

The glory of God's grace 6

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NASB)

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

That is salvation.

Then verse 10 says:

Ephesians 2:10 (NASB)

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

That is the life after salvation.

Works are not the cause of salvation.

Works are the result of growth.

Works are not the root.

Works are the fruit.

If you want deliverance in time...

If you want stability under pressure...

If you want to face the giants in your life...

If you want to glorify God in experience...

Then doctrine must move from hearing to application.

From gnōsis to epignōsis.

From information to metabolized truth.

From faith possessed to faith applied.

That is the difference.

Proverbs 29:18 (NASB)

**Where there is no vision, the
people are unrestrained, But
happy is one who keeps the
Law.**

Numbers 14:4 (NASB)

So they said to one another, “Let’s appoint a leader and return to Egypt!”

This is one of the saddest verses in Scripture.

God delivered them from slavery, and they wanted to go back.

Why?

Because bondage becomes familiar to believers who refuse spiritual growth.

The old life becomes attractive when there is no vision for the future.

Hebrews 4:11 (NASB)

Therefore let's make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following the same example of disobedience.

Notice the balance here.

Rest does not eliminate diligence.

Grace does not eliminate responsibility.

The author is very careful in defining the sin of the Exodus generation. He does not emphasize immorality. He emphasizes unbelief.

Notice the progression:

Hebrews 3:12 (NASB)

**The Danger of Unbelief Take care,
brothers and sisters, that there will
not be in any one of you an evil,
unbelieving heart that falls away
from the living God.**

Hebrews 3:18-19 (NASB)

And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

This is extremely important because verse 18 uses “disobedient” while verse 19 explains that disobedience as unbelief.

In other words, the author defines their disobedience for us.

Their disobedience was not primarily behavioral.

Their disobedience was theological.

Their disobedience was a failure to trust the character and promises of God.

**That is why when the spies returned in
Numbers 13 and 14, the issue was never the
giants.**

The issue was never military strength.

The issue was never the walls of the cities.

**The issue was whether Israel would believe
God's promise.**

God had already said:

“I will bring you into the land.”

The giants simply exposed what was already in their hearts.

This fits perfectly with our teaching that giants do not create unbelief; they reveal unbelief.

The giants were not the problem.

The unbelief was the problem.

Hebrews 4:11 (NASB)

Therefore let's make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following the same example of disobedience.

The phrase “be diligent” is fascinating.

The Greek verb is *spoudazō*.

**It means to be eager, diligent,
earnest, zealous, to make every
effort.**

There is a seeming paradox here.

**We are told to make every effort to enter
rest.**

How do you work at resting?

The answer is that the effort is not self-effort.

The effort is faith.

The effort is choosing day after day to trust God rather than ourselves.

The effort is maintaining doctrinal orientation.

The effort is remaining teachable.

The effort is continuing to advance despite opposition.

The effort is refusing to quit when giants appear.

The effort is continuing to believe God when circumstances seem to contradict His promises.

That is exactly what the Exodus generation refused to do.

The promised land was never a picture of heaven.

The generation that left Egypt was already redeemed.

They had already been delivered through the blood of the Passover lamb.

The issue was not salvation.

The issue was entering into the experience God had prepared for them.

In the same way, Hebrews is written to believers.

The issue is not getting saved.

The issue is advancing.

The issue is entering into God's provision, God's plan, God's power, and God's rest in time.

“Making every effort to enter God’s rest means making every effort to remain positive toward doctrine, filled with the Spirit, consistently perceiving, metabolizing, and applying the Word of God so that we continue advancing in the plan of God rather than retreating in unbelief.”

Notice the contrast:

The Exodus generation saw giants and retreated.

Joshua and Caleb saw the same giants and advanced.

The difference was not the giants.

The difference was faith.

This also connects beautifully with our series the glory of Gods grace.

Many people hear “make every effort” and think God is demanding more works.

But Hebrews is actually saying the opposite.

The effort is not earning something from God.

