

Sufficiency for Godly Living #3 - Man's Sufficiency vs. God's Sufficiency

by Bob Hoekstra

The sermon emphasizes the importance of relying on God's sufficiency for godly living, rather than relying on human effort and resources.

Duration: 55:59

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 2 Corinthians 3:3, 2 Corinthians 3:5-6, Hebrews 7:18-19

Topics: "Gods Sufficiency", "Heart Transformation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal experience of going door-to-door to share the message of God. Initially, they were enthusiastic and organized, but their efforts were met with rejection and disappointment. They realized that their approach was focused on their own efforts and trying to live up to a perfect standard. The speaker emphasizes the importance of the heart in living by God's sufficiency and contrasts it with living under the law. They highlight the need to trust in God's grace and allow Him to write His message of holiness and godliness on our hearts.

Transcript

God's sufficiency for godly living. This particular study is a contrast. Man's sufficiency versus God's sufficiency.

We should expect by the terminology there's going to be a big gap between the two, a great difference between the two, and so it is. 2 Corinthians 3.5, one of our theme verses for all six studies reads, Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God. That very verse speaks of the contrast between man's sufficiency and God's sufficiency.

Man's sufficiency. Let's face it. The Bible makes it clear.

We don't have resources that are adequate to meet the task. The task is godliness. The task is growing in Christ-likeness.

The task is walking with God and serving God, being transformed to the image of Christ. We don't have adequate resources to cause that to happen, though that is the path we are to walk in. So clearly we must look elsewhere for our sufficient resources for Christian living.

And this very verse tells us the source. Our sufficiency is from God. The only place we can find adequate supply of life to grow and live and serve the way God calls us to function is drawing our sufficiency from God Himself.

So we're going to look in this study at the contrast between man's sufficiency and God's sufficiency. And we use the word versus here. Man's sufficiency versus God's sufficiency.

They're really in conflict. There's a great contrast. One can only be used for the kingdom of man.

The other must be drawn upon for the kingdom of heaven. One, everyone draws upon it in the natural plane of human existence, man's sufficiency. But that will not be adequate for what we're called to in the family of God.

Man's sufficiency versus God's sufficiency. There's another way to look at that contrast, and it's right in the immediate context of our primary chapters for these six studies. And that is 2 Corinthians chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5, right in there.

The other way to look at this issue of man's sufficiency versus God's sufficiency is that this speaks of the difference between living by the Old Covenant of Law and the New Covenant of Grace. The New Covenant of Grace is really the theme of these early chapters of 2 Corinthians. Right in this chapter, chapter 3, there is a contrast built in about the New Covenant and the Old Covenant.

2 Corinthians 3, verse 6, speaking of God who also made us sufficient as servants of the New Covenant. We are New Covenant servants. We serve God under the terms of the New Covenant.

And we've looked much at that already. Jesus said, This cup is the New Covenant in My blood which is shed for you. The shed blood of Jesus Christ purchasing for us an astounding new and living arrangement for walking with God.

That's the New Covenant. This chapter later on in verse 14 says, But their minds were blinded for until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament. Same term, it could be translated, Old Covenant.

And perhaps it would even be a more precise, contextual translation. Same word, Testament covenant. But at the reading of the Old Covenant, because the veil is taken away in Christ, the contrast in this very chapter is about the Old Covenant of Law contrasted with the New Covenant of Grace.

Verse 5 brings that down to the contrast between living by man's sufficiency or living by God's sufficiency. See, living under the law as our code of life, as our way to relate to God, it demands that you live up to that law on your own best effort and resources. Now of course, no one could start or develop a relationship with God by law.

The book of Galatians is exceedingly clear on that. As is Hebrews, as is the message of the prophets of old, Jesus himself, and the apostles in the New Testament. The law wasn't given to begin or develop a relationship with God.

The law was given to show our desperate need to have a relationship with God. For forgiveness of sin and then new life to draw upon. And of course, that all is provided in the New Covenant, the grace of God.

