apostle Paul learned this, didn't he?

And while there were times of uplifting, there were times when the dear man knew what it was to be cast down. While there were times when he, as it were, was able to mount up a little, on the mount, and enjoy the favour of God in a very outstanding way, there were also times when he was in the deep valleys.

And he had been there at this time. The Lord was so fit to deal with the Apostle and to give him this thorn in the flesh.

[ 3 : 1 1 ] And he tells us, doesn't he, he told the church at Corinth, he prayed that the Lord would remove this thorn. He says, for this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

And yet, it was not the Lord's will that that thorn should be removed, but rather, that Paul should, from that day on, live with this thorn in the flesh.

That which perhaps seemed to him a disadvantage, he looked at it. And yet he was brought to realise that there was blessing in it.

Even though, it was that which is so uncomfortable to the flesh. It is very significant, isn't it? A thorn in the flesh. We all know what it is, or at least many of us, to have a thorn in our flesh, and it can be very troublesome.

And we, use every possible means to extricate that thorn. Well, Paul, the Lord gave to Paul this thorn in the flesh.

[ 4 : 18 ] It's not clear what it was. Some have made suggestions as to what that thorn was. But the great point is this, isn't it? How Paul was given to observe and to realise that it was in this way that the Lord had given it this thorn.

It was the Lord who put the thorn into Paul's flesh, as it were, using the figure, of course. He acknowledges God in this.

And while he acknowledged that he prayed that it might be removed, he had to see that it was not the Lord's will, but that the Lord gave him something else.

And our text this afternoon, as we try and consider it, is really the answer to that petition in a far different way to what Paul had thought of in his request for that thorn to be removed.

And surely there is instruction for God's praying people here. we might tend, and it is our nature, isn't it, to be freed from pain and discomfort.

[ 5 : 36 ] Or if troubles come, we might tend to pray the Lord will deliver us out of those troubles. With their afflictions, the Lord will grant healing mercies. But it's not always the Lord's will to answer our petitions in that way.

And so Paul proved it. And although he besought the Lord three times, evident, the dear man was quite urgent about this.

Remember, he was a preacher of the gospel. The Lord raised him up and made him very useful as a preacher of the gospel. And the Lord greatly blessed his labors.

and it may be that Paul thought, well, if the Lord would only remove this thorn, then how much better I could labour in his name. But that was not the Lord's will.

And in one sense, the apostle at this time, he asked amiss, didn't he? And now we do need to be taught how to pray, what to pray for. We may not be left to ask amiss.

[ 6 : 49 ] And if there are those things which it seems the Lord doesn't answer those petitions, good it is we may be helped to view things in heaven's light.

I think there's a couple, isn't there? The good, O Lord, we on us be so, whether we ask for it or no. And if for ill we blindly cry, in mercy, Lord, that suit deny.

Well then, there are these words in this text and he said unto me, it was a message from heaven, you see. The Lord communicated a wonderful word to the apostle Paul and that which contains something far greater than the thorn being removed.

It was just this, my grace is sufficient for thee. The implication of course is this, that the Lord had promised he would supply that grace that Paul needed.

He has to live with that thorn in the flesh. Although it is not clear what that thorn was really, but Paul does say this, and it is well to keep close to the scriptures.

[ 8 : 05 ] He is described as a messenger of Satan to buffet him. A messenger of Satan to buffet him.

That was the thorn. And Paul was given to see the necessity of this. He says, lest I shall be exalted above measure. How Paul was establishing a precious truth here.

he could see how the hand of the Lord was in this. And this time through which he was now passing, the Lord was in control. And there was provision made.

Thinking of the text this morning, my time is in thy hand. And in the light of this word before us, are we not reminded, dear friends, of God's hand in dealing with his dear people as a gracious, a gracious hand.

For he, the Lord, said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee. And God's hand toward his dear people, the hand that holds them, the hand that governs all their concerns, controls their life, is a gracious hand.

[ 9 : 29 ] God is the God of all grace. God's grace. Paul was no stranger to the grace of God. But he had to come into the experience of it in various ways.

