

## 2 Corinthians (Quality: Average)

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Preacher: Buss, Charles (1913-1997)

- [ 0 : 00 ] Christ, of mine, let glory be ye as the glory of my peace.  
And to my soul, I'll lead you to joy.  
And to my heart, I'll lead you to joy.  
And to my soul, I'll lead you to joy.  
As the Lord may be pleased to help me this afternoon, I'll direct you to a word in the second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 12.
- [ 1 : 17 ] And a sentence in the ninth verse. The second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 12, and a portion of the ninth verse.  
And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.  
As this word reminds us of how the Lord is pleased in his mercy to communicate to his dear people in their times of need.  
And surely all along life's pathway to a true pilgrim journeying through this earthly course, it is a time of need. It is constantly. It is a great mercy, friends, if you and I are kept conscious of our need, of that which the Lord alone can supply.  
It is sad if we are left to think we can go in our own strength, lean upon ourselves, as it were. To all this is a false thing, a false prop.
- [ 2 : 37 ] To think we can stand our own strength, or to trust in our own wisdom. Great mercy the Lord delivers us from this. So that we are brought down, really as dependent, needy sinners, depend alone upon his mercy.  
Now this word, as you know, was spoken by the God of all grace to his dear servant, the Apostle Paul. And in the chapter we are reminded how God gave to Paul an outstanding experience.  
Something he could not really divulge to the people. And he speaks about being caught up into paradise.  
He heard unspeakable words. It is not lawful for man to utter. What an outstanding experience it must have been. But following this, the Apostle was made to realise that God was dealing with him.  
Although there was this outstanding experience, yet there was this that followed. Paul speaks of a thorn in the flesh. So in verse 7 we read this.
- [ 3 : 57 ] And lest I should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh. And that thorn he describes in this way, as a messenger of Satan, to buffet me.  
Lest I should be exalted above measure. How we see that the Lord does balance the clouds, doesn't he, with regard to the experience of his dear people.

And as Paul was given to him. And as Paul was given this thorn in the flesh. He was brought to realise that it was given to him.

That God who had so favoured him in such an outstanding measure, gave him an experience which was really so wonderful, that this should follow.

And Paul was given a glimpse, really, of the purpose of this. Lest I should, he says, lest I should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations.

[ 5 : 06 ] And yet, we find that the dear apostle made this a matter of prayer. This thorn in the flesh.

He says, for this thing, this thorn in the flesh, I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And so that these words in our text this afternoon, which I will try and call your attention to a little, as I may be helped, was really the way in which the Lord was pleased to answer Paul's prayer.

Now this reminds us, doesn't it, of how the Lord deals with his dear people. Of course, the request that the thorn should be taken away was not granted.

But, er, there was something else. Far better, really, than the thorn being removed. We may sometimes seek the Lord about particular matters.

Does it always follow the Lord's ceasefire to answer according to what we think we need? And we do need grace, don't we, to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God in all his dealings with us.

[ 6 : 19 ] And, er, although God is a condescending God to hear and answer the prayers of his dear people, there are times when we may ask and miss, as it were.

Really, you know, Paul asked and miss, didn't he, when he prayed that this thorn might be removed. If not consistent with the mind and will of God.

Maybe we can picture Paul in his ministry, and as God used him so abundantly with regard to the salvation of souls, through the gospel preached by the Apostle Paul, and it may well be that he thought, well, what hindrances would be, this thorn in the flesh.

A hindrance to his usefulness in the ministry. But he had lessons to learn. If Paul had lessons to learn, surely you and I have lessons to learn.

And to be humble enough, be made teachable enough, to learn those things that God would have us to know.

[ 7 : 32 ] Well, you can imagine Paul then, with this thorn, there have been several suggestions with regard to this thorn in the flesh.

But I'd like to keep to the scriptures. For the scripture so clearly shows to us, this thorn in the flesh which God gave Paul, which he desired might be removed from him, is described as a messenger of Satan to buffet him.

The buffetings of Satan. The Lord permitted this. Satan is a buffeter. And he's a cruel foe.

And the Lord sees fit at times to permit Satan in this way. You might have to consider the case of Job, and how the Lord permitted Job to come, didn't he?

