

## The Grace of Jesus II Corinthians 8:9

My outline this morning is simple. It's only three points with no subpoints. If you take notes, I'm going to give them to you at the beginning of the message and then you can put your pen down unless you want to include in your notes the passages that we will be referencing.

Yes, we'll give a meaning, talk about its measure and its means as we have with the other character traits of Jesus we have discussed, but what I want you to see today is the magnitude of grace. But no matter how much or how long we talk about grace, we will never fully plumb the depths of its richness or the vastness of its meaning. But understand even a bit of the significance of grace should give us a greater appreciation for what we receive by grace which has been made possible through Christ.

If we really grasp the idea of grace, it should knock our socks off, blow us away, overwhelm us, boggle our mind. To comprehend even a smidgen of what grace has done for us should evoke on our part exuberant praise, not only now, but certainly for eternity. I believe that the praise we give in heaven will not only be because we see the full glory of God, but also because we will have a better understanding of what we have been given that we didn't deserve.

Grace touches every aspect of the believer's life – from salvation, to sanctification, to glorification. Let me begin with this passage: **“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” II Corinthians 12:9a**

Here is the outline:

- The sufficiency of grace in salvation
- The sufficiency of grace in sanctification
- The sufficiency of grace in suffering

### I. THE SUFFICIENCY OF GRACE IN SALVATION – II Corinthians 8:9

I mentioned last week that there is a difference between mercy and grace. We noted that mercy is simply God not giving us what we deserve. Grace

on the other hand, is God giving us what we don't deserve. If we are to have a better understanding and greater appreciation of grace, we need to consider who we are apart from Christ and who we become because of Christ.

Every one of us has a sin nature and a sin problem that we were born with. David makes that accurate assessment when he writes **“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” (Psalm 51:5)**

I am not a sinner because I sin. I sin because I am a sinner. Our sin has separated us from God.

We are all guilty of violating or breaking God's holy law and therefore deserve His judgment and just punishment.

**Isaiah 53:6 “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way.”**

**Romans 3:10 “There is none righteous, not even one.”**

**Romans 3:23 “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”**

**I John 1:8 “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”**

**Romans 5:6** calls us ungodly.

**I Peter 3:18** calls us unjust or unrighteous.

We can't escape it and we can't do anything in our power about it. We are sinners.

A skunk smells because that's its nature.

A dog barks because that's its nature.

A cat does whatever a cat does because that's its nature.

I sin because I am a sinner.

If it were like an AA group, I'd stand up and say: “Hi, I'm Pastor Howie and I'm a sinner.”

According to verses like **Romans 5:10** and **Colossians 1:21** being a sinner makes me an enemy of God. **Romans 8:7** adds that my mind is hostile to God.

In that sinful condition, the Bible is very clear what my destiny will be.

**Ezekiel 18:20 “The soul that sins, it shall die.”**

**Romans 6:23a “For the wages of sin is death.”**

Apart from having Christ as my Savior, there is no other option. Spiritual death and eternal separation from God is my destiny without Christ. Jesus gives a glimpse of what hell will be like for the spiritually dead in **Matthew 13:49-50: “This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”**

In **Mark 9:43** Jesus says its fires never go out.

In **Matthew 22:13** Jesus says it is a place of darkness. Peter calls it blackest darkness (**II Peter 2:17**).

Paul adds in **II Thessalonians 1:9** that **“they will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might.”**

In **Matthew 25:41** Jesus says they are cursed and will join the devil and his angels in the eternal fire. Eternal spiritual death awaits those without Christ. Many don’t know it. Many others don’t think it will happen to them. Many don’t believe it. Some don’t even care.

I had a friend who raised pigs. He raised them for only one purpose. He didn’t raise them to be pets. He didn’t raise them as a hobby. He didn’t raise them to become guard pigs on the farm. He raised them to become food and that meant they had to die. That was their destiny.

The death we deserve and the debt we owe is because of sin and there isn’t any way on our own to make ourselves right with God. Our peril is everlasting punishment. But as we learned last week about mercy, God has, for a time, withheld the punishment we have coming to us. That’s where grace comes in. Grace is unmerited favor. Grace is something we don’t deserve but that God has given. Where mercy is God not giving us what we deserve. Grace is God giving us what we don’t deserve. I am certain every one of us has experienced grace. We deserved some punishment, but shown grace by

receiving something we didn’t deserve.

We deserved some punishment for not eating our broccoli, but we got the ice cream cone anyway.

We deserved that speeding ticket, but were given a warning.

We deserved...but got...instead – you fill in the blanks.

We have all been shown grace.

