

Tha all sufficiency of God's grace (Quality: Good)

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[0 : 00] Seeking the Lord's help, I direct your attention to the second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 12 and verse 9.

The second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 12 and verse 9. He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

As I have come to the States and preached at Chateau and Sheboygan and now here in Grand Rapids, this verse has followed me.

[1 : 17] I had it many months before I came out here. And I preached at Chateau from it and I preached at Sheboygan from it.

And it has rested with me today to bring it before you again. There can be no bottom to this well. There is such a glorious truth that lies here.

The all-sufficiency of our God in his grace to us sinners that we are.

And individually we know as the Lord has taught us what sinners we are. If he has shown us by the light of his Spirit the heinous nature of the sins of a lifetime and brought them before us under the condemning power of his holy law, we shall have in a very small measure a measure of his grace.

I heard your dear pastor in England some years ago speaking from the word that the Apostle Paul uses, the Apostle Peter uses so frequently, the word precious.

[2 : 48] It has always since then struck me very forcibly that when Peter spoke of the precious blood, for as much as ye know ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, that Peter had a measure by experience in his soul of the knowledge of sin and the efficacy of the blood of Christ in his own heart.

And under those circumstances he was able to gauge that the blood of Christ was precious. And when we come to look here at the all-sufficiency of God's grace, some of you here have walked a long lifetime now.

And as the Lord has taught you, and as he has shown you something of your own fallen nature, and shown you something of your own rebellious spirit, you have in a little measure some view of the all-sufficiency of his grace, the extent of it.

As Joseph Hart speaks of the extent of God's grace in the light of his sins, he says this, sins against a holy God, sins against his love, his blood, sins immense, as is the sea, hide me, O Gethsemane.

The dear man of God had some measure of the extent of the grace of God that had followed him, kept him, had not left him, or cast him away, abandoned him, but what a mighty extent of that grace he knew in his soul.

[4 : 43] And one thinks of the dying thief on the cross of Calvary, and how he cast it in the face of the Lord Jesus, thou that savest others, save thyself.

And then in the hours that followed of darkness, he came to us. And then we see the glory of the grace of God, the mercy that was extended to that dear man in that he received that answer from Christ, today they shall be with me in paradise.

And we would desire this afternoon to look at the extent of the fall, the depths of the fall, and the depths and extent of the sufficiency of the grace of God that is extended to his fallen people to deliver them out of the fall.

When we come to look at this apostle here, we see the circumstances that surround the giving of this promise to him. this revelation in his heart, we see the pathway he'd walked, and all he had suffered for the truth's sake.

And yet still, in divine wisdom, the Lord saw fit to lay in his flesh a solemn thorn in the flesh.

[6 : 29] He saw fit to deal with him in this deeply mysterious way. And yet we see that the apostle had a sweet knowledge of the grace of God in the giving of that thorn, lest I should be exalted above measure.

God had blessed him deeply in his soul with a remarkable view of himself, and yet he saw fit to keep him from the solemnity of his fallen nature which would rise even in the blessing of the grace of God revealed in his heart in the person of Christ.

Yet he could see his fallen nature would rise in pride. And the Lord saw fit to keep him from being exalted and to humble him.

We've been in the last day, yesterday in the hospital here and seen a sad and solemn sight. A dear Dutch elder lying there paralyzed.

young friend Michael in his pathway that he is walking and we have seen the hand of God, the voice of God, and all the depth of that grace that is spoken of here that extends right down into the very deepest water that God can bring his dear children.

[8 : 06] Right to the very edge of eternity there under the solemn hand of God. Those everlasting and eternal arms of his grace are under his dear children.

Oh, the blessed nature of the all-sufficiency. See, we shall never this side of the grave comprehend the full purposes of God in his dealing.

We watch them and look at them in awe and wonder how he moves and works and we know in the paths of his dear people and we cannot tell, we do not know why.

The theme writer says, why through darks and paths we go we may know no reason yet we shall hereafter know each in his due season.

But having made those few remarks we would desire to come to the text here before us. And he said unto me and this opening part of the text has drawn our hearts affections to these precious words of the apostle.

