



By

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The Grace of God is glorious! It can blind the powerful and give sight to the humble.

We are mere mortals. We cannot comprehend the Glory of God. We can read about it. We can think about it. We can imagine it. But we cannot fathom it. We've not seen it in our lifetime. Few have seen God's Glory and lived. Those who did were changed forever. The Bible is full of examples of the Glory of God's Grace. For the sake of our brief study, we'll look at five people whose lives were altered by it: Moses, Peter, James, John and Paul. We'll learn what they learned about the Glory of God's Grace.

Moses and the Glory of God's Grace

God demonstrated His Grace toward Israel by placing Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, in a high position in the government of Egypt.

“So Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.’”Genesis 41:41

Joseph was 30 years old. God had showed Joseph that a famine would soon come upon the entire land affecting everyone, including his own family. The famine would begin after seven years of abundance. Joseph used his position and power to store up tons of grain in all the cities of Egypt. Just as Joseph had predicted, the seven years of abundance ended and the seven years of famine began.

When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. And all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the world.”Genesis 41:56-57
Jacob (also named Israel) and his family lived in Canaan. He heard about Egypt's grain and sent his sons to buy some of it. Joseph eventually made himself known to his brothers, who had sold him into slavery many years earlier. Joseph forgave them and invited his father and brothers and their families to move to Egypt.

“So Israel set out with all that was his, and when he reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, ‘Jacob! Jacob!’ ‘Here I am,’ he replied. ‘I am God, the God of your father,’ he said. ‘Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph’s own hand will close your eyes.’”Genesis 46:1-4

Jacob died in Egypt. So did Joseph, at the age of 110. Joseph’s children, Manasseh and Ephraim, joined the other children of Israel in leading them into prosperity.

“Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, but the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land was filled with them.”Exodus 1:6-7

This was not to last long. God had prophesied their downfall generations earlier.

“Then the Lord said to him [Abraham], ‘Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.’”Genesis 15:13-14

That's what happened some time after Joseph's death.

“Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. ‘Look,’ he said to his people, ‘the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.’ So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor ... the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly.”Exodus 1:8-13

The history of Israel during those 400 years was bleak. The people of God were born into oppression, grew up in oppression and died in oppression. Generation after generation knew little else. Their God was silent. The king of Egypt ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill all the boys born to Israel. The midwives did not obey the king and the people of Israel increased. Pharaoh ordered his people to kill all the sons of Israel but let the girls live. It seemed that Israel would soon perish, but God was Gracious toward His people and gave them Moses.

Moses' mother saved his life by placing him in a papyrus basket among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. Pharaoh's daughter found the baby and later made him her son. Moses grew up in the courts of Egypt.

“One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand ... When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian...”Exodus 2:11-12, 15

Moses became a shepherd, married and had a son while in Midian. He stayed for a long time.

“During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.”Exodus 2:23-25

God’s Grace is about to be poured on Israel. He is about to free them from four centuries of slavery. How does He begin? By showing Moses the Glory of His Grace.

“Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, ‘I

will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.’ When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, ‘Moses! Moses!’ And Moses said, ‘Here I am.’ ‘Do not come any closer,’ God said. ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground ... I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the land of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of the land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey ... And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.’”Exodus 3:1-10

We see in these verses the tenderness, mercy and grace of God. He was concerned about their suffering and was going to rescue them through Moses. Moses argued with God about becoming Israel’s leader, but Moses did go and did lead Israel out of Egypt. The Glory of God’s Grace changed Moses from a shepherd into the greatest leader Israel had ever known.

Who was the “angel of the Lord” who appeared to Moses from the burning bush? God! God called to Moses from within the bush. Sometimes we don’t think about this, but that was the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ inside that burning bush. The Glory that changed the life of Moses is the same Glory that changed you and me.

Moses experienced the Glory of God's Grace many times before he died. He watched the wonders of God unfold in Egypt that eventually led to Pharaoh's agreement to let the Israelites leave the country. Moses saw the Glory of God's Grace as He placed a pillar in front of the people to lead them out of Egypt. It was a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Moses saw the Glory of God's Grace move that pillar from in front of the people of Israel to behind them to protect them from Pharaoh's charging army. God told Moses that what was about to happen was for His Glory.

"I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen."Exodus 14:17-18

Moses and all of Israel watched as the entire army of Pharaoh that had chased the Israelites into the Red Sea drowned. It was another demonstration of the Glory of God's Grace.

"That day the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. And when the Israelites saw the great power the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant."Exodus 14:30-31

Moses witnessed the Glory of God's Grace when he saw God feed the Israelites with bread from heaven . Moses saw the Glory of God's Grace as Israel defeated the armies of the Amalekites as long as Moses held up the staff of God. However, nothing could have affected Moses as much as receiving the Laws of God on Mt. Sinai. God wanted Israel to be safe and prosper in the land He was going to give them. He demonstrated His Grace toward them through laws that would govern them wisely and well.

“When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai ... To the Israelites the glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.”Exodus 24:15-18

Moses returned from the mountain top with the Law in two tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God. However, Moses found a rebellious Israel worshipping other gods. Moses was so angry at what he saw that he threw the tablets, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. Moses later returned to Mount Sinai to receive God's Law again. Moses asked God to show him His Glory.

