

Deficiencies and Difficulties

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#0190

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—November 10, 1978

Our text this evening is found in 2 Corinthians 3:5; in fact, it's not even the whole verse, it's just the last five words of the verse. I like short texts sometimes, and this one tells us exactly what we want to study about for the next little while.

“...our sufficiency is of God” 2 Corinthians 3:5.

What I want to study with you tonight is deficiency and sufficiency. Our sufficiency is from God. In other words, any sufficiency we have, any adequacy, any qualifications we have for our job or meeting our problems, it is from whom? It is from God.

Now I'm very happy as I come to you tonight because I know that somebody is going to leave this chapel tonight far richer than when you came in. And thank God this doesn't mean some raffle or bingo game; no, nothing remotely like that. I hope that you can be one of those that go out of here so much richer than you came in.

They say a man is as young as he feels. A man may be as rich as he feels, provided that the feeling is based on fact. I've seen people who thought they were very rich, but they only had some Ethel alcohol in their veins. I don't recommend that method of feeling rich. But to become aware of the riches which one has, and to find out how wealthy we are as the King's children, this is indeed a wonderful experience. Our sufficiency is of God.

The wealth we're studying tonight while it's not confined to money, infinitely more it includes money, but money really is becoming less and less a solution to human problems, do you agree with me? One reason is because money is getting of less value all the time. But the other reason is that the problems that are affecting and afflicting human beings are more and more problems that money has little and in many cases nothing to do with. But thank God we have in *Him* the solution to every problem, the answer to every question. Our sufficiency is of God.

Now, in the same book 2 Corinthians 12:9, we hear Jesus speaking to the apostle Paul, and He tells him where the sufficiency comes from, what it's wrapped up in:

“And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee”
2 Corinthians 12:9.

What is the source of our sufficiency? God's grace. That means His love expressed to undeserving beings. God doesn't give the angels in Heaven grace. They don't need it; they've never sinned. But you and I as sinners need grace—God's favor, His love, something that we don't deserve, but which we need oh, so much. And He says: "My grace is sufficient."

"...My grace is sufficient for thee for my strength is made perfect in weakness" 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Another translation reads, "My grace is all you need." Still another translation says, "My grace is enough for you; my power is at its best in weakness."

This is the thing I'm anxious that God shall impress our hearts with tonight—that our inadequacy in no way limits God. My strength is made perfect in what? In weakness. So do we have deficiencies? He has sufficiency more than enough to *match* it. And it's impossible for you to bring to God a deficiency so great that He can't more than make it up. That's true in any life, in everybody. So Paul says:

"Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities,
that the power of Christ may rest upon me"
2 Corinthians 12:9.

Now, we come to the bright star of the evening—2 Corinthians 9:8. In fact, it's more than a star, it's a whole constellation. See if you don't agree with me:

"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you;
that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may
abound to every good work" 2 Corinthians 9:8.

Looks like Paul went out of his way to get the words that would express the largest concepts. And the Holy Spirit inspired him to do this in this verse. I want you to think of these various dimensions. Take that word "always." What does that mean? There's never any time when it isn't so. Look ahead of you—tomorrow, next week, next month and next year—*always*.

We're to take the breadth: "In all things"—no limit. Look where you will on the right or the left, and there's no problem that can come to you physical, spiritual, financial, social, any problem—"In all things." Then think of the height of this statement: "Having all sufficiency." Higher than human thoughts can reach, there we are. Looking ahead, there's no limit. Looking to the side on either side there's no limit. We can advance on as wide a front as we choose. And looking above there is no limit. Infinite. Why? Because of that expression, "all grace." And God's all grace has a lot. There's no limit.

So, because of God's infinite grace, we cannot exhaust our resources in time, in space, looking ahead, looking to one side or the other, or looking above and beyond—Infinite grace. As one translation puts it, "There is no limit to the blessings which God can send you."

With this, I will read *Volume 6*, page 467:

“We may draw upon His fullness and receive of that grace which has no limit” *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 6*, page 467.

The sum of the last two words, will you repeat them with me? “No limit.” Let me read the paragraph that these two words climax:

“Workers for Christ are never to think, much less to speak, of failure in their work. The Lord Jesus is our efficiency in all things; His Spirit is to be our inspiration; and as we place ourselves in His hands, to be channels of light, our means of doing good will never be exhausted. We may draw upon His fullness and receive of that grace which has no limit” *Ibid*.

