

When There Isn't Enough, Grace Is

2 Cor 12:9 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.

I. Introduction

1. I shared on Wednesday's devotion about a burned-over mountain visible from our condo in Gatlinburg.
2. In late November 2016, there was a fire around Gatlinburg that came to be known as the Chimney Tops 2 Fire. It caused 14 deaths and destroyed 2,460 structures. ¹[images: **Gatlinburg fire; Gatlinburg mountain 2; Gatlinburg mountain 3**]
3. This area that once was consumed by a raging forest fire, leaving this area looking like a lost cause, eventually rose from the ashes and is becoming renewed with new greenery re-growing there and new buildings rising all around.
4. The fact is that a burned over forest comes back very strong because **within the ashes of destruction are the elements needed to produce new life.**
5. In the past few weeks we have been teaching on the idea that the place where God puts His name is a special place. When God puts His name over a place, that place becomes a place where His name is honored, where He is worshiped, and where His Word or commands rule.
6. It began as a city where God placed His name, and we spoke about Jerusalem where Solomon's temple was built.
7. And with the building of the temple in Jerusalem, it became that special place where God placed His name, and with that, came special promises, that even if the children of God backslid and denied that name, if they turned back to God in repentance, God's mercy would find them and draw them back into relationship with Him.
8. Today we will take another look at how that powerful mercy did that very thing for the people and the city of Jerusalem.
9. But God's purpose was not only to place His name over a city. He wanted to place His name upon people.
10. When a person calls on the name of the Lord to be saved, and when the name of Jesus Christ is called over that person at their baptism, 3 things happen:
 - a. God's name is placed on the person;
 - b. the blood of Jesus is applied to that person's soul and spirit; and
 - c. that person's sins are washed away.
11. And this is not just theology to discuss, but something to live by on a daily basis.
12. Like we mentioned last week in the message: Crisis, Meet Grace. The point of that message is that grace, one of the blessings that comes with having the name of God upon you, will keep you.

¹ <https://wildfiretoday.com/2016/12/07/two-juveniles-charged-with-starting-fire-that-burned-into-gatlinburg/>

13. This is the application we used last week:
The grace of life gives a hidden glow, strength, and insulation that will lead you through the crisis until you come out of the crisis.
14. The grace of life covers our marriages which has the power to carry us through any crisis. A marriage on the brink of collapse can rise up stronger as they lean on the grace of life
15. Grace covers our families and has the power to sustain us as a family whatever trial comes our way. A family fraught with relationship strife can come through to peace by trusting in God's grace.
16. Grace will keep us through whatever personal crisis that we have to face, whether it is job loss, sickness, disease, accident, or false accusations, God's grace can provide you with both the strength and insulation, by His favor on you, to lead you through and out of crisis.
17. So we need to declare to our crisis, Crisis, Meet Grace!
18. Grace is a benefit of having the name of the God placed upon us.
19. Today, I want to take this thought a little deeper in this message: **When there isn't enough, Grace is.**

II. The temple

A. Jeremiah's promise of restoration

1. Let us begin with looking back at a time and place where grace, like a buried seed, sprouted up many years later with hope.
2. The prophet Jeremiah had predicted that there would be a period of 70 years of judgment on Jerusalem. (Jeremiah 29:10), and in 586 BC, the temple was burned to the ground by Babylonian soldiers.
3. But sown in the ashes of the temple were the seeds of grace, because that was a place where God put His name.
4. And God had promised that when His people humbled themselves and turned from their wicked ways, they could see restoration.
5. So around 70 years later, the prophet Daniel, after reading the word of Jeremiah, prayed a prayer of repentance. You can read the entire prayer in Daniel 9. It starts this way:
Dan 9:2-4
*2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to **Jeremiah** the prophet, that he would accomplish **seventy years in the desolations** of Jerusalem.*
3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:
4 And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;
6. Following Daniel's prayer, one of his contemporaries, Ezra, also relied on Jeremiah's promise.
7. You see, when the seeds of grace are planted, there will be a reaping of a harvest when the season and conditions are right.

- B. Beginning of the restoration
1. Notice how the word of the Lord came to pass 70 years later. The temple was burned down in 586 BC as we mentioned, and 70 years later in 516 BC, it was rebuilt.
 2. God did an unlikely thing and stirred up the king of Persia to fulfil His promise:
Ezra 1:1-2
*1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, **the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,***
*2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and **he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.***
 3. The process began under King Cyrus and continued under King Darius who affirmed Cyrus's order to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.
 4. But it is important to note, some of the enemies of grace rose up and tried to stop the rebuilding of the temple that Ezra began.
 5. But where grace has been planted, where the name of the Lord has been placed, redemption will come.
 6. King Darius reaffirmed the order by Cyrus, but notice how he put it:
Ezra 6:7-8, 12
*7 **Let the work of this house of God alone;** let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews **build this house of God** in his place.*
*8 Moreover I made a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith **expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered.***
...
*12 **And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all kings and people, that shall put to their hand to alter and to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed.***
 7. It doesn't matter who tries to stop grace, if someone continues to lean on God's grace, it will be enough to take you from fire to restoration!
- C. It isn't what it was, but it is what it is.
1. I want to point out another truth to how grace works, by even looking at our times.
 2. Here we are, still in the middle of a pandemic, and as of July 17, the number of positive cases confirmed in Indiana was at its second highest peak (854) following the highest level we saw on April 26 (946), so our state continues to trend gradually upward in the spread of the virus.
 3. Yet even in the midst of this, we are able to come together here to worship the Lord.
 4. We have found that it is possible, even though we are exercising precautions in our gatherings that make it different than it was before, we can still worship.
 5. Some might complain that it is not like it used to be. And with these restrictions, masks on, not shaking hands, not hugging, keeping distance, this feels different than it used to be.

