

Series: Standing on the Promises of God

MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE 2 CORINTHIANS 12

Text: 2 Corinthians 12:9

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⁹ 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.

Introduction:

In this passage we have an autobiography and he shines the light on the promise God made to him.

He gives testimony to the way in which he proved the grace of God in his own life.

The relevance of this passage to us is found in the fact that we, as believers are always in need of grace, not only “dying grace”, but also grace to live our daily lives.

Note:

1. PAUL'S SUFFERING HE REFLECTED

Every believer experiences trial and testing.

A. It Is the Common Thing of the Entire Human Race

Job 5:7

⁷ *Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.*

Job 14:1

¹ Man *that is* born of a woman *is* of few days, and full of trouble.

Not only is trials and testing common with the human race but also:

B. It Is the Common Experience of All Believers

Psalms 34:19

¹⁹ *Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.*

In verse 7, the apostle tells us about a very sore trial that befell him, "a thorn in the flesh".

Concerning this, notice:

2 Corinthians 12:7

⁷ And 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.

- The Nature of It

It was real, and not imaginary.

It was not a recurring carnal desire, otherwise Paul would not have gloried in it; nor does it seem likely that it was some fellow believer or an unbeliever who was "a thorn" in his side; nor was it remorse over his pre-conversion persecution of the saints.

It was an infirmity, a weakness, or an oppression or oppressor.

2 Corinthians 12:7

*⁷ And 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.*

So think that Paul's thorn in the flesh was a physical issue.

Others feel that Paul's thorn was demonic oppression.

Either could have been as the messenger of Satan could have reminded Paul of some physical issue.

The truth is we don't know exactly what Paul's thorn in the flesh was but it was something that was troubling to Paul.

It's helpful I believe to us that we don't actually know what Paul's thorn was other than that it was physical and painful; because we may apply the promise of verse 9 to our infirmities, our deafness, our weak digestion, our aches and pains, our timidity, etc.

We note not only the nature of this thorn in the flesh but also:

- The Purpose of It

When unpleasant things happen to us we naturally ask, Why? Why has God permitted this? In Paul's case the purpose was revealed to him, verse 7.

2 Corinthians 12:7

⁷ And 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.

The apostle was particularly susceptible to the temptation of pride and conceit because of his very

great gifts, and in particular, because of his amazing experience at Lystra fourteen years previously:

2 Corinthians 12:2-6

² I knew a man in Christ above 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. ³ And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) ⁴ How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. ⁵ Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. ⁶ For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

Compare to Acts 14:19-20

Acts 14:19-20

¹⁹ And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. ²⁰ Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

God gave Paul a "thorn" to keep him humble. Paul's thorn was purposeful, as are all our trials and tribulations.

John 13:7

⁷ Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

It's comforting to know the Lord is working out His purpose in our life.

Psalms 138:8

⁸ The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.

We note not only the nature and purpose of this thorn in the flesh but also:

- The Source of It

2 Corinthians 12:7

*⁷ And 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.*

Where did this thorn come from? Verse 7 tells us that it was "the messenger of Satan", but notice that the word "given" occurs in verse 7.

This thorn was a gift.

Note:

Psalm 55:22

²² Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

The word burden has the idea of something given by God.

Note: Philippians 1:29:

Philippians 1:29

²⁹ For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

We see that God's thorns are given to us by Him, though He sometimes allows Satan to deliver them, as He did in the case of Job:

See: Job 1:6-12

Job 1:6-12

⁶ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. ⁷ And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. ⁸ And the LORD said unto

Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? ⁹ Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? ¹⁰ Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. ¹¹ But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. ¹² And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

We note not only the nature, purpose and the source of this thorn in the flesh but also:

- The Result of It

What effect did Paul's thorn have upon him? It drove him to his knees and made him pray and praise.

Note:

Acts 16:25

²⁵ And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

Again, we too when our thorn in the flesh inflicts us with pain we should pray and praise the Lord.

I mentioned that we should pray. I want to share some thoughts about:

2. PAUL'S SUPPLICATION HE REVEALED

In verse 8, we are told that Paul prayed about his infirmity.

