

And Who is sufficient for these things?

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Let us pray.

Dear heavenly Father, most gracious and holy and sovereign Lord, I thank you, oh Lord, for great things thou hast done. I thank you, Lord, for thy work in the souls of they people to bring them forth from bondage, to bring them forth from sin and to reveal thyself. Oh, Lord, what a merciful Lord thou art not to leave us to ourselves. Father, I pray this hour and the hour to come that thou would be pleased to lift up thy name, to glorify thy name. Lord, may you speak to our souls that thou would let just a crumb fall from thy table that it may nourish our souls, that you may speak and commune with us, Lord, that we would know thy presence in great power, in great joy by thy great love. Lord, I ask now that thou would purge us of all the things that so easily come into our minds and, Lord, may you lay our minds upon thee and bring us, Lord, to thy banqueting table. And, Lord, may we feast upon what thou hast set before us before the foundation of the world. Bless this day, Lord, for thy name's sake and for thy glory alone in Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

I believe it was last Friday night I sat down and opened up a book of sermons by Daniel Smart and I was trying to read. I thought it was a good time to read so I opened up the book and I read one line. And then I got interrupted. I never got back to the book the rest of that night and in the middle of this sermon, the sermon I don't recall because I had read a few of them, but that night the preacher asked a question in the middle of the sermon and I knew he had got it from Scripture, I just didn't know where he had got it from. And the question was:

“And who is sufficient for these things?”¹

Later on that night I spent some time with the family and went to bed and as I went to bed I had an unrest in my soul. I was struggling with some things. And the Lord brought that to me again. And it isn't the question that brings peace. The question is:

“And who is sufficient for these things?”²

¹ 2 Corinthians 2:16.

² Ibid.

It is the answer. And when the Lord brings that answer that is where our peace is and when he makes us to lie down in that green pasture of his rest, that is where our rest is. But it is a worthy question. It bounced around in my head the entire night. I had a great restful night when the Lord applied that he was sufficient for all the things that were bothering me. The next morning I got up. I had great peace, but I also had great joy because I knew then that is what the Lord would have me to speak.

Not knowing where it was, I went and opened up the Word of God and that is where we start today in 2 Corinthians chapter two verse 16. Paul in this letter to the Corinthians, in this portion of the letter is speaking about those that the Lord has called to be gospel ministers. In verse 16 he says these words.

“To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?”³

It is a deep question. It is a question that burdened Paul’s soul at that moment. We are going to back up a little bit to find out in the context of how the Lord brought this question to him. Why he brought his question to him. What is the significance or this question to you and I?

So if we start in verse 14 we come across this very blessed, blessed word.

“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.”⁴

Do you understand that today? Do you feel that way today? Does your soul feel that way today? Has the Lord impressed himself upon you in your life to let you know that you always, the Church is always triumphant in Christ Jesus? It doesn't seem that way, does it? It doesn't seem that way down here on earth. It doesn't seem that way in our daily grind and it doesn't seem that way in our daily lives. It doesn't seem that way when the old man gets the upper hand, when we are filled with anger, filled with sorrow, we are filled with anxiety. It doesn't seem like we are triumphing much, but what the Lord gave the apostle Paul as he spoke about this—and I said this little section about being a minister of God—the way this begins in thanking God which always causes us to try...

Now if that word wasn't in there, it would be pretty easy to explain, which causes us to triumph in Christ, because we have a warfare. But do you realize that in Christ Jesus even in the midst of that warfare we are the church triumphant. If we be in Christ Jesus we are always triumphant because our head is triumphant, our Lord has fought every battle. Our Lord has went before us.

I talked to my family this week and to my class also about the same thing. There are many things in this life that we don't deem to be good. We deem them to be hard. But if Romans 8:28 is true—and I believe it is—we have this Lord, this triumphant Lord who

³ Ibid.

⁴ 2 Corinthians 2:14.

has put all things under his feet. And he has performed all things for you and I if we being him. And he has done it so that we are triumphant. I can't bring that to your soul. Only he can. In hours like this, what the Lord has laid on my heart today is this question. But it is not just the question. I pray that the Lord answers the question to your soul this morning. Who is sufficient for these things?

“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.”⁵

As I said, the apostle Paul is talking about being a gospel minister. He is talking about where the Lord has sent him. He is talking about the blessings of the gospel and how the minister of God, if he is a true minister of God always triumphs in Christ and no matter what message that the Lord gives him, because, as you will see, there are some very hard things coming up here, hard things to our flesh, hard things for us to understand. We are bombarded with the missionary movement. We are bombarded with knocking on door to door, go and knock door to door every week or every day trying to get people in the kingdom of God. But these words that he gave the apostle Paul that the triumphantness in Christ in the spreading of the gospel, that the gospel does two things. The sword is sharp on both sides.

