

Authentic Hope

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[0 : 00] Let's pray.

Gracious Lord, we do indeed thank you for the way you have led us as we have come this morning and as we church together. And as Steve has prayed for us, so indeed we ask that you might work mercifully by your spirit, through the power of your word, strip away every distraction, focus our minds and revolutionise our hearts.

For Christ's sake, Amen. So, I was really thrilled when I saw the series that you're doing at the moment, God's Sufficient Grace.

2 Corinthians is one of my favourite books and as the Apostle often does, it is a book that is full of understatement and there is no greater understatement than that phrase that titles your series, God's Sufficient Grace.

What does the word sufficient mean? Sorry? Enough. When you say, oh, it's sufficient. What are you meaning?

[1 : 37] It's just enough. It's just enough. So we're saying, God's just enough grace. It's interesting, isn't it?

Isn't it not the greatest understatement you've ever heard? Here we are, the recipients of this lavish, as John chapter 1 calls it, grace upon grace upon grace, and it's meant to be an endless series.

It's like the waves of the ocean. We don't get this on the western side, the Indian Ocean is a pond. But when you go down to DY and you see the waves, grace upon grace upon grace, and do they ever stop?

No. And neither does God's lavish grace. So when we talk about God's sufficient grace, let's just bear in mind that we're talking about the understated God, the God who, when he created all things, at the end of each day said, God saw what he had made and behold, it was good.

Good. Couldn't you have come up with a slightly better adjective? Couldn't you have just extended yourself a bit? I mean, like he clearly is an American.

[3 : 03] That's awesome! You know? Like, you just would go to town. And I mean, at the end of all six days of creation, when it was complete, when it had the crowning glory of the one made in his image, when it was in perfect harmony, when love had had its full sway, can you imagine the dynamic nature of what had been done?

The Lord thought, oh, okay, I better extend myself. He saw all that he had made, behold, it was... Very good. Great. Great. So look, just when you come in here and you think God's sufficient grace, just recognise the God we serve.

He's not American. He is understated. Right? And we're talking about authentic hope.

And I get the impression from the screen that's been up here that authentic, true, real. Very good. I have no idea what's been going on.

They're held on too hard, so I can't pull them off. There's a very good job, whoever did this. I know nothing about it, but I'm just wondering why there are only this many.

- [4 : 25] I mean, how many of us are there here? There's got to be a hundred plus, even on Father's Day. Or how come there's only 20-odd masks on the wall?
- Did you take your mask off when you came in today? Did you take it off? Because we all wear them, don't we? Every one of us.
- And we are talking about authentic Christian living. Real. And I know one of the things that I found breathtaking was the, as I grew in Christ, was coming to understand the most practical Christian doctrine there is.
- Imputed righteousness. Justification by faith. That I am established outside of myself. And so you can see me as I am.
- Even with all that inadequacy, all that bankruptcy, all the failings. Because all that does is reveal more greatly the sufficiency of the God we serve.
- [5 : 41] So, when we think and read through, hear this passage from 2 Corinthians chapter 5.
- I'll try it again. I must have hit the wrong button. It says, For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God.
- An eternal house in heaven. Not built by human hands. And when we think about earthly tents, there's no place we should start more appropriate than the incarnation.
- That the word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only son of the father. And when you see that little word there where it says the word became flesh and dwelt, dwelt, literally that word dwelt is tented, tabernacled.
- The eternal son took on flesh and tented amongst us. Pitched his tent as he refers to this flesh, this body.
- [7 : 12] But it says there that we know that if this earthly tent we live in is destroyed, and you've been hearing about this just last week as you've looked at chapters 3 and 4, but if this earthly tent is destroyed, once again, there is no place that we should look more closely than the destruction of the body of Christ.
- A body that was given over for sin. Everything done within that flesh was perfect, was righteous, was holy, was pure, and yet look.
- It's hard to look at, isn't it? It's hard to look at.
- He died my death. He died your death. This was the full curse of sin and the full judgment of God upon it poured out upon his tent, upon his earthly body.
- But then it says we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. And we look to the resurrection.
- [8 : 44] We look to the resurrection. The fact that death, as the song says, could not hold him down. when he rose, it was the proof.
- Do you ever wonder whether your sin is dealt with? Whether it will ever visit you again? You only need to know that he rose to know that it is gone forever.
- It will never visit you again. It's not possible. Because if any of your sin or my sin was still hanging, stuck to him, he couldn't have risen from the dead.
- He was doomed forever. So, when we think about this heavenly dwelling, meanwhile, we groan, longing to be clothed, instead, with our heavenly dwelling.
- I need to just check what slide we got here. We have got that one up already, haven't we? Okay. Alright. I just realised it's not obeying all the clicks that I've put in it, but that's alright.
- [10 : 03] We will work with that. When it talks about a new body, receiving a new body, should I be thinking about Chris Hemsworth?

