

## 2 Corinthians

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Preacher: Broome, John Robert (1931-2013)

[ 0 : 00 ] I am seeking the Lord's help. I direct your attention this evening to Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 9.

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This word has rested with me for a long time and I have preached on it many times. And it rests upon my heart again tonight.

It contains an inexhaustible mine of truth and of the love of God that lies here.

[ 1 : 34 ] I felt with me. I felt with it on my mind this afternoon that word dropped in, I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and I will show mercy upon whom I will show mercy.

Lord was there in the 33rd chapter of Exodus. Communing with his dear servant Moses. And he was in need.

And in that solemn situation where Israel had had the golden calf and the Lord had dealt solemnly.

And Moses came to that place in his experience where he desired the Lord's presence. And the Lord spoke that beautiful word to him, My presence shall go with thee.

And I'll give thee rest. And he said after that, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up ahead. He longed for the Lord's presence.

[ 2 : 45 ] And the Lord said to him, I'll make all my goodness pass before thee in the way. And I'll be gracious to whom I will be gracious.

And we come to look at this word. It's the opening part that rests with us constantly. My grace is sufficient for thee. My thoughts go this evening to the last word of that day.

It's very remarkable that the Lord should take note of his people personally and individually.

That he should not only take note of them, but draw near to them and deal with them. And we come to look at the Lord's sovereignty that lies here, my grace.

Grace. I'll be gracious to whom I will be gracious. He's sovereign. Grace is something that is the prerogative of a king.

[ 3 : 59 ] The extension of that scepter that we read of in the time of Esther. I'll go in unto the king and if I perish, I perish. She knew what grace was.

When the scepter was extended in her direction. And every one of God's dear children has to come to know what grace is.

Unmerited, undeserved. Hand of God extended toward them in their sin. In their fallen and ruined condition.

In the undeserving nature of what they walk in. That they walk before God as rebels. Every one of them. No different from the whole of humanity.

And they have no more merit. Or desert. Or claim upon God than any human being ever had or hasn't. When God extends the arm of his mercy.

[ 4 : 58 ] In sovereign grace. It is extended. Undeserved. Unmerited. It is true grace.

It is the scepter of mercy. It is the scepter of mercy. It is extended to them. Condemned sinners. And God in his sovereign grace.

Snatches them as brands plucked from the burning. I remember. I think I have said it here before. But I say it again. I remember so well many years ago.

When I was a student. I had heard the name of Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones. I was under the impression he was a great preacher.

So I thought one Friday night I'd go and hear him. And the place was packed. There were a couple of thousand people there. And he was a gifted orator.

[ 6 : 02 ] Let's put it mildly. He moved the whole audience that night. But what I'm coming to is this. His text was this. And I shall never forget it.

Nor the order in which he opened it up. Being justified. Freely by his grace. Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. But one thing that man that night.

Totally and utterly mishandled was grace. He never once mentioned that he was sovereign grace. He mentioned the mercy and love of God to sinners.

And he mentioned every other aspect of that truth. Justification. The freeness of it. The redeeming love and blood of Christ. That the operative word in that text is grace.

And you know I remember walking down. From Westminster Chapel after the service. And I thought to myself. There's something wrong here. Something was lacking there tonight.

[ 7 : 07 ] Then I thought. I wonder how J.C. Philpott would have handled that day. And I suddenly realized. That half that congregation were Arminians. Half were so called Calvinists.

But at the root of all of it. There was a covering up. Of what grace really is. If you take sovereignty from it. What is it? Oh when we consider that word.

I will be gracious. To whom I will be gracious. Grace is that love. Of Christ.

Christ. And the mercy of God. Through Christ. Extended to. Hell deserving sinners. Who haven't a claim upon God.

And if he were to cast them into hell. They would. Have to own him to be utterly just. And they have to realize what it is. To be plucked as a brand from the burning.

[ 8 : 09 ] Having. Having no claim upon God whatsoever. And to realize in their hearts. What grace really is. That condemned.

Under God's holy law. And brought down. As dear Hezekiah was. As God brought him. Face to face with eternity. To cry out to God.

