

2 Cor. 12:9

October 18, 2002



FOR GOD'S GLORY MINISTRIES

“My grace is sufficient for you, for My Strength is made perfect in weakness.”

My Grace is Sufficient

I lay in my bed suffering in excruciating pain, something I had been battling for the last decade. The pain came from a high school sports injury. Four years later, when I was twenty, my condition was further aggravated by an auto accident - a head on collision, sending me to the hospital for three weeks with a broken nose, three broken ribs, a separated sternum, and whip-lash. Despite the physical injuries, the emotional trauma was far worse since my two children, Andrew and Nicole, were killed in that early-morning accident in Winslow, Arizona. Twenty years later, the excruciating pain began in my cervical (neck) region and continued almost constantly for ten years. My only respite was to lay motionless trying to find God amidst the pain. No human, not even the gentle touch of Darilyn, my wife, could help me. She would try to talk to me but most of the time I would just motion to her that I was fine. It was God I sought in the dark and silence of that room. He was my only hope. Here was a secret place amidst my suffering where I could hear His gentle voice. Through His gift of spiritual language, there came an outpouring from me to Him and a consequent flooding in my soul - a joyful dancing of my spirit-man that lasted as long as I

could divorce myself from the physical pain. In time, I learned to separate my spirit man from my earthly man, silencing the pain as I communed with Him even as the earthly man's neck throbbled with excruciating pain.

From the secret place, His words to the Apostle Paul echoed in my mind as I begged for healing: “My grace is sufficient” (2 Corinthians 12:9). I groaned within, “This is not what I had in mind.” I wanted healing and I knew the Lord Jesus could heal. I had seen Him heal those around me. The previous Sunday, Darilyn and I had laid hands on a child who needed eye surgery. We watched her eyes go from crossed to



“King of the Broken hearts!”

perfectly normal instantly. The doctors were amazed at her healing during a pre-surgical examination the next day. So why not me, why couldn't I be healed? Why would the Lord allow me to suffer through so much pain? I couldn't understand, but I knew I heard His words, and I needed to spend time meditating on His relentless words reverberating in my heart. "My grace is sufficient."

"My grace is sufficient." I could have yelled at God, "Sufficient? How can you say Your grace is sufficient when I am suffering such unbearable pain?" But, He was right. His grace was sufficient. His words brought peace, contentment, and even life in the midst of great personal distress. Many doctors examined me and after several x-rays, M.R.I.'s and examinations, their diagnoses were the same: "Mr. Bemis your pain is real. There is just not much we can do for you." Discouraged, I would return to my Great Physician to hear His comforting words: "My grace is sufficient." Time and again, I paused to surrender once again to His overall plan. In my flesh, I did not necessarily like that plan, nor did I agree with it. But, who am I that I should question the ultimate plan of God? Over and over life-giving words reverberated deep inside. "My grace is

sufficient." One day, the pain became unbearable and I cried out to God from my personal agony, "Lord if Your grace is sufficient, then You better give me another dosage of Your grace, because this is not working." Tears streamed down my face as I groaned in agony. Instantly, I fell asleep and bringing a brief reprieve from the pain.

Understand my agony. My pain traveled over the top of my head and down into my eyes. Often it traveled down my arms to my finger tips. Other times the pain centered between my shoulder blades and even down into my chest. The doctors first thought I was suffering from an allergy. A year of allergy tests

