

Sufficient Grace

2 Corinthians 12:7 – 10

I. Intro

- A. Hate to start on depressing tone
- B. Reality statements: We live in a stressful world; we live in a world filled with pain; because, we live in a world that is corrupt – corrupt with sin
- C. Jesus said: John 16:33 (NIV)
 - ³³ ... In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."
- D. James 1:2 (NIV)
 - ² Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds,
- E. Truth is no matter who you are, no matter whether you think or anyone else thinks you deserve it, you're going to experience some significantly stressful events in life – such as passing of loved one, getting sick, or someone mistreating you
- F. Apostle Paul certainly experienced trials, hardships, persecution; passage today see Paul doing a lot of boasting
 - i. Early church in Corinth at the time was being deceived by false teachers of the Gospel
 - ii. These false teachers boasted a lot about themselves – their own influence, abilities, capabilities
 - iii. Paul, in order to plead the case of Christ, takes a play out of these false teachers' own playbook to get through to these believers in Corinth
 - iv. Paul not boasting in his own influence, abilities, experiences but boasting in how the Lord has worked in/through him through all his circumstances
- G. If we believers would only do more of the same; instead of wallowing in our own misery due to our circumstances, boast about how God works in/through us through it all
- H. **READ 2 Corinthians 12:7 – 10**
- I. Difference between believers and non-believers when it comes to suffering is that it's not that believers won't experience suffering – it's that as believers, Satan is bent on our destruction – which means we'll encounter even more trouble if we're seriously striving to live for Jesus
- J. D.R. McConnell (book, "A Different Gospel" quote: *"As followers of Christ, we often suffer not because we are out of God's will but because we are in it, not because we lack faith but because we have faith. We suffer not because we need to be filled with the Spirit but because we already are."*

- K. In one sense, we as believers suffer just like unbelievers do; but, unlike unbelievers we have a relationship with Almighty God, who by His all-sufficient grace sustains us in times of hardships, trials
- L. Charles Spurgeon quote: *“The saints shall persevere in holiness, because God perseveres in grace.”*
- M. Points about God’s grace and suffering in trials and hardships

II. **** ON SCREEN ** 1 - By God’s Grace, There is Purpose in our Pain**

- A. All aware of Paul’s words, “... a thorn in my flesh”; a lot of “guessing” as to what that was; some say physical ailment, some say it was bad eyesight but I don’t think we can rule out that “thorn” could’ve been some person or persons that persistently were “thorn” in Paul’s side or a “thorn” in Paul’s ministry
- B. Notice two things mentioned in passage: **1)** Paul asks the Lord to remove this “thorn” - which is perfectly ok to do, to ask God to take away whatever is causing us suffering, struggle; **2)** Paul’s request for removal was secondary to his main request of God which was asking God to teach him whatever it was He wanted to teach him through this “thorn” in his flesh
- C. **Question:** What are some things the Lord could be teaching us in our hardship or suffering? Patience, trust, relax, slow down, think of others, or maybe simply be thankful for life, be thankful for God Himself
- D. One special point God makes in our trouble – on our own, we are weak; on our own, we can do nothing
- E. See **in v. 9** when Paul realizes this special point God was making in the midst of all his trials/struggles – *My grace is sufficient for you ... my power is made perfect in weakness*; “made perfect” in Greek is in the active present tense meaning “is being perfected”
- F. This verse telling us God’s grace is all we need in any affliction, during any time of difficulty; in our times of struggle, weakness His grace is at work in us and His power is being perfected in us – it’s not us becoming stronger as much as it is God becoming stronger in us
- G. It’s only when we admit our absolute need and dependency on God in everything will we face real/true life, pain/suffering/persecution, and even death just as Jesus did
- H. In other words, **** ON SCREEN **** God uses our pain/hardship to make us more like Jesus

III. **** ON SCREEN ** 2 - By God’s Grace, There is Power in our Pain**

- A. The power of God that can be revealed in our pain, when we let it teach us that we're nothing apart from Christ, is also the power to reveal Christ to others
- B. **** ON SCREEN **** The Lord can use our struggle, pain to reveal the power of the difference His grace can make in us, and in others
- C. What Paul says in **last part of v. 9**: *Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me*
- D. Because of the power of God being revealed in our difficulties, because in our struggles we learn more about the all-sufficiency of God's grace, then we become deeper and stronger in our confidence that He is all we need
- E. **Illustration**: How pearl is formed; a small grain of sand slips its way past the seal of an oyster's shell becomes an irritant immediately causing discomfort; the oyster, in an attempt to ease the discomfort, coats the grain of sand with a layer of the inner lining of its shell; still doesn't ease the discomfort so the oyster continually coats the sand grain ultimately having little effect on getting rid of the irritant; as far as the oyster is concerned, what we call a "pearl" is nothing more than great suffering; one day, the oyster is harvested from the water, is opened, and inside a gem of great beauty and value
- F. Those irritants of this life, and the power of Christ in us, are creating in us as followers of Christ a "pearl" - that in God's eyes is of great beauty and value

IV. Close

- A. **** ON SCREEN ****
- B. **Question**: So what should our response be to life's struggles, pain, hardships, difficulties? Not only our response as individuals, but also our response as a church when we as body of Christ face struggles and difficulties?
- C. **1)** Ask the Lord what He wants us to learn from it
- D. **2)** Ask the Lord to remove it
- E. **3)** If He does remove it, praise Him
- F. **4)** If He doesn't remove it, praise Him
- G. For His grace is sufficient for us, His power will be perfected in our weakness