

By God's Grace – part 2
Life Vision Statement – part 2

January 14, 2024

PCI Life Vision Statement:

By God's grace, to step forward as God's man or woman,
in my spheres of influence, to serve His purposes, for His glory.

DAY 1: Grace #1 (review) I'm on His team.

1. Last week we looked at the primary meaning of God's grace, which is undeserved favor. We'll review what I'm calling "Grace #1" today.

2. In the next three verses, **underline** all the words and ideas that talk about our nature before coming to Christ.

Ephesians 2: 1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

3. What strikes you about our natural human nature?

4. After reading verses like this, one wonders why God didn't, a loooooong time ago, just say to each of us, "If that is what you insist on doing, fine. I'm done. I'll have NOTHING more to do with you!"

5. Yet, that is not God's response to rebellious people!

*Ephesians 2:4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is **by grace you have been saved**. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might **show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness** to us in Christ Jesus. 8 **For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—**9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

6. What strikes you about God's grace?

7. Grace is not just an expression of acceptance. It is the lavishness of grace that is equally stunning!

8. What strikes you from today's writing?

DAY 2: Grace #2: God's power over our weakness

1. As we step out as a member of God's team, to serve His purposes, for His glory, we find out that this world is extremely challenging! What we don't yet understand is that we will need far more power to deal with the extremities of life than we imagine. In order to receive God's power, we must realize that whatever human power we may think we possess will be woefully insufficient in facing life's challenges and overcoming our own human nature.

What we need is humility!

2. Here is how God dealt with the great apostle Paul.

II Corinthians 12:7 Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

3. This is a stunning testimony. The apostle Paul was "about His Father's business," and yet God deemed it necessary to add trouble to the apostle—trouble that would humble him!

4. What strikes you about this?

5. Here was Paul's initial response.

II Corinthians 12:8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

6. Here is God's response.

II Corinthians 12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

7. What strikes you about God's response to Paul's **pleading** three times with God?

8. Here is Paul's response.

II Corinthians 12:9b Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

9. Two vital lessons for us about God's grace:

a. No matter how hard it is or how much it costs or how weak we are, His grace is sufficient.

b. His power is made perfect in our weakness, as we look to Him in faith.

10. What strikes you from today's writing?

DAY 3: Grace #2: God's power over our troubles

1. As we saw yesterday, God's puts a premium on our humility!

1 Peter 5:5 In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows grace to the humble." ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

2. As we've already seen, unless we are humble, a simple recognition of our inabilities, we will never really depend on God's power, choosing either to rely on what we can do, or give up on doing what we know we should.

3. Peter also adds the humility piece of submitting to our elders. Why do you think that is important?

4. "God opposes the proud." My mentor gave me a metaphor of God opposing us. Imagine me being an offensive lineman on my high school team. I would be in the huddle, hear the play, and then line-up for the play. Just before the ball was hiked, I looked up to see the defensive tackle opposite me. To my shock, God was opposing me!!! This is a picture of what Peter tells us.

5 We will need God's grace to deal with anxiety and worries.

1 Peter 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

6. We will need God's grace to deal with Satan's attacks against us.

1 Peter 5:8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

7. How are we to resist Satan (v. 9)?

8. His grace is sufficient to save, sustain, and sanctify us.

9. What strikes you from today's writing?

DAY 4: Grace #2: God's power over our suffering

*1 Peter 5:9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing **the same kind of sufferings**.*

1. Suffering is part of life. We live in a fallen world where evil occurs, things break, people behave in ways that are corrupt, and sometimes God's punishment to correct us can be painful.

2. God's people are not immune to suffering as Peter says.

3. In the face of suffering, Peter tells us to:

a. Resist Satan

b. Stand firm in the faith.

4. What strikes you about verse 9?

5. Thankfully, God is redemptive and uses our suffering for our benefit, the benefit of others, to advance His kingdom, for His glory.

*1 Peter 5:10 **And the God of all grace**, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have **suffered** a little while, will himself **restore** you and **make you strong, firm and steadfast**.
¹¹ To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

6. For each of the pieces of this verse, jot down what strikes you:

a. The God of all grace –

b. God called us to His eternal glory –

c. Suffered a while –

d. Restore you –

e. Make you strong –

f. (Make you) firm –

g. (Make you) steadfast –

7. What strikes you from today's writing?

DAY 5: Grace #2: God's power over any challenge

1. As we've seen, suffering and being humbled are normative! This is especially true for the Christian.
2. Sometimes, we foolishly imagine that the farther we go on with Christ, the easier life will be.
3. That's not true. Consider Paul as a case study. Underline every challenge and type of suffering Paul had to endure.

II Corinthians 11:23 I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. ²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

³⁰ *If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness:*

4. What strikes you about Paul's suffering and difficulties?
5. While all of these trials and tribulations were going on, Paul was moving forward to accomplish God's purposes, in his spheres of influence, for God's glory.
6. It is obvious that Paul needed the grace of God to meet the challenges of his life.
7. As Christians, we are called upon to meet life's trials and suffering while at the same time caring more about the people God has brought into our sphere of influence! This is where our lives matter. This is where we experience of grace of God and His power to get outside ourselves and into the lives of people around us!
8. If you are currently going through a trial or suffering, how does Paul's example help you?
9. Are there people in your sphere of influence that could benefit from your love and care? Who?
10. What strikes you from today's writing?