In the beginning, he could say, with regard to his experience, and he called me by his grace. We know the circumstances that are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

Saul of Tarsus, he who persecuted the church, was injurious, a blasphemer, hurled men and women to prison, who professed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, much damage, but how he was powerfully stopped, brought to a sudden stop, as it were, on the way to Damascus.

And there he had to realise God's hand was upon him. And he was stopped in his career, in all his pharisaical jealousy, and the enmity against the Lord Jesus Christ and his people, but there was a greater power.

And God's hand was upon him there, and he was stopped, brought down and brought low. And then the Lord raised him up.

[ 10 : 57 ] So Paul was no stranger to the grace of God, in calling him out of nature's darkness, and calling him out of his former life as a religious professor, and leading him in the way everlasting, and being raised up as he was to fill a very useful sphere in the church of Christ.

But it was God's hand, God's grace. But now in this experience that Paul came into, having been so blessed, God had granted him that wonderful vision, and he was as one caught up into the third heaven, and he could scarcely, he cannot describe the joy that he felt in that experience, experience, but then you see, it passed.

And while it was a wonderful visit, and be thankful, dear friends, if sometimes some little measure, the Lord is pleased to visit you in his mercy, and soften your heart, and lift you above these earthly things, but we do have to be reminded that we're still here below, we're still as pilgrims as it were journeying in this wilderness world.

And Paul had to go on from that time of blessing and be brought into this other experience, and to realise much of the Satan's buffeting, but he could see the purpose of it, lest, he says, I should be exalted above measure.

He was given to see at length, the needs be for this thorn, they should be kept humble, he should be kept dependent upon his God. And to great mercy, friends, if the Lord deals with you in that way, to bring you down, to make you humble, and keep you humble, and we do need to be kept in that way, don't we?

[ 13 : 02 ] How pride can work in various ways, and unsuspected sometimes. things. I think one hymn writer speaks to this as in the heart up this with God's own gifts that might seem gracious near.

Oh, to realise the needs be of God's humbling mercy, and I speak of it as humbling mercy, humbling grace it is. And in the moment in which the Lord is pleased to lead his dear people into his truth, it would be a way in which self has to be abased, and Christ exalted.

Remember that John spoke in that way, didn't he? He said, he must increase, referring to the Lord Jesus Christ, I must decrease. And so Paul here says, lest I shall be exalted above measure.

This thorn was given, yes, to keep him in his right place, to cause him to learn fresh lessons with regard to his dependence upon his God.

And how the Lord sanctified this, he says this, doesn't he? Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities for the power of Christ may rest upon me.

[ 14 : 32 ] And even to this extent he says, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake. For when I'm weak, then am I strong.

Well then, there's this wonderful word from heaven, communicated from heaven to the apostle Paul, my grace is sufficient for thee.

Now while this is a word of course to the apostle Paul, particularly, it is on record in the scriptures, and is it not a word to, for God's dear people to consider?

and while it was spoken as a wonderful word to Paul, as the communication of that grace, which the Lord was pleased to give to Paul at that time, he is still the God of all grace.

grace. Yes, and you and I who may live in that little sphere where the Lord has placed us, what a great mercy if in some little measure we can prove in our experience something of the fulfilment of this blessed and gracious word.

[ 15 : 53 ] My grace is sufficient for thee. Oh, how it reminds us of grace. And what grace is. The grace, the free unmerited favour of God to poor unworthy sinners.

And that grace is such that it is grace which is sufficient. It is grace to satisfy, to suffice every need, whatever need a child of God may come into along the pathway of life.

There is a sufficiency in that grace. My grace is sufficient for thee. but it is God's grace.

And as the God of all grace, he condescends to bestow that grace. And the greatest mercy a poor sinner can know is to be the subject of God's grace.

Remember long years before this how dear Moses pleaded with the Lord, didn't he? if now I have found grace in thy sight. He was in a difficult circumstance at that time.

[ 17 : 05 ] There were dark clouds with regard to Israel and their sin. And the Lord withdrawing his presence as it were. Moses said, if now I have found grace in thy sight.

And does it not become a question sometimes in your own experience as to whether as to how much you know this grace.

What a great mercy it is to find grace. And how is it poor sinners come to find grace? Well, it is as the Lord bestows it. Man has no ability to search out and find grace.