[9 : 26] The beauty of the work of God and the vital necessity of this work of God if ever you and I are to reach glory that we be found in these opening simple words and the gospel is so essentially simple and he said unto me.

We commented on it on Wednesday night. the voice of God heard and known in our heart. The voice of God speaking to us.

Oh what do you know? What do I know of that voice of God? I think of the life of his dear servant Elijah and how God spoke to him again and again and the voice of God was heard.

I think of the grace of God as he spoke to his dear servant in his unbelief as he fled from Jezebel and the beauty of those words those gracious words arise and eat why the journey is too great for thee.

The eternal God touched with the feeling of the infirmity of his dear servant in his unbelief after he had walked on Carmel and seen the rain and run before the chariot of Ahab.

[10 : 55] Now the grace of God that he needs. He needed grace to stand before the priests of Baal alone. He needed grace to go seven times to pray for the rain.

But oh what grace he needed when the Lord came to him and he felt his ministry was at an end and he longed for the Lord to take his life. Then oh how we see my grace is sufficient.

Oh the depth to which that grace of God came down in the pathway of his dear servant and blessedly delivered him and fed him with that sacred heavenly food and brought him to go in the strength of it many days.

He said unto me and I asked you last time I was speaking here what have you got? What has the Lord said unto you?

What has he spoken to you? What have you heard of his voice in thy pathway? wife? And answer this question can you tell what the effect of that was on your soul when the Lord drew near and spoke?

[12 : 22] I've often thought of Elijah in the cave when the Lord called me by his grace. It was with a mighty effectual call.

And I've said of that night when he called me to himself and separated me from the world that I can understand what Elijah knew when he heard the still small voice of his guard in the cave.

What doest thou here Elijah? Oh the grace of God that followed the dear man to that place and there drew near and communed with him and he said unto me.

Still small voice of God has authority in it and it has grace in it. Oh it has what we read of in the account we were reading on Wednesday night of Moses.

Lord the Lord God gracious long suffering. Oh here is the sweet manifestation of his grace.

[13 : 31] in the hearts of his dear children. They are never out of his sight. He understands them perfectly.

He who neither slumbers nor sleeps watches over them. He knows what they need. He knows what chastening hand they need.

He knows what comfort they need. He knows what to speak in their heart and he knows when to speak into their soul.

He knows when they are brought down broken and wounded at his footstool of mercy. He sees their godly sorrow and repentance.

He puts their tears in his cup in his bottle. All he does. watches over them in tender love and compassion and infinite mercy.

[14 : 37] None of them will ever reach glory without the fullest sufficiency of this grace. When we look at some of the godly men of old and where they came to.

Noah, what a solemn place he came into. Abraham, how he lied. And we can trace these dear men. Jacob, follow them through and all their sins.

Jonah, how he fled from the presence of his God and the grace that possessed him. The gracious hand of his God, his long suffering mercy.

Now, come to your own case. And look at it. Oh, dear friends, I look into my own case, the hypocrisy.

I set about in my youth, keeping my father and mother quiet by attending the house of God. But, in the week I had my complete fill of the world.

[15 : 46] Oh, the grace of God that called me, and called me, and called me, and eventually by his effectual call, halted me in my mad career.

I look back and I believe we do, the older we get, the more glorious the sight of his grace we have, as we look back to the mercy that spared our life.

life. I can trace in my life two or three times when I have been absolutely at the gates of death. And yet, the hand of God kept me, and spared me from being cast into a never-ending eternity.

And when we go on in life, and the Lord does teach us and speak to us in our heart, oh then how solemn are the sins.

As we quoted just now, Joseph Hart said, sins against a holy God, sins against his love and blood. You know, Joseph Hart was brought up, as you may know, from that precious account that appears in the front of his hymns.

[17 : 07] J.C. Philpott said of that account, he knew no more sacred writing outside the scriptures than Joseph Hart's account of the work of God in his soul.

But that dear man came to a knowledge of the truth in his youth and then turned his back upon it and went into atheism and wrote books against the truth and turned his back in vicious anger against his God.

And then the Lord called him 25 years afterwards, brought him out. And oh, the fiery furnace of conviction he passed through.

