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**God’s Grace is Enough for Me**

JUNE 26, 2022

**Welcome**

Have you ever had one of those days (weeks?!) when you felt like your insides were ‘tied up in knots?” Life is full of challenges, disappointments, failures, threats, and tragedies. While we may not always know what to do in those situations, we do know that just “trying harder” doesn’t undo the knots.

The apostle Paul was no exception. In our text for today, Paul not only speaks of his “thorn in the flesh,” but also speaks of weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecution, and calamities.

What would life feel like if we believed God’s grace was sufficient for us? What if we trusted in the providence of God? What if we were able to discover contentment? What if we believed there was life beyond our circumstances? What if we were able to discover serenity? Today we’re going to consider “God’s grace is enough for me.”

**Praying the Passage...**

Dear Lord, we come before you today admitting that we need your grace. While we know that your grace is sufficient for us, we don’t always live like we believe that. Take those things that hinder us from knowing and trusting you more and turn our hearts back to you. Open your word to us today so that we may see in these words your sufficient grace for us today. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Into the word.**

The Apostle Paul experienced both the highest highs and the lowest lows in life. Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 out loud. Look for the ‘life-connections’ in these words. How have these words been your experience?

**2 Corinthians 12:1-10 NLT** 1 This boasting will do no good, but I must go on. I will reluctantly tell about visions and revelations from the Lord. 2 I was caught up to the third heaven fourteen years ago. Whether I was in my body or out of my body, I don't know—only God knows. 3 Yes, only God knows whether I was in my body or outside my body. But I do know 4 that I was caught up to paradise and heard things so astounding that they cannot be expressed in words, things no human is allowed to tell. 5 That experience is worth boasting about, but I'm not going to do it. I will boast only about my weaknesses. 6 If I wanted to boast, I would be no fool in doing so, because I would be telling the truth. But I won't do it, because I don't want anyone to give me credit beyond what they can see in my life or hear in my message, 7 even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. 8 Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. 9 Each time He said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. 10 That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

In verses 2-5 Paul speaks of a God-given experience of such a sublime nature that even after 14 years he cannot describe it. The word ‘Paradise’ refers to an intimate place, like a garden, where the King only brings his closest friends. Paul talks about this experience in terms of relationship with God.

•Have you experienced friendship with God?

•What is it like to call God “friend?”

•People talk about either feeling “far away” or “very close” to God.

What has your experience been with God?

•What does it mean to say that God’s grace is sufficient for you in times of challenge?

Paul goes on to describe intense physical pain and the gift of God to overcome his anguish in the rest of the passage. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7b-10. The Greek word translated “thorn” might also be translated “stake,” a word that suggests Paul experienced severe, sharp pain. Some scholars believe Paul’s suffering was chronic;

Paul tells us it kept him humble and dependent on God’s grace and sufficiency.

•Do you know anyone who suffers (or do you suffer) from an affliction, which God has not healed, even after much prayer?

•How does this suffering either move us away from or toward God?

•Talk about why it is difficult to trust God when we, or someone we know, is in much pain.

•How is God’s grace sufficient in these challenging times?

Horatio G. Spafford is credited with writing the words to the beautiful hymn, “It Is Well With My Soul.” The hymn is a response to the tragic loss of his wife and his daughters in a shipwreck. Somehow, God broke into his devastating loss with grace that is really nothing short of miraculous. The words to the hymn reflect that grace.

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way

When sorrows like sea billows roll;

Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say

It is well, it is well with my soul.

It is well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come

Let this blest assurance control

That Christ has regarded my helpless estate

And hath shed his own blood for my soul.

It is well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.

•Talk together about how you have seen God’s grace break through the “thorns in the flesh” that you know people have experienced.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. Please don’t hurry. Read these words a couple of times and let them really sink in to your heart.

•What benefit does Paul receive by boasting in his weakness?

•How does the power of Christ dwell in him through his boasting?

•How can Paul say that when he is weak, then he is strong?

•How does this boasting in weakness translate into strength in your life?

**WALKING WITH JESUS**

This week, begin and end each day by reading 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. These are profound words of hope in times of hopelessness.

Pray that God will use you either as individuals or as a group to reach out to someone who is in need. Trust that God is in the details and in the highest of times as well as the lowest. God’s grace is sufficient for all things!

**Closing Prayer..**.“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardships as the pathway to peace; Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; Trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His Will; That I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him forever in the next. Amen.” --Reinhold Niebuhr