

The grace of God is sufficient in 2024

Reading: 2 Corinthians 12: 6-10

The Lord told Paul that despite his "thorn in the flesh", God's grace is sufficient for him. We read about it in 2 Corinthians 12: 7 – 10:

*Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. **For when I am weak, then I am strong.***

How did God's grace make a difference in Paul's life? How did it meet his needs?

1. **Grace** could meet Paul's needs because it expresses God's acceptance and pleasure in us. When we freely receive his grace, we enjoy the status of favour and approval in God's eyes. Grace means that God loves us, that he is favourably inclined towards us; we have his acceptance and his promise of caring for us always.

2. **Grace** could meet Paul's need because it was available to him all the time. When we sin or fail, or fall short, it does not put us outside of the reach of God's grace. Since grace is given freely to us in Jesus, it can't be taken away because we stumbled. When we come to God by faith, through the blood of Jesus his grace is ever ready to meet and minister to our insufficiencies.

(7) The presence of Paul's thorn in the flesh.

To prevent spiritual pride, Paul was given something: **a thorn in the flesh!**

To batter me means that this **thorn in the flesh**, the **messenger of Satan**, "punched" Paul. He felt that he was beaten black and blue by this **messenger of Satan**.

3. (8) Paul's prayer regarding the thorn in the flesh.

I pleaded with the Lord three times: In fact, Paul *repeatedly* prayed about this thorn in the flesh. We might imagine that when the thorn in the flesh first appeared, Paul thought, "This is no problem. I'll just give it to the Lord in prayer." But nothing happened when he prayed. So he thought, "This is a tough one," and prayed again. When nothing happened after praying the third time, he knew God was trying to tell him something.

3. **Grace** could meet Paul's need because it is the very strength of God. So much of the power of this world is expressed in things and in ways that bring harm and destruction to us, to the world we live in and to God's work. It happens when we take a worldly perspective about authority, spiritual power and strength, and deny God's truth about the strength of grace and love.

God's grace is not weakness or the tolerance of impurity.

Instead, it is the power of God to fully and completely give what we lack.

And He said to me: God had a response for Paul. The answer was not what Paul was initially hoping for, or expecting. But God still had a response for Paul. We often close our ears to God if He responds in a way we were not hoping for, or expecting.

My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness: Instead of removing the thorn from Paul's life, God had given, and would give, His **grace** to Paul all the time. **The grace God gave Paul was sufficient to meet his every need.**

Closing thoughts...

Being spiritually pretentious and conceited kills the working of God's power through our attempted witness and our lives!

But to trust in God and believe in his grace, enables us to be true vessels of his love, and as such, of his power!

(9-10) God's provision to Paul through his thorn in the flesh.

And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

To do this, Paul had to believe that God's **grace is sufficient**. We really don't believe God's grace is sufficient **until we believe we ourselves are insufficient**. We can't receive the sufficiency of God's grace until we know our own insufficiency.

My grace is sufficient for you:

Paul's continued - even forced - dependence upon God made him stronger than he would have ever been if his revelations had made him proud and self-sufficient.

For when I am weak, then I am strong: What triumph! What can the world do to such a man so firm in the grip of Jesus? God did not allow this *thorn in the flesh* to punish Paul, or to keep him weak for the sake of weakness. God allowed it to show a divine strength in Paul.

The greatest example of the principle Paul is communicating was lived by Jesus Himself. Could anyone on earth be meeker than the Son of God to be hung on the cross, hung in our place that He might redeem us from our sins? As that point of absolute weakness was met by the mighty power of God as He raised Him from the dead, the pressure of the thorn in Paul's life was a reminder of the power of the cross. In 2024, God's grace is and will be sufficient in every circumstance!

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