

2 Corinthians

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[0 : 00] As the Lord should be pleased to help me, I shall call your attention to a subject you will find in the second epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 12, and the first half of the ninth verse.

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

Chapter 12, second epistle to the Corinthians, and the first half of the ninth verse.

In this word, there is a wonderful unfolding of the why and wherefore of the dealings of God with the Apostle Paul at this time when the word was spoken.

And the opening up of this truth to the Apostle Paul must have been surprising.

[1 : 42] Although he was such a well-taught man of God, he was outstanding for the grace that he was the subject of.

And he was of a truth, first and foremost in the age in which he lived, as an Apostle, a good minister of Jesus Christ.

And I want as the Lord to help me to open up this line of things, because there is in this word a line of things which will be, as the grace of God shall make it so to you, very profitable to contemplate, and it might be a word in season to some of you in living the life of the righteous.

This is the life of the righteous, as you help to live it a day at a time, remembering all the day long, my grace is sufficient for thee.

And as thy days, so shall thy strength be. And in the chapter where the subject is found, the Apostle Paul had been driven to give an account to the church at Corinth of how he came to be an apostle, of how he came to be an apostle, and that he had indeed divine authority to preach the gospel of the grace of God.

[3 : 40] And that fact is surprising to contemplate. I have often reminded you about the church at Corinth, and I just say a word or two, as the background of the subject here, that, as you are all aware, the Apostle Paul had been used of God for the founding of the church at Corinth, and for it to be built up and become a unique church.

But, as it is wont to do, Satan considered the church at Corinth, if so be, he could gain some advantage, and undo the influence of it.

And, he was permitted to do so. So that, he wrought, first of all, a party spirit, and then, he so gained his ground in doing this, that there were some in the church at Corinth, who had had their names placed on the church roll through what God had made the Apostle Paul's ministry to them, who now declared that he was no more than a reprobate and not a minister of Jesus Christ.

And, he says, I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.

And, he also says, Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith. Prove your own selves.

[5 : 37] And, then, he gives an outstanding account of how God had dealt with him in his labours in word and doctrine upon Zion's walls, and how he became the good minister of Jesus Christ that God had made him to be.

And, now, that is just the background of the subject. And, then, in the opening word of the chapter, he says, It is not expedient for me, doubtless to glory.

I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. Visions and revelations. A, you need much grace to deal with visions and revelations.

For they do not always come from the Lord. And, now, this vision and revelation did come from the Lord.

And, maybe, you and I would have heard nothing whatever about it, nor the church of Christ down through the ages. But, Satan, gaining this advantage in the church at Corinth, it drove the Apostle Paul to make a vindication of his apostleship.

[7 : 12] And, thus, he gives the details. And, he was inspired by the Spirit of God to record them in the sacred pages. What does he say?

I knew a man in Christ about fourteen years ago. Whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth, such an one caught up to the third heaven.

I knew such a man. Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth, how that he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful, margin possible, for a man to utter.

And, now, if you remember that the Apostle Paul, on his missionary journeys, after he had been greatly used of God to do much good in his labors in one city and another, he came to one named Lystra, and there, through the persecution, he was taken outside the city of Lystra and stoned, and left us dead.

And the disciples stood around him as he laid on the ground, apparently dead. Says the Apostle Paul, whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth.

[8 : 43] It would be said he was deeply unconscious. But while he was in that state of bodily weakness and apparently dead, the Spirit of God wrought in his soul's experience this vision and revelation so that in his soul's feelings he was caught up into paradise.

And, now, I turn aside a moment to make this plain. You, dear young people, remember it.

It will help you when, maybe, you find some things hard to be understood. The good work that God begins in a sinner's breast is supernatural.

Therefore, it is carried on in that way. And it is conducted from heaven. He which hath begun the good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

and there may have been in the church of Christ many instances like this, not to the same superlative degree to be caught up into paradise, but many of a like nature where people who were taught of God have come down to the end of life's journey and have been in what these physicians call a coma or unconscious and have left no dying testimony yet in their soul's experience were just outside the gates of paradise preparatory to entering therein.