In the Old Testament, the word grace originally meant to bend or stoop down and then came to mean unmerited favor. I’ll be the first to admit that I don’t understand a thing about what it means to be royalty in England. In London, those of royalty live by certain rules. They appear aloof and distant. Occasionally, the news will report about one of the royals stopping, kneeling down or stooping to touch or blessing a commoner. Nothing in the commoner deserved being noticed or touched or blessed by royalty. That’s grace.

Donald Barnhouse once said: **“Love that goes upward is worship; love that goes outward is affection; love that stoops is grace.”**

In Christ’s coming to earth, God stooped down to touch us with His grace. Grace is God’s favor to the unworthy, the underserving. It’s God’s goodness to those who deserve only punishment. Grace is something given freely on God’s part, not because we can earn it or even that we deserve it. If grace were in some way something that we could earn, then it wouldn’t be grace. Passages like **Ephesians 2:8-9** and **Titus 3:5** make that abundantly clear by telling us it is not by anything we can do.

Wayne Grudem underscores this by saying that **“grace is devoid of human effort or self-reliance.”**

We need grace because there is no other way to be saved. In our sinful condition we deserve judgment but God in His grace has given us a way to be saved, but not by anything we can do. Grace, then is all God in His showing favor to the unworthy. We can’t do anything to earn grace and we can’t do anything to add to it. Again, if there is anything that we can do, then it’s not grace. An acronym we

learned in college was God's riches at Christ's expense. God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

So here's the verse I chose for today.

**II Corinthians 8:9: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich."**

Let me give you my "Howieism" – Jesus was rich but voluntarily became poor so that we who are poor can become rich, not monetarily but spiritually. That's His grace.

When we consider who we are and what our destiny is without Christ, to receive what He gives us is truly amazing grace. Grace is God's willingness to forgive us on account of what Christ did in dying on the cross and abundantly bless us even though we don't deserve to be treated so kindly.

Now when you look at the context of the passage, it seems unusually out of place. Talking about the sacrifice of Christ in all that He gave up in the middle of a passage that has to do with giving. But Paul has a point to make. Paul is encouraging the believers in Corinth to be as generous in their giving as the believers in Macedonia. Even though they were poor, they gave out of their poverty and even beyond their ability. To illustrate their giving, Paul reminded them of how much Christ gave up in order to give us what we don't deserve. From the splendor of heaven to the squalor of earth, Jesus put aside His glory on our behalf. That's grace.

He had everything but set it aside to become poor for our sakes. He took our debt and paid it with His life. He became what we are, poor, in order for us to become what He is, rich. That is grace.

Paul will tell the church in Rome that through the grace of Christ, by becoming part of His family we become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

**(Romans 8:17)**

Someone who knew the tremendous reach of grace was John Newton, author of *Amazing Grace*. That hymn is THE most often requested song at traditional funerals, yet how many people hear the

lyrics but choose to live outside the grace of Christ? The hymn clearly speaks to our salvation, our sanctification, and our sufficiency.

When John Newton wrote the lyrics, he well understood who he was before he was saved and who he had become after he had been saved. He knew what he deserved but was eternally grateful for the grace he was given. His mother was a godly woman who taught him Scripture at an early age, but died when he was seven years old. By the age of 11 he spent time with his father on the seas. Something about the sea drew him and the lure of temptation took him further from the Christian roots of his mother and deeper into sin. At 18 he was pressed into serving in the British Navy, but in time deserted his post and was captured. For two days he sat in suspense of what might happen to him and during that time wavered between committing murder and suicide. He wrote later that he was capable of doing anything. After two days of uncertainty, he was flogged and placed on a passing slave ship. Robert Morgan describes Newton's life as one filled with "voyages, dangers, toils, and snares. It was a life unrivaled in fiction." The attraction of the lucrative slave trade kept him on the seas. On March 9, 1748, the 23-year-old was jolted from sleep when a violent storm descended suddenly catching the crew off guard. It was the next day that he cried out to the Lord in great peril. For the rest of his life, every year on the date of his salvation, he celebrated his conversion and spiritual transformation with prayer.

In reflection on his life before Christ and the transformation that came because of Christ, he wrote his hymn that has left its mark on believers spanning 2 ½ centuries.

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost but now am found;  
Was blind but now I see.

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Based on what we said about our sin nature and what judgment I should receive, I am no better deserving of grace than anyone else.

John Newton was talking to a man about Heaven. His listener was an unbeliever and decided that he'd have a little fun with the preacher. So he asked Newton to describe something that he thought would surprise him when he got there. He replied that the three greatest wonders of Heaven will be these: The first will be to see many people there whom I didn't expect to see. The second will be not to find many church-goers whom I did expect to see. And the third and greatest of all will be to find myself there, knowing what I know of the wickedness of my own heart.