Forgiving our sins and giving us a new life to draw upon for daily living. So this study of man's sufficiency versus God's sufficiency is a look at the contrast between trying to live under the terms of the Old Covenant of law as opposed to living under the New Covenant of grace. The Old Covenant of law just leaves you man's resources to draw upon.

The New Covenant of grace opens up God's sufficiency as our daily supply. Now that's sort of a framework of thinking together in the context and where we're going in this passage. Now let's look at a number of contrasts between man's sufficiency and God's sufficiency, or Old Covenant living versus New Covenant living.

Here's one, and there are a series of them in chapter 3 of 2 Corinthians. Here's one, our first heading, ink versus the Spirit. Verse 3, Clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God.

We looked before at this issue of God marking us as letters of Christ, building a characteristic of life into our lives by His work that makes us a living statement of who Jesus Christ is and what He can do. And here we're reminded how that letter was written in our lives, not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God. Ink versus Spirit.

Ink speaks of human resource, something man can produce and man can use, whether he's just natural pagan man or even born again child of God, but say, walking in the flesh and just dabbling in human resource alone. Just in the realm of human life and existence on earth, ink. You don't have to be a Christian to use ink.

You don't have to walk in the Spirit to use ink. I mean, ink falls on the just and unjust alike, just like the rain. It's sort of a resource that any can avail themselves of.

Well, that's not how we live the life in Christ, not just by anything you can grab and kind of make it work. Life in Christ must be by the Spirit of the living God. Ink versus Spirit.

Human resource versus divine resource. A good example in the contemporary culture we live in, including the contemporary church culture we live in, this illustration of ink, is the slick, four-color, eight-fold-out church growth brochures. There are churches literally built by the brochure.

Now, not that it is against the will or character of God to communicate something with someone in a brochure. That's not the point. The point is, where are you putting your trust and hope? And there are many churches in America that are almost literally built on ink.

The whole thing runs by the four-color, eight-page, slick brochure. Selling the program, selling the church, selling the leaders. I was just this afternoon looking in some of my study and teaching files on the class I'm preparing at Calvary Chapel Bible College called, The Church, How Jesus Builds It.

I was looking at some of the brochures from the church growth movement that have come to my own personal address or post office box. And just selling happy times and fun times. And one I looked at today, it was beautiful.

It was well done. I mean, exceedingly well done. And this contemporary, really kind of a hip, with it, I guess, I don't know, maybe kind of a yuppie Southern California family.

I don't know. But, you know, they're sitting around the fireplace looking like this perfect, absolute combination of capability, and yet casual, open, and yet, don't want to get too radical, you know. And they said something like, here's a family that loves to have fun.

And the invitation was, come to our church and you'll have it. And then the name of the church was signed. I mean, ink.

It's ink. That's not how lives are built. That's not how the church is supposed to be built.

Lives are to be built by the Spirit of the living God. Hearts are to be touched and changed by the Spirit of the living God. Think about it.

What characterizes your own life? Your own Christian walk and growth and service? Does it all hinge on ink or the presence and activity of the Spirit of God? Ink, that's living by man's sufficiency. The Spirit of the living God at work, that's how we live, by the adequate resources of God. Here's another contrast between man's sufficiency and God's sufficiency, or between Old Covenant living and New Covenant living.

Next heading, tablets of stone versus human hearts. That also is in verse 3. Clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is of the heart. Soft living vessel, the heart, instead of tablets of stone.

Here's another contrast. Tablets of stone versus human hearts. Tablets of stone, they're external to our lives.

Human hearts, inside our very being. Big contrast. Tablets of stone, inanimate, just a dead rock.

Tablets of human heart, the tablet for the writing of the message, is alive, it's us, and God working on us and in us. The contrast is enormous. It's the difference between trying to live up to a perfect standard that we're looking at outside of our being, contrasted with God bringing that message of holiness and godliness and his perfect glory into the center of our being and writing it on our heart and mind.

