

Sufficient Grace

2 Corinthians 12:7-10



Grace—what a beautiful word! In our Sunday school years, we were taught the definition of grace as the unmerited favor of God. Webster defines unmerited as not deserved.

We have been given a universe full of blessings of which none were even remotely deserved. Yet God, because of His limitless love for mankind, chooses to work in our lives and sustain us on a daily basis by His presence at work within us.

Grace is a ring on our finger that says, with all our faults and messes, we were chosen by God to be His bride and a part of His redeemed Church. Christ imparted grace to us freely because of His beautiful love for us. It is part of the salvation package and completely unearned.

Sometimes the concept of what grace truly is eludes us. You may have grown up in a legalistic environment that put the focus more on doing than being, where following rules was level with or even more important than the relationship with our Savior.

From experience, I know

that is a heavy burden to bear, and many times it is even harder to break free from that mindset.

But God is so faithful to us, and His grace is truly sufficient. It draws back the curtain of false guilt, false humility, and false doctrine and brings us to the bright light of the truth of what God has provided for us as His children.

It's so beautifully stated in Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Amen and amen! What freedom! The concept is so fundamentally simple, but we must guard against letting traditions and half-truths keep us limited in our growth as Christians. Don't let this happen to you! Don't stay if this is where you are! Run!!

When we truly understand grace, those fears and self-doubts melt away like a freak April snow. Grace has us covered. Now we just need to live like we believe it—with purpose, strength, and confidence in our position in Christ. Grace has set us free!

Have you experienced legalism or false guilt? How did you overcome it? Are you still dealing with it?

How do you live out grace on a daily basis?

Saving Grace

Ephesians 2:8

“For by grace are ye saved through faith...” God’s grace has been extended to all of us so we might be a partaker of the gift of salvation. We could never do, be, give, or work enough to be worthy of salvation. Anything we could think of bringing to the table is like dirty, oily rags our husbands’ wipe their greasy hands on after changing the oil. We deserved death. We had nothing of worth to redeem ourselves. Christ stepped in our shoes to take our place and bring salvation to a dying world full of sinners.

Grace is so simple; yet so profound that it is hard to grasp and settle in our hearts and minds the absolute conviction of believing salvation comes through grace alone. We can do nothing to deserve salvation. Instead of destroying us or just

leaving us to our own devices, God chose to sacrifice His son as payment for our sin.

Read Ephesians 2. Paul gives a good description of our wretchedness in verses 1-3. Not a very flattering picture, to say the least. The tide turns in verse 4 with the phrase, “But God...” But God wasn’t ready to throw us to the wolves. He will never give up on us.

He made a way because of His rich mercy and great love for us. Even when we are far away, doing our own thing, living for ourselves, God loves us and draws us to Himself. Because of His grace, He is reconciling us by His Spirit to be no more strangers and enemies, but fellow citizens of the household of faith. He broke down all the walls and brought us peace, and *He is our peace*. Great news indeed!

What steps are you taking each day to grow in your faith? What do you struggle with in your Christian walk?

Are you sharing your salvation story with others?

Strength Through Weakness

2 Corinthians 12:9

Paul writes about his “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7- 8). He tells the Corinthian church how he was afflicted with some ailment, which most Bible scholars believe was some type of eye problem, and he had asked the Lord three times for healing. As far as we know, Paul suffered from this problem until his death.

Why was Paul afflicted? He was wearing himself out, traveling from city to city, preaching the gospel, and bringing people to faith in Christ. Why would God strike him with an affliction that possibly hindered him at times? Good questions! A lot of us have probably asked similar questions in our own situations.

At 24, I began having severe joint pain that ended up being scleroderma. I was a young pastor’s wife, and we were working

like crazy to build our church and youth group. I remember thinking, “Lord, I was going like gangbusters here, and now I can barely get out of bed. Why??”

I think Paul probably had those same thoughts. As he wrote these verses, he may have looked back on when he first began having trouble and remembered questioning. In verse 7, he tells the church he has figured out his ailment was given to him so he wouldn’t get the big head! Paul didn’t exactly state it that way, but that’s the gist.

He was afflicted so he would not get exalted or proud from being blessed by God with knowledge to share with His people. He also acknowledged he knew Satan was enjoying making trouble for him.

Have you ever felt Satan was “buffeting” you? What was the circumstance? What was your response?

Do you think Satan is behind all sickness? Why or why not?

What lessons do you think Paul learned from his affliction? How can we apply them in our own situations?

How did Paul make the jump from praying three times for his thorn to be removed to verse 9 where he states, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities?” Our answer is in the next phrase – “that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” That’s a big jump, if you ask me. So, what does it look like to glory in being sick? Paul could boldly make this statement because it led to his life being such that the power of God was free to work through him. Paul could have easily been an arrogant know-it-all because, well, he pretty much knew it all! He had studied the Torah from a child and was Rabbi Gamaliel’s star pupil. He had influence with the high priest and was a Roman citi-

zen. After becoming a follower of The Way, Paul became very influential in the early church, even going so far as to dress down Peter when he felt he was being a little two-faced. It would not be a stretch of the imagination to think of Paul as having a good-sized ego.