So when you think of the sufficiency of grace in salvation remember that:

No one is beyond the reach of grace.

No one is beyond the grip of grace.

Grace not only saves you, it holds you.

Grace gives you a second and third and fourth chance.

When it comes to salvation, you lack nothing His grace can't give you.

When we really stop and think about what we have been saved from, it is truly amazing grace.

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,  
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt,  
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,  
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.

It is grace that pardons and cleanses within!

It is grace that is greater than all our sin!

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**Romans 5:20 "Where sin abounds, grace did much more abound."**

His grace is sufficient to cover all our sins. Our sin will never overcome His grace.

The gospel is the good news of God's grace. When we have a better understanding of what grace is, we will have a better understanding of what grace does in saving us from our sin and giving us a home in heaven.

Max Lucado begins his book In the Grip of Grace with the following excerpt explaining that the only qualification for writing a book on grace was the

clothing he wore and then explains: "For years I owned an elegant suit complete with coat, trousers, even a hat. I considered myself quite dapper in the outfit and was confident others agreed.

The pants were cut from the cloth of my good works, sturdy fabric of deeds done and projects completed. Some studies here, some sermons there. Many people complimented my trousers, and I confess, I tended to hitch them up in public so people would notice them.

The coat was equally impressive. It was woven together from my convictions. Each day I dressed myself in deep feelings of religious fervor. My emotions were quite strong. So strong, in fact, that I was often asked to model my cloak of zeal in public gatherings to inspire others. Of course I was happy to comply.

While there I'd also display my hat, a feathered cap of knowledge. Formed with my own hands from the fabric of personal opinion, I wore it proudly.

Surely God is impressed with my garments, I often thought. Occasionally I strutted into his presence so he could compliment the self-tailored wear. He never spoke. His silence must mean admiration, I convinced myself.

But then my wardrobe began to suffer. The fabric of my trousers grew thin. My best works started coming unstitched. I began leaving more undone than done, and what little I did was nothing to boast about.

No problem, I thought. I'll work harder. But working harder was a problem. There was a hole in my coat of convictions. My resolve was threadbare. A cold wind cut into my chest. I reached up to pull my hat down firmly, and the brim ripped off in my hands.

Over a period of a few months, my wardrobe of self-righteousness completely unraveled. I went from tailored gentlemen's apparel to beggars' rags. Fearful that God might be angry at my tattered suit, I did my best to stitch it together and cover my mistakes. But the cloth was so worn. And the wind



was so icy. I gave up. I went back to God. (Where else could I go?)

On a wintry Thursday afternoon, I stepped into his presence, not for applause, but for warmth. My prayer was feeble.

‘I feel naked.’

‘You are. And you have been for a long time.’

What he did next I’ll never forget. ‘I have something to give,’ he said. He gently removed the remaining threads and then picked up a robe, a regal robe, the clothing of his own goodness. He wrapped it around my shoulders. His words to me were tender. ‘My son, you are now clothed with Christ.’

Though I’d sung the hymn a thousand times, I finally understood it:

**Dressed in his righteousness alone,  
Faultless to stand before the throne.**

I have a hunch that some of you know what I’m talking about. You’re wearing a handmade wardrobe yourself. You’ve sewn your garments, and you’re sporting your religious deeds...and, already, you’ve noticed a tear in the fabric. Before you start stitching yourself together, I’d like to share some thoughts with you on the greatest discovery of my life: the grace of God.”

My guess is that we have all at one time or another, worn a similar suit of self-righteousness. We’ve tried it on for a time thinking it fit nicely as we wear clothes of our own making only to find that it is just a cheap imitation and it is only by grace that we are saved, not by anything we could ever do.” Are you tired of trying to pursue salvation on your own? It will never be sufficient. But the grace of Jesus Christ is always sufficient for what you need to be saved.

Now the great thing about grace isn’t just that it gets us in the door of heaven in the life to come, it helps us here on earth in the life we live now. There is sufficiency in grace for sanctification.

## II. THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST IN SANCTIFICATION

The lyrics of John Newton again help us.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares  
I have already come.

‘Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.

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Paul implies grace in sanctification when he writes: **“being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ.” (Philippians 1:6)**

Let’s look at an example of the Lord’s grace.

### **Luke 22:24-34**

Jesus is with His disciples in the upper room on the eve of His betrayal and crucifixion. He has given the ordinance of communion which was to continued until He returns. He has said someone in their group will betray Him and they wondered who among them would stoop so low as to betray their master and teacher. He also challenged their self-centered hearts when they dispute about who would be considered the greatest.

