

The Sufficiency Quotient

Some things in life just don't seem to add up. For instance, why good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to good people. At work in the lives of God's people, however, is a powerful formula we call the sufficiency quotient, our focus in today's Templates of Truth.

The Apostle Paul had an extraordinary experience – one that was, literally, out of the body! He was *caught up* (II Corinthians 12:4), which means to be suddenly snatched away. That is the same word that Paul uses in I Thessalonians 4:17, to describe what happens to believers in that event we refer to as the Rapture – the sudden snatching away of the church into heaven. That is exactly where Paul was snatched away to in this experience – *caught up into Paradise* (the place where God abides). In this earthly realm, we simply cannot fathom the depth of such an experience. In fact, Paul confesses – *(I) heard inexpressible words which a man is not permitted to speak*. No human language could adequately describe the heavenly things Paul witnessed in this out-of-the-body experience. Even if words could be found, Paul assumed a divine restriction not to utter them.

Imagine for just a moment the amazing effect such an experience would have on you or me. If we are honest, we will admit that our sense of divine favor would be rather significantly puffed up. That was Paul's take on it – *because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations...to keep me from exalting myself...*(12:7). Paul recognized that he could easily see himself as God's special pet because he was made privy to something only a very select few were ever allowed. To keep that from happening, Paul concluded – *there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me – to keep me from exalting myself!* (12:7). Scholars have speculated for centuries what this thorn was, but the bottom line is, we simply don't know. The common assumption is that it was some form of constant attack that resulted in physical affliction to Paul's body.

Paul asked God on three occasions to remove this thorn. Rather than do things the way Paul wanted them done, God did things according to His divine nature and plan. In case you missed that point - God doesn't always fix things the way we want Him to. The answer God gave to Paul must not slip our insight – *“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.”* (12:9). Just because God doesn't fix things the way we want Him to doesn't mean that God doesn't fix things. He always has a perfect and complete method for the way in which He operates in our lives.

The factors in Paul's sufficiency quotient are worth noting. First, life is good! WOW – imagine being zapped up for a glimpse into Paradise! But then, *snap*, life just changed! Enter the thorn. “What's this? You take me to heaven only to bring me back down to earth and afflict me with this? Not fair, God! Take it away please...please...pretty please?” Then resting to the right of the next plus sign is a negative value - life is now dramatically different! “How can this be? What am I going to do now? How can I deal with this?” The key factor in many formulas

is what is known as the primer. It is the cipher key that defines the equation or breaks the code. It is the one prime variable that leads to and justifies the quotient – different is good! It is still different, but different is good because of the primer – *God's grace!* That results in *sufficiency*, a Greek word meaning “enough to the point of satisfaction and contentment.” Removing the thorn is the easy solution. Being satisfied and content in spite of the thorn is the miraculous solution, as miraculous, in fact, as being zapped into Paradise. For the believer, it is the sufficiency quotient.

What life-altering condition are you being forced to live with today? What have you prayed for God to remove or change and, so far, nothing has happened? Is it pain, loneliness, financial loss, your health, a bad relationship or an intolerable job situation? What is easier for God to do, deliver you from those circumstances or give you the supernatural power to remain in them and still be satisfied & content? What makes you the stronger person, the first option or the second? God told Paul, “*Power is perfected in weakness.*” (12:9). It is possible, because *God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed* (II Corinthians 9:8).

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.

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