[10 : 36] Because this work, good work, is supernatural, does not depend on you being conscious and having good health to be able to enter into whatever visions and revelations God may be pleased to give you.

Remember that. And now then, the apostle Paul had this wondrous experience, a vision, a revelation.

salvation. And when you think, follow this along, when you think, how, when he was Saul of Tarsus, on the Damascus road, how he was called by grace, how he was cut down under the law, convinced of his guiltiness before God, favoured to see Jesus, and raised up a forgiven sinner, and baptized, and all inside a month, her soul, and then sent out to preach the gospel, he had a very, very striking beginning to what God ordained he should be upon Zion's walls.

and he was a man of like passions as we are. Therefore, being so highly favoured of God in his labours, there was that tendency that he might become lifted up.

Preachers, though they be sent of God, tend at times to become, I was going to say, elated.

[12 : 34] inflated, I think I had better say inflated, puffed up. Popularity would do that, and Satan takes advantage of it.

And now the apostle Paul was just a man, and as yet he had not declared that he was the chief of sinners, but he did say he was not worthy to be called an apostle, and he felt that he was less than the least of all saints, but there was a little bit of something locked up inside the apostle Paul that if it was given vent, it would lift him up and undermine the influence of his ministry.

me. What does he say? Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

There is a tendency for men, sent of God to preach, to be exalted above measure. Strictly speaking, they are not to be exalted at all in their own feelings.

Everyone so ordained of God to preach the gospel has got this feeling deep down in his heart, when he is in a right spirit, he will be exalted and extolled and be very high, yes.

[14 : 24] and now let us just look at this in approaching the subject. Here is this thorn in the flesh and I want you to remember it is not just meaningless repetition of thorn in the flesh.

It was not to do with the spirit, I mean the good work begun in the apostle Paul's breast. It was something that fretted him, aggravated him, pained him, derided him, according to what he was by nature, the flesh.

Yes. A thorn in the flesh. Speaking with great reverence, the spirit of God in his infinite wisdom has not recorded what the thorn in the flesh was.

Some of the most ridiculous suggestions have been made by godly men and great preachers too as to what it really was. No, no, the wisdom of the spirit of God is seen in his silence as to what it was.

Because had it been recorded what it was, it might not have been in agreement with the thorn in the flesh that you are the subject of.

[15 : 55] I remember reading many years ago in one of William Huntington's letters, when the word of God has got no mouth, sinners in reading it must have no ear.

Which is to say, you must never do any scripture twisting, and begin to speculate as to the word of God may say this or that, when it keeps silence on any particular matter.

You dear young people remember that, old people too. And it says, a thorn in the flesh.

and it says, the messenger of Satan to buffet me. Satan was to do with it. And you know, Satan knows your weakness, and he will inject his thorn in your flesh where your weakness is, and that will make it more painful.

And you need much grace to behave aright therein. And it will not do for you to behave like the apostle Paul did, under this thorn in the flesh.

[17 : 19] How did he behave? For this thing I besought the Lord Christ, that it might depart from me. Lord, do take away this thorn.

Thou knowest how painful it is, how it irritates my flesh, how it aggravates me. I am conscious of its whereabouts by day, by night.

Lord, do take it away, and then with better health, and freed from it, I shall be able to serve thee more all-heartedly.

No, no. The answer to that petition was no, no.

thorn, and he said unto me, Paul, I am aware of this thorn in the flesh, which you were the subject of.

[18 : 21] I know every detail as to how you feel in the possession of it, and I dare not remove it, I cannot extract it, but I want you to remember wherever you may be, however much this thorn in the flesh may rankle, my grace is sufficient for thee.

My favor you shall realize, my presence should go with thee wherever I ordain you to go, so that you shall rise above the fretting of the thorn in the flesh, and realize, my grace is sufficient for thee.

My strength is made perfect in weakness. One thing I might add, in opening up what this thorn of the flesh may be, I dare not suggest what your thorn in the flesh is, I hope you are aware of it, and I hope you are finding every day as you journey on, my grace is sufficient for thee.

But you will have to learn to live like this, in the possession of it, ever on thy captain calling, make thy worst condition known, he shall hold thee up when fallen, or shall lift thee up when down.