Our heart, so key in living by God's sufficiency, so key in living under the new covenant, so critical living by the grace of God, to say the same thing three different ways. Jesus said, guard your heart, for out of it flow all the issues of life. All of life starts in the heart and flows outward.

What's going on inside the heart will always eventually shine out, show forth, be manifested, evident to all. So guard the heart. Live by what God is doing in the heart, not by what we can drum up to measure up to an external standard.

Tablets of stone versus tablets of human hearts. What a major difference. Tablets of stone, us trying to achieve a standard we're looking at.

Tablets of human hearts, God inside writing the message on our thinking, our motivations, our evaluations, our priorities, all of that. God at work at the very fountainhead of life in the core of our being, where the Spirit of God dwells, and where the Spirit of God can develop and release the very life of Christ in and through us. Just think of it.

To shape and change your own life, would you rather try your best on your resources, say to live up to the message on the stones, the Ten Commandments, or have God inside of you affecting who you are and how you think and act? There's no comparison. Tablets of stone versus human hearts. Enormous

difference between living by man's sufficiency versus God's sufficiency.

Now more. The letter versus the Spirit. The letter versus the Spirit.

Verse 6. Speaking of God who also made us sufficient as servants of the new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. The letter versus the Spirit. What an enormous contrast.

Living by the letter, that speaks of man's sufficiency. The old covenant, it speaks of law. Living by the Spirit, instead, speaks of God's sufficiency.

The new covenant, living by the grace of God. The letter rules to keep. It doesn't matter if it's the Ten Commandments from God Himself or the 110 evangelical commandments from you and me.

Oh, you can't do that and be a good Christian. Oh, you've got to do this to be a growing Christian. Oh, you can't do that if you're a Christian.

Well, if you want to really show you're a Christian, you've got to get into this. And we can lay them out and we can back them up by Scripture, that is, insofar as things that might please or displease God, but we don't get to the heart of the issue. Where is the resource for this coming from? Me or God? That's what we're driving at in this study, time after time.

Yes, the Ten Commandments are holy, just, and good, as the Scriptures declare. They describe the perfect holiness of God and call us to walk in it and not violate it. But as Hebrews 7, 18, and 19 say, the law makes nothing perfect.

The law just demands perfection. It cannot offer anything to cause the perfecting or maturing process to take place. It's a measuring rod.

It is not a source of growth and life. If you want to grow up to be six foot tall, you don't take a six foot measuring rod and see how much of it you can eat every day, right? You use that for measuring. But if you want to grow, you eat that which nurtures life.

That's what we're talking about. The letter is a measuring rod of life. Whether it's there or not, it doesn't nurture or cause or provide life.

Only the Spirit of God can do that. You've got to read a hundred verses a week to grow. You've got to pray and fast seven times every six months to grow.

You've got to witness eight times a week to be a maturing Christian. Listen, all of those things can be happening in the life of a maturing believer, but none of them in and of themselves causes the life to spring forth within. Again, it's more like signs of potential life versus what is causing the life to grow and flow and develop.

I mean, pagans and heathens can go to religious meetings. Pagans and heathens can have fasts for all kinds of reasons. And they can memorize things.

Some who don't even know God memorize the Bible. There was a man in Israel who memorized the entire New Testament. Not because he was a Messianic Jew.

He was tired of these Christians bugging him, and he's going to show them they didn't know what they're talking about. It isn't the fasting. It isn't the meetings.

It isn't the memorizing. It's where is the life source flowing from? Man or God? The letter versus the Spirit. It's the difference between living by rules to keep or the Spirit of God at work to change us.

Major contrast. The letter versus the Spirit. Here's another contrast.

Ministry of death versus ministry of life. These issues appear in verses 6 through 8. Speaking of God who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away. We'll come back to that issue in a while. How will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? For the moment, those few verses are packed.

We're comparing and contrasting the ministry of death versus the ministry of life. The ministry of death, verse 7. But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones. Verse 8, the ministry of life.

