

“UNDERSTANDING GOD’S SUSTAINING GRACE”
2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-10

NOTE: Recently we began a series entitled **“AN ADMONITION FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH”** taken from 2 Peter 3:17,18. Those two verses are located at the end of a chapter where the Holy Spirit led the Apostle Peter to correct errors that some were teaching about the return of Christ. Thus, in order for believers to be correct on all things regarding the return of Christ, the Holy Spirit, through Peter gives us **TWO ADMONITIONS** to apply:

- **AN ADMONITION TO GROW IN THE GRACE OF CHRIST – 18A.**
- **AN ADMONITION TO GROW IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST – 18B.**

During our last study we focused on **GROWING IN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF GOD’S SAVING GRACE** and today we want to continue by studying about **GROWING IN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF GOD’S SUSTAINING GRACE.**

OBSERVATION: THE GRACE BY WHICH GOD SAVES US IS THE SAME GRACE BY WHICH GOD SUSTAINS US THROUGHOUT THE ISSUES OF LIFE.

OBSERVATION: THOUGH EVERY BORN AGAIN BELIEVER IS A RECIPIENT OF GOD’S WONDERFUL GRACE, MANY BORN AGAIN BELIEVERS FAIL TO ENDEAVOR TO LEARN ABOUT GOD’S GRACE...WHICH IS WHY THIS ADMONITION IS GIVEN TO US IN 2 PETER 3:17,18. TODAY WE ARE GOING TO FOCUS ON UNDERSTANDING THE “SUSTAINING GRACE OF GOD” THAT IS SO SIGNIFICANT IN OUR VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING.

QUESTION: WHAT IS GOD’S SUSTAINING GRACE?

- **GOD’S SUSTAINING GRACE IS HIS UNMERRITED FAVOR IN GRANTING BORN AGAIN BELIEVERS ALL OF THE WISDOM, STRENGTH AND DIRECTION THAT IS NEEDED TO FACE EVERY TRIAL, TEMPTATION AND SITUATION OF LIFE!**
- **NO CHRISTIAN CAN LIVE THE VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE WITHOUT GOD’S SUSTAINING GRACE!**
- **EVERY CHRISTIAN CAN AND WILL LIVE THE VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE WITH GOD’S SUSTAINING GRACE!**

ENCOURAGEMENT: GOD’S SUSTAINING GRACE PROVIDES THE SUFFICIENCY AND THE STRENGTH WE NEED IN FACING EVERY WEAKNESS AND CIRCUMSTANCE OF LIFE AS SEEN IN 2 CORINTHIANS 12.

A LESSON ON GOD’S SUSTAINING GRACE

NOTE: In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul is giving a personal testimony on how God sustained him while facing a tremendous **LIFE DOMINATING PROBLEM** which is very applicable to every Christian today.

I. THE ABUNDANCE OF REVELATIONS – VSS. 1-5

A. When were the Revelations Given? Vs. 2a

-Fourteen years before Paul wrote this text (Vs. 2). Paul wrote this text in 60 AD. And so, the revelations came in 46 AD around the end of the FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY and Jerusalem Council in Acts 15.

B. Where were the Revelations Seen? Vs. 2b

-The Third Heaven, which is the dwelling place of God (**PARADISE**)

- The first heaven is the clouds around the earth.
- The second heaven is the stars and planets of the universe.
- The third heaven is the abode of God.

C. What were the Revelations? Vs. 4

-We do **NOT** know as it was unlawful for Paul to tell them.

II. THE THORN IN THE FLESH – VSS. 6-8

A. Why was the Thorn in the Flesh Given? Vs. 7a

-To keep Paul from exalting himself.

B. What was the Thorn in the Flesh? Vs. 7b

-We do not know though many have speculated. The text does give us an indication. IT WAS A MESSENGER OF SATAN...A DEMON TO BUFFET PAUL.

1. The word **“MESSENGER”** is **“ANGELOS”** which most of the time in the NT refers to an angel, as the messenger of God.

2. But this **“MESSENGER”** was from **SATAN** which means it was a demon that was sent to buffet Paul in the flesh. (Thorn/Stake)

a. This **“MESSENGER”** could have affected Paul with a physical issue.

b. This **“MESSENGER”** could have affected Paul in his sinful flesh.

C. What did Paul Do? Vs. 8

-He prayed **THREE TIMES** that God would remove it. **God did not do so.** This compares to Jesus praying **THREE TIMES** in the Garden of Gethsemane to remove the cup of suffering from Him in Mark 14:32-41. **God did not do so.**

III. THE GRACE OF GOD – VSS. 9,10

A. What did God Do? Vs. 9a

-Though God did not remove the THORN, He gave Paul something to face the THORN which was better...**HIS ALL-POWERFUL, SUFFICIENT GRACE!**

B. What did Paul Do? Vs. 9b,10

-He **REJOICED, GLORIFIED and TOOK PLEASURE** in his infirmities knowing that **GOD WOULD GIVE HIS SUSTAINING GRACE.**

A SURE REALITY – THE GREATER THE ISSUE, THE GREATER THE GRACE!

IV. THE EFFECT OF GOD’S GRACE

A. Through Grace, God provides strength in our weakness.

B. Through Grace, God provides enablement for our victory.

LESSON/APPLICATION

1) God’s Sustaining Grace is HERE for us too.

2) How do we experience God’s Sustaining Grace?

-By Humbling before God consistently – James 4:6

-By Going to God Immediately as the issue arises.

-By Taking God at His Word – Hebrews 4:16

-By Trusting God to Work – KNOWING THAT HE WILL GIVE HIS GRACE.