

GOD'S GRACE IS SUFFICIENT

By: PHILLIP HAYES

“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” [2Corinthians 12:9].

Several weeks ago my wife and I were reminiscing about the many friends we had met over the years. During our travels as evangelists and missionary workers we have met scores of men and women that were serving the Lord. Many of these folks have remained in contact with us and have become our friends. We treasure the times we have had with all of them.

During these travels we have ministered in various churches and Christian fellowships. As we were not affiliated with any particular denomination we were privileged to minister to Christians of different doctrinal views. Because of their denominations teaching some may not have embraced everything we taught. As most of you know denominations have a strong hold of their people and will not allow their folks to hear anyone outside their own licensed preachers.

As we talked about our experiences, we began to feel the love we have for these folks. We talked about the anointing and power of God that was so manifested among the people in those services. We talked about the love of God that we felt in most of the churches we had been

privileged to minister in. We also talked about how strong many of the Christians were and also remembering the weak ones that would come for prayer confessing their faults and battles they were having with the flesh and the devil. Remembering the tears and the joy of the Lord they had after prayer was precious. Although they were weak in many areas of their lives, they loved Jesus! As we thought about those wonderful times we rejoiced and were thankful to God for allowing us to meet and minister to them.

We began to talk about how we experienced the same love, anointing and power of the Holy Spirit among all these people although we knew they were separated by various doctrines. They didn't believe the same thing! Some were Jesus Only or Oneness people, some were Trinitarian people, some believed in once saved always saved, some believed you had to be baptized in water, some didn't, some believed in the rapture, some didn't, some were Sabbath keepers, some were not; and on and on their belief systems differed greatly.

The only thing most of them had in common was they said they were Christians, they believed in Jesus, that He died for them and had risen from the dead!

I know Bible doctrine (teaching) is extremely important. I believe God's will is for us to believe the same thing. I believe we should all study to know the correct teaching of Jesus and His Apostles. I also know there are false doctrines that could very well damn your soul. But without question, there are many misunderstandings over doctrine among God's people.

I thought about the scores of weak Christians we have encountered. I have heard it all! People have come to me asking for prayer for all of the sinful vices you could imagine. They were weak and would easily fall into sin. They were lovers of God but they were bound. We have

been asked, "Is smoking a sin or a weight? Our answer has always been, "It doesn't matter, the Bible says to lay them both aside!" Weights and sins must be dealt with. The scripture in question is Hebrews 12:1, *"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."* It is clear, the writer of Hebrews is writing his epistle to Christians that are already saved. He recognizes there were weak Christians that had not laid aside all their weights or sins. Yes, born again, Bible believing Christians still have problems with sin! You might as well get off your self-righteous religious high horse and admit there is a problem with sin among God's people today! Everyone is not as perfect as you might think you are! The Bible says, *"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations"* [Romans 14:1].

The more we talked about all this, I couldn't help but wonder, if someone loved Jesus with all their heart and lived for Jesus as best they could, but were bound with an unhealthy habit (that many would consider a weight or perhaps a sin) if the person died in that condition, would they go to Heaven or hell?

As we discussed this, the question came to me, "Will God's Love for us override or cover our misunderstanding of the scriptures?" Another question I had was, "Does God consider it a sin to misunderstand a teaching that is actually preached from God's Word?"

I went to bed that night with these questions on my mind and all that we had discussed. I must admit I was troubled as I thought about all the weak but precious people we had ministered with and to over the years. I was awakened about 3am with these words flooding my mind, "My grace is sufficient for thee"!

I began to pray and talk to the Lord. I remember asking, "Lord, I know that's what Paul said when he had asked you 3 times to heal him. You told him that your grace was sufficient. I remember saying, Lord, I've preached from that passage many times."

That statement wouldn't leave me. As I got up from bed all I could think about was those words, over and over, "My Grace is sufficient"; "My Grace is sufficient"!

Was the Lord speaking to me that His Grace was sufficient and would cover over a person's faults, weights or sins?! Was this True?!

It was a Sunday morning and I was to preach that morning. As I meditated on what I believed the Lord had spoken to me the scriptures started flooding my mind. I want to share them with you.

The first verse of scripture I received was the one in Hebrews that I have already shared, *"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations."* I felt the Lord was reminding me that there were weak people in His church. That they were His and He did not want others to be doubting or disputing their salvation. In other words, Jesus was their Lord, and they were His people! He would be their Judge! According to God's Word, when we wound a weak brother's conscience, we sin against Christ! *"But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ" [1Corinthians 8:12].*

I think about God's Grace a lot. If you don't have our article, "Amazing Grace" order your copy today. God's Grace didn't start in the New Testament! I have found His Grace throughout the Old Testament! Many define God's Grace as His "Unconditional, unmerited Love and Favor" We are saved by His Grace and not by our works. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" [Ephesians 2:8-10].

As I thought on what Jesus had spoken to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you", I began to see how the words Grace and Love were intermingled. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" [John 3:16].* Grace was the fruit of God's love for the world! Praise the Lord!

An understanding began to unfold before me. God is love! John declared it in His first epistle, *"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" [1 John 4:7-8].*

Again in chapter 4, verse 16, John declares, *"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him".*

Here is the key I believe the Lord was revealing. The key is Love! Not only that God is love and that He truly loves us, but we are also to love Him and one another. I have met many ministers and lay persons that could quote scriptures, preach great sermons but didn't display any real love for people. Many love religion. They love their denomination. They love their church. But they don't really love their brother or sister in the Lord! Most don't even like people, much less love people!

Let me ask you dear reader, "You say you love God! But, do you love your brother or sister in the Lord? Do you have a concern for the lost?" God's word says, *"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment*

have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" [1John 4:20-21]. Love is our commandment! This should never be misunderstood!