The beauty of this is knowing Paul realized the danger of that very thing, and he was grateful for this humbling condition that kept him in check. He welcomed the power and perfect strength this affliction allowed God to place in him.

As I battle scleroderma, lupus, fibromyalgia, and a few other annoying things, I must admit this is not my thought process! Our human instinct is completely the opposite. It’s

more “woe is me” than “Christ’s power in me.” Let’s work on that together, dear sisters?

2 Corinthians 12:10 sounds like a good oxymoron, doesn’t it? How can we be strong when we’re weak? How can being weak bring out strength?

Weakness can manifest itself in several different areas. We may be weak physically with health conditions that zap our physical strength. Pain, disability, and being on medications can all attribute to feelings of weakness.

We all have times we feel emotionally weak and vulnerable because of situations we may find ourselves in. Loneliness, fatigue, fear, depression, rejection, and sadness leave us weak. Spiritually, our apathy toward spiritual matters, burn-out, sparse church attendance, shunning fellowship with believers, and a dusty Bible on the

shelf can weaken our relationship with Christ.

We must be diligent to guard against falling into the trap of weakness. Of course, there are illnesses we cannot do anything about or change the severity of the disease. The strength comes in the way we deal with it.

The battle is often fought and won in our heads and not our doctors’ offices. Our strength is revealed in day-to-day living with whatever has been placed in our path and, most importantly, glorifying and praising God through the entire journey.

Our emotional strength comes from healthy relationships and not allowing Satan to get a foothold in our thought life. Don’t be afraid to seek out wise Christian counsel if you feel emotionally overwhelmed.

Guard your heart and your mind. Think on what is good, holy, and uplifting.

Spiritual Success

Hebrews 4:14-16

The Bible is full of promises, especially for us, God’s beloved children. We tend to pick and choose a few favorites along the way, and this passage is my number one. It speaks to me in a very powerful way as I battle through my physical, emotional, and spiritual weaknesses. But this truth tells me—and you—we can find power and strength in the midst of all that is thrown our way.

Take courage in knowing God is concerned about everything in your life. That means the big things like cancer, heart attacks, Alzheimer's, company downsizing, and unsaved family and friends, as well as a balanced checkbook, laundry, bills, and your child's first piano recital.

Rely on God's power in your life to deal with physical pain and bad test results. Lean on His strength and comfort. Ask for help in dealing with life's disappointments, rejection, strained relationships, and fear that seeps through the cracks when we're not looking.


Do not let Satan fool you into thinking God is deaf to our cries! The Supreme Creator of the universe totally and intimately loves us, so why would we ever think He is unwilling or unable to heal us. The healing may not be our physical maladies. It may be healing our stubborn hearts and wills to accept His plan for this season in our lives. Don't believe Satan's lies that God doesn't care...God isn't listening...you're sick because you sinned. Leap into that blanket of sufficient grace, and remember He has promised it has all the fluffiness you need to rest easy. Just breathe...

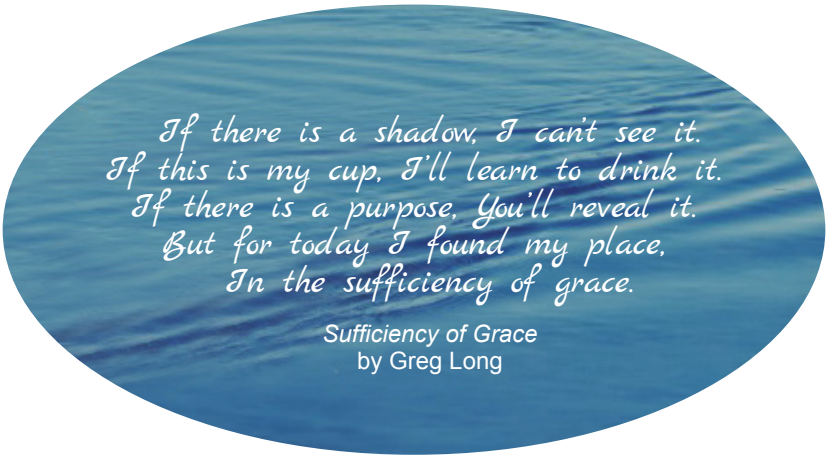
No one wants us to live a successful Christian life more than Jesus Christ. His strength is available to us whenever we ask. Sometimes it comes through weakness... but it comes. Rest in His promises, dear sisters, and be strong!

On a scale of 1 to 5, how successful do you feel in your Christian walk?

What does this promise of strength through weakness mean to you?

Think of ways you can implement this truth in your daily life.

Hebrews 4:14-16 is the ultimate promise of sufficient grace. We have a God who not only knows every hurt and pain and sympathizes with us, but One that promises He will honor our boldness and grant us grace as we ask for help in our times of need. What a mighty God we serve! Rest in this promise and press on. His grace is sufficient for our EVERY need. 



*If there is a shadow, I can't see it.
If this is my cup, I'll learn to drink it.
If there is a purpose, You'll reveal it.
But for today I found my place,
In the sufficiency of grace.*

Sufficiency of Grace
by Greg Long

About the Writer: Amanda Kilgore, wife of James, mother to Jamie, and grandmother to Jett, resides in northeast Tennessee. Besides writing, she enjoys singing with the worship team, traveling, and, of course, spoiling Jett.