Go back to this description, a thorn in the flesh. And remember it is to do with what you are by nature, because it is a heritage of the Adam fall.

[20 : 25] When the Lord God drove out Adam and Eve from Eden's garden into the world under the curse, one thing to do with the curse was thorns and thistles, it shall bring forth.

Yes. And the thorn in the flesh that you are the subject of, is a reminder all of sin, and come short of the glory of God.

Alas, how sad our state by nature is. And now, says the Apostle Paul, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me.

And now, godly scholars tell us, follow this along, this word buffet, is to do with what the Apostle Paul would have been well aware of, of what was done in the age in which he lived, especially in the Roman amphitheaters, when they not only ran races, but they staged great fights.

And instead of using boxing gloves, they wore a glove which on the outside of it had got strips of iron, worked into it.

[21 : 58] A terribly horrible, brutal business it must have been, so that when two champions fought, they sometimes beat each other, so that they were hardly recognizable, ere the fight was concluded.

And now, that is just how Satan buffets you, if you are a sinner born again. he wants to beat you into being unrecognized as such a character, a sinner born again.

He comes upon you a thorn in the flesh, he works on what you are by nature, and if he should gain his end in doing it, tempting you to this and that, and you should fall a prey, then, what you are by nature, will nullify to a very great degree, your profession of the name of Jesus, and you will bear many a wound and scar in your profession, which the worldling will observe, as well as those in church fellowship with you.

The messenger of Satan to buffet me, and remember, while it is recorded, fight the good fight of faith, it means there is no armistice, no flag of truce is allowed, no breathing space, but it means if you are not on the defensive and better still, taking the offensive, Satan will be buffeting you and gaining some ground upon you.

It is not written without deep meaning, watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation and fall a prey to it.

[24 : 16] How the apostle Paul stresses that, continuing instant in prayer, praying always, praying without ceasing, yes.

You see then, God in his infinite wisdom permitted this to come into the apostle Paul's life in what one might say was almost the acme of his success in preaching the gospel of the grace of God, and there was a need before it, lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

You see, dear friends, if you have got your name on the church roll aright, and if you are indeed without your name on the church roll yet, a sinner born again, you will never sail across life's sea without some proper ballast, and God will regulate that ballast as to the measure of it, so that you shall ride the seas in safety.

I remember how astonished I was many, many years ago when I was at Southampton docks, being down in that area to preach, I went to see a huge liner, one of the tip-top ones at that time, as it was in dock, and I was amazed to see whereabouts the plimsoll waterline was, as it was being emptied of its cargo, and the passengers had disembarked.

It seemed to me that when at length the ship was riding the seas properly, there must be three-fifths of it underwater, according to that waterline which was by law established, and now God knows where your waterline is and mine, and he gives us that balance so that you cannot sail the seas in safety unless that plimsoll waterline is not to be seen.

[26 : 57] It must be hidden just below the surface of the waves. do remember that. You see then, if you are a sinner born again, there will be given to you a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet you, and what will he buffet you about?

He will not buffet you so much about your flesh, flesh. No, because he knows what you are by nature, and what you are prone to on account of it.

He will buffet you regarding what you hope is what God has done for your soul. He will call it into question. He tells us we are weak, our hope is in vain, the good that we seek we ne'er shall obtain.

He will seek to undermine the influence of your profession, of the name of Jesus. Yes, He will aim to rob and spoil you of that which is indeed your treasure wherein your hope in God is built, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me.

And the remedy lies before thee, pray. But do not pray like the apostle Paul did, that the thorn might be removed.

[28 : 45] Ask for grace, and yet more grace, and yet more. And now that brings us to this line of things. And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee.

For my strength is made perfect in weakness. And now, if you and I have got grace, the if needs thinking about, grace, if you and I have got grace, there can be no question, no time needs to be taken up as to whether grace is sufficient, because God has guaranteed it.

My grace is sufficient for thee. How wonderful is the grace of God. who can begin to think of the fullness of it?

You sing about it, for fullness resides in Jesus our head, and ever abides to answer our need, but what a fullness that is.

Do think, ask God to help you, do think, I say, of the hundreds of millions untold, who have been called by grace, and by that grace have lived right, and at the last have died right, and are in the realms of bliss as sinners, saved by grace.