He permitted Satan to come upon Job. And Satan was permitted to do what he did. But under the permission of God.

[ 8 : 42 ] And yet it was overruled for good. But oh, this messenger of Satan to buffet. Satan is a, as I said, is a cruel foe.

And he's a foe to God's dear people. He's a foe to God. And therefore everything that comes from God through his grace, to his dear people, Satan is opposed to this.

And he will seek to do all he can, as it were, to distract, and to discourage. The mercy is this, he cannot destroy.

Paul was raised up to be a messenger of God's grace. And all that Satan was permitted to do could not destroy what the Lord was pleased to perform through the labors of the Apostle Paul.

Yet no doubt that the man came into this experience. He might have thought what a relief it would be if the Lord would remove that thorn so he could continue in his labour of love and not have to bear this freaking thorn.

[ 9 : 58 ] And so he sought the Lord for it. That it might be removed. And he pursued this, didn't he? He says, For this thing I've sought the Lord thrice.

Not just once or twice, but three times. Lord, remove this thorn. Well now, these words in the ninth verse, which I wanted to try and speak to you from, as I might be helpful for a little while, it's the way the Lord answered this request.

Not according to what Paul and visitors it was, but according to God's sovereign will. And that which would prove to be for Paul's good.

And surely everything that comes into the experience of God's dear people, in the way the Lord is pleased to deal with them, it is for their good. And to the glory of his name.

Paul, as he writes to the church at Rome, made that very definite statement, didn't he? He said, And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God. To them who are called according to his purpose.

[ 11 : 11 ] All things. Yes. Not only the things which may, perhaps as we look on them, appear to be beneficial to us, but things which are otherwise.

All things. It embraces everything. All that the Lord is pleased to, bringing to the experience of his dear people, along nice way, whatever that may be. It will work together for good.

God will make it work together for good. Well, this worked together for good for the Apostle Paul, didn't it? Because in answer to that petition, although the Lord did not see fit to remove the thorn, what did Paul receive?

He had this wonderful communication from heaven. And he said unto me. Or maybe, dear friends, as you journey on in life, to either times when you do long for some communication from God himself into your soul.

For the Lord to speak a word. In those far off days, often the Lord saw fit to speak in a definite, particular way to his dear people.

[ 12 : 25 ] They had not the word of God as we have it, but God spoke to them directly. Now, in this gospel day, and we have the Holy Scriptures of truth, how often the Lord is pleased to speak to his dear people through his word, through the written word.

We tried to consider this morning that word of hope. The Lord speaks through his word. So that it is as though the Lord speaks sometimes through his written word to his dear people.

Sometimes he speaks through his dispensations, his dealings. There's a voice sometimes in God's dealings with us in his good providence. But oh, what a great mercy if there are from time to time those communications from heaven.

And he, the God of all grace, he who called Paul a sort of tarsus by his grace, communicated to Paul in this way.

And what a communication it was. The thorn had remained.

[ 13 : 44 ] Paul had to live the rest of his life with that thorn in the flesh. That difficulty, whatever it was, that message of Satan to buff it, he had to live with it.

But alongside that, this wonderful provision from the God of all grace and the communication of it, he says, and the Lord speaks thus to Paul, and he, the God of all grace, said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee.

And Paul was given to see the benefit of this. Something far better than the removal of the thorn in the flesh.

To experience the communication of this grace in all its sufficiency. So that, although through the effect of the thorn in the flesh he was often weakened, he was infirmed, yet, the grace was so sufficient, so that Paul could say, my strength is made perfect in weakness.

Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, the power of Christ may rest upon me. He was given grace. However, the Lord did communicate this grace.

[ 15 : 08 ] It was only by the grace of God Paul could view these things in this way. Otherwise, he could have been overtaken with self-pity. But this grace was given.

And that grace whereby he was enabled to humble himself under the mighty hand of God. And we are exhorted, dear friends, up in the scripture. Humble yourself, therefore, under the mighty hand of God that you may be exalted in due time.

You see, the time came with Paul when he was exalted, when he came down to the end of the journey. Yes, when he was gathered up into heaven and to know that eternal rest.

But now, may we just look at this word a little this afternoon, my grace, the grace of God. How can we speak of the grace of God?