It is a most remarkable account. And then for the last eight years of his life, he preached the gospel in London to thousands and penned those beautiful hymns on the love and mercy and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

and had such a precious sight of the agony of his dear Savior for his sins in the garden of Gethsemane and entered into such sweet fellowship and union with his dear Redeemer.

[18 : 20] Oh, the nature of grace as we said at the beginning, the deeper the hues and dyes of sin that the Lord shows the sinner in his heart and I believe he does.

He draws his dear people nearer to himself and in doing so they have such a sight of the heinous nature and evil of their sin in his sight.

You know, I think his heart says this, to see sin smart but slightly. To own with lip confession is easier still but oh to feel cut deep beyond expression.

And you know when the Lord dealt with his dear apostle here, oh how he brought him into a solemn sense and realization of his weakness, the pride of his heart, even in his best blessings and the best gifts of God, how his pride could rise and make ingraze a snare and the apostle could see the necessity of this thorn in the flesh and the Lord brought him as he prayed to be released from it thrice, he besought the Lord to take it away.

And what did the Lord do? he didn't remove it. I've said in speaking from this before, God does not always answer our prayers in the way we expect, but be certain of this.

[20 : 09] These words are an answer to prayer, not as the apostle hoped, but as the Lord intended. They were an answer to that prayer.

thrice I besought the Lord to take it from me, and he said unto me. And we see the grace of God here in the heart of his dear servant, that not only did he give him the wisdom to understand what was happening and the necessity of it, but he brought him under his divine grace to bow in absolute submission, to the will of his God.

I thought as I watched those two dear brothers in the hospital, this text was with me, oh the grace they need, and it has pursued me this word, my grace is sufficient, and you know, the sufficiency is divine, and it's completely beyond our comprehension, salvation, and we don't know what we may be called to pass through, and what of the sufficiency of this grace we may be called to enter into, but we know this, and we can see the sufficiency of this grace, in the words of the Lord to his dear servant Moses, the everlasting arms are underneath, there's no depths to which his dear church can possibly sink, no depths of suffering and sorrow and darkness and temptation where these arms of his all sufficient grace are not underneath, and

I've said this in preaching, we don't know what this thorn was, to see something so remarkable, the apostle should not write down exactly what happened, but that he should leave it as a sacred revelation that would be of help to all the church of God, who might well be tempted to think that if he had mentioned the peculiar nature of his thorn in the flesh, then they might be well tempted to say within themselves, well, I haven't got that thorn, but we cannot say that, it is every thorn, and when we come to look at the solemn thorns in the flesh that the people of God carry, thorns in the body, those afflictions that are laid for a lifetime never to be taken away.

thorns thorns in the pathways that affect the poor mind, weaknesses that the Lord lays, and what is the effect?

[23 : 31] I believe I know something of it, it is to drive us home to anchor on his breast, it is to bring us into a place where we cannot carry on without him, and it is to bring us into a place where we come like the apostle did, when carrying his thorn in the flesh, he said, I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me.

The deep waters and sorrows that cross life pathways, oh, when the child of God is brought down and brought under the weight of his thorn in the flesh, and the weakness in body and mind and soul, and the temptations that beset the child of God, and then look upward and to seek the divine strength that lies in this promise, my grace is sufficient for thee, and the blessed truth of the Lord's words here, my strength is made perfect in weakness, the effect of the thorns in the flesh, in the hearts of his dear children, is to bring them to their knees, not in formality, not in a form of words, but as he brought his dear servant Hezekiah, like a crane or a swallow, so did

I chatter, to wrestle with their God, to come like Jacob came, I'll not let thee go except they bless me, and you know, all of this his divine teaching, for that hour, when heart and flesh will fail, and his dear people will cross that valley of the shadow of death, all of it is in the perfect will of God for them, that they should be prepared for that hour, in a knowledge here, in time, of his glorious strength, a knowledge of what it is, in their weakness, to put their hand into the hand of God, and know the mighty power of his strength communicated to their soul, what it is, to come up out of the wilderness of this world, leaning hard upon their beloved, and he said unto me, the dear apostle, knew well the voice of his