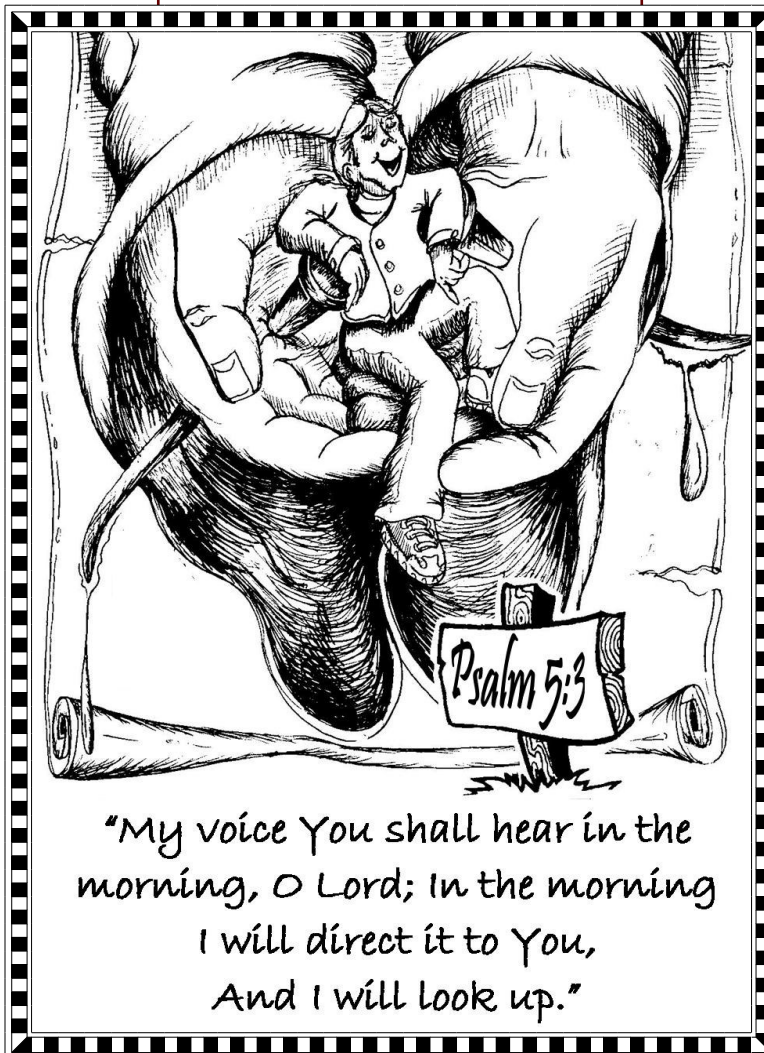
returned negative. Even though I told the doctors at the outset that I knew my neck was the root of my pain, the x-rays contradicted my diagnosis, showing no real signs of neck damage.

Finally, in August of 2001, a doctor confirmed my suspicion. Damage to two cervical bones was putting pressure on nerves causing the terrible pain. Within weeks, surgeons fused the two cervical bones together. At last, the pain, although not entirely gone, was greatly eased. I can literally tell everyone that my head is screwed on, hopefully straight. I have two metal plates and four titanium screws holding my head on. My doctors are not finished. We continue to look for total alleviation of my pain so that I can go on to live a normal life. In the mean time, "My grace is sufficient," says Jehovah Rapha.

"My grace is sufficient What did the Lord mean when He said to me that His grace was sufficient? To one who has lived on the corner of pain and suffering I will tell you what this has meant to me.

I. Trusting in His Higher Ways

First and foremost it means that the Lord God Almighty knows what is happening and for whatever His reason for me to go through this valley of darkness, I must still trust in His higher ways. I am submitted to His



authority. He is the First and the Last, and He is the Beginning and the End. He was there in the beginning when I was hurt and this is evident in that I was not paralyzed by this accident. And the Lord will be there every step of the way until the end. He knows when this happened and He knows when I will be relieve from it. In order for me to go forward I must trust in God's sovereignty. He knows what He is doing in my life. I may not agree, and I have told Him that but He sees the total scheme of things.

After my last operation, I prayed with a lady next door to me who under went 3 neck fusions at one time. I was able to pray for her at her request and she was able to bear the pain and fall fast asleep. For whatever the reason I must trust in His strength, His higher ways, for they are differently higher than my limited scope. I have found that in the dark times of physical pain that I have hours to communicate with the Lord. It is in this communion with Him that I find my peace. I still may not understand but I place my trust in His higher ways.

In the secret place of a surrendered soul come plans, whispers, and just plain old Holy Ghost comfort from the King. I have found His arms wrapped around my heart. I have found His presence in the quiet solitude. I have discovered my relationship with Him deepened beyond measure. The only thing I can do at times is relax in His presence. I have lost many days of productivity in my estimation, but I have found my God much bigger than I ever thought. In the quiet times I have learned to lean on Him, trust in Him, and call upon Him as I have hid in His wonderful presence.

One day, I was vomiting blood from the horrible pain. When I am vomiting I do not want any comfort. Just leave me alone! My poor wife, bless her heart, for she was always trying to help, but I just lashed out at her attempts to comfort me. That day the Lord said, "I do not care how much you hurt. You know how to act now, just do it right." He did not even give me an excuse. Yes, I was in pain, but the pain would not control my attitude. I was to be gentle as a dove and as wise as a serpent. (Matthew 10:16) I was to rejoice in the Lord always (Phil. 4:4) And I mean always! I was to rest in His

grace and still function in righteousness. I found I could do this, but it took much surrendering. Life's circumstances were not to control me I was to call upon His presence. I was to follow Christ and obey His word every day. These were choices I had to make everyday. Those closest to me knew when I was in pain and they would pray. They had the best intentions and I loved to receive healing prayer but they did not know that God told me His grace was