6. And some of us are just glad we can even gather at all in the middle of a spreading pandemic. And using cautions, we are presently able to continue.
 7. **It isn't what it was, but it is what it is.**
 8. The people of Ezra's day had a similar experience when they were able to regather in Jerusalem to rebuild the temple.
 9. After years of not "having church" in Jerusalem, they were able to regather and restart. But it was different. Let's read about it:
Ezra 3:10-13
*10 And when the builders **laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD**, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel.*
*11 And **they sang** together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the **people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.***
 10. Everything wasn't the same as it was before, but it was still a day of rejoicing because the foundation was in place!
 11. But some of the elders wept at the sight, perhaps remembering the glory of the earlier days:
*12 But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were **ancient men, that had seen the first house**, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, **wept with a loud voice**; and many shouted aloud for joy:*
13 So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.
 12. Perhaps they were weeping in joy, perhaps they were weeping in sadness that it wasn't like what it used to be.
 13. **It isn't what it was, but it is what it is.**
 14. And that is enough to shout about! Why? Grace has brought us to this place.
- III. Grace is sufficient
- A. Out of comfort zone
 1. I want to close on the thought that our title points to. **When there isn't enough, grace is.**
 2. We all have a comfort zone that we wish to live in, and would stay there all the time if we could, but that is not always possible.
 3. Quite often, God pushes us out of our comfort zone so that we can discover more of Him, and enjoy a greater reliance on Him.
 4. While we are in a comfortable spot, we are less likely to venture into greater and deeper experiences in God.
 5. We spoke about this in our Bible study on "What is Worship?" on July 8.
 6. We are comfortable wading into waters that are ankle-deep because we can totally control our movements.

7. But getting into waters to swim in is less comfortable because we can get into a place where we are driven not by our will but by the current.
 8. But there in the deep is often where learn the deepest truths and our reliance on God is the greatest.
 9. And may I say to you, we **are** in deep waters, but there is a current there called grace.
- B. Sufficient grace
1. Let us look at how that worked for the Apostle Paul.
 2. He had been mightily used by God through many notable miracles and revelations. So it would have been easy for Him to get comfortable and feel a sense of exaltation about his position with God.
 3. But God had better things in mind for Paul. Better things in the form of a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of satan who buffeted him:
2 Cor 12:7-10
*7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to **buffet** me, lest I should be exalted above measure.*
 4. The word buffet literally means to strike with the knuckles or closed fist. It is how Jesus was beat prior to His crucifixion.
 5. He said this thorn in his flesh was a messenger of satan that was beating on him. In the next verses he describes it as a weakness or infirmity that he asked God to remove three times:
8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.
 6. Paul records how God answered that prayer for deliverance:
*9 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.*
 7. Paul did not get what he asked, but what he got was sufficient grace, and grace was enough. He received enough grace to be content with given the circumstances.
 8. **There wasn't enough of what he wanted, but there was enough grace.**
 9. So when there isn't enough of what you want where you are at present, there is enough grace to get you through.
 10. Grace is that inner glow that gives just enough strength, just enough favor to get you through the fire until full restoration comes.
 11. But that is when grace comes: during our weaknesses, during our infirmities, during our distresses.
 12. So can we take pleasure when those times come? Yes. Because grace is there with you:
*10 Therefore I **take pleasure** in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for **when I am weak, then am I strong.***
 13. Grace is like an asbestos suit that allows us to make it through the fire.
 14. And grace is sufficient!
- IV. Conclusion

1. In closing, I want to point out one building complex that we saw from the Ober Gatlinburg aerial tram. It once was a large and beautiful structure that as of last week was still a burned-out shambles. **[Gatlinburg mountain_4 uninsured building]**
2. Someone in the tram asked the guide about the structure. She said it was once a nice resort but because it was uninsured, it was abandoned and never rebuilt.
3. How tragic that something that was once of such value was left to decay and crumble.
4. But when there is **no insurance**, or maybe **not enough insurance**, there is no **assurance** of restoration.
5. That is the life of those who try to live outside of God's grace.
6. And the tragedy is that it is much worse than just turmoil here on this earth. Because we are saved by God's grace, what do you think is the eternal future of someone who rejects God's grace? This passage describes it:
Heb 10:27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.
7. But God has not appointed us to wrath, but glory, when we are living under His grace.
Rom 5:1-2
*5 Therefore being justified by faith, we have **peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ:*
*2 By whom also **we have access by faith into this grace** wherein we **stand**, and **rejoice** in hope of the glory of God.*
8. *1 Peter 5:10 But the **God of all grace**, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*
9. When there isn't enough, Grace is!