Literally here called the ministry of the Spirit. But correlate that with verse 6. The Spirit gives life. So we're comparing and contrasting a ministry of the Spirit and the ministry of life.

Ministry. Serving up something. Providing something.

Dispensing something. Producing something. Serving up something.

Well here there are contrasting ministries. Death and life. How could you get more severe in contrast? It's hard to find things more opposite than death and life.

That's what we're speaking here in ministry. Each of us, all the time we're ministering, we're either ministering up death or life. Churches as they minister, they're either ministering death or life.

If we or a church is ministering by human sufficiency, death, spiritual deadness and death is coming out of it. If we or a church are ministering by God's sufficiency, life is being served up. That's the difference.

Ministry of death versus ministry of life. What would a ministry of life look like in a person or a church or a family? That person's life and ministry, their family, the church they are serving in, the ministry would be characterized, if it's a ministry of life, it would be characterized by the things that God is and God can produce, like love, peace, humility, confidence in God, a realness, a genuineness, fulfillment in lives, both those serving and those they serve, gentleness, warmth. Those are just some of the descriptions of what a ministry of life would look like, individually or collectively.

From whence does that flow? From living by the sufficiency of God. God either is these things or produces these things. And He does it for individuals, families and churches.

Those who live by God's sufficiency. What would a ministry of death look like? What would characterize it in an individual, a family, a church? Instead of love, there would be judgmentalism. Instead of peace, there would be a striving anxiety.

Instead of humility, there would be pride and self-righteousness. Instead of confidence in God, there would be self-confidence. Instead of a reality, a genuineness in lives, there would be hypocrisy and pretense.

Instead of fulfillment in lives, there would be emptiness and frustration. Instead of gentleness, there would be harshness and roughness. Instead of warmth, there would be coldness and austerity.

God's sufficiency produces gentleness in lives and families and churches. Man's sufficiency can produce a harshness, a roughness. My wife and I came to the Lord.

My wife came to the Lord in 1965. I came to the Lord the last week of 1965. And we were both saved in a church that, though it got the gospel out sufficient for folks to find forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Christ, it was characterized often by man's sufficiency, degrees and professionalism and achievement and, you know, being better than others and kind of a religious military.

Be all you can be, you know. And my dad knew the pastor, and they'd been friends from way, way back in their young adulthood. And it's amazing to me because my dad is really the opposite of roughness and harshness.

And he didn't go to the church. He just knew the pastor. My dad lived then as he does now in Dallas, Texas.

But he helped this pastor in Glendale, California and loved him, wanted to encourage him and had a heart for him. But there was a harshness and a roughness in that church. And though it's a strange, long story, and I won't bother you with it, but I ended up working at that church even before I was saved, which is a little bit of a tip-off.

Partly because they had compassion on me and partly because they were being kind to my daddy who saw how desperate I was. I was so desperate just before I got saved. From my eyes, I was so desperate I'd even work for a church if I had to, you know.

In those days, that's the bottom of the barrel desperate, you know. So, for whatever reason, they let me work there. And I ended up going to staff meetings and all.

Oh, I just was startled to see the brutality sometimes verbally toward the staff members. I thought, well, what do I know? I guess that's the way you're supposed to do it. Not at all.

That's old covenant. That's law. That's by the letter.

That's living by man's sufficiency. That's you as a leader. You're going to make those people be what you think they ought to be, you know, if it kills you and them.

And it will. It will. Because it's a ministry of death.

Churches are to be loving and peaceful and walk in humility and a confidence in God and a genuineness and lives fulfilled and gentle and warm. Have you ever walked into a church group and maybe out on the road or something and you just felt a coldness, an austerity, kind of this amazing distance? How can we all be in one room and so far apart from each other? Well, it comes from old covenant letter of the law. Living by human sufficiency.

It's inadequate. It's like a stone. Yeah, you can write the perfect message in it, but you can't touch lives the right way through it.

