**It’s God’s Grace That Sees Us Through**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**2 Corinthians 12:6-10**

**Sunday Morning**

**February 5, 2023**

**2 Corinthians 12:6-10**

6 For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me. 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.

8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, 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. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Saints, accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior doesn’t guarantee that you will not suffer in this life. This world is a fallen place, and Christians are not exempt from adversity.

**So how can believers face hardship with confidence and assurance?**

The secret is learning to rely on God’s sustaining grace. The apostle Paul wrote,

**2 Corinthians 12:10**

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Saints, Paul found incredible power by relying on the Lord’s strength instead of his own. God desires for all His children to learn how to live through His sustaining grace.

**Sustaining Grace is God’s answer to the painful circumstances of life.**

If you have been a believer for any length of time, you know that God doesn’t always rescue us from painful situations. That’s why we need sustaining grace.

It upholds us, lifts us up, and strengthens us. If we walk in its power, you and I can face everything in life with confidence and assurance.

The New Testament describes the life of the apostle Paul, who had to endure the unthinkable circumstances of life!

**2 Corinthians 11:23-28**

23 Are they ministers of Christ?--I speak as a fool--I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness-- 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

Saints, Paul also had an unknown “thorn in the flesh”

**2 Corinthians 12:7-8**

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. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

Scholars have speculated that this might have been continuous persecution, a particular temptation, a physical ailment, or something else entirely.

**So, if God doesn't deliver us from all suffering, should we even bother asking Him to help us?**

**Of course!**

Jesus told His disciples,

**Matthew 7:7-11**

7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

But when God doesn’t answer our prayers for relief, we must trust that He has a higher purpose in our trial! Amen

**Luke 18:1-8**

1 Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, 2 saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. 3 Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.'

4 And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, 5 yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.' " 6 Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said.

7 And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? 8 I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

**God’s** **Grace enables us to continue when circumstances don’t change** **especially** **when we expect answers now!**

Maybe you prayed and your friend died anyway. Or your spouse left. Or you lost your job. In situations like these, it’s natural to wonder this:

**Does God even care about me?**

**Has He abandoned me?**

Believers may begin to feel as if the God is distant and unconcerned.

**Why do doubts creep in?**

**1. Satan Lies to Us**

He wants us to distrust our heavenly Father and try to handle life on our own.

**John 8:42-44**

42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. 43 Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word.

44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

**2. We Listen to the Wrong Counsel**

**Proverbs 18:24**

"Some friends may ruin you, but a real friend will be more loyal than a brother."

**Proverbs 13:20**

"Spend time with the wise and you will become wise, but the friends of fools will suffer."

Saints, people who criticize your faith in God can’t encourage you with Godly principles. They base their advice on personal experiences and emotions instead of biblical truth.

**3. We are tempted to give up when we focus more on our loss than on the Lord who can deliver Us**

Saints, when we allow the temptation to enter in, we end up feeling hopeless and discouraged.

If this describes you, don’t be alarmed. God doesn't get angry when you have difficulty trusting Him. He can handle your questions, doubts, and frustrations. Be completely honest with the Lord and allow Him to comfort you.

**2 Corinthians 1:3-4**

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Saints, Paul’s affliction was for a specific reason—to keep the apostle from becoming prideful “because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations” he had received from the Lord.

**2 Corinthians 12:7-8**

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. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

Without this struggle, he may have forgotten his utter dependency on God. He preached the gospel all over the Roman Empire, discipled the early church, and wrote much of the New Testament. Pride could have crippled his ministry.

That’s why nothing Paul could have done—praying more passionately, developing more faith, serving more diligently—would have prompted the Lord to remove this affliction. But the apostle learned to be content in every situation!

**Philippians 4:11-14**

11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

God’s grace was sufficient to carry him through any adversity!

**2 Corinthians 12:9-10**

9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, 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. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Like him, believers can learn to depend on the Lord’s strength when life is difficult.

**God’s Grace reminds us that the priority of our life is our personal relationship with the Lord**

**1. You can Never Justify Giving Up**

Even if you have tried your best and failed, God still loves you

**2. God always has a Valuable Lesson for Us in Hardship**

Examine how you handled the valley experiences in your life and learn from them. Grow in your ability to repent quickly, forgive, and return to close fellowship with the Lord.

**3. God Doesn’t Promise Us an Explanation**

Saints, God wants us to trust that He has our best interest in mind. He guarantees His support and strength in the midst of our struggles.

**4. The Lord Works Something Good through Every Difficulty**

**Romans 8:28**

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

**How does God’s Grace Work?**

**1. God’s Grace Releases Supernatural Strength to keep us going despite our pain, suffering and loss through the indwelling Holy Spirit.**

**2. God’s Grace Ignites the Determination to Keep Going no matter what**

This is why some people never lose their joy and peace despite great difficulty. God fills our lives with His strength, protection, love, faith, kindness, and gentleness.

**3. God’s Grace Reminds us that God is always with us**

Our spouses, friends, or families may walk away, but He will never abandon us!

**Hebrews 13:5**

"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

**4. God’s Grace allows us to learn from God in the Difficulty**

Saints, despite our suffering and pain, we can be content in knowing that He will lead us through triumphantly if we obey Him.

**5. God’s Grace reminds us that God uses Trials to Strengthen our Faith and Deepen our Intimacy with Him.**

**1 Corinthians 10:13**

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

**6. God’s Grace assures us that the Lord has limits on what can happen to His children.**

This promise is exclusively for those who know Jesus Christ as their Savior. We can be confident that God is in control of every trial we face.

**7. God’s Grace Gives us Faith to Believe that God will turn our tough times into something good**

**In Closing:**

Saints, the apostle Paul discovered that the Lord’s power was greatest when he was weakest. The same is true for you. As a believer, you can learn to rely on the Holy Spirit.

When difficulty comes your way, acknowledge your helplessness, cry out for Him to encourage you, and allow Him to carry you through your trial.

No matter how difficult your circumstances become, your heavenly Father cares about you. He promises to take your suffering and bring something good from it.

As you remain in close fellowship with the Lord, you will be able to tackle life’s challenges with supernatural peace and joy. That’s the power of sustaining grace.

Saints, Soon and Very soon, Jesus is about to appear, we are almost out of here!

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54**

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

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**Acts 2:38-39**

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**Let’s Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**