What is this grace? The source of it is in God. The God of all grace. Yes, the channel through which it flows is through his dear son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 16 : 23 ] John could look on the dear Lord Jesus Christ when he was here upon earth, seeing him that one who was full of grace and truth. Full of grace and truth. And there is that wonderful store of grace, such a fullness in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you see, this grace is the free and unmerited favour of God to sinners. It cannot be merited in any way, whatever.

It cannot be bought, it cannot be purchased. It does not flow, as it were, in a family tree, no. We have instances of this in the scripture where it is so clearly seen that it does not follow if there is a gracious parents will be gracious children.

But offering God in his sovereign mercy, seen for that it should be so, but it doesn't flow in that way. It comes from God. It is the free, unmerited favour of God to unworthy sinners.

The great grace of God. Where should we be, dear friends, if there is no grace? Surely, often times, as you come to the Lord in your times of need and trouble, it is helpful, isn't it, to realise that you approach unto a throne of grace where the Lord is pleased to meet his dear people and draw them to himself and for there to be those dispensations of his grace manifested as he enables his dear people to request these things.

[ 18 : 10 ] My grace. And think what was done, that there could be grace. God is a holy God. We are sinners.

There is that description in the word of God concerning all mankind, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We are all sinners. We are all partakers of the Adam Fall without exception.

What a mercy if we are partakers of his grace. And this grace, you see, is to fallen sinners. And as I say, we do need to meditate upon what was done, that there could be grace, there could be favour, because we are sinners and God is a holy God.

His law is a holy law. It demands complete obedience. We have transgressed it. We are sinners. The psalmist in Psalm 130 makes reference to this, doesn't he?

If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, who shall stand? Well, iniquity abounds, doesn't it? We are all sinners. There were no standing before a holy God, only to be condemned, justly condemned, because we have broken God's holy law.

[ 19 : 36 ] But then, the dear Lord Jesus Christ himself, in all that he did, made a way whereby this grace could flow so freely to guilty rebels, unworthy of the least of his mercies, or that we might be helped to think upon this wondrous truth that God is the God of grace.

That is this grace, this free, unmerited favour that all is pleased to dispense to his dear people. And the salvation, the word is very clear in the scriptures, all of grace.

I hope in God's mercy, it flows through grace. And so we go back again to that, which I quoted in the 130th Psalm.

If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand? But, there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. There is the grace. The favour of God, whereby, there can be forgiveness, pardon for sins, offences.

But you see, the holiness of God had to be satisfied. The justice of God had to be met. And the dear son of God came down to this world that it might be so.

[ 21 : 02 ] And he lived that holy life to satisfy the demands of the law which you and I have broken. And this he did perfectly, completely. There was that voice from heaven, wasn't it?

This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. And God the Father is well pleased in the obedience of his dear son, the Lord Jesus Christ who was made under the law to redeem his people from the law.

But you see, he kept the law. Yes, complete obedience the Lord Jesus Christ brought forth in his holy life.

A life without any blemish, whatever. He was the holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Yet, he was unspotted by the world, unspotted by sin.

He rendered completely all the demands of that law. And that for his dear people. So that the justice of God could be satisfied.

[ 22 : 15 ] But then also, when you think of his sufferings, there could be favour. There need to be sufferings.

There need to be a sacrifice. This was brought before God's ancient people again and again with regards to the Old Testament dispensation of worship. sacrifice had to be brought, had to be offered.

And they had to be as near as possible without blemish. And it was in this way alone, in those Old Testament times, could people come before God through the high priest in the way of worship.

And blood had to be shed. But this was just a type. There was no virtue in the blood of bulls and goats and birds.

No virtue whatever. But it typified that one great sacrifice which was yet to be offered in the Lord Jesus Christ himself. This was so necessary, wasn't it?

[ 23 : 24 ] There needed to be a sacrifice. There needed to be a price paid. And that price, as one as well put it in the hymn, his own heart's blood. You see, if there had been no sacrifice, there could be no grace.

But blessed be his name, the sacrifice was provided. The dear Son of God was willing to come down this world to live that holy life, satisfy the holy law for his dear people, and then to suffer, bleed and die upon the cross, to pay that tremendous price to redeem his dear people from all iniquity.