And you go into some other groups and the moment you're in there, you just sense the arms of God are wrapped all around you, you know. They're living by the sufficiency of God. They're living by the grace of God.

They're functioning as new covenant servants. You know, I think it would be almost humorous. It would be kind of a shocking revelation, but it would be almost humorous if one night God would move across the church world as the death angel once did across Egypt and God would have every church sign on every church building in the land rewritten from heaven's perspective.

And the next day they happen to be walking by the church sign and it says, Old Covenant Community of Death. Come one, come all, we'll lay the letter of the law on you. I mean, honestly, I'm not saying I know every place that would be rewritten, but let's face it, in too many places and in too many places they might be shocked.

Well, that's how critical this issue is. Because no matter what we put on our church sign, if we're drawing on the wrong resource, we're killing people spiritually. And you can kill people in pride or despair.

Hey, you're great. The reason God saved you, you're super. Hey, God don't make junk and you're the best of His non-junk, you know.

All this self-worth pump up, you know. Hey, look at the price God paid for you. Boy, He must have thought you were something great.

It's interesting the Scriptures don't draw that inference, you know. That, look at the price paid, wow, you must have been some merchandise. That's the human mind that comes up with that twist on the Scripture.

The Scriptures say, oh, what love the Father had for us. That when we were yet sinners, Christ died for the super special folks. For the ungodly.

The message is always, how great His love to pay a price like that for us. Wow. It's not, boy, what I am worth.

No, it's oh, how He loves. Oh, how He loves that He would pay that infinite price for someone like me. Wow.

What love God has for us. And in that love we find acceptance, peace, security, blessing, protection, joy. And it blows our minds, you know.

That's the kind of ministry God wants us to have. One of life that gives people life, hope in God, humility before God, love from God, peace with God, reality in the Lord, and gentle like Jesus, warm and loving as only God can be. Those are our choices, ministry of life or ministry of death.

Now, there's another way to say this. And by the way, we are talking, again, life and death issues. This is not just, again, a little theological hair splitting, you know.

Well, you know, what is that, some kind of way you like to do it? No, it's the choices the Word gives us, life or death. It all depends on where we're drawing the resource for the life we're living, the ministry we're

developing. Man's sufficiency or God's sufficiency.

But there's another way to talk about that ministry issue, ministry of condemnation versus ministry of righteousness. That's another way to say it, life or death. It all depends on where we're drawing the resource for the life we're living, the ministry we're developing.

Man's sufficiency or God's sufficiency. But there's another way to talk about that ministry issue, ministry of condemnation versus ministry of righteousness. That's another way to say it.

Verse 9, For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. We'll talk about this glory issue. It's a wonderful one.

But let's just take the phrases ministry of condemnation and ministry of righteousness and compare and contrast them. Again, ministry. Serving, providing, dispensing, making available.

What does our ministry offer to people? Individually, as a family, or as a church family. Does our ministry offer condemnation or righteousness? The ministry of condemnation, living by the letter of the law, living by the sufficiency of man. It's a condemning ministry.

It says guilty, it says you failed. It's typified by the law. If you try to live up to the law every day, it's a condemning experience.

You give it your best shot. You're looking at the Ten Commandments, you're giving it your best shot, and no, it's better than you ever, ever, ever did, ever dreamed you could do. Then you come up to get the report card.

How is that? Guilty. Guilty? I never did as well. The whole week was the best ever.

Yeah, but remember the standard. Be as holy as God. Be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.

Leviticus, 1 Peter, Matthew 5.48, Be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect. That's the standard. So no matter how well you do, you come before the standard.

And what does it minister to you? Condemnation. You failed. You don't measure up.

You're guilty. Ministry of condemnation. You're guilty.

You failed. You fell short again. Yeah, but I did better than anyone in our test group of 100 Christians.

I was 20, 30 points better than any of them. They aren't the standard. Yeah, but I did better than I ever did.

You're not the standard. Yeah, but I'm improving. Improvement isn't the standard.