Is that what I'm going to get? You know? I won't ask my wife what she thinks, alright? I don't really want to know the answer to that, but can I say most assuredly that when we think of the new body that we receive, that because Christ has risen with an indestructible body, an eternal body, this is not some airy, fairy, spiritual resurrection, this is a resurrection with substance, a resurrected body, and when Christ raises with that body, that is the guarantee that you and I will have a new body.

It won't bear the impact of the curse of sin the way this one does. So does that mean it will be like this? Well, no.

Because I want to tell you, that body still bears the curse of sin. We need to come back to seeing what Christ has done.

Because what Christ has done and what dominates his life is what will dominate your life and your resurrected glorious body.

[11 : 40] body. I want to just take us through and just quickly, I was going to unfold this slowly but it's all up in front of you now and I've realised that I struggle to read all of this from this distance because this body is wasting away and these eyes are part of that.

And it says, but we have this treasure in jars of clay, body, as Steve mentioned before. Okay, look, hold on, hold on a second, let's just get this right.

Hold on, I'm coming down, I'm going to sit with you. We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We're hard pressed on every side.

This is where you've been last week. Hard pressed on every side, crushed in fact. Perplexed, but not in despair.

Persecuted, but not abandoned. Struck down, but not destroyed. I can't tell you how many times, even just in the last ten years, I've been struck down, I felt crushed, I felt completely overwhelmed.

[12 : 57] But, his grace is sufficient. We always, it says in verse 10, carry around in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

I just realised we've got a much better view looking this way. Here I was, I was looking up here and I should have been looking here. That's great. I'll get used to this place eventually. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body.

See those words in bold there? we carry around in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed.

It's the same as when Paul says, I did not come amongst you with eloquent words so that it might be clear to you that the power, the dynamic for the words that I speak comes not from me, it comes from God.

And it is the same here. I am amazed and humbled by the things that people have said about us and our ministry over in the Northwest, over in Wickham.

[14 : 13] The things that people over there say about us and it is because the life of Jesus is being revealed in this inadequacy. And it goes on and says, we are always being given over to death so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body.

Because we know that the one who raised Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself. So you see it is Jesus' life and death and resurrection that determines your course.

And then he goes on and says, therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

And this is the thing, we need to develop a discipline, a discipline of knowing that it is solely in Christ I live. You think of Galatians 2, I have been crucified with Christ.

It's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, in this body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

[15 : 32] We've got to start hanging much looser to this body. When we read and we think of these passages, so see the highlighted passage there where it says, meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling.

Do you groan? I'll bet if you're getting as old as me, you groan. But is it because you're longing for your heavenly body?

Is that why you groan? Or do you groan because you're just not happy, you're not content with this vessel that the Lord has given you?

Or you see it breaking down? Are you walking in a staunch resistance? to the groaning of this body?

Not because you're longing, longing for a new body, a resurrected body, but because you actually want this one.

[16 : 47] That's why the gyms are full, isn't it? That's why there is so much about the body beautiful. And you might say, oh Rich, it's easy for you to say that.

You know, like you clearly have been letting yourself go for a while. You'd be right. You'd be right. But I've got to tell you, this is not where we are to put our hope.

authentic hope is not in this. It is in the resurrected body that we see firstly in Christ as the first fruits, and then which will come to all those who have hoped in him.

he says, for while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened because we do not, we do not wish to be unclothed, but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling.

I want to encourage you to truly groan and long for your heavenly dwelling. I've got to tell you, that is hard for us to do. It's hard for us to do.

[18 : 19] The first reading that we had was from the very start of Jesus' public ministry, Matthew chapter 5. I've only put up verses 3 to 6 here.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. As I said earlier when I was up here talking with Steve, those who recognise that they are completely bankrupt.

Jesus is saying, unless you realise you are bankrupt, you will not come to me. You will actually pursue your own adequacy.

In fact, to the person who believes that they are not bankrupt, let me tell you this, grace is an offence. Why? Why is grace an offence to those who do not recognise that in and of themselves they are bankrupt?

Can anybody come back at me? Why is grace an offence? grace an offence? Why is it not to the weakness? Sorry? It shows up the weakness?