Oh Lord. I am oppressed. By the weight of my sin. By thy condemning holy law. Bow down under it. We know that was the case. Because he says afterwards.

In love to his soul. The Lord had delivered it. From the pit of corruption. And cast all his sins. Behind his back. And the dear man knew. What grace was. What? Blessed mercy.

If we are brought to this place. Where we are brought to feel our need of God. Under his condemning law. When we are brought to feel that.

[ 9 : 18 ] We cannot cease from sinning. Besetting sins everywhere about us. Thorns in the flesh. And we come into the seventh of Romans.

Dr. Lloyd-Jones used to say that. He didn't believe that the seventh of Romans. Was the experience of a child of God. He said that. He believed the seventh of Romans.

In that solemn passage. When I would do good. Evil is present with me. It was the experience of the apostle Paul. On his journey to Damascus. As he kicked against the bricks.

But he said when he was converted. That wasn't his experience at all. He was then a conqueror. Very solemn. Very solemn. The path of God's dear people.

Is a path of impotence. And of conflict. And of temptation. And oh how they need.

[ 10 : 17 ] The grace of God. All the days of their life. More and more. You may look. Upon God's servants.

As they come to the end of the journey. And think. Well they probably don't need as much grace. As when they started out. My friend. They need more. And fail to need it.

And look at the beauty of this. Lovely word. Of promise. The extent of it. The extent of it. God's dear servants. Some of them.

In the scriptures. Show us. The extent of God's grace. I think of David. In his great sin of adultery and murder.

And the grace of God. That he needed. After he had penned that. Beautiful psalm. The Lord is my shepherd. I think of Peter.

[ 11 : 18 ] I'll go with you even unto death. And went out and denied him. With oaths and curses. The look that Jesus gave. His dear servant. Was grace.

It broke his heart. It did. It did. It did. And you know. There are two aspects to this.

There are. Outward sins. And there are. Inward sins. There is the. Outward fall. And the inward fall. And there is a bitter conflict.

The outward may be kept clean. But oh the inward. I don't know which of the Scottish ministers it was. Feeling it was Dr. Kennedy of Dingwall.

One of the godly Scottish divines. Prayed that. The Lord would keep. His secret sins.

[ 12 : 23 ] From the sight of his congregation. Not so much the thoughts. The sins of deed. But the sins of thought. In his heart. The evils of his fallen nature.

That were ever prevalent with him. And the conflict. That was. It is described in the. Seventh of Romans. There is a conflict. He was. Dealing with. In the.

Days of his pathway. In his ministry. And deeply. Deeply. Conscious of it. He was. And. Sore of beauty. In this word.

My grace. Is sufficient for thee. Let us consider this. That. The Lord.

Knows us. In. Its entirety. Our hearts. He sees all. And we know that is so.

[ 13 : 23 ] We know that is so. None. Fully know. All the depths. Of our hearts. Nor all that lies.

In the way. It is only. The individual. Child of God. That knows. What the Lord sees. And.

Who knows. The grace. That he needs. And the grace. That he will need. To bring him to glory. Because grace. We shall ever need. Down to.

A dying hour. A dying grace. Why. One of the greatest sins. Of our hearts. Is unbelief. Solemn.

Unbelief. Many say. We should. Take the Lord. At his word. But you know. There is a lot of error lies there.

[ 14 : 23 ] Yet there is a lot of truth. Grace. Oh. To be enabled. To trust him more. Especially. In the. Blessedness. Of the promises. That he has spoken into our hearts.

And to rest in them. And to bring them to him. There is nothing more precious. Than grace. To be enabled. To rest. And trust in him.

At all time. And to pour out our hearts. Before him. When I went out. Recently.

To America. Last October. I went out on the 8th of October. When the crisis. Was. At its heat. When the war in Afghanistan. Began. And there is a lot of signs.

About us. Of tension. And danger. But you know. I walked with this word. I flew with it.

[ 15 : 18 ] Across the Atlantic. I travelled with it. I preached with it. It was ever with me. It was sweet. It was precious. My grace. The arms of love and mercy.