[30 : 29] And everyone found grace is sufficient, whether it was to live and go to heaven in life's morning, afternoon, evening, time.

Each one found grace is sufficient. So will you, and so shall I, if you and I have got well-grounded evidence of what it is to be called by grace.

And now the apostle Paul said, in one epistle of his, and he called me by his grace. And he says in this epistle to the Corinthians, by the grace of God, I am what I am.

And he says another thing, too, about it. And the grace of God was bestowed upon me, not in vain. which is equivalent to this, when on the bough rich fruits we see, it is then we cry a goodly tree.

there are many people who we do believe are called by grace, but they do not always evidence that grace in what they do, what they say, and where they go.

[32 : 03] I'm not fitting any caps on, I'm just telling you the truth. And there are poor sinners called by grace who do not know for sure that they are.

And they say, marks of grace I cannot show, all polluted is my breast, yet I weary am I new, and the weary long for rest.

Look at this word again. and he said unto me, do you say, I wish he would say it to me?

If you have got that concern that the God of all grace should say such a word as this to you, he has already said it.

What you need is faith to believe the word of his grace is recorded here, from which I am trying to preach. Listen, it is grace that makes men feel their need, and cry to God for more.

[33 : 21] And you could have no concern that such a word as this should be lodged in your heart, with thus saith the Lord, unless you had already got grace to receive it. Think of Lydia.

she heard us. What then? Whose heart the Lord opened. And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee.

The grace of God. Angelic minds cannot explore that vast unfathom seat, is void of bottom, brim or sure, and lost in deity.

And now, you will find as you journey through life, if you are indeed called by grace, that you do want to live inside this beautiful scripture, my grace is sufficient for thee.

And you will find, you will want grace to be in accordance with whatever your special need is at the time. sometimes, you need quickening grace.

[34 : 36] It is astonishing at what a low ebb in the things of God our souls can be found. And when you look into the word of God, it is very striking where some people who were so evidently called by grace, were found to be in their souls feelings at times.

And now think of godly David when he said, take not thy Holy Spirit from me. When he pleaded, leave not my soul destitute, make not my soul bare.

When he looked within and could hardly tell what he was or where he was in things divine. Godly Job declares, ask for my hope who shall see it.

And Jeremiah, a wonderfully well-taught man of God, complains, water's flowed over my head and then I said I'm cut off.

God. It is not against you if the messenger of Satan comes to buffet you about your hope in God and seeks to undermine the reality of it.

[36 : 07] He is said to be the accuser of the brethren. brethren. And with the brethren he deals as the messenger of Satan to buffet.

Yes. To harass, deject and dismay. And you do need grace as quickening grace. Go back to godly David.

Quicken thou me and I will call upon thy name. As though David said Lord I cannot do it otherwise. I cannot call upon thy name as I feel at the present time.

Lord give me a proper frame. Pour upon me the spirit of prayer. Bestow the grace of supplication. Grant that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth might speak.

For as I feel my heart to be at the present time so hard even as adamant I have no feeling wherewith to draw near to thee as I desire.

[37 : 19] You want grace. Quicken grace then. My grace is sufficient for thee as quitting in grace. You want grace too as supporting grace.

Sometimes events come into our lives that are unlooked for. The hymn writer says every day new straits attend and you never can tell any day that dawns what that day has got locked up in store for you or yours.

The air the day ends you may find your life is altered from that time on. It may be a bereavement or it may be an affliction or it may be some adverse circumstances come upon you and yours and your life has to be rearranged on account of it.

And if it should be the day of prosperity is now become the day of adversity you will need grace sufficient to meet it.

Otherwise you will react to it and Satan will gain an advantage over you with a thorn in the flesh and you will be behaving in a way that is not honoring to God or becoming for you with your name on a church roll.

[38 : 58] Oh it is a wonderful mercy to find grace is sufficient when trouble like a gloomy cloud gathers thick and thunders loud. When an affliction is laid on you and when it means a hospital ward in the operating theater if you are a sinner called by grace you find you have a very solemn reaction in your soul's feelings as to whether you will have grace sufficient to go forward into what lies ahead.