2 Corinthians 12:8

⁸ **For this thing** I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

Do we pray about our thorn in the flesh?

Do we bring our burden to the Lord?

Do we bring our need to the Great Physician?

Note: James 5:13-15

James 5:13-15

¹³ *Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. ¹⁴ Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

Notice:

- Paul Prayed Directly – “For this thing”

Paul prayed directly not generically.

We too should get specific when we pray. So often when we pray generally instead of directly.

Not only did Paul pray directly but also note:

2 Corinthians 12:8

⁸ *For this thing **I besought the Lord** thrice, that it might depart from me.*

- Paul Prayed Earnestly – “Besought the Lord”

Note Paul didn’t complain Paul prayed.

It’s also important to know that Paul besought the Lord not someone else, or some self-help procedure.

We too should go to the Lord when our thorn in the flesh begins to inflict pain.

Too often people get bitter and begin to complain when these times come.

Too often we try to fix or remove our thorn in the flesh instead of going to the Lord.

Paul not only prayed directly and earnestly but also note:

- Paul Prayed Faithfull – He besought the Lord “Thrice”

2 Corinthians 12:8

⁸ For this thing I besought the Lord **thrice**, that it might depart from me.

Paul didn't quit after praying once or twice but continued to pray.

I think we need to understand his prayer was answered, not in the way he expected, but in the way God wanted.

When we pray, sometimes the Lord answers our prayers with a Yes, sometimes with a No, sometimes with a Wait, and sometimes He answers quite differently from what we expect, as He did here.

What a good thing it is that He does not always answer our prayers in the way we want!

We have considered Paul's Suffering and Supplication note lastly:

3. PAUL'S SUFFICIENCY HE RECEIVED

2 Corinthians 12:9

⁹ 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.*

Paul's prayer was answered in the greatest possible way.

The greatest answer to prayer is not the thing we pray for, but Him!

Verse 9 tells us that with the revelation of Himself the Lord gave the promise of His sufficiency:

Note:

A. It Was a Powerful Sufficiency

2 Corinthians 12:9

⁹ 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.

The Lord said, "My grace . . ."

The Lord said, "My strength . . ."

Note:

Isaiah 40:28-31

Isaiah 40:28-31

²⁸ Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. ²⁹ He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. ³⁰ Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: ³¹ But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Note not “It Was a Powerful Sufficiency” but also:

B. It Was a Personal Sufficiency

2 Corinthians 12:9

*⁹ 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.***

God knows our personal needs and is able to meet them all.

Note not “It Was a Powerful and Personal Sufficiency” but also:

C. It Was a Present Sufficiency

2 Corinthians 12:9

*⁹ 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.*

Note it doesn't say will be but rather “is.”

The grace was already there for Paul to draw upon it. All he had to do was to appropriate, to take, to receive, to experience and to enjoy!

Note: 2 Kings 6:15-17

2 Kings 6:15-17

¹⁵ And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? ¹⁶ And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. ¹⁷ And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

Note not “It Was a Powerful, Personal and Present Sufficiency” but also:

D. It Was a Plentiful Sufficiency

2 Corinthians 12:9

*⁹ 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.*

The need was met with sufficient grace.

As the need increases the grace will increase.

The Lord gives us all the grace we need to make us the men and women He wants us to be, to keep us doing His will and to enable us to finish our course with joy and all we have to do; is draw upon His plentiful supply.

Remember God is not short of grace or insufficient but rather His grace is sufficient.

Note not “It Was a Powerful, Personal, Present and Plentiful Sufficiency” but also:

E. It Was a Practical Sufficiency

2 Corinthians 12:9

⁹ 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.

The grace of the Lord became operative in Paul's weakness; therefore the thorn became the channel of the power of God, for His strength was made perfect in weakness.

These last 19 words – *“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”* Is the Song of the Sanctified Thorn.”

Close:

May we learn that God's grace that is promised is sufficient.

But also may we understand that this lesson is best learned by a thorn in the flesh.