About us. I felt it. My mind was kept in. Perfect peace. And quietness. I proved the beauty.

Of that lovely word. In quietness and confidence. Shall be thy strength. Fear was taken away. And there was a wonderful peace.

In the precious nature. Of his grace. His presence. I felt in preaching.

From this word. Before I went out. That. I had a sight. Of those men. Going into the fiery furnace. Heated seven times hotter. And I had a realisation.

[ 16 : 15 ] That. They could never have known. The grace of God. As they knew it. The grace they knew. Was related to the heating. Of that fire. Seven times hotter. They needed.

Abundant grace. Or sufficient grace. Death was before them. Death was about them. But the grace of God. Was with them. And they were kept.

By his almighty arm. His blessed power. And. Life is that. All over. It will be that.

In a dying hour. A furnace heated. Seven times hotter. To go into that valley. And to go alone. And then to know. His presence.

His arms about us. What Moses knew. When he came. To his dying hour. And what he expressed. In the. 33rd of. Deuteronomy.

[ 17 : 11 ] The dear man of God. His heart was. Filled with a sense. Of the. Love of God. And his. Precious promises. Were. Resting in his soul.

Thy shoes. Should be iron and brass. As he was about. To walk. The Jordan of death. Thy shoes. Shall be iron and brass. And as I do. Not many of them left.

But as I do. So shall thy strength be. And then. Like. A psalm. Of praise. He breaks forth.

Into a sweet. Precious. Confession. Which is centered. Upon. The grace of God. Revealed to him.

In his heart. And he says this. There is none like. Unto the God of Jeshurun. Who rideth. Upon the heaven. In thy help. And in his excellency.

[ 18 : 05 ] On the sky. The eternal God. Is thy refuge. And underneath. Are the everlasting arms. And he shall thrust out. The enemy. From before thee.

And shall say. Destroy them. Israel. Israel. Then. Shall dwell. In safety alone. Beautiful word. The arms of God.

Underneath him. Dwelling in safety alone. The grace of God. With him and about him. God's dear children.

Prove this. In life's pathway. To be the only way to walk. Life out here below. To know the.

Nearness. Of their God to them. His help. And presence. Be able to look up to him. And realize. That he hears. And answers prayer.

[ 19 : 03 ] You don't need. More than one answer. To prayer. To understand that. I remember. When I was quite young. 16 or 17.

The only thing. I could. Put together. Regarding anything. Spiritual. Was one or two answers. To prayer. And they didn't relate. To myself either. They related to others.

But they were true answers. To prayer. One of them. Was a very striking one. That I never. Forgotten. The first answer. To prayer. I ever heard. He used to go.

With my father. A lot preaching. And I was a lad. Of seven or eight. And up till I was 16. I constantly. Travelled with him. And I met. Some of the godly.

Saints. The dear deacons. And so on. That he used to meet. As we travelled. There was a dear old deacon. Called Jim Woodford. At Downton. At chapels. Long closed now. But he was the tailor.

[ 20 : 00 ] In the village. He gave out the hymns. At the chapel. His godly man. And I felt. Not that he ever said anything to me. But I felt a love to him.

He walked out his profession. In humility. And as a child. I. Had a realisation. That he was a godly man. There were one or two like that.

Old Emmanuel Byrd. At Enford. Godly man. Billy Curtis. Godly man. They were. But Jim Woodford. Was taken ill. And taken into hospital. In Salisbury.

One Saturday afternoon. My father said. He was going to see him. Desperately ill and dying. And I remember. Going into my room. And dropping on my knees. And feeding a love.

To the old man. I asked the Lord. That he'd spare his life. We went to the hospital. His wife came out of the ward. And she said to my father. Give him two days to live.

[ 20 : 56 ] And I remember thinking. My prayer. Ah. He lived two years after that. He lived two years after that. And I paced the end of his bed.

Two years later. When he was dying. Trying to tell him. My answer to prayer. My lips were sealed. I couldn't open my lips. Never did tell him. But I loved him. There was an answer to prayer.

And we come to. Look at Moses experience. Here in this precious. Moment in which he was coming. To the end of the journey. Israel then.