God is the standard. And if we live by man's sufficiency, man's resources, what man can do, it leaves people under condemnation. Guilty.

You failed. It's a restrictive way to live, a repressive, inhibiting. You never feel that you've ever functioned properly.

It's based on merit by performance. You know what it does to? This is a killer. It leaves people never at ease with God because they can never do enough to satisfy His holy standard of perfection.

So they think God's always down on them. They think God's mad at them. They feel like God's against them.

It's a ministry of condemnation. What is the other option? Well, living by the resources of God. New Covenant living, living by the grace of God.

That's a ministry of righteousness. That ministry announces, declares, by faith in Christ, you can be righteous in Christ. And that righteousness of Christ can be available daily for daily living by faith.

It's a liberating message in ministry. It's an enabling, strengthening, encouraging ministry to people. The relationship with God is not built on performance, what they could do for God, but what God has already done for them in Christ.

It lets people become increasingly at ease with God. Building a relationship with God. Drawing nigh to God.

Not running and hiding. Not watching out that He's going to thump any moment. But no seeking, approaching, because they know Christ is their propitiation as the Scripture puts it.

The satisfactory payment for their sin debt. God isn't mad, He's satisfied. His wrath has already been poured out on Jesus that should have been poured out on me.

God's not looking for a chance to get mad at me. He's looking for a chance to show me how much He loves me. That's our message one to another if we have a ministry of righteousness.

In a ministry of righteousness, Christ is not only our substitute on the cross, forgiving our sin and death, and giving us new life. He's our daily resource of life. Each day we draw from Him what we need for the challenges, opportunities, situations that face us or that are going on inside our very being.

Ministry of condemnation versus ministry of righteousness. Major difference. If we live by the sufficiency of man, if we try to urge others to live by the sufficiency of man, we're just dispensing condemnation for them.

But if we'll live by the sufficiency of God, urge others to do the same, we're ministering righteousness. Righteousness from Christ in Christ that covers our sin and offers us a whole new life to grow in. Let's begin to get into this glory issue that appears numerous times now.

So far we've looked at these contrasts. Ink versus the Spirit. Tablets of stone versus human hearts.

The letter versus the Spirit. Ministry of death versus ministry of life. Ministry of condemnation versus ministry of righteousness.

Now, fading glory versus remaining glory. This is a biggie. Fading glory versus remaining glory.

For if what is passing away, verse 11, was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. The glory of that which is passing away, fading glory, contrasted with the glory of that which remains, remaining glory. Verse 7 even speaks of the fading glory.

End of the verse, Because of the glory of His countenance, which glory was passing away. A fading glory. Now think of the implications of these contrasts.

A life characterized by fading glory versus remaining glory. One is built on man's sufficiency. The other is built on God's sufficiency.

One is built on performance under the letter of the law. The other, by receiving God's resources under the grace of God. The fading glory.

It's sort of like the hype of a religious pep rally. You know, you're together. Five thousand together.

Ten thousand. Seventy thousand in the stadium, chanting, Jesus, Jesus, will take the world for Him. And will be faithful to Him.

It seems at the moment like you could never stumble or fail. There's a glory in it. And it is a glorious moment.

But oh, it can so easily be a fading glory. How? When you're off alone, two weeks later, where's the glory of the seventy thousand? It's just you, the world, the flesh, and the devil. And you feel outnumbered.

Why, when we were all chanting, glory be to God, it was like I could never do wrong. Glory be to God. But glorious as that may be for the moment, if it's based on human sufficiency, it'll be a fading glory.

I remember when I was pastoring in Dallas, Emmanuel came out to help you go door to door, to take the world for Christ, a house at a time. Boy, we got excited in the church I was pastoring there in the middle and late sixties. We got a team together.

We asked for volunteers. We had a good church pep rally. Who wants to take this neighborhood for the Lord? Well, who doesn't, you know? Yes, yes.