God, he was not a stranger to it when he said this, we read those afflictions that he passed through for the sake of the gospel, oh, what a catalogue of suffering they were, and I felt, in reading them with this text upon my mind, this dear man of God, in all the sorrows he passed through, knew, much, of the grace of God in supporting him, do you not think that in that day and the night in the deep, his eyes were constantly up to his guard, we see the case of Jonah in the belly of the whale, out of the belly of hell cried I and thou heardest me, I do ask you, where have you been, what pathway has the

Lord caused you to walk in, that you have had to cry to him, what hospital bed have you lain on, what hours have you waited to go down to the theatre, what afflictions have you known, what fears have you had, what temptations have you been through, what have you proved of the divine nature of this glorious word, my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness, oh what have you known of weakness in the pathway here below, the weakness that brings with it solemn temptation, how many have been brought under solemn pressures of life's pathway, to feel that they will be brought to a complete mental breakdown, and brought down in black darkness and temptation and almost despair, when they have had to cry to their God to support them and sustain them, and he has drawn near in his grace, and spoken a word in their heart, calmed their fears, silenced the temptation of a tempting adversary, with his fiery dark, and brought them to a heavenly peace, such as they could never give themselves, and they have walked out the beauty and blessedness of this sacred truth of

[28 : 59] God in the heart of his dear servant, my strength is made perfect in weakness. there is a beautiful blessed movement here of the spirit, in the hearts of God's dear church.

It is a glorious reality, when the spirit, the comforter, draws near in the abject weakness of God's dear people, and brings them to this blessed place, where, as the woman touched the hem of Christ's garment, in faith, in that glorious exercise of faith, the virtue flowed into her dear body and soul.

And you know, there is a beauty in that. All Christ knew, and he does. He knows when his sacred virtue flows into the paths and hearts and souls of his dear church here below.

And they know, and there is precious fellowship, one with another. There is union and communion with the eternal Son of God.

My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. It is the poor, the sick.

[30 : 40] Christ said this, blessed are the poor in spirit. It's the sick that need the position.

And when we come to look at this word, my strength is made perfect in weakness, I believe there is a glorious balancing here.

The deeper the weakness. The heavier the cross, the greater the sorrow, the more the child of God and the sand, the blessed, sacred, glorious nature of the divine strength that is given.

And they look in wonder at the peace that flows from Calvary's cross into their hearts. For here lies the strength of Christ in the hearts of his dear people.

My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. strength is this, that it is 100% divine.

[32 : 11] Oh, to be brought to that place when they had nothing to pay. He frankly forgave them all. when his dear church is brought down to her nothingness, emptiness, to her foolish, total dependence upon God, then this perfection is reached.

My strength, says God. Oh, look at it, beautiful words. my strength. Is there any strength but his?

I believe there's none. But we need to be brought very low. I thought as I looked at that dear daughter, I'd never known him in my life, but oh, what abject weakness God has brought him to.

Weakness. And then to know his presence. Oh, the strength of submission to his holy mind and will.

The strength to bow under the cross. That's great. Oh, when the Lord gives great, divine grace, then there is submission to his will.

[33 : 41] And here we see the apostle in this text being brought to submission to the will of his God.

Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmity. That's submission. That's great.

To bow beneath it. Naomi required three open graves to bring her down to the words she spoke to her dear daughter-in-law Ruth.

Sit still. Beautiful words. The scripture has some lovely words. The Lord has spoken them in my life, in my heart.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Be still and know that I am God. Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.

[34 : 53] The Lord will fight for you and you shall hold your peace. Sit still, my daughter, until they see how the matter will fall. Oh, the grace that is needed the Lord gives it.

He sanctifies. He does indeed. The deep crosses and afflictions of his poor people, he does sanctify. And here we see the apostle taking up his cross, most gladly.

All the grace that he needed, the heavenly wisdom to see the glorious purpose. It was not to have ease here below.

It was to have suffering here below. That would be the means of divine preservation which would prepare him for eternal glory.

It was to be separated from this world. I and thy people separated people. Separated from this world by divinely given affliction.

[36 : 11] But here it was. The Lord would do it. And they do it in the heart of Naomi. He brought her back.

My grace is sufficient. It's sufficient for the deepest died, most rebellious sinner, in all his fallen nature.

The Lord followed his dear people to bring them back to this place. Most gladly therefore, Naomi bowed under her bereavement, husband and two sons, all her arm of human strength removed.

