

"WEEKLY WISDOM"
By Pastor Darryl Baker

For The Week of 07.19.10

"GOD'S GRACE IS SUFFICIENT"

2 Cor. 12:9 But He said to me, My grace (My favor and loving-kindness and mercy) is enough for you [sufficient against any danger and enables you to bear the trouble manfully]; for *My* strength *and* power are made perfect (fulfilled and completed) *and show themselves most effective* in [your] weakness. Therefore, I will all the more gladly glory in my weaknesses *and* infirmities, that the strength *and* power of Christ (the Messiah) may rest (yes, may pitch a tent over and dwell) upon me!

One of the most misunderstood areas of scripture has been what is known as Paul's thorn in the flesh. I want to clear this up today and in talking about what Paul was dealing with here teach on learning how to rely more on God and therefore seeing His grace at work in our lives. To begin with we will need to look at a couple of other verses before our foundation verse above to understand first of all what Paul's thorn in the flesh was all about.

2 Cor. 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.
2 Cor. 12:8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

Here we find out why Jesus told Paul that His grace was sufficient for him in what he was dealing with. The thorn in the flesh is clearly described here by Paul as a messenger of satan to buffet him. It amazes me today how many minister's still want to claim this as a physical affliction of some kind when all you have to do is let the Bible interpret itself. This is not a physical affliction, but a messenger of satan himself trying to stop Paul from his assignment in God. The term thorn in the flesh was used back in the Old Testament.

Num. 33:55 But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain *shall be* irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell.

This phrase "thorn in the flesh" refers to opposition that will come to those who are godly, as they will suffer persecution from the ungodly. Moses above was told that if they did not drive out the inhabitants of the land they would be a thorn in their side. Anyone who would interpret this

phrase as anything else is not looking at what Paul clearly stated he was dealing with, an enemy arrayed against him trying to keep him from fulfilling his god-given call.

Secondly it has been said that God not wanting Paul to be exalted to a state of pride allowed or sent this messenger. They are therefore interpreting the use of being exalted as only relating to pride. But God's Word states that if we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, He will exalt us. Not all exaltation is a bad thing. Paul was being exalted by God clearly because of the revelations he was receiving from the Lord. Read Paul's writings and you will find a true humility, declaring he was the least of the apostle's. This was nothing more than what Paul states, a work of satan in trying to keep Paul from further damaging the kingdom of darkness and building the kingdom of God.

Paul like many of us in times of difficulty was asking the Lord to do something about this opposition he was facing. The Lord's answer is of course important but also very powerful. If you read all of God's Word you will find that God gave authority here on earth to man. Man relinquished this to the devil. The Bible even tells us that satan is the god of this world. There is coming a time when satan and every demon will be dealt with by God and cast into the lake of fire. Until that time God has given us His ability to put under our feet the forces of darkness that are arrayed against us. This is what grace is all about. Until the time of judgment comes, there will be demons here on earth trying to stop God's work. But thank God by His grace we have what we need to deal with the powers of darkness.

What we need to understand in dealing with the things of life that come against us is that God has given us what is needed to not only deal with these things, but to drive them back and overcome them. One reason believers are not is because they have bought the lie of the enemy that has come through false teaching convincing us that God must be allowing this in my life for a reason. If you believe that, you are not going to have faith in God to exercise your god-given ability to overcome. The reason Jesus tells Paul that His grace is sufficient was for multiple reasons. Let's look at some and then we to can tap into this grace.

First and foremost one of the things that grace means is heaven's help. Think about how you got saved. You could not do this on your own, nor with your own ability. You had to rely solely on God's help by putting your faith in a Savior who paid the price for your sin. In doing so you did not save yourself, you received the miraculous help of God that came by way of the Holy Spirit through your faith in Him to recreate in you a brand new spirit. This was heaven's help. You received something you did not deserve, earn, nor could you in your strength cause it to happen. You simply had faith in what Jesus did. You then exercised your faith in Him by calling upon the name of the Lord. You took action and you became born again. Most don't realize that when that happens the "power of God" was released to instantly change you on the inside.

Because of grace (heaven's help), Paul had what he needed to deal with this demonic assignment that came from the devil not God, to try and stop him. Through grace you become saved, which means you are now an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:17). Jesus has given us what we need to deal with and overcome opposition when it comes. Not just demons, but the very work of the devil. This is the victory that overcomes this world, even our faith. In this world Jesus said you would have tribulation but be of good cheer, He has overcome the world. This brings us to our next key point in Paul's answer that he received from the Lord.

2 Cor. 12:9 "...for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Jesus tells Paul that His strength is made perfect in weakness. The word perfect above means adding power where it is lacking. This happens when weakness is exhibited. The weakness spoken of is in not relying on our own ability, but God's (His grace) which has the ability to defeat any onslaught that the enemy may bring. Weakness is defined as a lack of strength. If you want the power of Christ to rest upon you then you must learn to quite trying to defeat your enemies with your strength and rely on heaven's help (God's grace) to be sufficient.

2 Cor. 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Through this experience Paul learned to put his trust in the Lord's ability which resided in him by the grace of God. This is why he learned to take pleasure in infirmities (weakness, not relying on his strength), and all the things that he would face in opposition to him fulfilling his calling. They would simply become another stepping stone to place under his feet as he went forward in God. The phrase "when I am weak" is referring to Paul not relying on his ability but God's. This is when we are truly strong, when we are walking in God's ability and not our own.

Far too often we are relying on our own ability and not on our god-given ability which came through the power of the Holy Spirit when we received Christ and are baptized in the Holy Spirit. You receive power to be witnesses for Him. As we see clearly in Paul's life and the other disciples it was in exhibiting this power by casting out demon's, healing the sick, and setting the captives free that they became witnesses for God. The church of the New Testament is the same church we are a part of today. They were not a defeated bunch, but a group who established God's kingdom by exercising the same power that Jesus used when He was here on earth.

God's grace is sufficient for whatever we face in this life. Because of the shed blood of Jesus scripture is very clear, Jesus defeated the powers of darkness and then empowered His church with the same authority He had. This is seen in Paul's life when the seven son's of Sceva tried to cast a demon out of a man. They did not know Jesus personally and relied on their strength, not the grace of God to cast out this demon. It did not work for they did not have a personal relationship with Christ. The demon told them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" They knew Paul because Paul learned that God's grace is sufficient for any challenge we face. Depend on His ability and you too can know the sufficiency of the grace of God for all you need.

See You Again Next Week For More
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MAY GOD'S VERY BEST BE YOURS!
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