The effort is entering into what God has already provided.

God had already given them the land.

They simply refused to enter it.

Likewise, God has already provided the spiritual assets, the indwelling Spirit, the completed canon of Scripture, the Problem-Solving Devices, and a Predesigned Plan for every believer.

The question is not whether God has provided.

The question is whether we will trust Him enough to move forward.

I think there is a tremendous “Glory of His Grace” principle here:

The opposite of grace is not merely legalism.

The opposite of grace is unbelief.

Grace says, “God has already provided.”

Faith says, “I believe He has.”

The Exodus generation heard the promise but did not mix it with faith (Hebrews 4:2).

Joshua and Caleb heard the same promise and rested in it.

That is why the author says, “Let us be diligent to enter that rest.”

In other words:

“Don’t make the same mistake they made.

Don’t stop at the border of God’s provision.

Don’t let the giants define reality. Let God’s

promises define reality. Move forward by

faith into what grace has already provided

Exodus 33:19 (NASB)

And He said, “I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion to whom I will show compassion.”

God here is defining himself and chose not to reveal raw power -but grace

Moses had interceded after the golden calf rebellion(ex 32)

Israel had failed miserably and judgement was deserved

moses asks in 33:18-show me your glory

Exodus 33:3-5 (NASB)

Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, because you are an obstinate people, and I might destroy you on the way.” When the people heard this sad word, they went into mourning, and none of them put on his jewelry. For the Lord had said to Moses, “Say to the sons of Israel, ‘You are an obstinate people; if I were to go up in your midst for just one moment, I would destroy you. So now, take off your jewelry that I may know what I shall do to you.’ ”

The Hebrew word translated “obstinate” is often rendered “stiff-necked” qesheh-oref), a farming metaphor describing an ox that refuses to respond to the yoke and resists the direction of its master.

Theologically, this passage highlights a tremendous principle: The problem was not God’s presence; the problem was Israel’s condition.

God’s holiness is a blessing to believers who are walking in fellowship, but the same holiness becomes a source of discipline when believers persist in rebellion.

What's beautiful is that this chapter then transitions into one of the greatest demonstrations of grace in the Old Testament. Moses intercedes, and God eventually promises:

“My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.” (Exodus 33:14)

So the chapter moves from:

Israel's failure,

God's holiness,

Moses' intercession,

and finally God's grace.

**That progression itself is a wonderful picture
of the believer's life.**

Our failures never diminish God's holiness, but neither do they cancel His grace.

The answer is not for God to become less holy; the answer is for grace to provide a way for sinful people to enjoy fellowship with a holy God.

Ultimately, that grace is fulfilled in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ

Now lets define glorify

**Greek word doxazo-to magnify, to honor, to reveal,
to cause to be seen as excellent**

To glorify God is to put his attributes on display

**Gods response in vs 19 defines what his glory
actually is**

**Not merely light, not merely sovereignty or
power**

**Glory is the display of who God is -at the core
of who he is is grace**

**Notice the 3 movements -goodness passing
before moses, the proclamation of the name,
and sovereign grace and compassion**

**Goodness is the Hebrew word-tuv-goodness,
prosperity, beauty, kindness, moral character,
beneficent favor**

Exodus 34:6 (NASB)

Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in faithfulness and truth;

**This is one of the most important
theological verses in all of scripture**

**This is not moses describing God this is God
describing himself**

**If God is immutable and declares himself
gracious then grace reflects his eternal
nature**

The Lord, the Lord God

The repetition of the Lord is emphatic-it stresses self existence eternality, covenant faithfulness, immutability

If God is immutable-malachi 3:6, hebrews 13:8-then whatever he declares about himself in ex 34:6 reflects his eternal essence

Grace is an eternal expression of who God is

Psalm 145:8 (NASB)