"To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of thee Lord, that He may be glorified"

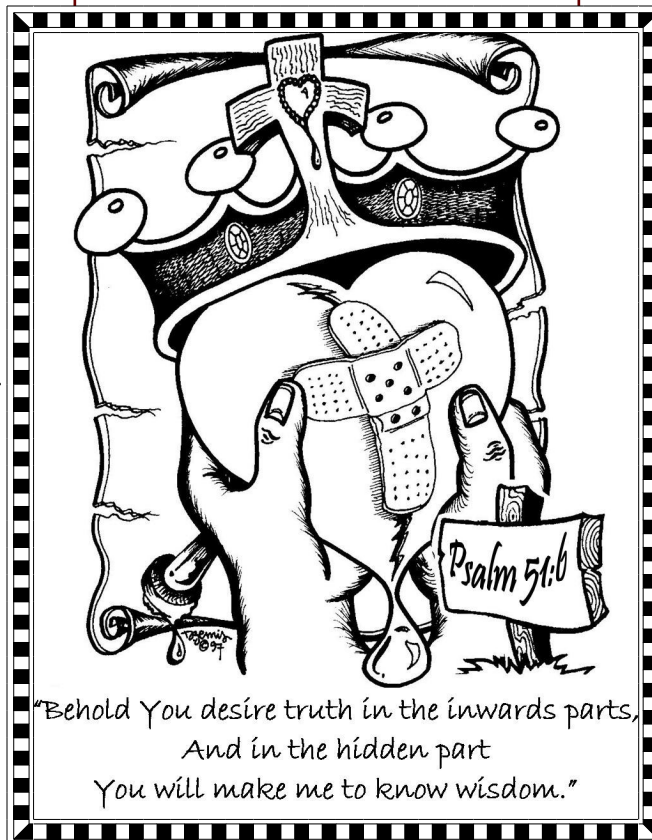
sufficient. But I found that their prayers ushered me into His presence and a certain amount of peace was always experienced.

I learned to receive the prayer and drop the condemnation. Some admonished me to, "Just trust in the Lord," as if I wasn't. Others suggested there was sin in my life. I began to understand what Job experienced through his "comforters." They meant well, but I could only remember God's words to me, "My grace is sufficient." I walked everyday learning to trust in the higher ways. It was not easy, but the results have been life-changing. God is God and I am not. I do not see the whole picture. I just see this moment that I am suffering. At the same time, I have become grafted into the branch which gives life. Here, one finds complete satisfaction in life, having given his life and laid it down at feet of Jesus. In dying one finds real life, life the way it was designed to be lived from the very beginning.

II. Trusting in His Grace

I have found in these years of suffering that God has been refining my heart to know Him and reflect Him even deeper. There is such a depth of love, understanding, and trust that one experiences when they have chronic pain as their personal friend. I could feel that the Lord was polishing my spirit man. I felt much like a diamond in the hands of the diamond cutter. I was in the grasp of the vise-grips and He was chipping off the rough edges and His chiseling hurts. I do not like it nor at times do I understand it when I am in the middle of the suffering. But I always surrender to the Lord, like it or not. Great growth seems to happen amidst pain.

While pinched between pain and suffering I was forced to find the secret place where the Most High lives. The darkness all around myself was horrific. In that darkness the circumstances changed my heart real quick. But I still was allowed free choice and with my choice I chose His grace. Despair sets in quickly if one does not capture those thoughts and redirect them upward over and over. Did you hear me? Over and over I had to redirect my thoughts and point them upward. The anchor for ones heart



is the foundation laid in His Holy Word. The anchor for ones emotions is founded on the same foundation. Do you want a sound mind, a steady heart, and emotions which are under control? There is only one answer: Lay a good foundation by nourishing your soul on His Word daily.

"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, than the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Cor. 12:9)

(Strong's Exhaustive Concordance) #5485 lists three meanings of the word "grace" as the Lord used it here with Paul. The Greek word is "Charis."

- Gratifying
- **Divine influence upon ones heart**
- Acceptable Benefit

The middle definition seems to be the best. Paul had a thorn in His flesh and three times he asked that it be removed but he was left in weakness to experience the Lord's strength. Paul allowed the Lord's **divine influence upon his heart** to accept his condition. I have had to allow the Lord's **divine influence upon my heart** each and everyday accepting my condition. Paul knew his Maker and he knew of God's great miracles. Knowing His maker has perform great healings through his own touch. Yet Paul allowed the **Lord's divine influence upon his heart** to guide his thoughts and his actions. How much more for you and I. We must allow the Lord to influence our hearts everyday. Paul was ship wrecked and then bitten by a viper, Everyone waited for him to die. He then prayed

for the Island's chief and healed him. (Acts 28) Paul knew of many miracles yet he still had accept the Lord reason for his thorn. Paul never knew the reason but Paul accepted that there was a benefit to God in the midst of his personal suffering.

