

Good morning, church!

This has been such a rich morning of singing songs of praise to our great God and hearing the power of God's redeeming love and powerful grace in the lives touched by the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Thanks for being here, **Adult & Teen Challenge Choir** to lead our hearts in worshipping the Lord.

Well, this is a special message that I get to share with you all because, **one:** I love this family of God in this local church that God has just brought my family to join back in December.

And **secondly**, it's very special to me because I worked at Teen Challenge as a Short-Term Recovery Coach and the privilege of leading a weekly Bible study from 2016 to 2017 through the books of James and 1 John.

And I want to make a special shout-out to someone here in the congregation who was one of the guys in my Bible study from the beginning: **Curtis**. Please stand up. If you were closer, I would run and give you a big hug, my brother. What a joy to have you here with your family.

**Curtis** was a client in short-term when I started the Bible study through the book of James, and he became a dear friend and brother in Christ, because he was desperate for God to transform his life being hungry for the life-giving word of Christ and His gospel.

**That's when God's word becomes so alive and active to transform our lives.** And God did transform Curtis' life! He graduated the long-term program 5 years ago. PRAISE GOD! Keep pressing on!

And by God's mighty, providential hand, the Lord brought Curtis and his family to Redemption City Church in Rochester a year and a half ago where my wife and I were members prior to coming to Trinity. And how amazing it was for God to reunite our fellowship and to hear of how God has kept this brother and his family faithfully clinging to Christ.

So if you are here to today and you struggle to believe in the miracles God is working out in His redeemed people, just trace God's mighty hand in a guy like Curtis who is here, by the grace of God, worshipping Jesus and walking in the newness of life that is found in the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Have you experienced this transforming work of the gospel in your life? Then you are a living miracle as well! And we must remember this promise of God in Philippians 1:6 to keep us to end:

*I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

Amen! Praise God!

Alright, that could have turned into my whole message, but that was just my introduction ☺

So what I get to do in the next few minutes is open the word of God and hear about the **all-sufficient grace of Christ that meets us in our weakness.**

If you have a Bible with you, please turn 2 Cor. 12:7-10. If not, listen closely to 2 Cor. 12:7-10. Hear the word of the Lord:

*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**.*

*Oh Father, let this word sink deeply into our hearts and may Your Spirit work in our souls so that we see our need for Christ all the more and how He meets us in our weakness with His **all-sufficient grace**. In Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.*

None of us like to be weak. That is a simple fact of our human nature. None of us like to be weak. But I want to bring us from that uncomfortable place of weakness to where Paul takes us to actually being content and celebrating weaknesses because of the **all-sufficient grace of Christ**.

So the first question I had of this passage in 2 Corinthians 12 was **why is it good and necessary to have weaknesses in our lives?**

The first answer Paul gives us is very clear in verse 7 where he says twice: TO KEEP ME FROM BECOMING CONCEITED. Or to keep me from exalting myself!

Paul could have become proud of God's work in his life and what God had revealed to him in seeing great visions of Christ. But instead he needed to remain **humble** and **dependent** upon God. And God certainly **humbled** Paul by giving him a thorn in his flesh, which was probably a physical ailment that caused him to experience severe pain and affliction every single day of his life.

And what was Paul's response to this thorn in the flesh? Did he curse God or grumble against God? No, we see in verse 8 that he turned to the Lord in prayer to plead with the Lord three times, humbly asking if the thorn could be taken away...

It was good and right of Paul to plead with the Lord three times, and it is good and right for us to do the same:  
**God, please take this from me!**  
**Lord, have mercy on me, please relieve me of this pain!**  
**Oh Father, I am struggling, please heal me!**

And we should also pray in humble faith for those we love who are suffering: *"God, please help my brother, rescue my sister, heal my mother, deliver my father, and so on..."*

And God loves to hear us cry out to Him in our desperation! Remember **WHO** we are praying to!  
**The God of all creation** who **cares** for the **needy**, who is **near** to the **brokenhearted**, and who **saves** those who are **crushed in spirit!**

And how does the Lord answer these prayers? Look at how astounding his answer is to Paul: **"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness!"**

Instead of God miraculously taking the thorn away from Paul, He gave Paul something far greater and way better than what he requested. The greatest promise we can receive in our weakness is hearing Christ say to us: **"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness!"**

What does this mean for our lives? Well before we look to how it presently relates to us, we need to look back to what Jesus Christ has done for us. What did He do to be able to make this promise of **all-sufficient grace to help us in our weakness?**

Let's turn our eyes to how Jesus is the perfect example of humble dependence and complete submission to His Father in His time of agony and pain in the Garden of Gethsemane before He would be Crucified on the cross.