“For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ.”⁶

It is a smell of pleasure. It is a great pleasure to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost to hear the gospel, the true gospel preached. It is a great smell unto him. It is acceptable unto him.

“...in them that are saved, and in them that perish.”⁷

Do you understand that? That where the Lord's mercy and where the Lord's justice kiss each other, they kiss each other in the gospel. They kiss each other in perfect and in perfect unity in the Lord Jesus Christ. But the picture that we have for us in early revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ coming with a sword coming out of his mouth tells you a little bit here, that the gospel doesn't just come and is a comfort to the people of God, but it has a damning effect to those outside of Christ.

“For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved.”⁸

God is glorified when the gospel goes to them that are saved. You say, “Yes, amen, we believe that.”

“...and in them that perish.”⁹

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ 2 Corinthians 2:15.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

There is the purpose of the gospel. No true minister of the Lord will ever shy away from that. And it is a monumental thing that the minister does as preaching the gospel because he knows just as Noah was sitting there driving the nails into that boat, making that boat, knowing that every time he was condemning the world every moment was getting one step closer to the whole world being washed away. That is the gospel, that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. The people of God find grace in the eyes of God.

I want you to realize how this started.

“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ.”¹⁰

The gospel will always triumph in Christ. No man will ever put that down. No man could put it asunder. And then we come to our focal verse.

“To the one we are the savour of death unto death.”¹¹

Do you understand that? You might be squirming in your seats right now. To the gospel that comes to ... it doesn't come to the soul of the unregenerate. It may come to his mind, his fallen mind. It may set him out on a path to try to do something for the Lord, but for the most part it hardens. It hardens to the very core and makes one angry. Lord, why are you this way? It is rebellion against the sovereignty of the Lord.

“To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.”¹²

When you hear the gospel preached do you savor, do you have great joy in the resurrection of the Lord? Do you have great joy in the life of Christ, the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the ascension of Christ, the exaltation of Christ? Is that what you feel? Is that what your soul desires? The apostle Paul said, “You know, when we preach the gospel, when the true gospel goes out it divides. It divides to the very core.”

It wasn't as the churches of old who would say, “Ok, you sit on the left because I have deemed you to be a sheep and you sit on the right because I have deemed you to be a goat.” That is not the case. It is the gospel that divides. The minister of God doesn't know what the gospel is doing and to where it is going. And they think we have a good idea by the fruit that we see that it produces, the fruit of the Lord that it produces.

But the Lord has a dividing line.

“To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.”¹³

¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 2:14.

¹¹ 2 Corinthians 2:16.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

And then the question comes. And now you understand the mighty weight of the question. Who is sufficient for these things? Who could be sufficient enough to divide rightly the truth? Who is sufficient enough to make sure the gospel goes to its appointed place and it doesn't miss and it doesn't rest or doesn't fall to the ground. Paul will quickly answer his own question here shortly. Let's think about the question.

“And who is sufficient for these things?”¹⁴

Who is sufficient to send the gospel to its appointed place? Who is sufficient to bring forth the gospel from its appointed place? It is all of him. Every true minister of the Lord knows this. He knows that the truth comes from him. He knows that the truth is watered by him and he knows that the increase is given by him. And who is sufficient for these things?

So if you just look over in chapter three he answers this question. In chapter three we will begin in verse four.

“And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward.”¹⁵

We trust in you, Lord, that you know what you are doing. We trust in you, Lord, that you know where to send your gospel. We trust in you, Lord, that you are the sword that rightly divides. We trust in you, Lord, that you know where your appointed targets are and that you will get it. And it will be for your praise and your glory and your honor. And, Lord, we also know that you will send it and you will condemn man with it. And we also know, Lord, that that is to your glory, to your honor and to your praise.

“And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves.”¹⁶

We don't have that sufficiency. I define the word sufficiency this way. It is supply equal to want, fit, able, competent power or ability. We don't have that ability. We can't have that ability. We don't have the knowledge of the Lord to know where he sends the gospel. We don't know to what purpose it is. But we know he has a purpose. And Paul says that and as gifted as Paul was, as many place as Paul was sent, he says:

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves.”¹⁷

We can't, Lord. We don't know what to preach to go from one room to the next room from one city to the next city, one day to the next day. But our sufficiency, our supply that is equal to our wants, our ableness, our fitness, our competent power or ability is of the triune Lord.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ 2 Corinthians 3:4.

¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 3:4-5.

¹⁷ 2 Corinthians 3:5.

“Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament.”¹⁸

That is what we are. That is what the true ministers of the Lord are, able in Christ Jesus.

“Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”¹⁹

Well, what a difference. You mean the gospel minister doesn't preach duty faith? No, he doesn't. You mean the gospel minister doesn't teach you to obey the law? No, he doesn't. He doesn't put the ought to and the have to and the must to on you? No, he doesn't. He preaches Christ crucified. He preaches the life of Christ. He preaches that the sufficiency is of Christ. And he has made us able to do that.

Now all of this being said in Paul's life, we have to examine that today. Because, as I said, how the Lord gave me the Word, how he dropped it down to me on that Friday night it certainly wasn't about preaching the gospel. It was about the sufficiency of the Lord in my life for all things. And that this what we are going to look at today, all things temporal and all things spiritual, because I don't know about you and I don't know what kind of thoughts you have and I don't know what kind of depth of thought you have, but there are some weighty matters that attend the child of God every day. There are the temporal matters.

I mean, I get very perplexed sometimes in watching my children grow up. There are things that I see in them that disturb me greatly, things that I see in me that disturb me greatly, things that I see in those that I love that disturb me greatly.

“And who is sufficient for these things?”²⁰

That is the question. What are these things for you today? If you have ever asked this question or been brought to this question, who is sufficient for these things? What are these things? Maybe it is the afflictions that we carry. And they are. They are very burdensome. In fact, the more that they draw out, the more that we start to question whether we will ever be made whole again. Who is sufficient for these things? Who can make us holy? And we... you know, sometimes we sit there and we contemplate it and we think about it and we go, “Well, Lord, if you can make me whole, you should have done so already. Why is it that I still struggle or I have three or four good days in a row and then, boom, I have another day I am knocked off my feet?” Well, who is sufficient for these things?

A lot of things trouble us. The things in this nation trouble, because on the outside and just looking with our eyes, our temporal eyes we don't see things getting much better. In

¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 3:6.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ 2 Corinthians 2:16.

fact, we see them waxing worse to our understanding of things the way we grew up. Things have gotten worse. Who is sufficient for that?

Maybe it is financial. Maybe we look at our finances and things are going as well as we would like them to. We have got something on the horizon that is due. Who is sufficient for that? That is what I said. I pray that the Lord drops this question to you. But more importantly I pray that he answers it, that he answers it the way he did it to Paul. Our sufficiency is of God. Our sufficiency is of him. So what about the weightier matters? What about the sin? What about the constant things that plague us each day, our unbelief the things that we struggle with and the Lord proves himself and he proves himself over and over and we still have unbelief the next time? Does that weigh down your soul? It weighs mine down. Who is sufficient for that?

And then what about your very soul? What about the ups and downs of your soul? What about the struggles that we have each day? What about the up one minute and down the next? Does that burden you? It burdens me. I have gotten everything I wanted to get done last night and I got it done early. I was so happy and proud of myself. I sat down to read. I sat down to study. And, you know, this precious book was shut up to me. Nothing. It didn't matter what I read. It didn't matter what was there. It didn't matter what I tried. It didn't matter how hard I prayed. It was shut up to me. I started to get hardened and I started to wonder why and then I started, of course, pointing finger to myself and rightfully so.

Then the Lord sent the text again to me so I went to sleep early last night. And he told me he was sufficient for these things. It is always have great anxiety that I am going to be left to myself to speak the Word of God and that is a very fearful place to be. And he is sufficient for these things.

These weightier matters about death. That is a weightier matter and I see it weighing down even the youngest children that I have. Sometimes get a fear of death come upon them over the littlest things. And you can sit there and you can laugh at them. Maybe it is a thorn. Maybe it is a bumblebee, something that really just torments them. And you can sit and sit there and go, "Wow, you know, that is really silly." And then an hour a later be taken off to some thought about your children dying, your wife dying, you dying, your loved ones dying. Who is sufficient for that? Who is sufficient to show you that he has took the sting of death away, that he is triumphant over death?

What about temptations? Is he sufficient to show you that he has made a way for you to escape them? I hope so, because that is the only way you will be able to escape them. And the debt of that sin, wow. As that sin piles up who is sufficient to take that away? Who is sufficient to heal? Who is sufficient to protect? Who is sufficient to give joy, to give peace, to give love? I see my kids run to me a lot thinking that mom and daddy have that sufficiency. You know, there is times we don't. We can put medicine on something and pray with them and ask the Lord to bless it. That is as far as it goes. We can't take the fear away and we can't take the pain away.