Shall dwell in safety alone. The fainting of Jacob. Shall be on a land of corn and wine. Also his heaven shall drop down. Jew. Happy art thou. O Israel.

Who is like unto thee. O people. Saved by the Lord. The shield of thy help. And who is the sword of thy excellency. And thine enemies.

[ 21 : 55 ] Shall be found liars unto thee. Thou shalt tread upon their high places. My grace. Oh when we see the grace of God.

In the heart of his dear servant in that hour. His eyes were fixed upon his God. And he was resting there. In joy and peace.

The mercy of God. All the days of his life. Right back. To his birth. And the putting of him in the ark. The grace of God. The mercy and love of God.

Have watched over him. Thou shalt not. Be forgotten of me. Says the Lord. Regarding his dear people. There.

In his arms. And I've always felt that. The arms that he felt. In his dying hour. The grace of God. That was about him in those arms. That were underneath.

[ 22 : 51 ] Was the same grace. Sovereign grace. That surrounded him. In the ark. And the beauty of that grace. That was with him in the court of Pharaoh.

Choosing rather. To suffer affliction. With the people of God. Than to enjoy the. Pleasures of sin. For a season. Esteeming the.

Reproach of Christ. Greater riches. Than the treasures of Egypt. For he had respect. Under the recompense. Of the reward. We see. His knowledge. Of the grace of God.

Revealed to him. In his heart. And the Lord. Drew near to him. In that dangerous situation. With all its temptations. And gave him grace.

To choose rather. To suffer affliction. With the people of God. What. Beautiful grace that is. As the Lord. So. Come to you.

[ 23 : 51 ] That he has done that. In your soul. Given you the grace. To choose rather. To suffer affliction. With the people of God. That enjoy the pleasures.

Of sin. For season. Joseph in that. House of Potiphar. Shall I do this great evil. Oh. The grace of God. That was in his heart. The knowledge of God.

That was with him. The presence of God. That was there. In his soul. And the sin. The temptation. The evil. The grace of God. And we see it.

When a boy. Of seventeen. The Lord. Planted that seed. Of divine grace. In his soul. And revealed himself. To him. Just as he did. To dear old Jacob. At Bethel.

Oh. Mark. The work of God. In the hearts. Of his dear people. The seed of grace. That is sown. In the soul. The mighty divine work. Of that new creature.

[ 24 : 47 ] In Christ Jesus. The effectual call. Of God. The voice of God. Heard in their souls. And as they journey onward.

In all the vicissitudes. Of life. And its temptations. And its sorrows. And its fiery furnaces. And its thorns. In the flesh. And its crosses.

They learn. They experience. They walk out. The all sufficiency. Of this grace. They have tasted it. In the.

Dawn of the work of God. In their heart. And they go on. As the journey of life. Goes on. To prove the. Extensive nature of it. Its. All.

Sufficient grace. It's a beautiful word. By grace. Is sufficient. It's a lovely word. There are words.

[ 25 : 44 ] In scripture. Which have. An eternal. An eternal. Ring about them. Such as. I will never. Leave thee. Nor forsake thee. What a word.

That is. What an extensive word. That is. We cannot measure. The nature of that. Never. There's a beauty in it.

There's a blessedness in it. When we come to this word. My grace is sufficient. It's a quiet. Peaceful. Blessed word. But. It contains.

A magnitude. A divine magnitude. Why? Because it's God's grace. That's why. It's his grace. And it's beautifully spoken of here.

My grace. It peculiarly. Comes from his throne. It peculiarly. Comes from his heart.

[ 26 : 47 ] It's peculiarly revealed. To peculiar people. Peculiar in this sense. That they.

Are chosen of God. In eternity past. They distinct.

In God's sight. They are loved. As Jeremiah was. With an everlasting love. To them the Lord says. I know the thoughts.

That I think towards you. Thoughts of peace. And not of evil. To give you an expected end. They're his. And they always will be his.

My grace. Is. Sufficient. For thee. And then the verse. Goes on. For my strength.

[ 27 : 52 ] Is made perfect in weakness. And we can say. Of these. That they're poor. They're weak. But.