And many signed up. And we started meeting. We charted out on the wall, the streets in the neighborhood, every address of every house throughout the neighborhood.

Emmanuel in hand. Go, go, go, go. Boy, they didn't have a chance.

It all went great until that first person answered the first door. We didn't know they were going to pop our balloon. I mean, how rude can you be? Oh, the glory began to fizzle and fade.

That little army kept dwindling. And we'd sit before the charts and the maps and the manuals on the table and oh, the condemnation. Oh, the sense of failure.

And we'd hype and pump. We've got to try harder. That's the thing.

We're not trying hard enough, you know? The actual fact of the matter is we never reached one household that way. God saved many souls through the neighborhood, but in ways that we didn't seem to affect, you know? Spontaneous meeting at the grocery. A conversation after a church service.

Someone over for dinner. I mean, that wasn't in the manual. Well, we were living, really.

We had good motives. I mean, we did want to reach people for Christ, but the sufficiency was definitely man's. And the glory faded.

Fading glory versus remaining glory. It's one of the contrasts between living by man's sufficiency or God's sufficiency. Why does the glory fade under the arrangement of man's sufficiency? Because the glory

depends on my ability and my faithfulness.

And they're both lacking. I might have great intentions. I might have a very serious, profound vow.

I might find commitment renewed. But if I'm drawing on my resources, my own inability and my own unfaithfulness will eventually be demonstrated. What is the option? We don't have to function in the Christian life with a fading glory.

There's a remaining glory that can abide with us day after day after day after day. A glory that remains like the everlasting God who always was, always is, and always shall be. God isn't on today and off tomorrow.

Here today, gone tomorrow. His name kind of says it all. I Am.

Think on that name. Nobody started me. No one sustains me.

No one will stop me. I Am. That's glorious.

The glory remains because the everlasting God is one who has promised to His children that He will never leave us nor forsake us. Yeah, He can be there when the rally is 70,000 strong, though sometimes we get distracted from Him if it's too exciting. He can be there.

The hope and the strength of any given heart that is looking to Him, not the hype of the moment, but the wonder of it is too when all the rest are gone and we're just absolutely alone, He's still there. He hasn't changed. He's still available.

He's still committed to us. He's still able. See, that's where the remaining glory comes from.

That kind of glory can stay. Why? Because it depends on His ability and His faithfulness. And He is totally able and completely faithful.

Oh, the difference between living by man's sufficiency versus God's sufficiency. Let's take this issue of glory, matters being glorious, wondrous, a step further. Our last heading speaks of substantial glory versus excelling glory.

Let's pick up a bit in verse 8. How will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect because of the glory that excels. For what is passing away was glorious.

What remains is much more glorious. On the one side, you have a substantial glory. The terms speak of the law, the old covenant.

It was glorious. It came with glory. It had glory.

But the Scriptures here speak of the new covenant of grace, living by God's sufficiency as an excelling glory, using terms like more glorious, exceeds much more in glory. Here's the issue. The old covenant, the law, it definitely had a glory.

For example, the law points out the basic problem of man, his sin. Now, it is glorious if you have a problem to know what the problem is. It's not the most glorious thing, but there's a glory to that.

Yeah, I got a problem, I know, I just can't find what it is. Here's what it is. Oh, wow, thanks.

Thanks, Lord. There's a glory in knowing that we have a problem, and the problem is sin that separates man from God, and still the law, once saved, can show us that we have another problem, once saved, human inadequacy. Not only sin from having failed, but we're not adequate, even once saved, to make it happen, God's way out of our natural human resources.

That's called the flesh. Can't please God according to the flesh. So it's glorious to know the problem.

Sin and human inadequacy. Sin that separates from God, human inadequacy to walk godly on our own. It's glorious to know that, and the law has a glory.

And Moses went up on the mountain, and he came down, and his face was shining. It was glorious, that encounter with God, but it was about, basically, the law of God, the standard of God. Yeah, it was glorious, but the glory was fading.