Then Jesus declares that Satan has asked to sift Peter like wheat. In other words, he wanted to test Peter’s faith. But Jesus reassured the disciple that He had prayed so that his faith wouldn’t fail. He would falter but Jesus encouraged Peter that when he returned he was to strengthen his brothers.

In Peter fashion, full of his own self he protested that he would never do such a thing. He was ready to go to prison and even die for Christ. But Christ said that no matter what Peter thought of Himself, his spiritual pride would falter and he would deny the Lord not once, but three times. In one of the other accounts, Peter said that even though everyone else falls away, he would remain faithful.

As we read the account of Jesus’s arrest, we find that Peter disobeyed the Lord. Peter said he would go anywhere for Jesus. Jesus told Peter that where He went Peter couldn’t follow right then. After the arrest, Peter followed from a distance and then was found warming himself around a fire. Not once, not twice, but three times with greater degree Peter denied knowing Christ. At that moment the rooster

crowded. As Jesus was being led out, all He had to do was look at Peter.

Now turn to **John 21:15-22**. It is here that we witness the grace of Jesus toward Peter.

Anne Lamott wrote **“I do not at all understand the mystery of grace – only that it meets us where we are but does not leave us where it found us.”**

Kate Etue adds **“Grace is the voice that calls us to change and then enables us to yield to its transforming power.”**

Jesus had built a little fire and sat cooking some fish for the 11 disciples. We aren't told where they sat, but I wonder if Peter sat by himself away from the Lord, too ashamed and guilty to look Him in the eye, wondering what might be said. We can well understand if Peter was a bit anxious when Jesus invited the disciple to come and join Him by the fire or maybe it was Jesus who got up and went to Peter. Three times the Lord asked Peter if he loved Him. Here is grace revealed and grace received.

Jesus loved Peter where he was at, but didn't want to leave him there.

The grace of Jesus restores us when we have fallen and guides us in our walk with Christ. Grace enables us to be transformed through the empowering work of the Holy Spirit.

The psalmist understood this restoration when he wrote **“The Lord is my Shepherd...He restores my soul.” (Psalm 23:3)**

When we have fallen away from sin, He is there ready to receive us and return us to our former position.

**Luke 15:11-24** (Prodigal son)

Mercy withheld what the son should have been given by the father. Grace restored to him what he didn't deserve. **“But where sin increased, grace increased all the more.”**

**I Peter 5:10 “And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself**

**restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”**

I find it incredibly comforting that in His grace, that it is the God of all grace who comes and restores us and helps us to keep growing in sanctification.

Let me close with this final thought about the sufficiency of grace. It is always sufficient in our suffering.

### **III. THE SUFFICIENCY OF GRACE IN SUFFERING – II Corinthians 12:7-10**

Marsha Snell Nicholson stated that **“God never gives a thorn without this added grace, He takes the thorn to pin aside the veil which hides His face.” Isaiah 30:19 “Cry for help and you'll find it's grace and more grace. The moment He hears, He'll answer.”** (The Message)

The old spiritual born out of the era of slavery encourages us with the grace of Jesus in the face of suffering and the sufficiency of His grace to meet that suffering.

**Nobody knows the trouble I've seen,  
Nobody knows but Jesus.**

What are you going through right now that can only be met with the grace of Jesus?

Maybe you have tried your own way and found yourself floundering.

His grace is always sufficient for what you need right when we need. As Paul said, His grace is sufficient for me and continued by noting that it is when I admit my weakness if what I am going through, that is when I find His strength to be sufficient, it will never run out.

A number of years ago, we were driving and the car made a ding. The display screen on the dashboard indicated that we were low on fuel. Now what you need to understand is that in Robyn's previous car she was told you could go another 20 miles or so before requiring a gas station. Well, she assumed that the Terraza could go the same distance, so she kept driving. We came to an intersection and the car ran out of gas. On the corner was a gas station but we had insufficient gas to get us another 100 feet. .

We'll never have enough to get us through our struggles on our own, the grace of Christ is sufficient.

Grace while unmerited is unlimited.  
Grace while unmerited is unchanging.  
Grace while unmerited is unfathomable.

Our own efforts won't get us to where we need to go. Grace is sufficient for whatever we need. In this case sufficient doesn't mean just enough, it means more than enough. It's what you need in the moment.

Lewis Smedes writes that "Grace is the gift of feeling sure that our future, even our dying, is going to turn out more splendidly than we dare imagine."

John Stott says that "Grace is God loving, God stooping, God coming to the rescue, God giving Himself generously in and through Jesus Christ."