Did you ever hear of a man, a representative of some company, that has a drawing account? What does that mean? He’s out on business for the company, and he can draw on his drawing account. How much? Whatever he needs. What a shame to go around unable to meet our possibilities, our opportunities, because we’re not making use of our drawing account. We may draw upon His fullness and receive of that grace which has no limit.

Dear friends, let us praise God from whom all blessings flow. What do you say?

Now let’s go to Romans 5:20; here we have one of the most beautiful applications of this principle that we’re studying, one of the most beautiful illustrations of this truth that we’re looking at. Romans 5:20, the last line:

“...But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” Romans 5:20.

What does abound mean? Multiply, lots of it, plenty of it. Is there plenty of sin around? Did any of you ever find more in your life more than you thought was there? Did you ever disappoint yourself? But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. That’s right, much more. So as the beautiful song says:

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt;
Yonder on Calvary’s mount out poured,
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.
Marvelous grace, infinite grace,
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
Marvelous grace, infinite grace,
Grace that is greater than all our sins.

There’re two things that worry some Christians. There may be somebody here tonight that’s worried about one or the other of these two things. One is being sure that your sins are forgiven. It is written:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive

us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”
1 John 1:9.

How does He do that? By His grace. His precious love has provided the gift of Christ. The blood that was shed on Calvary is a free gift of His atonement. And where sin abounded, there did grace much more abound.

What kind of man was that, that Christ won as a convert shortly before He died. Was it a good man or a bad man? A thief and a murderer, dying there getting the just deserts of his deeds. But Jesus’ grace saved him and covered him. Grace greater than all his sins.

Can God do that for me and you? Can He? Is He doing it? Praise His wonderful name. So let us not whittle down our debts hoping that we can get them low enough that God will cover them. No, no. If somebody is going to offer to pay all my debts, I don’t propose to whittle down any of them. I propose to bring them just like they are and get them all paid in full, what do you say?

The other thing that Christians sometimes worry about is the end of the road. Am I going to make it? I hope I can hold on. I hope I can hold out.

Well, friend, turn to Philippians 1:6. You see, God has an advantage that you and I might not have. Jesus told about a man who should have looked things over and planned before he started to build. But the people that saw the result of his failure began to mock him because they said this man began to build and was not able to finish it. God is never caught in that problem.

God made the heavens and the earth of this planet in six days. He started out Sunday morning with nothing, and He ended up as the sun went down on the sixth day with everything finished. He said it was in what condition? Good. And that’s why you and I are here tonight, because we believe that. Without fail or interruption, every seventh day since then, the Sabbath has been reminding God’s children of that wonderful fact that when God starts something, He can finish it. Every vesper hour, every Friday evening as it rolls around, God’s had somebody in this world to remember this Sabbath day to keep it holy. Aren’t you glad?

What’s all that an assurance of? Here it is Philippians 1:6, will you read it with me?

“Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath
begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of
Jesus Christ” Philippians 1:6.

He started it; He’ll finish it. He began it; He’ll complete it. No question about it.

But it’s His grace that does it. As I was studying with you a few evenings ago, there at the very last when the beautiful cloud appears and Jesus is revealed to view, and all in this world look up and see that One that died for men; the wicked of course will cry to be hid and they run, but the righteous cry with trembling, “Who shall

be able to stand.” And then Jesus speaks and you remember what He says? “My grace is sufficient.” Just what we’re reading tonight. Is it sufficient? Will it be then? Is it now? Yes.

So I want you to think tonight of these two great anchors. The beginning of the Christian life as we come to Jesus and ask Him to begin this work in our hearts, to forgive our sins and cleanse us, and then when we meet Him as He comes in the clouds He says, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” And we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him.

Now I want to ask you something, friend: If we’re sure that He’s begun the work, and sure that He’s going to finish it, what about all the time in between? You see, if we’re anchored at the beginning and anchored at the close, we need not move in uncertainty and confusion. We anchor in Jesus all the way through.

Look please at Romans 8:32. His grace is sufficient to begin the work in us, His grace is sufficient to finish the work in us, and:

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things” Romans 8:32.

Having demonstrated His love by pouring out the blood there on Calvary, His heart broken under the weight of the sins of men, having thus shown His love and inspiring in our hearts contrition as we come to Him, He will not spare anything. He’ll pour out all Heaven in the endeavor to show us what has been made possible through that great gift.