The hand of God had gone out against her. The Almighty she said had dealt bitterly, but it was in grace. Sovereign grace.

And he would bring her down at his footstall of mercy as clay in the hands of the heavenly potter.

[37 : 14] Most gladly therefore would I glory in mine infirmity. Sacred, solemn, awesome words. Oh, can we measure the grace that is needed to bring a child of God to this solemn and sacred place where there is a sight of the purposes of God in the cross.

The purposes of God in the thorn in the flesh. The Apostle saw it. And what? Why did he rejoice? I believe it is so beautifully clear why because he longed for something better.

Sufferings, yes. He took them quietly, silently, submissively. Why?

There was a purpose that the power of Christ may rest upon me. You know, John the divine says in his epistle, truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

The Apostle in his epistle to the Philippians refers to that fellowship in his prayer when he says that I might have fellowship with him in his suffering.

[38 : 47] Now that is exceptionally solemn. fellowship with Christ in his suffering entails crucifying sorrow.

It does indeed. Eating requires deep waters to cross life's pathway.

When we look at some of the dear old saints of old, my mind goes to Rutherford at Anworth. That fellowship which he had with Christ in his sufferings was to be torn away from his beloved flock and imprisoned and throughout his life to be bitterly persecuted right to a dying hour.

all the sorrow that the Lord sees fit to bring into the lives of his dear people.

Truly we can say deep waters cross life's pathway. The hedge of thorns were sharp. They are the ordained steps of God's dear people.

[40 : 06] but in them that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

And you know from Rutherford's prison the Lord in his remarkable purposes drew from his dear heart some of the most precious letters that any saint of God has written.

And those letters have been spread worldwide and made a blessing in the hearts of thousands of God's dear church. Little could the dear man of God see in that prison as he penned those letters what the Lord was doing.

But one thing we know that in his darkest hours the power of Christ was resting upon him. And the savour of Christ was in his dear soul.

And he was brought to that blessed place where he was submissive to the will of God. Most gladly therefore will glory.

[41 : 22] That's a solemn word. But I believe it contains that which is divine. There is that which is as clay in the hands of Heavenly Potter.

There is their sweet fellowship with his Redeemer in his suffering. With the man of sorrow and acquainted with grief.

We shall never know any fellowship with Christ unless we are brought into deep waters and deep crosses. There we shall know them.

When we look at some of the sorrows we've seen here in Grand Rapids they are indeed crucified. None of us can know what grace we would need unless we are brought to that place to be still in the hands of our God who doeth as he will with his own among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay his hand or say unto him what doeth there.

Most gladly therefore will I glory in mine infirmities why that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

[42 : 46] The deepest fellowship with the Redeemer in his sufferings must come in the deepest sorrow the darkest pathway the greatest suffering the heaviest crosses and you know even then I believe in some of the most bitter cups which the Lord puts into the hearts of his dear church they are most solemnly aware that they do but taste the cup that he alone has drunk it off but there is something very sweet sacred here what lies before you in life's pathway and me none of us know but this we do know our steps are ordered God moves in a mysterious way we shall never comprehend it but oh for this spiritual prophet to be made known in our heart that we be brought into this place that the apostle came to a precious promise given to him for life my grace is sufficient for thee for my strength is made perfect in weakness and the sanctifying of it in his dear heart so that from his lips come these remarkable words most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmity only grace divine heavenly grace can ever enable a soul to do that that the power of

Christ may rest upon me and then he goes on in the concluding verse to this therefore I take pleasure in infirmities in reproaches in necessities in persecutions in distresses for Christ's sake and here is his precious conclusion when I'm weak then am I strong oh to be brought to lie on a bed of affliction weakness suffering and sorrow and then to know the strength of Christ his presence his sacred sanctifying influence of the spirit to be still and bow in his dear hand and have precious fellowship with him in his suffering these are the footsteps of the flock tell me oh thou whom my soul love it where thou feedest thy flock and the beautiful answer of the bridegroom if thou knowest not go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock and here we have the footsteps of the flock of Christ going forth out of time into his immediate presence upheld in the arms of their God in their suffering sorrow being made ripe for glory

Amen