In fact, man in his fallen nature has no concern about the grace of God. And it is only as the Lord has been pleased to be gracious in his dealings that a poor sinner comes to understand something of his need of God's grace and a desire that he might be the partaker of it.

So then there are times when there's that inquiry, isn't there? If now I have found grace in my sight. You see, thinking about Satan's buffetings and gracious characters are the ones who will experience the buffetings of Satan.

[ 18 : 36 ] Not his own, no, but the Lord's dear people. And those buffetings and the effect of those buffetings will be will be in this way sometimes.

But you fear unless you're altogether deceived. And what you hope has been an experience that is that which is not of grace.

But it's one of devil's buffetings and how he often comes in that way. He proves to be an enemy, doesn't he?

He's one of those, well he is the mightiest foe of all. But the mercy is this, dear friends, that the God of all grace is far mightier.

God who is the God of all grace is an almighty grace. He is an almighty God. And his grace, yes it is and is spoken of as invincible grace.

[ 19 : 43 ] And what a wonderful thing it is, the grace of God. The free unmerited favour of God which he bestows upon poor sinners. And then as like Paul, he came into this particular experience of trial and the buffeting of Satan, thorn in the flesh.

This which was so discomfoting as it were. This which was so humbling. Bring him to realise his utter dependence upon his God.

And being encompassed these infirmities and having to learn that his strength was not himself. Yet in this way he experienced the communication of God's grace to strengthen him, to sustain him, yes to support him, to supply every need as he journeyed on in the way the Lord had appointed for him to go.

And so as Paul had to continue in labouring in the gospel amongst the churches, he had to do so with this thorn in the flesh. And to this end that he should not be exalted above measure.

What a great mercy word is to humble to humble us. For there's so much in us by nature which would tend to lift us up as it were, if left to ourselves.

[ 21 : 23 ] we need to be humbled. There's a great word in the scripture, I've often thought of it, it is this, humble yourself therefore under the mighty hand of God, oh to be led in that path, be truly humbled before God, yes under his mighty hand.

And there's a promise you see, humble yourself therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may be exalted in due time. And there is an exaltation finally.

And while Paul of course was, he'd been exalted, he'd been blessed with a wonderful vision of God's glory and heaven, and he was blessed in it, he was lifted in that way, but that was just temporary as it were.

He was earnest of that which was yet to come. He had to come down to the valley again as it were. But there is a prospect, and we think of that word in the Psalms, the Lord will give grace and glory, and glory.

And that is the prospect, and that's the expectation of God's dear people by his grace. Yes, exalted in due time.

[ 22 : 53 ] And what a wonderful exaltation that will be. Paul realised this as he came down to the end of the journey, didn't he? And realised there was a crown of righteousness laid up for him in heaven.

But meanwhile, he had to live this way, walk this path, to this end, that he had to glory in his infirmities, that he might experience the power of Christ.

And it was by reason of a thorn in the flesh that, reminding him of his infirmities, that he experienced the communication of the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it is through him that grace comes, you see. But how sufficient it is. Think of the word. And while I feel I can only touch on it very simply this afternoon, do a ponder the word, my grace is sufficient for thee.

Or the wonder of it. And the promise of it, you see, the communication of it. Because it was, as the Lord was pleased to communicate this grace, so Paul proved to be what it was, sufficient.

[ 24 : 10 ] Sufficient to meet every need. Not everything that we may think we want, but every need. And really, if we're helped to rightly consider grace, how sufficient it is.

It answers every need, doesn't it? The grace of God, flowing as it does through that one channel, the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, to know that grace. Paul in one place, he writes to one church, he mentions this concerning them, that they knew the grace of God in truth.

Knew it in truth. And really, that is a searching word, isn't it? You see, we grace, the word grace is a very common word amongst us, isn't it?

And we may know about the grace of God, as it were, and we hear about it, but all to know it in truth. Ye knew the grace of God in truth. And what is that but to experience it?

[ 25 : 22 ] To know something, the communication, that grace, into your very heart. But oh, as this text reminds us, it is sufficient, isn't it?

