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When Grace Is “Sufficient” — P5

“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.” (1 Corinthians 15:9)

A third experience of grace is when God deems what He’s given you in your circumstances sufficient, when you don’t feel it is.

This is so clear in Old Testament folks like Job and Jeremiah who struggled to bear what God allowed: *“He has driven me and made me walk in darkness and not in light. Surely against me He has turned His hand repeatedly all the day”* (Lam. 3:2-3). *“God has wronged me and has closed His net around me. Behold, I cry, ‘Violence!’ but I get no answer; I shout for help, but there is no justice. He has walled up my way so that I cannot pass, and He has put darkness on my paths”* (Job 19:6b-8). They did endure in their faith, by God’s grace, but not without moments of anguish in their suffering and despair at God’s “silence.”

Our New Testament example of “sufficient” grace is the great Apostle Paul, who was given *“a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me”* (2 Cor. 12:7b-8). Three times Paul asked God to remove it from him, but God would not. Finally, God did respond to Paul, but it wasn’t what he was expecting. *“And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness’”* (2 Cor. 12:9a).

God told Paul that He would not remove the problem Paul was struggling with, and furthermore, God said His “grace” was sufficient for Paul to keep enduring it! This would be hard to hear if you had been begging God to heal you from something painful or remove something that was tormenting you. There are many Believers in this camp. Many of us have suffered, or are suffering, and God doesn’t

give us the grace we feel we need to get through it. Why does He deem the “lesser” grace He’s given us sufficient when He gives abundant, sometimes overflowing, grace to John or Jane Doe—people who seem to have everything we could ever want? Did we do something wrong? Are we being punished? Are we any less men or women of faith? Were Paul or the Believers at the end of Hebrews 11 any less men and women of Faith? No!

God, in His wisdom, and according to His will, grants the measure of grace He deems necessary for His purposes in each Believer’s life. It isn’t the same for everyone, and we don’t know why—only He does. Because of this, Believers who struggle more with pain, torment, temptation, or persecution can struggle with bitterness, frustration, and anger in their circumstances. They may feel picked on, marginalized, forgotten, or abandoned by God. And from a human perspective we might even say they have cause. The road of “sufficient” grace is one of the hardest roads for the Believer to walk, and those walking it shouldn’t be censured or criticized in their struggles.

Unfortunately, it’s all too common for us to judge the Jeremiahs, Jobs, and Pauls around us. We say things like, “Your suffering could be discipline for sin in your life” or “if you had more faith, God would heal you” or “you need to do ‘x’ or ‘y’—it worked for me” or “follow these 3, 6, or 9 steps and they will change your life.” If that doesn’t work, they might say, “You obviously aren’t trying hard enough,” or “try this other self-help approach.”

These are all different ways of saying, “you are responsible for your situation” or “you can get yourself out of it.” It puts the focus of the Believer on themselves and not on God. Consider that these are literally the words of Job’s false friends when he underwent his terrible trial—words condemned by God Himself, Who’s grace He deemed sufficient for Job to endure a terrible trial for God’s eternal glory and his. Even so, Amen. (Next week, we’ll continue looking at “sufficient” grace).

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