Weak in themselves. In him they're strong. They know their weakness. But you see.  
The Lord speaks these words. To his dear apostle. It is the Lord. That says. My strength.  
I've often thought. In regard to the ministry. That I've seen a beauty. And blessedness in it.  
When God's servants.

Feel that they're. Most empty. And there are degrees. Of emptiness. They feel. And the longer. They're in the ministry. The more they understand.

[ 28 : 56 ] What that means. They come. The Lord's servants. To a place. Rather like the hymn writer. Tis. Perfect. Poverty alone.

That sets the soul. At large. Whilst we can call. One might our own. We have no foolish charge. Well in the ministry. The Lord's servants. Come down to. Such a feeling. Of emptiness.

As perfect poverty. They have nothing. And yet. Then. The Lord is able.

To put more. Into their earthen vessel. In its emptiness. Than he could ever. Otherwise do. When they're. They're emptiest.

He's able to fill them most. They're never in a better condition. To be filled. Than when they're empty. Not.

[ 29 : 54 ] An experience. They enjoy. They like to go. With their vessel full. But oh. When they go. With it empty. And when we come. To look at the words. Of the Lord. To his apostle. My strength. Is made perfect. In weakness. And his dear servants.

And his dear people. Feel their weakness. Walk in their weakness. Then is the hour.

And the time. When the Lord. Can strengthen them. Most. And when they. Appreciate. The Lord's strength. Most. When they.

Understand it. And can grasp it. When. They feel. The remarkable. Nature of it. I remember.

[ 30 : 51 ] In 1971. I went for an operation. In the Royal United. And. I was greatly. Exercised.

And tempted. I remember. In the morning. Before the operation. About half past one. Walking around. Feeling. Burnt up with fear. And exercise. And concern.

Temptation. Then I was. Dressed in the operating. Robes. And laid on the bed. To wait. To be taken down. On the trolley. To the theatre. But you know. In that.

Half hour. Before I was taken down. And they never gave me. Any injection. Or anything. Suddenly. Felt a peace.

That passed. All understanding. And I lay there. For half an hour. In perfect peace. His presence. Calm. Amidst.

[ 31 : 49 ] Tempestuous motion. Knowing that the Lord. Is nigh. I shall never forget it. Precious experience. To know that.

He is there. And watches. And that he is able. To grant the peace. Which he spoke of. When he was here on earth. My peace.

I leave with you. My peace. I give unto you. It's not been in my experience. Many times. In life's pathway. That I've known such a precious peace.

My grace. Is sufficient for thee. His. Blessed. Strength. And presence. In the sweetness of it.

I believe the. Lord's servant Elijah. Knew something of it. As he stood on Carmel. Dealt. With the prophets of Baal. I believe he knew a little of it.

[ 32 : 51 ] When the rain came down. And his prayer was answered. And I believe. The man of God. Knew somewhat of it. When he ran before the chariot. Of Ahab. But he knew.

The source of it. And the. Origin of it. When he fell before Jezebel. Oh. How he began to go in his own strength. The Lord left him.

Then he knew it. Why. I know this to be true. That. There have been times in my life. When in great weakness. The Lord has spoken a precious promise.

Remember one occasion. When he spoke to me. When I. Was very low. And under a tremendous. Trial at the time. And. It brought me to physically shake. And then the Lord spoke.

One Sunday morning. As I had to go to preach. And hardly in the eye. Stand up in the pulpit. And he suddenly said. The mountain shall depart. And the hills be removed. My kindness.

[ 33 : 49 ] Shall not depart from me. And neither shall the covenant of my peace. Be removed. Says the Lord that has mercy on me. And you know. It was Galid Chapel. Brighton I was going to. And I drove to Brighton that morning.

In perfect peace. I never forget it. But you know. This is the sequel to that story. I preached all day at Galid. All the help I felt.

And the quietness. And as I drove out of Brighton that night. Up the road to Lewis. The trial came down on me. Like a great storm. And descended on me.

And shook me. And shook me. Oh. I had felt the presence of my God. And the peace of my God. And the beauty of this lovely world.