And so it meets every need. It's everything in the grace of God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, to meet the needs of every one of his dear people.

It is grace, it says, through grace they are called. Yes, called into life. As Paul said, he called me by his grace. And those whom the Lord is pleased are called by his grace.

He will supply this grace. From day to day, and from year to year. Yes, in early experience, good it is to know something of the grace of God.

And we hope some of us can look back to those times when we first had that sweet hope in our hearts that we're no strangers to his grace. Well then, we journey on, don't we?

[ 26 : 32 ] There is the pathway point of the times in God's hand. But there's grace sufficient. Yes, and it may be as I try and bring this word before you this afternoon, there have been those spots and places where you have proved the truth of this word and realise how it does suffice.

when I said in him, it suffice the saints of old and it suffices still. It's still the same grace. And the influence and blessing of that grace remains the same.

this grace the Lord bestows. Down for generations he has bestowed it upon his dear people. And there's no diminishing of that grace.

Although there have been changes in the history of the world and in the history of the church. And indeed in many ways we live in solemn days, don't we?

The solemn times in which we live. indeed they are. But there's no difference in God's grace. And it's sufficient for every time.

[ 27 : 51 ] Yes, and God's dear people being called to walk in these days, that grace is sufficient. Yes, it will meet every need.

Think of the fairness of it. It is free grace, isn't it? God is sovereign in his dealings. He bestows his grace. We could describe grace as the free unmerited favour of God to sinners.

And it comes that way. It's not anything that is entered into by merit, man's merit, no. But it is the free unmerited favour of God.

And it will be that. yes, all through the journey. And in the midst of the pathway, how true this is, my grace is sufficient for thee.

And while you may be called to pass through perhaps particular scenes, think about the times in God's hand. hand is a gracious hand.

[ 29 : 02 ] And there are those beautiful words in the scriptures, there is no one to them that fear him. Now we may think that there are things we should like to have, but you know, he will not hold any good thing from his dear people.

No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly as those who walk by his grace. And his grace is sufficient in this sense. Yes, it is sufficient and it comes freely.

But then you see, it is that which continues to flow. It does not mean you're always in experience of realizing the fullness of that grace and the experience of it, but when you think of the source of it, there is an unending fullness.

It is brought before us in the word of God in various ways. Yes, the river of God's grace as it were. Yes, the wells of salvation.

And such like words in the scripture all bring home to us the fact that there is undiminishing fullness in this grace. It flows still.

[ 30 : 26 ] Thousands have been the recipients of it through the past generations. But it is still sufficient. There is no diminishing of it. So that whatever experience you may come into sometimes, it may be in some ways, in measure like Paul, lest you serve it shall be exalted above measure.

there are those humbling truths we have to learn. And it is a humbling truth to learn our dependence upon God. And not to lean on self or something base instead of trusting sovereign grace.

us. We need to learn these lessons, don't we? But this is profitable. And that grace is bestowed.

It comes from that unfailing fullness. goodness. But then our text reminds us doesn't it, that as Paul received it you see, it was a word from heaven and he said unto me, it's the God of all grace, that my grace is sufficient for thee.

And you see that answered every need, didn't it? Answered every need. And Paul was able to continue in that way in which the Lord had appointed for him to go.

[ 31 : 54 ] Yes, in that strength which God gave. Well on the one hand he had to learn his own weakness. But then on the other hand to realise the communication of this grace which was a strength to him.

And there's something about the grace of God, isn't there? Which is very strengthening. And what a mercy to your friends, notice a little of the experience of that, that grace which strengthens, that grace which sustains, that grace which supports, and that grace which enables, yes, and enables you to bow humbly before him as it were.

You see, Paul was brought to that point where he had to learn the will of the Lord, which was not as Paul thought in the first place, as he thought that the Lord would remove this thorn, that was not the Lord's will, but he had to learn the Lord's will, that he had to live with this thorn, and in this, to experience God's grace, that was the Lord's will concerning him.

And God's grace is such that it enables poor sinners to bow before the Lord. We need that grace, don't we? We need humbling grace, we need submissive grace, grace to acquiesce in the Lord's dealings.