**8 ¶ The Lord is gracious and
compassionate;
Slow to anger and great in
mercy.**

This is a direct theological echo of ex 34:6

**The psalmist is quoting divine self
revelation**

**Notice the consistency-gracious, merciful,
slow to anger, abounding in loving kindness**

Across centuries God has not changed

1 Peter 5:10 (NASB)

10After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

**Peter calls him the God of all grace-not some grace,
not limited grace, not temporary grace-all grace**

**Peter a Jew saturated in the Old Testament
understood the God of Ex 34:6 is the same God
sustaining suffering believers**

**The suffering context is important-when we glorify
God by trusting him under pressure we are putting
his eternal nature on display**

Exodus 34 was spoken after the catastrophic failure with the golden calf

Peter writes to persecuted believers-grace is revealed in suffering and also restoration

The glory of gods grace is not merely in salvation it is sustaining restoring strengthening and establishing

Exodus 34:6 establishes

Grace originates in divine essence

Grace is eternal because God is eternal

Grace is immutable because God is immutable

Grace operates in harmony with justice and truth

Grace sustains believers in both failure and suffering

**When we glorify God by
trusting him under pressure
we are putting his eternal
nature on display**

**We are not creating grace we
are reflecting grace**

**Grace and compassion define his
name**

**This is critical to this series-Gods
glory is not abstract brilliance it is
the manifestation of his gracious
character**

I will be gracious

Hebrew word-chanan-means to show favor, to bend or stoop in kindness, to grant favor to the inferior, or to bestow unearned blessing

This is old testament grace-God actively choosing to favor

It is not earned, it is not merited it flows from his sovereign character

Note eph 2:8

Hebrew chanon and Greek charis same theological dna

Grace originates in the sovereign freedom of God

I will show compassion

**Hebrew word racham-deep mercy, tender affection,
emotional movement toward the helpless**

**The word is related to rechem which means
womb**

The imagery is protective nurturing care

Grace is not mechanical, grace is compassionate

**Gods grace is not just justice restrained it is
compassion expressed**

Vs 19 is saying:

Gods glory is his goodness in motion

His goodness is gracious favor

His grace flows from his sovereign freedom

His sovereign freedom is not arbitrary it is compassionate

Grace is not God reacting it is God revealing himself

When moses asked to see gods glory, God showed grace

that means when we live by grace, when we depend on grace when we reflect grace we are displaying Gods glory

**Ephesians 1:6 (NASB)
to the praise of the glory of His
grace, with which He favored
us in the Beloved.**

Grace is the most visible expression of divine glory

**In the angelic conflict what magnifies God-not
merely his power, not merely his omniscience, but
his gracious dealings with sinful humanity**

The cross is the ultimate fulfillment of exodus 33:19

**Goodness passing before us, the name revealed,
grace sovereignly dispensed, compassion
demonstrated**

**Before sinai law is even fully operational, before
tabernacle worship is established, God defines himself
as gracious**

Grace is not plan b it is his nature

**And when that grace is metabolized in the believers life
-when we rebound, when we trust, when we operate in
the faith rest drill, when we refuse legalism we are
putting Gods goodness on display**

That is the glory of his grace

Grace is love expressed toward the undeserving without compromising holiness

The structure of grace in Gods character

Grace is-

A disposition in the character of god

A policy flowing from sovereignty

A provision secured by justice

An expression of love

A manifestation of immutability

2 Corinthians 12:9 (NASB)

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.

The sufficiency of grace flows from omnipotence, because God is omnipotent his grace is sufficient, because God is immutable his grace does not fluctuate, because he is eternal his grace is not subject to time and has no expiration.

Grace was part of Gods eternal plan, it did not begin at the cross

The cross manifested what had already been decreed

Grace is not reactive it is eternal

If grace flows from the essence of God then your security does not rest in your consistency it rests in his unchanging character

When circumstances shift grace remains

When you fail grace remains

When you suffer grace remains

**The glory of his grace is the visible expression of
who God has always been**

Grace is not God being soft, grace is god being god

**And when you understand that stability enters the
soul**

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.

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.

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