My strength. My strength. God's strength. Is made perfect in our weakness. I felt it when I was a student.

[ 34 : 47 ] On occasions in my exam. I sat in some of the exam halls. In London University. They taught three thousand students about me. And felt his help.

Praying my way through. I walked in the London Underground. In the rush hour. And felt as I was standing on the White Horse Hill. Here on a midsummer's day.

In a dark November night in the rush hour. The Lord's presence. The sweetness of it. His help. His grace. My strength.

Is made perfect in weakness. God's dear people. Have a source of strength. The world knows nothing of. Then the Lord.

Is their strength. And this. Is the foundation. They stand upon the rock.

[ 35 : 51 ] Christ Jesus. By precious faith. God's dear servants. Could never go to preach. That is. His true servants. Without the precious nature.

Of this promise. My grace. Is sufficient for thee. For my strength. Is made perfect in weakness. Many a time. They stand up and feel.

They'll come to an end. Have to sit down. The Lord is their. All sufficiency. Now. When these. Words were spoken.

Into the Apostle Paul's heart. It had an effect. No longer. Did he. Ask the Lord. To take away.

His. His thorn in the flesh. His weakness. No. He. Took it up. In his arms.

[ 36 : 47 ] Willingly. Most gladly. Oh. What a remarkable change in him. Thrice.

I besought the Lord. That he would take it away. But no. He said. And you know. Notice this.

The. Answer the Lord gave him. It was an answer. Was not the one he wanted. Yet it was the answer. Beautiful answer. The Lord did not answer him.

Exactly as he expected. Yet he answered him. You cannot say. He didn't answer him. He did answer him. It was an answer to his prayer. The answer to his prayer.

That the Lord would take it away. Was this promise. And you know. Look at it.

[ 37 : 44 ] The thorn remained. But so did the promise. That was never to be taken from him.

Every promise that God gives to his dear church. Is theirs for life. Never to be given. God's word is sure. When spoken into the souls of his dear people.

Not one jot or tittle of it. Will ever be altered. It's spoken. It's spoken. Forever. And here. Written into the heart of the dear Lord's servant.

Was this precious word. My strength. Is made perfect in weakness. And so he could truly say. Out of the. Precious gift. Of this word.

To his soul. Most gladly. Therefore. Will I glory. In my infirmities. That the power of Christ.

[ 38 : 45 ] May. May. Rest. Upon me. And he goes on. To speak of it all. When he says. Therefore I take pleasure. In infirmities. In reproaches.

In necessities. In persecutions. In distresses. For Christ's sake. For Christ's sake. That was the.

Substance of it. And the essence of it. For Christ's sake. And then he adds this lovely word. A sweet. Meditation on his path. When I'm weak.

Then. In that hour. In that moment. In that weakness. I'm strong. Why? Because.

He has been brought. To rest. Upon his dear redeemer. Beautifully. Spoken of.

[ 39 : 47 ] In the. Scriptures. When. We. Read in the. Prophet Isaiah. Of that. Perfect. Peace.

Of God. They will. Keep him. In perfect. Peace. Whose mind. Is stayed on thee. Because. He. Trust it in thee.

Trust ye. In the Lord. At all times. Ye people. Pour out. Your heart. Before him. God is a refuge. For us.

Trust ye. In the Lord. Forever. For in the Lord. Jehovah. Is. Everlasting. Strength. Oh. What a mercy. To learn this.

Glorious lesson. To be taught of God. To be brought into this way. Not a way. The carnal heart. Would choose. But the way.

[ 40 : 45 ] The. Child of God. Understand. Says the apostle did. When I'm weak. Then am I strong. To go forth.

In life's pathway. In all our weakness. And to know. His help. His presence.

His grace. His strength. This. Is. Is the. Experience. Of his dear children.

In all generations. And they are brought. To what Moses was brought to. In a dying hour.

As he was. To know. There is none. Like. Unto the God of Jeshurun. Who right is. Upon the heaven. In thy hell.

[ 41 : 42 ] And in his excellency. Upon the sky. The eternal God. Is thy refuge. And. Underneath are. The everlasting. Arms.

Amen.