[19 : 30] It does? But why does it offend me if I don't think I'm bankrupt? Sorry? Yeah. I get no kudos.

loss. You think, what is at the very heart of our sinful selves? I want to tell you it is that sinful core of our pride that believes that we are good enough for God without God.

See, the nature of atheistic humanism today is that it can achieve everything that God would promise without him.

And to atheistic humanism, it does not want to know about grace. It does not want to know about the greatest gift of all time because that actually detracts from it.

And so Jesus rightly starts and says, blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who realise their bankruptcy before the Holy Father, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

[20 : 41] Why is theirs the kingdom of heaven? It's not because they stay bankrupt, it's because realising their bankruptcy, they do what? They come to Christ.

Don't they? Realising their bankruptcy, they come to Christ. He goes on and he says, blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

I have to ask us this because this is our challenge in a place where we have one of the highest standards of living on earth, in a place where I love the changes that have been done here, but can I tell you when Wickham does not even have a place where it can gather, where it is identified as the meeting place of God's people, it's overwhelming.

When I see the poverty, it is overwhelming. when I see the needs, it's overwhelming. And we must ask the question, have you hungered lately?

[22 : 09] Are you thirsty? Because what do we do as soon as we're thirsty physically? We just straight away, as soon as we're thirsty.

How long do you wait and allow the physical thirst to go? Before you go, walk to the fridge, open and get something that's as cold as you want. It's not long, is it? Before you get the beverage of choice.

But we know that we're talking about a different thirst, aren't we? Let's go back to Jesus and the cross. What were one of his words that he spoke from the cross? He said, I thirst.

Did he go to the fridge and get out his beverage of choice at just the right temperature? No. In fact, they went to place something to his lips to dull the pain, but he didn't take it.

Because what was he really doing when he said, I thirst? He was experiencing exactly that which you and I experience as a result of living with the emptiness, the emptiness of being a rebel, of being without God and without hope in this world.

[23 : 42] Now that you have come to Christ, you recognize your bankruptcy, you've come to Christ, do you stop hungering and thirsting? The answer is no. In exactly the same way as he says, blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

What's the nature of our mourning? We have this all sufficient grace and yet, even though we have that now, we are also still beset with the weakness, with this clay, broken clay pot, with this tent that is fading away, with this tent that shows the signs of the curse.

And so, we mourn what we see sin doing here, what we see sin doing in the world, what we see the powers of darkness seeking to do, we mourn these things.

We hunger and we thirst. And I want to encourage you to check yourself and ask, are you setting up your life so there is only comfort and convenience?

What happens when you hunger? Every day, if there is not hungering and thirsting and mourning within you, there is something wrong.

[25 : 13] We're missing something. Like, I'm so thrilled to see you younger guys in here. Now, you won't pick up everything that we're talking about, that I'm talking about, but you know what?

You know why it's so good? Because you are confronted by a world that is saying to you, you need to pursue your own comfort and convenience. Jesus is saying the opposite. And he's saying that as you thirst and hunger and mourn, he's also saying that his spirit at work within you will bring love, joy and peace.

It seems like a dichotomy, doesn't it? Like a contradiction. How can these things be going on at the same time? But constantly, I guarantee you, if you hunger and thirst as Christ did daily, then you will also know his peace.

Indeed, he said, my peace I give to you, my peace I leave with you, not as the world gives, do I give. Not as the world gives, do I give.

So we need to be content to walk to the beat of a very different drum if we are to be authentic believers and if we are to be authentic in hope.

[26 : 43] So I want to share with you a quick story because one thing that I found overwhelming during the ministry in Wickham was the number of our indigenous people that I placed in the ground.

In a community, an indigenous community of probably 1500, there would be a death every week, maybe two, sometimes three.

Think about that. We're talking a population of 14 to 1500, maybe at times up to 2000, and there is a death every week.

people in this land are literally passing us by. And the number of kids I would minister to that are impacted by that, that are orphans, that have already lost both parents.

You see this boy on the screen here. He was the angriest boy I had ever witnessed. You know how in schools you're not meant to touch the kids?

[27 : 56] Well, the local principal, who was very suspicious of me at first, but eventually I became a trusted confidant, and she would ring and say, Rich, can you please come up?

it's Zane. And I would get there, and the classroom, all the kids would have been evacuated, and Zane would be in there with a golf club destroying the room.

And she would need someone, because all the male teachers have been taken out of our primary schools, she would need someone to go and disarm Zane, and then in all his fury, still him.

