

Text: [II Corinthians 12:8-10](#)

Topic: Beyond Our Limits

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Proposition:

When we reach the point in our Christian journey where we find it difficult being faithful to God's will we can depend on God's grace to give us enabling power.

Antithesis:

One day I was driving down a two lane country road in Mississippi, on my way to a meeting, when I encountered a sign that said "Road Closed, Bridge Out." When I read the sign I experienced a little frustration because if the bridge was not out I could cross over and be very close to my destination. Because I had reached the physical limitations of that road I had to turn around and find another road in order to reach my destination.

As I thought about that situation I started thinking about how this situation often mirrors life. The truth of the matter is that often on life's journey there are times when we reach a point of personal limitation and have to make adjustment and making those adjustments can sometimes be very difficult for us.

For example as members of the Christian community of faith God's Word teaches about a standard of life that we are to practice every day. We are called to demonstrate the transforming power of God in our lives every day as a part of our on going process of Christian maturity through intentional faith development. When we read [Galatians 5:22](#), we see that the evidence of Christian maturity is how the Holy Spirit transforms our lives.

Such a standard of living is most favorable until it challenges or offends our sensibilities or challenges our reasoning, or requires a sacrifice that our flesh won't surrender.

When this happens and our faithful obedience to the standards of the Gospel of Jesus Christ can seem hard and uncomfortable. For example, when it requires us to:

- [Give faithfully and generously](#)
- [Love the unlovable unconditionally](#)
- [Have faith in the storms of life](#)
- [Trust God When...](#)

It is during these and other times weakness, vulnerabilities and limitations can become most apparent.

The true test of Christian Character is evident:

- When we can be kind to people who say wicked things about you.
- When you can demonstrate the Radical Hospitality of the Good Samaritan with love and compassion.

- It is best demonstrated when you remain faithful to God even when your family and friends want to follow a path that isn't God's way.
- It is best demonstrated when you remain faithful to God even when you are doubtful or when your reasoning and analytical skills cause you to doubt faith

The relevant question for many people is: How can we strive to reach the standard of life God desires for us when for whatever reason we reach a point of limitation that hinders our faith, growth and service as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

The Answer: Know and believe that God's Grace is sufficient in your situation.

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Thesis:

Up to this point in our text The Apostle Paul was in a battle. He was in a battle with his opponents in Corinth. He had encountered people who challenged his authority and his ability as an Apostle.

When his opponents had compared him to other Apostles of his day they found Paul to be weak and inadequate. Yet Paul was unwilling to go tit for tat with his opponents by pointing out all of his strengths. Paul decided that he would talk about his weakness because it was in weakness that God strength was best demonstrated in his life.

That's when Paul told the Corinthians when he talked about the thorn in his flesh. He told the Corinthians how he had been given a thorn in his flesh by Satan. It was Paul's testimony that this happened so that he would remain humble in terms of his gifts of ministry.

Paul said that he asked God to remove a thorn in his flesh three times only to hear the Lord say **"My grace is sufficient."**

When Paul acknowledged his weakness and personal limitations and prayer about it he learned that the sufficiency of grace was the enabling power in his life that gave him the strength and power to go beyond his limits.

Celebration:

That is a good word today because every time we come to a point on the road of life where the bridge and the road is closed down and we are unable to go any further if we acknowledge our weakness and limitations before God in prayer we too will discover that God's grace is sufficient.

This very much consistent with what happened on Calvary. Jesus suffered bled and died in his human weakness so that the power of God could beat the forces of sin and save humanity.

The sufficient grace that Paul is talking about will take us beyond our limits because it is a sustaining and sanctifying grace that nurtures us in our Christian experience.

Sufficient: *adequate, enough, satisfactory, necessary, appropriate, ample, plenty, abundant.*

When you consider and use these terms in the context of sufficient grace as used by Jesus with Paul is clear what Jesus was saying to Paul and to all of us live by the Word of God.

My paraphrase: I am not going to move this thorn from you flesh because there is enough of my GRACE to help you deal with and overcome the thorn that is buffeting you

Buffeting - *hitting something repeatedly and with great force*

Despite our weakness, sufficient grace allows us to see the God's power at work in us: and have greater confidence that we can go beyond our personal limits because of our ongoing relationship with God.

When we are at the point of our limit and find it most difficult to move forward in obedience to God's will for us God's grace comes to us in abundant supply.

- Perhaps in the encouraging words of someone who speaks to us, perhaps in a song we sing or hear. For example I was singing deep in sin far from the peaceful shore ... When nothing else could help love lifted me."
- Perhaps in a scripture like the, 23rd Psalms. The Lord Is My Shepherd...
- Sometimes it could come in a sermon
- In a prayer you prayed or you heard someone else pray.
- Through a miraculous or unexpected event in your life that you know could only be God's doing.
- It can come in acts of healing and forgiveness.

In Psalms 94 the Psalmist seems to have reached his limit because his sufferings and persecution. Yet listen to his testimony:

¹⁶ Who will protect me from the wicked? Who will stand up for me against evildoers? ¹⁷ Unless the LORD had helped me, I would soon have settled in the silence of the grave. ¹⁸ I cried out, "I am slipping!" but your unfailing love, O LORD, supported me. Psalm 94:16-18 (NLT)

Application:

Someone might ask how this enabling power can work for me in my situation.

- 1) Just know and believe that God can make you strong when you are weak.
- 2) Remain faithful to God in your spirit especially when your flesh is weak.
- 3) Always remember that God's grace is the result of his unmerited love for you and not the result of anything you do for him.

This was is a message of Hope, Deliverance and Victory, Just for You!!!