We read in **Matthew 26:38–46** that He pleaded with His Father three times,

***“My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”***

***Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, Your will be done.”***

***He went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.”***

From that point on, from Gethsemane to Golgotha, **Jesus marched toward the cross** in complete submission to His Father knowing He would have to **drink** the cup of His Father's **wrath**, dying in our place for our **sins**, being **buried** in a grave, and three days later **rising victoriously**, conquering sin and death and Satan! And He is seated at God's right hand in glory, always interceding for us. All so that He could save US, weak and broken sinners! Now that is amazing grace!

And therefore, Jesus is able to make this great promise to us in our weakness, **“My grace is sufficient for you.”**

That is the good news of the gospel! Jesus calls the weak, the lonely, the despised, the bruised, the broken, the rejected, the destitute, those who have squandered the Father's inheritance, and run to them, and say again and again and again, **“My grace is sufficient for you.”**

And when Jesus made this promise to Paul, He didn't mean for it to just apply ONCE to Paul in that particular time of weakness. No, He meant for it to apply to every single point of weakness and hardship that Paul was facing, and likewise us!

We know this because when Paul wrote the verb **“said”** in verse 8, **“And He SAID to me, My grace is sufficient for you...”** **Said** is written in the perfect tense, which means that Christ *has said* and *keeps on saying* continually, **“My grace is sufficient for you.”**

Do you hear Him saying that to you right now? Keep listening! Keep clinging to His promise! He will be enough for YOU and He will NEVER stop being enough for you!

**How then should we respond to Christ's all-sufficient grace** and live in light of what He has done for us?

We respond by receiving it **by faith** each and every day, moment by moment.

So whatever you're going through, whatever weakness you're facing, whatever trial you're up against, or hardship that is upon you, or calamity that crumbles your life, or persecutions that tear down your faith... Will you let those overcome you in the midst of the struggle?

Or will you humbly depend and submit yourself fully to His grace and power to help you endure through the struggle, by relying upon His constant promise of **all-sufficient grace**?

This is active faith! This is humble faith! And it's really hard for me! I am so weak at times that I let my weakness paralyze me... But what I need to do in those moments is simply cry out to Jesus, “I need Your help, Jesus!”  
“I can't make it on my own!”  
“I trust Your promise of grace to be enough for me.”  
“Help me, Jesus, to fully depend upon You.”

This is what it looks like to call to mind and remember that Jesus has said and keeps on saying to me, **“My grace is sufficient for you.”**

A living testimony of this is found in the life of Joni Eareckson Tada, who at the age of 17, suffered a diving accident in Chesapeake Bay that caused her to become a quadriplegic – making her unable to move her arms and legs for the rest of her life.

And this almost led her to take her own life early on, but she couldn't do it, so she prayed, "**God, if I can't die, show me how to live...**"

And God certainly showed up so mercifully and powerfully to sustain and strengthen her life so that she could say **50 years** after her accident, having learned what it means to depend upon the **all-sufficient grace of Christ**:

*She said: "I would rather have Jesus than be out of this wheelchair and on my feet not knowing Him... Jesus is that satisfying.*

*Being close to Him is better than any amount of walking, especially if that walking takes me down the wrong road.*

*Being near to Jesus is better than having use of my hands, especially if my hands were to reach for all the wrong things.*

*Oh, what a happy blessing my quadriplegia is for it keeps me so very satisfied in Jesus.*

*It keeps me singing this song, "I would rather have Him than anything this world affords today."*

Oh what a testament to how Christ meets us in our weakness with His all-sufficient grace. She did not let her physical paralysis paralyze her faith. Instead, she walked with Jesus, relying upon **His all-sufficient grace**. And we can do the same!

Wouldn't we rather say in our weakness that we have come to know Jesus MORE than say in our self-sufficient, pride that we don't need Jesus.

May we be a people known for our weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon us, and let Christ's power be seen by others so they turn to Christ and be **saved by His grace** and **rely upon His constant all-sufficient grace**.

Because when we are weak then we are strong in Christ.

This is the power of the Cross and the Resurrection of Christ.

And one day, oh hasten the day! Christ will transform our lowly body to become like His glorious body!

But until that glorious day, **Christ gives us His all-sufficient grace in our weakness** to carry us and show off His power to save a people for His glory!

**Let us pray:**

*"Oh Father, You are a good and gracious God.*

*You have made us to be dependent upon You because You want us to look to Christ and rely upon His all-sufficient grace in our weakness.*

*Help us all to cling all the tighter and lean in all the closer so that we become strong in Christ.*

*And Father, I want to thank You for bringing these men from Adult & Teen Challenge to sing songs of praise to You and share their stories to display the saving power of Your grace.*

*Please keep these brothers fighting the good fight of the faith, taking hold of the eternal life to which they have been called to in Christ Jesus.*

*And let His grace shine all the brighter through all of our lives, so that many will come to believe in His power, all to the praise of Your glorious grace.*

*We pray in the precious and powerful name of Jesus. Amen."*