And that grace might flow in all its fullness and freeness to his unworthy and yet needy people. Or to that we could be helped more to extol the grace of God in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He who was full of grace and truth. Then you see that there's a communication that through the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ grace flows.

And so God is the God of all grace who called Saul of Tarsus known later as the apostle Paul by his grace. communicated that grace.

[ 24 : 51 ] And in this particular sense, in this particular instance with regard to the thorn in the flesh, God speaks from heaven in answer to Paul's request.

As though the Lord says, Paul, it is necessary for you to live with that thorn. But there's grace. Grace to help in time of need. And this grace is sufficient.

my grace is sufficient for thee. I want that the Lord to help us to meditate upon this truth. The sufficiency of God's grace. And as it suffices the saints of old, it suffices still.

And poor sinner, for any intimation of thy grace, of God's grace, toward you, surely you should be humbled before a gracious and merciful God.

grace. Any intimation of that grace. But it is to realise your need of it and to pray for it. It's one of the ways the Lord is pleased to communicate this grace.

[ 25 : 59 ] He'll cause his people to seek it. Yes, to pray for grace. Yes, to know his saving grace, his supporting, his forgiving grace.

All that grace is. You see, the foundation, the petition really, of the psalmist when he prayed, that well-known prayer which has been the language of God's dear people down through the generations.

Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people. O visit me with thy salvation. Well, the psalmist prayed for grace. Yes, he prayed for grace.

He could see the need of it. He could see it as it was made manifest in God's dear people. And it brought him to this point, that he might know it personally.

Remember me. Or have there been some remember me's in your prayers along nice way? What a mercy it is. Those prayers ascend through the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

[ 27 : 12 ] Acceptably before a holy God. And that's grace, isn't it? Poor sinners, yes, taught by the Spirit of God to need that grace and to seek it.

And God his great mercy bestows that grace. Yes, when and where and how he sees fit. In his wisdom, he bestows it.

And how he sees fit in his wisdom, yes, to withhold certain things you may think you stand in need of, like Paul with the thorn in the flesh. But he bestows grace.

Yes, the grace of God. How Paul in his ministry delighted to proclaim the grace of God, didn't he? In salvation.

Yes, you see, it is grace to poor sinners, isn't it? Grace to poor, unworthy sinners. Grace to sinners ruined in the fall.

[ 28 : 18 ] But it is grace. We think of it as the life of God in the soul. Grace. I just mentioned this morning how Paul reminds the Ephesians that we're all by nature, dead in trespasses and sins.

But there is God's quickening grace. It flows through the same channel to the Lord Jesus Christ. And it flows so freely.

And it flows sovereignly. There's that great word in the scripture and we do well too. Bow before as it were the sovereignty of God.

He says I will be gracious to my will be gracious. I'll have mercy upon whom I will have mercy. How we should be humbled under the sovereignty of God in his dealings.

For every little intimation of his grace toward us dear friends. To trace it to God's sovereign will and purpose. That he will be gracious.

[ 29 : 25 ] Yes to whom he will. My grace is sufficient for thee. So Paul had to journey on from that experience.

First being lifted up as it were almost into heaven. Then coming down to the valley. And with this thorn to journey on in that path which the Lord had appointed for him.

Yes down to the end of the journey. But along life's way along that journey to realise the communications of that grace.

And God did communicate it didn't he? God is a faithful God. He said it and he performed it. That is an encouragement to consider isn't it?

When you try and pray for God's grace, his mercy. Yes and sometimes perhaps be helped to plead some gracious promise. Yes from God's word which perhaps had been made little help to you and you pleaded before the Lord.

[ 30 : 33 ] God is pleased to answer. Yes he was promised he was able to perform. It's his grace you see it's enabling grace and it helps his dear people along that way and were it enough of that grace well they would come to nothing but the grace is given.

God revealed this to Paul. And he found it was that which did strengthen him. Strengthen him in his weakness.

So he could say he the God of all grace said unto me my grace is sufficient for thee for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

God revealed this to Paul. You see we need to know our weakness. We need to know our dependence upon God and there's the communication of that strength.

strength. One has touched on this truth in one hymn about being weak and yet strengthened.

[ 31 : 56 ] strength. He has to be strength yet to be always weak. I haven't quoted it correctly but it might seem to some those who are ignorant of these things such a contradiction but it's not is it?