Romans chapter thirteen, verse ten tells us, "*Love is the fulfilling of the law*"! Therefore if we love God, we will love our brother and if we truly love both God and our brother, we have fulfilled God's law! Love then is our key to understanding, "God's Grace Is Sufficient"!

Look at this powerful scripture found in First Peter chapter 4, verse 8, "*And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*" Fervent charity among ourselves! That my friends means intent, without ceasing godly love for each other! If we have and demonstrate this love for one another it will cover a multitude of sins! This is God's Word!

This is what I believe the Lord was telling me at 3am that morning! People may be weak in various ways! They may not have as much understanding as others but if they truly love God and love the brethren God's Grace is sufficient for them! I hope you see this!

I believe this is why the enemy is always stirring up misunderstandings, strife and jealous among church people. Satan wants us to dislike one another. He ultimately wants us to hate one another and when you fall into that snare, Satan can destroy you! You cannot hate your brother and go to Heaven!

We see plainly that love will actually cover a multitude of sins! You can know you are saved! How? I will let the great apostle John tell you how, Here it is, "*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death*" [1John 3:14]. Dear friend, if you are having trouble loving your brother or sister in Christ I can assure you, the devil is working in your heart. Reject him now in Jesus name! Love

is the evidence of true salvation! Satan wants to steal away your love and if he does, he will have stolen your salvation! Don't allow your dislike of someone turn into hatred. It's of the devil!

Do you realize there is another verse of scripture that refers to covering or hiding sins? It's found in the epistle of James chapter 5, verses 19 and 20, "*Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*" All I can say is "Wow"! Our reward for converting the backslider or one that has gone astray of the truth is the hiding of a multitude of sins!

Every real Christian wants to live a holy life and be without sin. That desire was planted by the Holy Spirit! As hard as we try, we still fail! We try to be holy and live godly lives but we still may commit sins that we are unaware of. What is sin? It's missing the mark. Here's a few we may "miss the mark" in; "The very thought of foolishness is sin. All unrighteousness is sin. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. If you know to do good and don't do it, it's sin. Foolish talking and jesting is sin. The transgression of the law is sin."

Thank God for His Love and Grace He has imparted to us! We may not know everything about the Bible. There may be countless verses of scripture that we just can't seem to understand. We might stumble from time to time in our walk with Him, but His Grace is sufficient! His Saving Hand is always outstretched to us! I thank God for His goodness that leads us to repentance! "*Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*" [Romans 2:4].

You see, God is still working on us. I love that old

children's song that I use to sing with my children. "He's still working on me, To make me what I need to be, It took him just a week to make the moon and stars, The sun and the earth and Jupiter and Mars, How loving and patient He must be, 'Cause He's still workin' on me." Praise God! *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"* [Ephesians 2:10].

According to chapter eight of Romans God's Holy Spirit is making intercession for us. God foreknew us, and has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son. God has called us. God has justified us. God has glorified us. We are His workmanship! He is going to freely give us all things! It's His Work, not ours! Truly, God's Grace Is Sufficient for all of us!

Nothing can keep us from God's love and grace. Apostle Paul was persuaded of this and I am also! *"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"* [Romans 8:38-39]. God didn't call us to fail! He knew every mistake and sin you would commit, but He called you anyway. He called you to Victory! He called you to be more than a conqueror! *"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us"* [Romans 8:37]. Praise the Lord!

The Bible tells us to "Have no confidence in the flesh". Therefore, my confidence is not in my own ability to keep myself, rather my confidence is in my Lord, *"Who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy"* (See Jude 1:24). He has the power to keep you from falling!

We must therefore place all our faith in God's Gift of Love that He freely gives to all who trust in Christ Jesus our Lord. His Grace is Unconditional! His Grace is Unmerited! His Grace is Sufficient!

I will close with these final thoughts. As I look around me when I am in church I see people that are worshipping our Lord. Some display a lot of emotion in their worship, others are more reserved. However, each has a certain glow about them as they whisper and also shout their praises to our Lord. These people are all saved by the same Grace that I am. Some are very zealous, others are not so much. Some are having problems with the flesh and are weaker than some of the others. Some are strong in faith. But they are all God's people. God is working on each of them in His way and in His time. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We are all flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone. We have all been baptized into the same body by His One Spirit. We are His body in the earth. We are the redeemed of the Lord!

The Word of God has instructed each of us how we should conduct our lives while in this world. We understand God has given us a commandment. That commandment is that we should love God and one another. Jesus said, *"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you"* [John 15:12-14]. Our Lord is very plain. He is saying I love you so much that I will die for you! He called us His friends!

I have given you a scripture that says nothing is able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. I have found this to be true during my fifty plus years of serving the Lord. In all of my weaknesses, fears, doubts and failures, Jesus has never failed me nor has He

ever forsaken me. His love has been constant, His forgiveness available. Yes, we have all failed Him. *"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one"* [Romans 3:10]. Therefore, when I look around me and see the people I realize we all need God's Grace. We are all equal in God's eyes. Without His Grace, we would surely fail. Always remember, man judges the outward appearance, but God judges the heart (1Samuel 16:7).

It's our heart that must be dealt with. I believe Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. I'm sure most of you believe this also. However, the Son of God could not have died for us had He not loved His Father, and us!

I believe if we love one another as He loved us, we will be willing to die for one another! *"For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren"* [1John 3:11-16].

In these few verses we find the message from the beginning was love. We are told we can know we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren. We can know if we are saved if we have love!

John also reveals how we can perceive the love of God: We realize God's love is abiding in us when we know that we would lay down our lives for the brother or sister that is sitting across the aisle from you.