**GRACE (#4)**

***My Grace Is Sufficient For You***

When you hear the word “*sufficient*” what do you think of? My dictionary defines it as “enough; adequate.” My Roget’s Thesaurus gives synonyms of “acceptable, satisfactory, tolerable, enough.” Those are hardly words and descriptions that bubble up and spill over with energy and excitement. To say that my work is sufficient is basically saying I received a “C” on my report card. I got by. I passed, but only with “good enough” grades to keep from failing. If someone asks me, “Hey Rick, how ya doin’?” and I reply “Tolerable” – that would be a Tennessean like myself saying, “Fair to middling.” In other words, “I’m okay.”

When Paul was suffering mightily from his Satan-induced “*thorn in the flesh*,” the apostle begged fervently for God’s relief from his pain. His three-fold prayer for mercy was denied, allowing Paul to continue to suffer in a Job-like manner. But it is not that God was heartless to Paul’s plea, instead, it was out of great love and concern for him that He said these words:

*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.*

*Sufficient* is the Greek word *ARKEO*. It is defined as “to be possessed of unfailing strength; to be strong; to be enough.” The word implied to the Greeks the idea “to defend, to ward off” as to be able to have the defenses necessary to withstand an army’s offensive force coming against a city. The concept could be seen from the athletic phrase, “The best offense is a good defense.” When facing a superior army (or team) the battle (or game) is often won or lost by having a solid defensive position.

My mind thinks back to the legendary battle at Thermopylae in which 300 Spartans and 700 Thespians defended the narrow pass in which the Persian army of Xerxes had to go through to reach Greece. King Leonidas successfully defended this pass against a far superior army of at least 150,000 Persians for three days. If not for betrayal it is believed he could have withstood many more assaults before dying. In other words, his small army was “sufficient” to defend against the enemy.

Satan vs. Paul looked like a mismatch of epic proportions. Goliath vs. David seemed like the same odds. But we know how both battles turned out. David’s God was “sufficient” as he proclaimed for Goliath to hear, *“the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD’s, and He will give you into our hands.”* In mere moments he held the giant’s head up for all the Philistines to see (I Sam. 17:47-51). Likewise, Paul “*fought a good fight, finished the race, kept the faith*” to receive his crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Satan’s painful thorn could not defeat God’s sufficient grace.

While we still struggle with physical, mental and emotional pain, God is shouting to us, as He did to Paul, “***My grace is sufficient for you****, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”*  God’s defensive wall of grace will keep the enemy away. That is exactly why we should embrace Christ’s instructive prayer to ask God to “*lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one*” (Matt. 6:13).

Think of what God knows that you don’t. He knows exactly what Satan is up to at every moment of every day! I’ve always laughed at the story of the King of Syria’s frustration to defeat Israel. His battle plans were always revealed ahead of time so that Syria could not defeat them. After repeated failure he felt a spy was in his army who was betraying his plans. A servant spoke up and said, “*No one among us is betraying you, but Elisha the prophet tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom*.” (2 Kgs. 6:8-12).

God can just as easily see the schemes and battleplans of Satan and therefore “*lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one*.”

What Job suffered and endured seems super-human. What Paul suffered and endured (read 2 Cor. 11:23-33) also seems beyond belief. But God’s grace was *sufficient* (far more than enough) to foresee Satan’s tactics and provide enough strength for those heroes of faith to defeat him.

What are you going through right now? Make a list of the battles you are fighting today. Is it physical health, emotional trauma, mental depression or spiritual doubts? Whatever it is please know this, God is whispering to you now, “Child, *my grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness*.”

Think about this with me for a second. Did Paul have the power to remove his “thorn in the flesh?” Personally, I believe he did. Why do I say that? Because I feel the context shows us that his “thorn” came from his steadfast faith to keep preaching the gospel in spite of all obstacles. All he had to do was quit. Throw in the towel. Give up his faith. Bow the knee to Satan. And Satan, like his promise to Jesus, Adam and Eve, and all others he has tempted, would gladly remove this painful cross. He could walk away from all this persecution. Thank God, Paul didn’t walk away from his thorn. Thank God, Jesus didn’t come down from that cross.

And I thank God you and I are not quitting either. Never. *Never*. ***Never***!

We are going to get through whatever Satan throws at us. We are, by God’s sufficient grace and strength, going to be faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). Are you with me?

I love you. – Rick