Not a paradox as it were in a sense. But it is in this very way that Lord is pleased to make known his grace and the power of it and the effectiveness of it in our felt weakness.

You see we need to be brought down. Sometimes think of that expression by the psalmist when he said he weakened my soul in the way. It may be a long nice way you may to realise sometimes you have to learn this don't you your weakness.

your helplessness your insufficiency and yet the Lord has a purpose in this that you might know his grace and prove that grace to be what it is sufficient.

It's sufficient you see to help a poor sinner right to the end of the journey and whatever may lay in that pathway there is grace sufficient as Paul proved it as he journeyed on in his pathway that God has ordained for him to walk in and while we are not called to walk a path the same way as the apostle Paul but in our little way our humble way the Lord will have us to realise that it is by his grace and the communication of it how it must have encouraged Paul as he journeyed on because God said this and he said it from heaven he said it to Paul as the God of all grace and where the word of a king is there is power but how sufficient you see we are so insufficient aren't we insufficient of ourselves I know it's not according to nature or human nature would be self sufficient but we have to learn learn our insufficiency we have to learn our weakness we have to learn our dependence upon God and in this way to realise to prove from time to time in that little measure the Lord is pleased to communicate it to us that this grace is sufficient it meets every need whatever the trials may be whatever losses whatever the temptations whatever the difficulties in the way whatever infirmities there may be whatever sore temptations grace is sufficient it never fails but you see there is a communication of this grace grace to help in time of need the Lord has not seen fit as it were for us to store up in ourselves as it were but rather to be receiving grace day by day strength for the day so Paul proved it as he journeyed on in his particular pathway in life and as the Lord was pleased to so use him in such a remarkable way for the engarling of his church

[ 35 : 23 ] Paul had to prove again and again that his strength was not in himself this thorn would keep reminding him of his infirmity but he was given grace wasn't he grace it needed grace didn't it most gladly he says would I rather glory in my infirmities it is not in nature is it to glory infirmities no it may hurt our pride it's the path the Lord has appointed for his dear people to walk in and Paul was given grace and we see how the grace was manifested in his attitude in the midst of these things he says most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmity that the power of Christ may rest upon me oh here's the sufficiency of God's grace in the power of Christ yes Lord Jesus Christ who is full of grace was made that way whereby that grace can come right down to poor needy sinners it gives strength yes nothing to do with human power or ability no but that grace flows freely it is sovereign grace it is sustaining grace it is supporting grace it is pardoning grace yes it is grace to provide every need and that is promised and when you consider the exceeding great and precious promises that are scattered throughout the word of God and if the Lord should be pleased to make a word precious to you a precious promise you can trace it to his grace indeed you see not for our duties or deserts we're unworthy we're guilty but God is gracious and his grace is sufficient yes to help a poor sinner right along the journey down to the end of the way that saving grace that supporting sustaining grace that yes which will be soul humbling grace but it is grace yes the free unmerited favour of

God to poor sinners not for our duties or deserts the Lord is gracious he is pleased to be gracious he reveals himself in his words as a gracious God a sin pardoning God a sustaining and supporting God and in the Lord Jesus Christ we see that wellness divine compassion all the grace that was manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ and in what he is to his dear people and the communications of his mercy and grace to them yes as the need arises and as I said the Lord has not seen fit that we should have a stock in ourselves no but the way to experience this is as we are helped to realise that in ourselves there is insufficiency we are sinful we are weak we are poor but his grace is sufficient yes it is enlivening it is supporting it is quickening grace it is sustaining supporting grace it is grace for a poor sinner enabling him to endure to the end oh that you and

I might know that grace let me think of that beautiful word in one well known psalm he giveth grace and glory oh may you and I be the recipients of that great mercy amen let us close by singing hymn number 209 the tune is Dublin 129 hymn number 209 grace like a fountain ever flows fresh fresh suckers to renew the lord my wants and weakness knows my sins and sorrows too hymn number 209 a a poet have been a t or pas too a a

The Lord begs■ckam, He Chris, you may not bear this■■ He Faulkhold, O Whitech, King of City, He digs You may believe in you died S Health and Consumbring The End The End



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