Now it is our turn in the fiery furnace of adversity. Will we allow room for God's sovereignty even when we do not understand it fully.

Now that all sounds good but it is another story trying to walk everyday life allowing the Lord to influence our heart to not only do right but to be joyful in the midst of it all. Making sure I did not over react to everyday circumstances became my focus. I had to learn how to align my thoughts, my heart, and my soul to His perfect word, making sure I did not snap at someone, making sure I picked up my cross daily and followed My Lord Jesus Christ. (Mark 10:21) I learned to lay my pain down and to daily choose His divine influence upon my heart. I learned that in my own personal weakness I could call on His strength, His wisdom, and His higher ways to guide my troubled heart. I learned that if I focused on Him, my pain would lessen. I too have a thorn in my flesh, but I want to be more like Christ in my weakness.

As I focused on Him, often the Lord had me praying for healing of others. Some were healed instantly while I walked in my pain. I learned to trust in Him and His timing in His master plan for my life.

When I had to return to the hospital or another doctor's office, I learned to relax in Him. A recurring thought ran through my heart: "If I am right with the Lord, then every-

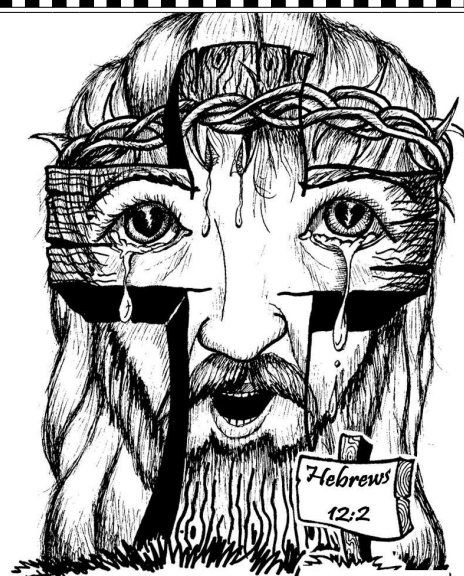
thing else will fall into place. For if God is for me then who can be against me." In the midst of pain I found my soul could echo the old time hymn: "It is well with my soul." Horatio Spafford penned this hymn after many sorrows had come his way. His son died from illness followed by the Chicago fire and he lost all his real estate investments. Then his wife and four daughters were on their way to England in 1873 and their ship was hit by another. The passenger ship went down in twelve minutes. He received a telegram from his wife, "Saved Alone." Only two words from his beloved that spelled out she was alive and his daughters, all four, were gone. Horatio booked passage to England to be with his grieving wife and on the trip the Captian pointed out to him the most likely point where the two ship collided. Horatio when down to his cabin and penned this hymn from the depths of his sorrow as he clung tight to His God. He trusted in God even when it made little since.

Horatio and I can tell you that during times of questioning, "It is well with my soul." The only reason one can find this kind of peace, peace like a river flows, is because one is willing to look up and trust God. The spirit-man has been able to mount on wings like eagles. (Isaiah 40:31) Surely we walk close to the

Master in times of pain. Or, I should say, you can choose to walk close to Him. I am glad for my infirmity which drew me closer than ever to His heart. And it means, "It is well with my soul." Only when I let go of God and try trusting in myself do I run into great darkness and despair.

III. Trusting in His Sufficiency

In surrendering to His highest calling to endure this pain, I can truly say that His grace, His presence has been enough. Do I want healing? Yes, I want healing, but His words to my heart have been, "My grace is sufficient," I then anchor my faith, my heart, and my soul to His spoken words. Yes, when He says, "My grace is sufficient" **He means that He is enough.** I know He hears my personal prayer uttered from my personal prayer closet. I had to find rest knowing that I am His



"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

child and that He knows how to take care of me. To find this place where His grace is enough is not easy.

But it is important to realize the other side of not accepting His grace is hopelessness. If our mind, heart, and soul is not anchored on His grace then we are open targets for the evil one to take us down. If we will not allow the Lord to influence our heart and emotions then who will influence them? If we are not anchored on Him, then we will be tossed and turned in everything we think, do, or say. When God is not enough, we will be disappointed, hurt, and lost because our only hope will be in man. I ran into an older gentleman recently who was diagnosed with the little “c” word, cancer.