In the book *Testimonies to Ministers*, we have a most beautiful statement:

“The Lord is making experiments on human hearts through the exhibition of His mercy and abundant grace” *Testimonies to Ministers*, page 18.

It is that word “exhibition,” to show. God has something to show. You know sometimes at these counties or state fairs, they have horses and cattle and something else that they’re showing, exhibitions—some prize animal. Jesus has an exhibition He’s giving—not animals but people. The Lord Jesus is making experiments on human hearts through the exhibition of His mercy and abundant grace. He is affecting transformation so amazing that Satan stands viewing them as a fortress impregnable to his sophistries and delusions. They’re to him an incomprehensible mystery. And the angels in Heaven look on with astonishment and joy. They’re pleased and thrilled with the exhibition of God’s grace in the hearts of His children down here in this world. Changing liars into true men; changing adulterers and profligate into pure and holy; changing gossiping tongues into sweet, kind speakers of love; changing the covetous into generosity; changing the disobedient into obedient; changing rebels into loyalty.

Is He doing it? What does it? His grace. And His grace is sufficient. Can it be done? Oh yes. Does it reach the cannibals in the South Seas? Can it reach the

cannibals right here? Oh, yes. You know what I mean, don't you, by cannibals here? Cannibals that feast not on human flesh but human character. Thank God, He is going to finish what He has started.

Remember that all the way along, God's grace is sufficient for our deficiencies.

One of the most beautiful statements on this is that statement in *Selected Messages*, Book 1, listen:

"When it is in the heart to obey God, when efforts are put forth to this end, Jesus accepts this disposition and effort as man's best service, and He makes up for the deficiency with His own divine merit" *Selected Messages*, Book 1, page 382.

Isn't that beautiful, friend? Isn't that an encouragement to us? To come with what we have—our weaknesses, our infirmities—and do our best by His grace, and with His grace, and through His grace to please Him, and know that all our deficiencies are made up. Then this colossal statement, I know not what else to call it; you'll find it in the book, *In Heavenly Places*

"Constantly God is laboring to make up man's deficiencies"
In Heavenly Places, page 221.

We keep Him busy, don't we? I know I do. And if I didn't know that He was making up my deficiencies I'd quit, I'd get utterly discouraged. But why get discouraged when He's coming along behind, before, above, and in all dimensions making up my deficiencies.

The prophet of the remnant tells an experience she had when her boys were little. They wanted to help her, and Sister White was a very economical person. She needed to be on the income that those pioneers had, or lack of it. So she was patching. The little boys wanted to help. She gave them patches and needle and thread and showed them how to do it. They did it. Do you know what she did after they went to bed, can you imagine? She made up the deficiencies.

I'm so glad that God lets me sleep at least once in 24 hours so the angels can work in making up my deficiencies. Constantly God is laboring to make up man's deficiencies. So when we look at it this way, we're not going to get discouraged because even our best efforts seem to accomplish so little, and seem so full of weakness. Of course, God knows about that. We're like people just learning to write; we're just learning to do anything. But that's not troubling God, that's not worrying Him at all. He's made full provision to cover all our past mistakes, to make up all our present deficiencies, and to present us faultless at last before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. What do you say, friend? I thank God for that wonderful love.

This has a very practical application in the daily experiences in life. For instance, in Philippians 4:19, we read that gracious promise:

“...my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” Philippians 4:19.

When I was in colporteur work, going from office to office and store to store with our truth-filled magazines, I remember a sign that some places used to have to discourage people from asking for credit. The sign read like this: “Your face looks good, but we can’t put it in the cash register.”

Some people treat God that way. But the promise of God is different from the pledge of men. The good intentions of our Lord are worth infinitely more than all the good intentions of human beings. And He says:

“...my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” Philippians 4:19.

Turn over to second Kings, the second chapter. Here is a most interesting little story, and like all the Bible stories, it’s a true story. Why on earth do people get excited about things that never happen when they can read wonderful things that *did* happen?

Elisha was running a self-supporting medical missionary training school. Those who attended that institute were called the sons or children of the prophets because they were guided by the spirit of prophecy. They should never have had any financial problems, should they? Well, they did anyway. Read the whole chapter, and you will find one problem after the other. But here is a very interesting story.

“...there came a man from Baalshalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat. And his servitor said, What, should I set this before an hundred men? He said again, Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the LORD, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof. So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the LORD” 2 Kings 4:42–44.