But praise be unto God when he reveals himself at that moment for us to tell them that he is sufficient for those things.

I want to go a few places and we are never going to leave 2 Corinthians. Paul has this theme running throughout this whole letter. So we begin in that very passage we like to quote that verse all the time which is 2 Corinthians 12:9. I think we all know that verse. It is very precious to us, because we are weak. We are weak and frail. We do have a great inability. But beginning in verse seven:

“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh.”²¹

You say, “Wow, that was pretty mean.”

Now that is great love and that is what Paul is saying. What great love that as I lifted up myself in pride, because of the Lord’s revelations to me, the Lord sent a thorn, a messenger of Satan to buffet me. The Lord knew that Paul needed that. His soul needed that. And he sent this thorn in the flesh—and we don’t know what that thorn is. It could have been physical. I believe it was spiritual. Either way, both of them lead to one of the physicalness of the thorns that we have lead to us crying out to the Lord. I hope so. And that is his purpose in them, to bring his children closer to him.

“...there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me.”²²

A messenger of Satan. That the Lord could overrule the messenger of Satan for his good, to bring the good to the soul of the apostle Paul. He even would send a messenger of Satan. You know the messengers of Satan, don’t you? Adam told last night. Adam come plenty last night and this morning. They come with a message contrary to the gospel, contrary to Christ. They come with great fear. They come with great anxiety. They come with great trepidation of soul.

But this thorn in the flesh, this messenger of Satan was given to Paul.

“...lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice.”²³

Now if you believe that is literal, I am sorry for you. It is perfection. He asked the Lord over and over for the Lord to remove it from him. That is what the number three is in the Word of God. It is perfection. You and I know that. There are times the Lord leads us to pray over and over and beseech the Lord over and over.

And the Lord in his perfect time he answers that prayer the way that he has designed to answer that prayer, according to his will. But Paul’s prayer was that it would depart from him. Lord, take this away. That is what I see that I need. I need you to take this

²¹ 2 Corinthians 12:7.

²² Ibid.

²³ 2 Corinthians 12:7-8.

messenger of Satan away. I need you to take this thorn that is in my flesh. Take it away, Lord. It is doing me no good. It is not {?} it is leading to these thoughts. It is leading to unbelief. It is leading to anger. He cried out to the Lord

“...that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee.”²⁴

We have used that verse a lot, but I will tell you what. We could read it a thousand times and it is not going to mean anything unless the Lord speaks it to your soul, unless he tells you that his grace is sufficient for you in that hour. He is sufficient for your pain. It is sufficient for that thorn. It is sufficient for your unbelief. It is sufficient for that messenger of Satan, his grace is. And sufficient is supply equal to want. You want that the Lord’s sufficiency. You want him to overrule it. You want him to take it away.

“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”²⁵

And how true that is, because we are very weak creatures. I don’t care how strong you think you are. This Word of God is filled with those who have been strong in the Lord and those who have been humbled. Why do you think as Jacob wrestled all night with the angel of the Lord? He wrestled all night and said, “Lord, I need that blessing. Give me that blessing.”

Do you know how that ended? He was touched in the hollow of his thigh. He was humbled in that touching. He was humbled and brought down to say, “As strong as you think you were, look at your dependency upon me.” And he was given that affliction so he may depend upon his Word.

His grace is sufficient. His strength is perfect in weakness. Them, because of the surety of Christ, because of the grace of Christ, then Paul... now just two verses earlier it was wait a minute. Take this messenger away. Take the thorn in the flesh away. You can just hear the agony. And then in verse nine:

“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”²⁶

And every child of God is brought to that place where they desire the power of Christ to rest upon the, not the power of themselves, not the power of outside influences, not the power of medicine, not the power of the doctor, but the power of Christ, because he is the applier of grace. He is the supplier of grace.

Now turn with me back to chapter four. Look at this starting in verse seven.

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels.”²⁷

²⁴ 2 Corinthians 12:8-9.

²⁵ 2 Corinthians 12:9.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ 2 Corinthians 4:7.

In these broken down bodies of ours we have a treasure. We have the seed of Christ. We have the Lord Jesus Christ dwelling in us.

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”²⁸

Oh, may the Lord make us understand that. We strive. We walk as hard as we can. We do things as fervently as we can. I am not preaching against that. I am preaching in the sufficiency of the Lord for all things. He is the fervency. He is the power.

