

2 Corinthians 9:8 Heavenly Living: Sufficient Grace

Paul knows the transfiguration of trouble, beginning with magnifying the grace of God:

2 Corinthians 9:8: “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.”

- **Grammatical Usage:** “grace” or in the Greek, “charin” meaning, “divine influence”; “abound” or “perisseusai” meaning, “increase”; “sufficiency” or “autarkeian” meaning, “contentment”.
- **Literal Interpretation:** And God’s divine influence increases to you, content that in every way, always having everything you need, you excel in every good work.
- **Contextual/Comparison:** God keeps His Word: God continually uses His Word. The second passage is **2 Corinthians 12:1-10**, which consists of a page from Paul’s autobiography where he testifies to the way in which he has proved the grace of God. We, as Christians, are always in need of grace – not only ‘dying grace’, but grace to enable us to live to the praise and glory of God. We may experience that God’s grace is sufficient for our every need, enabling us to get through difficult situations but to do so triumphantly! There are three main thoughts in **2 Corinthians 12:1-10**:

1. THE SUFFERING PAUL EXPERIENCED

Every Christian experiences trial and testing. First, because this is the common experience of all members of the human race (**Job 5:7**); and second, because it is the common experience of all Christians (**Philippians 1:29**). In verse 7, the apostle tells us about a very hard trial – “a thorn in my flesh”. Concerning this, notice:

- 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 (**v. 9**); 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, a handicap. It is helpful to us that we do not know what that thorn was, other than that it was physical and painful. Thus, we may apply the promise of **v. 9** to our infirmities – our deafness, weak digestion, aches and pains, timidity....
- The Purpose of it. When unpleasant things happen to us, we naturally ask ‘Why has God permitted this?’ In Paul’s case the purpose was revealed to him (**v. 7**). He was particularly susceptible to the temptation of pride and conceit because of his very great gifts, and because of his amazing experience at Lystra fourteen years previously (**vv. 2-6; Acts 14:19-20**). God gave Paul a ‘thorn’ to keep him humble. It was purposeful, as are all our trials and tribulations. Read **John 13:7** and take courage – for the Lord is working out His purpose in your life.
- The Source of it. Where did this ‘thorn’ come from? **V. 7** says it was “**a messenger of Satan,**” but notice the word ‘**given.**’ This ‘thorn’ was a gift! In **Psalm 55:22** the word ‘**cares**’ may be translated ‘gift’. Compare **Philippians 1:29**. So 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. This is a great mystery, but such is the teaching of scripture.

- The Result of it. What effect did Paul's '**thorn**' have upon him? It drove him to prayer.

2. THE SUPPLICATION PAUL MADE

In **v. 8** we are told that Paul prayed about his infirmity. Do you pray about yours? Have you brought your case before the Great Physician? Look up **James 5:13-15**, and notice:

- Paul prayed definitely – “**...to take it away from me.**” See what the Lord Jesus said in **Luke 22:31-32**.
- Paul prayed earnestly – for he tells us that he “**pleaded with the Lord...**” probably with tears.
- Paul prayed persistently – for he tells us that he made his request “**three times**” – and yet after praying three times the '**thorn**' still remained!

But notice, 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.

3. THE SUFFICIENCY PAUL RECEIVED

Paul's prayer was answered in the greatest possible way – by a revelation of the Lord Himself! The greatest answer to prayer is not the thing we pray for – but HIM! Study **v. 9** carefully and notice that with the revelation of Himself the Lord gave the promise of His sufficiency.

- It was a Powerful Sufficiency – for the Lord said, “**My grace...My power...**”; and link these expressions up with **Isaiah 40:28-31**.
- It was a Personal Sufficiency. Notice also in **v. 9** – “**He...me...My...you.**” That is very wonderful! – grace sufficient for you in your need, and grace sufficient for me in my need!
- It was a Present Sufficiency. The Lord said, “**My grace is sufficient...**”, not ‘will be’. The grace was already there for Paul to draw upon. All he had to do was to appropriate, to take, to receive, to experience, and to enjoy! Look up **2 Kings 6:15-17**.
- It was a Plentiful Sufficiency. The Lord said, “**My grace is enough...**”; and as the need increases the grace will increase (**2 Corinthians 9:8**). In our Lord Jesus Christ is all the grace we need to make us the people He wants us to be, to keep us doing God's will and to enable us to finish our course with joy – and all we have to do is to draw upon His plentiful supply!
- It was a Practical Sufficiency. 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! '**And**', says the apostle Paul in the last part of **v. 9**, '**it really works!**' Dr Scroggie calls the last 19 words of **v. 9**, 'The Song of the Sanctified Thorn'!

- **Conclusion:** Have I found God's grace sufficient of salvation? Have I found God's grace sufficient for trouble?