“And the Lord said, ‘I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But,’ he said, ‘you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.’ Then the Lord said, ‘There is a

place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.”Exodus 33:19-23

Notice three important points about God’s Glory. Moses asked God to show him His Glory. God’s answer to that was that He would cause all His “goodness” to pass in front of Moses. God said He would proclaim His name, “the Lord,” in Moses’ presence. God told Moses He would “have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” God used the words “goodness, mercy and compassion” when speaking about His Glory. The goodness, mercy and compassion of God are His Grace. His Grace is His Glory!

Here’s what happened when God showed Moses His Glory.

“Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. And He passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, ‘The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.’”Exodus 34:5-7

God again defines His Grace through His Glory. He is:

1. Compassionate
2. Gracious
3. Slow to anger
4. Abounding in love and faithfulness
5. Maintaining love to thousands
6. Forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin

God is also Just. He does not leave the guilty unpunished. Justice is an important part of God's Grace.

Seeing God's Glory affected Moses in several ways: spiritual, mental, emotional, social and physical.

“When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the Lord had given him on Mount Sinai. When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever he entered the Lord's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, they saw that his face was radiant.

Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the Lord.”Exodus 34:29-35

The Book of Exodus ends with the Glory of God’s Grace. It filled the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting. The Glory of God’s Grace continued to lead Israel into the promised land. It had a tremendous impact on Moses and all of God’s people.

“Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out; but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out—until the day it lifted. So the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels.”Exodus 40:35-38

Peter and the Glory of God's Grace

The Glory of God's Grace shines brightly in the New Testament. God demonstrated it at the birth of His Son, Jesus Christ.

“And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy that will be to all people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.’” Luke 2:8-14

The birth of Jesus Christ was all about the Grace of God. Jesus came to save His people from their sins and to establish a kingdom that would never end. The announcement of the Messiah's birth brought the heavenly host and “the glory of the Lord.” It was the Glory of God's Grace.

Jesus chose twelve men to be His closest disciples. He spent three years mentoring them, preparing them for their roles as the Apostles of the Kingdom. They saw Jesus heal the sick, raise the dead and work miracle after miracle. They were witnesses to the Power of God's Grace. Three of

them, Peter, John and James, had a special opportunity to witness the Glory of God's Grace.

“After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.’ While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!’ When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them, ‘Get up,’ he said. ‘Don’t be afraid.’ When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, ‘Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.’ The disciples asked him, ‘Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?’ Jesus replied, ‘To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.’ Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.”Matthew 17:1-13

The word “transfigured” is *metemorphothe*. It comes from the words *meta* (change, transfer) and *morphe* (form). It means “to transform, change from one form to another.” *Morphe* speaks to the distinctive nature and character of the object. This transformation of Jesus was not outward as with the change of clothing. It was inward and showed His distinctive nature and character. Jesus was the God-Man. He appeared like a man to those around Him, but inside that outer form was His Eternal Diety, His Majesty, and His Glory. What Peter, James and John saw that day was the Glory of God’s Grace in Christ. *Metemorphothe* is in the passive voice in Matthew 17:2, meaning “someone else” transformed Jesus. We know from the context that God the Father did the transforming.

God wanted Peter, James and John to see with their own eyes the Glory of God’s Grace. He wanted them to know Christ in a way that the others would not know until after His resurrection.

Mark also wrote about the transfiguration of Christ. It gives us more insight into what Peter, James and John saw, thought and felt.

“After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.’ (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.) Then a cloud appeared

and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: 'This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!' Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what 'rising from the dead' meant. And they asked him, 'Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?' Jesus replied, 'To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.'"Mark 9:2-13

Peter, James and John became leaders of the Kingdom Apostles. What they learned about the Glory of God's Grace from Christ's Transfiguration would keep them going through the toughest of times in their ministries. They knew that the One they served was truly the Son of Almighty God. They knew His Power, His Purity and His Glory.

John, the youngest of the Kingdom Apostles, saw the Glory of Christ many years later while on the island of Patmos. He saw the Power and Glory of Christ in a way that must have reminded him of the day he saw Jesus transformed. John and the other Kingdom Apostles had such high hopes for Israel. However, John had lived through Israel's rejection of the Kingdom and the Roman's destruction of Jerusalem. What he saw and heard in the "Revelation" must have lifted his heart to see the glory that would become Israel's.

“...and among the lampstands was someone ‘like a son of man,’ dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.”Revelation 1:13-16

The Book of Revelation is about God’s Grace toward Israel. He promised Israel a Messiah Who would destroy its enemies and make Israel the leading nation of the world.

“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. ‘He will rule them with an iron scepter.’ He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”Revelation 19:11-16

The Glory of God's Grace is a bright light. It shines for all to see what He has done.

“I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it ... There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”Revelation 21:22-24; 22:5

Paul and the Glory of God's Grace

Saul was a Pharisee who delighted in persecuting followers of Christ. He would have gone down in Israel's history as one of the great prosecutors and teachers of the Law, except for one thing: he saw the Glory of God's Grace.

“Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ ‘Who are you, Lord?’ Saul asked. ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied. ‘Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’ The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.”Acts 9:1-9

This was the turning point in Paul's life. He was on a crusade, a mission to destroy all the followers of Christ, but God had another plan. Jesus came to Saul in the Glory of His Grace, blinded the persecuting Pharisee and changed him forever.

“Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.”Acts 9:17-19

Paul related this event many times during his life. It was his moment of “great change.” It was his moment of “salvation.” God had been Gracious toward Paul. He saved Paul and gave him new direction and a new mission. That “mission of Grace” would become our salvation. It began with a bright light from heaven and became the beginning of God’s Great Mystery of Grace.

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