Even the thought of cancer can be devastating. But he and his wife prayed and stayed focused on God. The little “c” of cancer ran into the big “C” which is Christ. The doctors told him he had six months to live. That was 12 years ago. He is still with us. God is more than able and He will do it again. But even if He does not do it again, will we still keep our faith anchored upon Him who holds the keys to death and Hades? No one leaves this planet without His knowledge. No one!

Recently, a close friend died after two months of pain from cancer. He was singing for the Lord one day and two months later he died. I do not understand, for his faith was strong and he

laid on his bed of suffering and ministered to many. But we must trust God and know inside our heart that God knows what He is doing. Jesus said that unless a kernel of wheat dies it can not bring forth life. (John 12:24) We live in a society that seems to never be satisfied. But in the midst of great suffering; can you or will you allow God to be enough. I found that letting Him be adequate challenged my heart to the core. Can God be enough in the midst of all this agony? I can tell you that it is true, by trusting in Him and knowing in your heart that His grace is enough your peace is found. Personally I have found that the stronger the pain, the more I want God and the less I want this side of eternity. My heart understands what Paul was saying in

Corinthians: *“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”* (Philippians 1:21) He can be sufficient, He can be enough, and He can be adequate for our hearts to survive. This involves the heart surrendering and thanking the Lord for the pain which brings us to weakness. In our weakness He will show you His strength. In the midst of it all I have found my peace through communing with our Lord. I have found great joy while in the midst of great pain. Yes, when He says, *“My grace is sufficient”* He means that He is enough.

On one occasion, the pain was attacking full force and I was to lead worship that night at our church service in the prison. I surrendered and vowed to praise His name in the midst of my suffering. I found as I played my guitar the pain began to

lessen. But the next time I tried to do the same and it did not work. You see, I’m always looking for the perfect remedy, but not any more for I just look unto Him. He alone is worthy, He alone is my King. He alone is my Father and He has become my choice day in and day out. He has become my thoughts; He has become the very breath that lies within my heart. On good days I praise His name and think on noble things. On bad days I praise His name and think on noble things.

What this all means is that we can choose this day; whether this day is good or bad, to serve the Lord. I have



tried the other side of all this and I do not like the heavy garments of despair. I prefer to exchange them at the door with His garments of Joy. If there be any comfort I can share with You is that walking with God in the fire is the best place to be. I would not want to enter the fiery furnace of adversity on my own.

In the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, where was the one who looked like the Son of God? (Daniel 3) He was in the fire! So, dear reader, join hands with the Lord. Let us face this adversity together as we look unto the author and finisher of our faith, the Lord Jesus Christ.

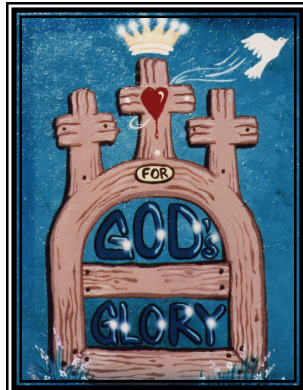
1. In closing, reading this kind of an article often collides with our own personal life. Let us bow before the Lord in humbleness and seek His face. If repentance is needed, do not miss this grand entrance. Just repent and let us move forward.

2. Next, I would place before you a chance to identify the adversity that keeps you from advancing or keeps you in a constant state of fear, hopelessness, or despair. Throw them down at Christ's feet and learn to trust in Him, regardless. Do not let circumstances dictate life. Trust in the Rock that is higher than I. (Psalm 61:2)

3. Join hands with me as we go forward in the name of our blessed hope, the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us pray: "Father of hope, breath into our hearts this message of life. Yes, Your grace is sufficient and in our own weakness we shall experience Your strength. You are our hiding place that secret place of life. Lord, You are enough for us to go forward today. Help us see our weakness and help us see Your strength. Help us to walk with You even when we do not have it all figured out. Life seems, at times, so complicated and hard, help us see Your hand moving on our account. We are going forward trusting in Your higher ways, we know they are the best. Give us patience as we travel the course of



today. Guide us to that secret place where we can find peace in the midst of all that is going on around us. Life in the desert is full of death, led us to the promise land. Lead us to a Rock that is higher than I. We bow down before You and lay our crowns at Your feet, You alone are worthy to be glorified. You are the beginning and the end. You are the first and the last. You are the alpha and omega, my Lord and my King. In the name of Jesus, amen and amen



1/03 Copyright & Published by:
For God's Glory Ministries
Chaplain Duane & Darilyn Bemis