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”²⁹

Yes, we are decaying every day. Yes, we are moving closer and closer to the appointed time of death. Yes, we are. Our bodies testify of it from the youngest to the oldest.

...that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.³⁰

As the Lord was laid in the tomb he arose from the tomb. The Lord is a resurrected Lord. The Lord is alive. The Lord is the God of the living. And for you and I today he is the sufficiency to show us that he is life.

“Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.”³¹

And what a precious gift that is to partake in the sufferings of Christ so that we are succored by the one who suffered, because our sufficiency is of the Lord. The Lord manifests that sufficiency today.

Paul said in Philippians 4:19:

“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”³²

What about the pictures that we have for us in the Old Testament of the sufficiency of the Lord? Time and time again the ones wandering in the wilderness, whether it was quail, whether it was the parting of the Red Sea and the destroying of their enemies right in

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ 2 Corinthians 4:7-10.

³¹ 2 Corinthians 4:10.

³² Philippians 4:19.

front of them, whether it was the Lord sending the manna. And what about that manna? Do you ever wonder why they only could collect the manna for one day and that was it? Except on Saturday, the sixth day. Why was it? Because you know what? We are not going to live on tomorrow's grace. And the strength that we need, the strength that we receive next week we are not going to get today. We will live every day upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Sufficient is this day. This day that we are in today is enough evil in this day. But he is sufficient. His grace is manna. The Lord Jesus Christ which is the picture of the manna. That is sufficient of us each day. We are not to collect for the next day. You can't collect for the next day. The child of God can't, because he is taught and he is brought to the feet of the Lord to live each day upon that grace.

What about Elijah? How was he fed? Day and night by ravens. Ravenous birds, predator birds, selfish birds, birds that would never collect to give to anybody but the Lord overruled that and he provided for Elijah day and night that way, just enough, just enough where he was dependent upon his Lord at the night time. He was dependent upon his Lord the next day.

What about Abraham? Abraham was told, "Behold, I am almighty God." In the Hebrew it means God all sufficient. As he went into Mount Moriah, as he took his son up there and the Lord had given him faith to believe that they would return. And the Lord provided. The Lord Jehovah Jireh, he not only provided a sacrifice, he saw the need, he provided. In the mount he will be seen. He was all sufficiency for Abraham that day. He is all sufficiency for you and I. And what about the roll call of faith in Hebrews 11? What about all of them that are mentioned? What we see in that whole chapter is the sufficiency of the Lord who met their need in the hour and gave them the faith of the Son of God.

Well, how do you know it was his faith? Well, it tells us that early in that chapter. He is the author and finisher of our faith. He is the beginning. He is the middle. He is the end. You are not going to have any other faith, child of God. You may try to have some false faith, but he is faithful. He is sufficient to supply all our needs day in and day out.

Oh, Lord, who is sufficient for these things?

Last place I would like to take you is in 2 Corinthians again if you will turn with me over to chapter nine. Paul tells us in Colossians that all fullness dwells in the Lord Jesus Christ. And with all that fullness is all sufficiency. Let's look at verse eight. And I want you to pay attention to how many times the word all is used in this verse.

"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."³³

Every good and acceptable work of our Lord is provided for of our Lord. God is able. He is able. The triune Lord is able to make all grace... This is... I always have this beautiful picture when the Lord brings it to me of Joseph opening the store houses and there never

³³ 2 Corinthians 9:8.

being anyone in any kind of want, in any kind of need, because it is just an abundance and abundance. We don't understand that, because the temporal things that we have always run out, whatever they are. And we have to go buy more or get more and hopefully we have the funds to buy more. But in this triune Lord:

“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”³⁴

Who is sufficient for these things? What are these things to you and I today? Whatever they are, whatever us burdening you at this hour, he says here, “I am sufficient for all those things, having all sufficiency in all things may abound to every good work.”

Do you ever worry about how you are going to treat someone or if you are going to have enough love for the brethren? He is sufficient, because it is his. And he is a sufficient shepherd for his sheep.

May the Lord impress upon you this hour, this day, this week that is ahead in the life in general the rest of your life his sufficiency. And may he ask this question:

“Who is sufficient for these things?”³⁵

But more importantly, may he answer it to you, because that is where his rest is. It is stored up in the Son.

Dear heavenly Father, most gracious and holy Lord, may thy power be upon thy Word. May you use it for the glory of your name in Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ 2 Corinthians 2:16.