

NO STRINGS ATTACHED

2 Corinthians 12:9

(Not entirely original with me)

Introduction: For centuries people have discussed, wondered and tried to figure out just what Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was. Everyone seems to have his/her interpretation. It was not a cut from a sword or anything life threatening but whatever it was, it was constantly there and was a bother to Paul. Paul was such a man that he tried to keep a happy face and to act as if there was nothing bothering him physically. However, Paul did mention his problem a time or two but he was learning a lesson and that was that his "thorn" helped keep him humble and it drove him to his knees often and he learned that God's grace was sufficient for his suffering from the "thorn." What Paul learned and passed on in his writings, every believer also needs to learn and that is that God's Grace has no strings attached.

I. GRACE CAN TRAVEL ONLY DOWNWARD

1. Love and Grace are almost identical.
 - Love, however can travel anywhere, upwards, sideways, downward.
 - Grace can only travel downward.
 - Royalty can be gracious to those who are subjects, thus a downward act.
 - Subjects, however cannot be gracious to their superiors .
 - Grace is royal attention given to those who are of a lower estate.
 - Sovereign Grace is God leaning downward to the lowly, the wretched and the lost.
 - Jesus came to bring man back to God, therefore an act of Grace.
2. Believers in Jesus Christ, Christians, are not under the law any longer, but under God's GRACE.
 - Except for the Grace of God found in Jesus Christ, there is no hope for any person ever being restored to God's favor.
 - Paul learned that God's Grace reached every area of his life and he was totally undeserving.

II. GRACE BRINGS ONE TO AN AWARENESS OF SIN

1. It is not the heaviness of sin that makes one aware of his/her sins.
 - Human nature or the "old sin nature" is a natural thing and no one ever senses a burden of sin as they go about living their every day lives.
2. When a person becomes aware of Jesus Christ, he/she is awakened to the realization of his/her sins.
 - Becoming aware of one's sins can bring a person to belief in Jesus.
 - Sometimes it is by a believing friend that brings one to an awareness of his/her sins.
 - Sometimes it is hearing the Word of God preached that brings one to an awareness of his/her sins.
 - Sometimes it is by a simple hymn that makes one aware of his/her sins.
 - In these ways and many others, the Holy Spirit brings conviction of one's sins, causing that person to get a glimpse of what he/she really is - a sinner, needing God's help.
 - "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner..." is the heart's cry of one exposed to his/her sins.
3. God's grace was sufficient for King David in his lust, it was sufficient for Peter when he denied his Lord, it was sufficient for the thief on the cross beside the Lord Jesus, it was enough for the man who was filled with demons.
 - There is nothing which Grace will not attempt and there is nothing that Grace cannot achieve.
 - Whenever one is awakened to his/her sins, God's Grace is sufficient.

III. WHEN SUFFERING COMES, GOD'S GRACE IS THERE

1. Everyone has times of suffering, sooner or later for all human beings will have those times.
 - Physical suffering, mental suffering, material losses, family problems.
 - Suffering can be temporary or it can longer slowly through years.
2. Suffering is handled in different ways by each person.
 - Some take it bravely, quietly and patiently, carrying his/her "cross" daily without showing signs of distress or pain, never a word of complaint.
 - Some gripe and complain at every breath, thinking of no one else but him/herself, acting as if he/she is the only person in the world who is suffering.
 - When God's Grace is present when one is suffering, there is a quiet peace, a confidence, a trust, a reliance upon the Lord. "My Grace is sufficient for thee..."
 - God's Grace in the Lord Jesus Christ upholds the believer in all things at all times.

IV. GOD'S GRACE IS PRESENT DURING TIMES OF TEMPTATION

1. Like suffering, temptation comes and goes in various degrees.
 - No two people are tempted exactly alike but every human being is tempted countless times.
 - Some temptations attack the flesh, some the mind and all in different degrees.
 - Some temptations are subtle, quiet, almost unnoticed, then some are loud, clear and strong.
 - Temptation is always there, no matter where a person goes, even in times of worship.
 - Age does not cause temptation to cease.
 - Youthful passions are replaced with more powerful force that brings about the hardening of one's heart.
 - Temptation follows every person from birth till death.
2. Tempted as every person is, there is hope and that hope is found in the Lord Jesus.
 - Satan trembles when he sees the believer on his/her knees going to God for help.
 - Jesus was tempted in all areas just as every human being is.
 - Did not Jesus conquer sin? Did not Jesus lead sin captive? Did not Jesus put sin at His feet forever?
 - When temptation comes again to YOU, say, "He is able to keep me from falling. He that is with me is mightier than they who are against me."
 - God's Grace is able to keep YOU during times of temptation.

V. AT THE MOMENT OF DEATH, GOD'S GRACE IS STILL THERE

1. For the believer at the time of his/her death, the pillow for his/her head is God's Grace.
 - The Lord is with the believer from the moment of his/her belief all through his/her life and He will be there with that believer draws his/her last breath.
 - There is no comfort so great for one dying as knowing that the Lord is there and that God's Grace is all that he/she needs.

CONCLUSION:

1. The believer's strongest assurance is that "God's Grace is sufficient for all things and at all times."
2. God's Grace is free, there are no "strings attached" to God's Grace.
3. It is not one's works, but it is by God's Grace that eternal life is to be had.