For my strength is made perfect in weakness, Paul says, and he learned it this way, as God was pleased to communicate this wondrous grace to him in the first place, and he journeyed on, and in this particular experience of it, when he was brought into this time of particular need, and it was, as the Lord said to him, it was sufficient.

[ 33 : 53 ] Now, there's a communication of it then. Are there times with you when you do long to realize the Lord in his communication of this grace?

To have this blessed word, as it were spoken into your heart. And he said unto me, I'd like to consider this. You see, it gives us this way in which it was a personal communication to the Apostle Paul.

And the Lord said unto me, and he spoke as a gracious Lord. He spoke as the Lord who was all-wise in his dealings, who knew what was best for the Apostle Paul to experience.

obedience. And so, instead of the thorn being removed, that which Paul had prayed for three times, that it might be so, had to remain.

But with it, the grace. With it, the grace. My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength, is made perfect in weakness.

[ 35 : 07 ] And as Paul had to learn again and again, that in himself, there was weakness. A lesson which must have been very clear in the Apostle's experience, because in his former life, you see, in his unregenerate life, and he was a religious man.

No doubt, he felt very strong in all the zeal that he seemed to possess, as he thought in persecuting the church. But he had to lose all that. Yes, all his former religion, which he gloried in, he had to lose it all, and count it, but worthless, as dung and dross.

And then to realise it's all within the Lord Jesus Christ. And it brought him to desire this, didn't it, that I may know him, he says, that it's Jesus, and the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of his sufferings, be made conformable unto his death.

Oh, how wonderful this grace is. And whatever the need may be, dear friend, in your present pathway, this grace is sufficient.

And as the Lord was pleased to, in communicate it to the Apostle Paul, he communicates it still to his needy people. And we can put it like this, can't we?

[ 36 : 37 ] We need grace to seek grace, don't we? We need grace to seek grace. We need grace to pray a right, and to seek to be able to call on the Lord and to desire those blessings which he is pleased to bestow according to his sovereign will.

And to be helped to leave the rest as it were. And you see there is the consummation of this. As we have that word in the psalm, he will give grace and glory.

And grace follows this glory. I must say, and glory follows this grace. Yes, grace is being described like this very well too, it's a bud as it were.

Glory is a flower. But how much grace is needed, isn't it? Yes, to continue in the pathway of life. Yes, we need preserving grace, we need sustaining grace, we need pardoning grace, we need keeping grace.

And whatever we may, we may seek to consider the manner in which we need this grace to be communicated to us. It is grace which is sufficient. And it is sufficient for the future.

[ 38 : 05 ] And none of us know what the future has in store for us, we have to live, and God grants us grace to live a day at the time. There is something about this word which is so helpful, isn't it?

That it will be sufficient to meet every need which may yet come. And there will be that time when the need will be great. That is, when you come down to the end of the journey.

Yes, dying grace. You see, we need grace. We need grace to live. And we need grace to die. But this grace is sufficient.

Oh, may the Lord speak his word into the heart. And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

And I want to enter a little into, just a little into, what the apostle speaks of, where he says, most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

[ 39 : 15 ] Amen. Amen. shall we conclude with hymn number 202 and 2 to the tune Farlingham 141 hymn number 202 now may the Lord reveal his face and teach our stammering tongues to make his sovereign reigning grace the subject of our songs 202 and the Lord reveal his face and teach our stammering tongues to make his sovereign reigning grace the subject of the songs and the spirit of the sound is glorified the sin of the sky to sing about his way and the glorious right of the sound of the sound of the sound that heavy grace cleanse the Lord and Richard praise

The highest once And from the world It's once we be It's never one Deep eyes And Satan's striving faith Against the church And you

Secure My grace As God They reign There all shall go To you Trust Grace The God Of souls And of souls Thy grace As God Will come And grace Will have

And save And save The world And live And save The world And save The world And save The world And save Oh Lord be pleased To mercifully forgive anything That has been spoken amiss Do bless thine own truth To our hearts And now May the grace Of the Lord Jesus Christ And the love Of God The Father The communion And fellowship Of the Holy Spirit Rest upon us And abide with us And with the dear people Of God Everywhere Now And forever Amen