And I would just hug him. I would just hug him. I remember one day when that happened, his mum came up, and she was so upset, and she was so ashamed, she hit him around the ear.

I later found out that both he and his older sister, both had perforated eardrums on the right-hand side. she hit him, she clubbed him, and then she grabbed him by the foot, and she dragged him to the car.

[29 : 25] And this is him around that time. And his mother was a very angry woman, would never smile.

mother. But I want to introduce you to her here. I cannot say her name because I haven't asked the permission of the family, and that is very important to them. But see this beautiful woman here, smiling?

smiling. She's smiling because she received God's sufficient grace. And she was transformed from a woman so deeply gripped and entrenched in bitterness to the suffering of her children, to a woman that shone with the love of Jesus, that could not get together enough saying, pastor, can we do some wonga, which means God's word?

Can we open the Bible? But of course, the impact of the entrenched dysfunction and bad choices and behaviours, the alcohol meant that this dear sister died only two years after this photo, at the ripe old age of 34.

Her kidneys, her liver, everything chucked it in. But hers was the favourite funeral that I took. I took many.

[30 : 57] And it got to the point where the indigenous pastor there, he would get me to speak because he'd never been trained and while he faithfully kept declaring the core gospel, their eyes they had closed.

But he said that their eyes would open and the screensavers would come down and so he got me to just say, just keep teaching the Bible. I would just work my way through the Bible with my largest congregation, sometimes up to 800, on a weekly basis.

In fact, sometimes when we had two funerals on a Saturday, can you imagine getting back here in the afternoon to hear Steve again? Well, that was my congregation at Robben Cemetery. But my favourite funeral was this woman's, this sister, your sister.

And she, they produce a booklet which is full of photos and this booklet full of photos always, always is the tribute for their whole life.

And their life, their funeral booklet means everything to them. All these tributes from family members, all these pictures, and their story is at the beginning and the story is read, you know, at the start of the service.

[32 : 11] And I got to read her story and her story had one paragraph about where she was born, who her parents was, where she'd lived, and then it said, now enough of me, let me tell you about my saviour and what he's done for me.

And the whole rest of her eulogy, two pages, was about what God had done in her life. Never seen it before, where somebody wrote their own eulogy and they used it to take the opportunity to do just that.

This was a woman that was longing for heaven. This is her son now, at another funeral, just recently.

You can pray for him, his name is Zane. And the anger is going. He's lost both his parents, but he knows that his mum is with Jesus.

Pray that he will trust Jesus. Now, what we have here in, is that it says, now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

[33 : 33] It removes any doubts because we know that the Spirit has been given us this guarantee. There is no doubt. And so he goes on and he speaks of the confidence that we have, that as long as we are away from the body, we might be away from the Lord, but we have the Spirit living and working within us as a guarantee.

So, just looking at the clock, it's time for me to finish up. But I want to finish up by just sharing with you Philippians chapter 1.

because I want to see if this becomes the standard for how you live in regard to your body and your time here. Have a look at it.

He says, I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body.

Christ will be exalted in your body, whether by life or by death. for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

[34 : 46] Is that your mantra and your motto? For you to live is Christ and to die is gain. He says, if I am to go on living in this body, this will mean fruitful labour for me.

Yet what shall I choose? I don't know, I'm torn between the two. I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far, but it's far more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith.

Did you see what Paul's only reason was for staying in this body? What was his only reason for staying? He says, if I am to go on living in the body, verse 22, this will mean fruitful labour for me.

To live in Christ here means fruitful labour. It means service of the gospel. It means to operate for the progress and joy in the faith of those around you.

I hope that your life is dominated by authentic hope. I hope that you, every time you come in here, you take off whatever masks this world might tempt you to wear.

[36 : 12] And that you might, as that means that you feel very vulnerable and exposed, that you might actually mourn and hunger and thirst together, but be encouraged because you are in the midst of this all-sufficient, this lavish outpouring of grace upon you.

Let me pray. Gracious Lord, we thank you so much for all that you have given us in Christ.

Father, the outpouring of your grace upon us in him is not simply enough or just enough.

It is all-sufficient. There is never a time where my need or my lack or my hunger or my thirst or my mourning is greater than what you give so lavishly.

so Lord, let our lives be a testimony to this lavish grace that you have given so that the hope that we live out, whether we are churching here with our brothers and sisters, whether we're at work or at home, whether we are with those who love you or those who don't, may our hope be revealed in this profound assurance that bring such comfort, that bring such filling, that bring such joy and peace inspired by your spirit.

[37 : 56] For Christ's sake we pray. Amen.