What looked like enough for only a few men turned out to be more than enough to feed how many? A hundred. What did God do? He made up the deficiencies. Several hundred years later, Jesus did the same thing with 10,000 people. Would God do that for anybody here?

Oh, my friends, if we’ll bring Him what we have, He will use it to accomplish whatever He has in mind to do.

So in Volume 6, you’ll find this story from the Bible quoted in the comment:

“When the Lord gives us a work to do, let us not stop to inquire into the reasonableness of the command or the probably result of our efforts to obey it. The supply in our

hands may seem to fall far short of our needs; but in the hands of the Lord it will be more than sufficient”
Testimonies for the Church, Volume 6, page 466.

There’s that word ‘sufficient’ again. It takes faith to start giving away what you have when you know it isn’t enough. That was Andrew and Philip’s problem when Jesus was trying to stir up grace in their hearts. But oh, how patient He is with us as He teaches us these lessons. Aren’t you glad?

This is the basis of Christian stewardship. If the only time we give is when we have a surplus, oh, we miss so many marvelous miracles and so many precious fellowships with Jesus. You remember that widow in Zarephath that God sent Elijah to. There were many widows in Israel, but God, in His providence, sent His prophet to this particular one over there in Zarephath to feed the prophet. But when he got there, he found somebody that only had enough meal and enough oil to make one more meal for her and her son, and that was all. Then they were going to die. It was famine time; it was drought, it hadn’t rained for months and years. God, through Elijah, encouraged that woman and told her to do what with that last little meal and oil she had? Make the prophet of God a little cake first. You selfish man. Who told Elijah to say that? God told him to. What was He trying to teach that widow? That God was sufficient, that His grace was sufficient.

Elijah told her:

“...thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth” 1 Kings 17:14.

Did it happen? Why friends, the next time she went in there, that barrel was just *full* of flour. What? Oh, no. No. You were listening, weren’t you? Every day she went there was enough for what? Just for the next meal. You know, that would give some people a nervous breakdown, an ulcer, or high blood pressure, or something like that. But not that woman, she had faith. And bless the Lord, it worked.

Now God hasn’t called everybody to operate on that program. Abraham never operated on that program. In the matter of food, he always had plenty. So did Solomon. So don’t think that everybody is led precisely the same way. But I want to tell you something, friends: Abraham had needs that were far greater than oil and meal, didn’t he? Was God’s grace sufficient when he was called to lead his son up the mountain and offer him on the altar? Oh, that was an infinitely greater need. Thank God, the grace of Heaven was sufficient, and Abraham was true to the test. Whatever our test, whether it’s material, physical, financial, spiritual, God’s grace is sufficient.

Let me throw in a caution because God throws in a caution. There never was anything that was ever taught but what it can be carried to extremes. I want to read you something from *Volume 3, page 411*:

“Our God is not a taskmaster and does not require the poor man to give means to the cause that belongs to his family and that should be used to keep them in comfort and above pinching want” *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 3*, page 411.

Read the whole page and the page before it to get the setting. It's our hearts that God wants. So in 1 Corinthians 16, He shows us that our giving should be proportionate and systematic. We're not to wait for some urgent call and then give what we happen to have. We're to hear in our income of every month or week, or whenever our income comes, occasionally or systematically, we're to hear in that income the call of God saying, Dedicate to Me My own portion of the tithe, and then talk over with Me what offerings you're going to give. Set them apart for Jesus with a blessing in it. But remember in it all, it won't be enough. God is going to have to take those offerings and multiply them as He did the bread by Galilee. And happy is the man, and don't miss it, that has learned this in his own experience. Happy is the man that has proved the promises of God and has seen God work again and again and again and again to accomplish what seemed impossible, humanly speaking.

So with our health problems, so with every other problem, God is in the business of making up our deficiencies. Through the grace of Christ, we may accomplish everything God requires.

So tonight, I'm thankful for the grace of our Lord. I'm thankful that it's sufficient. I'm thankful that it meets our needs. I'm thankful that we can always have all sufficiency in all things because of His abundant grace.

[Testimony service]

Let us all stand. Now, our Father, with all our hearts we thank Thee for Thy great sufficiency. We that Thee Thou hast harnessed the infinite powers of the God-head to the task of using our human weakness to accomplish Thy purposes. So tonight we're giving Thee what we have. Weak, unworthy, here we are, Lord. If this is what you want is us, then here we are. Take us and make us glad, as we see Thee working out Thy will in, and for, and through, and with us. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

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