

## Glory of gods grace 5

### **2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (NASB)**

**A Thorn in the Flesh Because of the extraordinary greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in distresses, in persecutions, in difficulties, in behalf of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.**

## Contextual Analysis of 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

The immediate context is Paul's discussion of the extraordinary revelations he had received.

In 2 Corinthians 12:1-6, Paul describes being "caught up to the third heaven" and hearing inexpressible words. Humanly speaking, such experiences could easily have produced arrogance, self-exaltation, and spiritual pride.

Therefore verse 7 begins:

"Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations..."

Paul was not being punished. He was being protected.

This is one of the clearest examples in Scripture of what we might call:

### **Providential Preventative Suffering**

God permits suffering not because a believer has failed, but because God knows what that believer could become without it.

This suffering was preventative rather than corrective.

Many believers understand discipline suffering.

Fewer understand preventative suffering.

Paul's thorn was not divine punishment.

It was divine protection.

This is similar to:

Joseph's years in Egypt

Paul's thorn

Job's testing

Christ's wilderness testing

God was preserving Paul's humility so that the glory would remain God's rather than Paul's.

### **“There Was Given Me a Thorn in the Flesh”**

The phrase “there was given” is significant.

The passive voice points to God as the ultimate source behind the permission of this suffering.

Satan was the immediate agent.

God was the ultimate sovereign authority.

Notice the paradox:

“A messenger of Satan”

yet

“there was given me”

Satan intended destruction.

God intended blessing.

This is similar to Joseph’s statement:

“You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.”

(Genesis 50:20)

The same event had two intentions:

Satan’s intention: torment

God’s intention: protection

## The Dative of Advantage

The Greek construction emphasizes that this thorn was given **for Paul’s benefit**.

The suffering was actually working in Paul’s favor.

This is an incredible doctrinal principle.

Most believers evaluate suffering according to comfort.

God evaluates suffering according to spiritual growth.

Paul's thorn was not evidence that God had abandoned him.

It was evidence that God loved him enough to prevent him from being destroyed by pride.

The very thing Paul wanted removed was the very thing God was using for his advantage.

That is a powerful principle for the Christian life.

Many times the grace of God is hidden inside the trial we are trying to escape.

### “To Keep Me From Exalting Myself”

Paul repeats this phrase twice.

This repetition is intentional.

The Holy Spirit is emphasizing the purpose.

Humility was more valuable than comfort.

Spiritual capacity was more valuable than ease.

The greatest enemy of spiritual growth is often not suffering.

It is arrogance.

A believer can survive suffering.

Many believers never survive success.

Therefore God often allows circumstances that keep us dependent upon Him.

## Paul's Prayer

Verse 8:

“Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.”

Paul prayed repeatedly.

There is no lack of faith here.

There is no spiritual failure here.

There is no deficiency in prayer here.

The issue was not Paul's prayer life.

The issue was God's plan.

Sometimes faith is demonstrated by believing God will remove the trial.

Sometimes faith is demonstrated by trusting Him when He does not.

### “My Grace Is Sufficient For You”

This is the centerpiece of the passage.

Notice Paul states “he has said to me” past tense

God never answered him the 3 times he had to recall doctrine

The word “sufficient” ( arkeō) means:

enough

adequate

fully sufficient

completely capable of meeting the need

God did not promise removal.

God promised provision.

The answer to Paul's prayer was not:

“No.”

The answer was:

“My grace is enough.”

Grace would supply everything necessary for Paul to endure and glorify God in the situation.

### “For Power Is Perfected In Weakness”

This is one of the most misunderstood phrases in the passage.

The verb (*teleioō*) does not merely mean “made perfect” in the sense of moral perfection.

It carries the idea of:

- reaching its intended goal
- being brought to full operation
- achieving its designed purpose
- becoming fully effective

A good translation of the thought would be:

“My power becomes fully operational in weakness.”

or

“My power reaches its intended effectiveness in weakness.”

God's power is not displayed when we can solve everything ourselves.

God's power becomes visible when human strength reaches its limits.

When we can do it ourselves, people see us.

When we cannot do it ourselves and God carries us through, people see Him.

That is grace on display.

## “Most Gladly Therefore I Will Rather Boast About My Weaknesses”

This statement would seem irrational from a human perspective.

Paul is not celebrating pain.

He is celebrating what pain allows God to do.

The weakness is not the blessing.

The manifestation of divine power through weakness is the blessing.

Paul understood something many believers never learn:

The objective is not personal comfort.

The objective is the glorification of God.

## “So That the Power of Christ May Dwell in Me”

The expression literally carries the idea of Christ’s power “pitching its tent” upon him.

The imagery is similar to the Shekinah Glory dwelling among Israel.

Paul is saying that divine power rests upon the believer who recognizes his weakness and depends upon God.

This is a tremendous connection to your theme of God’s glory being displayed in the believer.

The glory is seen when divine power rests upon human weakness.

### Verse 10: The Divine Paradox

“For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

This is not a contradiction.

It is a doctrinal reality.

When Paul was weak:

- he relied upon doctrine

- he used the faith-rest drill

- he depended upon grace

- he operated under divine power

When Paul was strong in himself:

- divine power was unnecessary

- self-reliance became the danger

This is why weakness often becomes the stage upon which grace performs its greatest work.

## Application to “The Glory of His Grace”

The central principle of this passage is this:

**God’s grace is most clearly displayed when human ability is exhausted and divine power becomes operational.**

The world glorifies strength.

God glorifies dependence.

The world celebrates self-sufficiency.

God celebrates grace sufficiency.

The world says, “I can handle it.”

Grace says, “I cannot, but Christ can.”

Paul learned that the thorn was not hindering God’s plan.

The thorn was part of God’s plan.

The suffering was not preventing God’s glory.

The suffering was creating the very conditions in which God’s glory could be most clearly seen.

That is why God’s answer was not the removal of the thorn.

God’s answer was something greater:

“My grace is sufficient for you.”

And every believer who has walked through suffering while trusting the promises of God eventually discovers the same truth: God’s grace is not merely enough to survive the trial—it is enough to glorify Him in the midst of it