You may have a very solemn reaction to it as to whether your religion is going to prove to be that which is of God or know whether teakle will be stamped upon it weighed in the balances and found wanting and yet this word will hold good for you when sore afflictions on me lie he is though I am blind too wise to her too good to be unkind yes and grace will help you to realize that it is the Lord let him do what seem with him good let my soul live and it shall praise thee let thy judgments help me my grace is sufficient sufficient as support in grace and now when you weigh the matter up if you look back over your long profession of the name of

Jesus or look back along life's way ever since you began to ask the way to Zion with your face thitherward you will find very often you have been at a very low ebb in things divine and yet this sabbath morn you are here before God and asking the way of Zion with your faces thitherward and whatever you feel in looking back wherein you have been brought very low at times when you have said zeal extinguished to a spark life is very low all my evidence is dark and good works I have none to show you have proved grace is sufficient and now let the apostle Paul help you and he says as dying and behold we live in the hymn writer declares ever sinking yet to swim having obtained help of

God having proved grace is sufficient sufficient as continuing grace I continue unto this day I remind you of that word in Isaiah I want you to think it over prayerfully as the days of a tree for the days of my people and now often you are like the tree in winter time it is alive and it is a fruit tree but there is no evidence of life because being winter time it is stripped and bare the life is in the root the root of the matter is functioning keeping the tree alive but the tree as yet is not evidence in what it is as a fruit tree but it is going through the days of winter time and our winter time seem very long and if we ever get a summer time it seems amazingly short but that scripture as the days of a tree are the days of my people is to describe the varying experiences that you are the subject of while all the while the tree lives and as the seasons come it behaves according to what the season is and so do you if it is winter time you give little evidence of what you are and what you ought to be you are alive but you are not lively in things divine are you but when there is a summer time or preparatory when spring time comes how good it is to see the hedges getting green the trees beginning to burst with buds and you look farther still and you see blossoms and you go on with expectation that at the right time there will be corresponding fruit yes and therein you see grace is sufficient the trees of the

Lord are full of sap and that sap is grace the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted my grace is sufficient for thee whether it be to quicken or to support or for you to continue it is sufficient too that you may combat with the messenger of Satan which buffets you so cruelly though the corruptions of thine heart daily new cause of grief impart still pray that all thy lust be slain that shalt thou seepest face in vain my grace is sufficient for thee as subduing grace it is sufficient too as pardoning grace because it is plenteous grace grace to pardon all my sin says the hymn writer much might be said along that line of thought but

[45 : 45] I must come unto the amen and he said unto me my grace is sufficient for thee and then he amplifies that a lesson you and I have got to learn if you and I have not already been learning it my strength is made perfect in weakness mark the word perfect you have got to learn what is perfect weakness when you do God will communicate perfect strength but while you think you have got just a little bit of strength God will not add his to your strength so that you between you should go on in living the life of the righteous no no who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness leaning upon her beloved leaning moves along the meaning the to be steadfast in believing yet to tremble fear and quake every moment be receiving strength and yet be always weak when

I am weak then am I strong says the apostle Paul my strength is made perfect in weakness and that strength will be communicated often in a way that you are little aware of it what I mean is you will have nothing special to tell about it in the communication of it I like that word in Daniel and they shall be open with a little help he lends an unseen hand he gives a secret prop yes they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength and he said unto me my grace is sufficient for thee you remember what is recorded as it comes to my mind of how they gathered the manor and the children of

Israel did so and gathered some more some less and when they did meet it with an omer he that gathered much had nothing over and he that gathered little had no lack it is just like that with sinners called by grace each one every one has to learn to live a day at a time and you never have any surplus grace no strength to spare but every day this guarantee my grace is sufficient for thee and the next day you will find the thorn is still in the flesh and it still rankles and then on that day you want again to realize my grace is sufficient for thee and one more thought and that would be the best thought in the sermon if it can be called by such a name and now in

Ezekiel you read a word like this and that is the prospect and there shall be no more a pricking briar unto the house of Israel nor any grieving thorn of all that are round about them that despise them and they shall know that I am the Lord God this is the way walk ye in it Amen