That glory was to fade, that a remaining glory in the new covenant would come and stay. And Moses put on a veil for the sake of the people, because the glory was blowing him away. He'd go up and talk to God, and come down and tell them, and they'd go, Whoa, Moses, please.

Can't stand it. Can't even look at you. Can't take it.

Yeah, there's a glory in that old covenant. But it was fading, verse 7, because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away. Moses put the veil on for the right reason, but he kept it on for the wrong reason.

He put it on to protect the people. He kept it on to protect himself. Verse 12, Therefore, since we have such hope, new covenant hope, hope of the sufficiency of God, we use great boldness of speech, unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.

He put the veil on to protect them from the glory. He kept it on to protect him when the glory was fading. He comes down, there's the veil.

He knows there's no glory there anymore. But they don't know that. He's got the veil on.

I've been with God. I'm going to protect you, blow you away. I mean, God and I are so tight, so close.

If you could really see what was coming out of this time with God and me, oh boy, man. And we're tempted to be just like Moses. Pretend like there's no inner sanctum on earth, like my quiet time.

So full and rich, I have to get up at four because I've got to be at work at nine. Peek behind there and go, hey, there's no glory back there. Well, we're not to be like Moses.

If there's any glory at all in our lives, it's to be because God is at work in us and we're giving Him all the glory anyway. Hey, if you see anything glorious shining, it's not me. That's our message in the New Covenant.

Because I'm not sufficient of myself to think of anything as being from me, but if you see anything sufficient, anything godly, anything glorious, I'll tell you, I know where it's coming from. It's God. That's the

more glorious glory.

There's a glory that was intended to fade, the glory of the old. But what is the glory that is excelling glory, greater than the glory of the law? Well, think of it this way. As glorious as it is to know what your problem is if you have a problem, isn't it much more glorious to know what the remedy is? That's how it is with law and grace.

Glory be to God, the law tells us what the problem is. I'm sinful. God's not.

I'm alienated from Him. And once forgiven, I look at the perfect standard of the law. I can't do it.

I'm inadequate. It's glorious to know those things. We need to know those things.

This is far more glorious. It is a remedy for the sin. And there's a whole source of adequacy that doesn't come from you.

It comes from God. Wow! Hey, that's glorious! That excels in glory. Yes, it's glorious to know what our problem is.

It's far more glorious to know the solution is ours in Jesus Christ. He becomes the forgiver of our sins and our sufficient resource for daily Christian living. Man's sufficiency versus God's sufficiency.

Critical issue. Most struggling Christians, the battle is right here. For most who have a vision to serve and please God, the fulfillment is right here.

It's amazing what a big issue this is. Living by man's sufficiency or God's sufficiency. It's the difference between being servants of the New Covenant or servants of the Old Covenant.

Old Covenant, law, letter, man's resource. New Covenant, grace, God at work, God's abundant sufficient resources for life. Let's go back to the verse we began with, 2 Corinthians 3.5. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God who also made us sufficient as servants of the New Covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

May our hearts receive the message of the Lord, embrace the vivid contrast and implications, and be drawn to walk in humility, admitting we don't have the resource needed, but also in faith and dependence upon God knowing He does have the resource that's needed. This message is not just about man's bankruptcy spiritually, it's about God's bounty that is infinite spiritually, and embracing the reality of both is where God wants us to walk. To put it in real simple terms, agree with God, admit with God, Lord, I am not sufficient to consider anything that would be godly, pleasing you, touch lives, change lives, see souls saved, or the kingdom built.

It can't, any of that, come out of my own natural, even dedicated, human resources. But I believe, Lord, that everything that's needed can come out of Your abundantly, comprehensively sufficient resources of life. Praise God it's not complicated.

It's not, can you say, every book of the Bible forward and backward in Hebrew and Greek. It's, are you willing to say, I'm inadequate, He is fully adequate. I renounce trust in myself, I want to put all my hope and trust in Him.

Lord, thank You. He says my yoke is easy, my burden is light.

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