

“Sufficient and Sustaining Grace!”

03-10-13

Here we are at the conclusion of our series on GRACE! I pray you enjoyed the journey, and I hope there are some things you've learned about GRACE that you never thought of before. I think one of the things we learned early on was the fact that GRACE isn't only a noun, but it's also a verb!

Turn to Ephesians 2. This saving grace in action is what brought Jesus Christ to earth to suffer, die, and rise for each one of us, that we might have life forever with Him as we walk by faith. Look at verses 8-9, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*

But I guess this raises the question, “Is this GRACE enough?” This salvation came through Jesus Christ alone! God is the actor, He's the one who wished to save the entire world because He saw what of a mess we had made of it. The sad part is that many people see salvation as the only time God was involved with mankind after the creation. But this isn't true!

Listen to Jesus' words from Acts 1:4-5 just before He ascended, *“And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”*

The Holy Spirit brings sustaining grace. Because of our sinful human nature, we're in desperate need of the grace of God each and every day! God meets us where we are. He said to us in 2 Corinthians 12:9, *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”* Max said it this way, *“Sustaining grace meets us at our point of need and equips us with courage, wisdom, and strength.”*

So in the midst of all our pain, where IS God's grace when we're hurting? Turn to 2 Corinthians 12. St Paul gave a wonderful testimony about how God walked with him every step of the way, and even though he asked for help three separate times, God showed him that his strength comes only from God. Look at verses 7-10, *“So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

This wasn't a new situation! The people of Israel in the Old Testament were continually turning away from God. But every time they felt God had left them and forgotten them, He was very clear that He loved them totally! Listen to these passages that show the heart of God toward His people. Deuteronomy 4:31, *“For the LORD your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them.”* Joshua 1:5, *“No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.”*

His love and grace never left them and it never leaves us! Max put it this way, *“Sustaining grace does not promise the absence of struggle, but the presence of God!”*

Jesus Christ came to earth to take our place and suffer the pain and death that was really ours because of our sin! He saw our suffering and He willingly took it and suffered in our place! Just like Paul, we can turn to God asking Him to take away our struggles. But we have to remember God knows our needs, He knows what's best for us. The

struggle we have is wanting His help right now! But we have to trust Him to do it in His timing!

Through our suffering and weakness, even though we want relief, we're being made into the likeness of Christ! Listen to Hebrews 4:14, *"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."*

Some days you might not think that the problems you're facing and the situations that are holding you back could possibly be making you like Jesus! But God sees you in a different light, a holy light. He sees you as His holy child washed clean in the waters of Baptism and the shed blood of His own Son. He wants you to know He's always there ready and willing to take your cares on Himself and do what's best for you.

Would you expect anything less from God? Look at the love and grace He's shown you so far in life! But even beyond that, God sent His One and Only Son to save us! Don't you think He would be there to help you each day? Listen to Romans 8:32, *"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"*

He knows about your thorn in your flesh and His words for you are very clear, *"My grace is sufficient for you!"* He wants you to take your cares to the foot of the cross seeking His grace, trusting in Him alone. But when you do, you've got to know that God's grace will never run out for you, it's a bottomless well of grace for you! He has enough grace for you to take every tear and wipe it away!

Max put it this way, "The words of the song "Amazing Grace" are yours. Though written in 1773, they bring hope like today's sunrise. *"Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home."* You have His Spirit within you. Heavenly hosts above you. Jesus Christ interceding for you. You have God's sufficient grace to sustain you!"

God's never-ending grace is yours forever! Trust Him to see you through! Remember, GRACE HAPPENS HERE!