

ALL-SUFFICIENT GRACE OF CHRIST (2 Corinthians 12:7-9)

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Introduction: You cannot reach your destination if your car does not have any fuel left.

Background: Paul wrote this letter in a more apologetic, argumentative, or lawyer-like tone addressing the false accusations against him by fake Christian leaders.

MAIN IDEA:

Paul's Thorn in the Flesh: (1) Paul's inner psychological struggles (such as grief over his earlier persecution of the church, or sorrow over Israel's unbelief, or continuing temptations); (2) Paul's opponents, who continued to persecute him (cf. Num. 33:55 and Ezek. 28:24, where thorns refer to Israel's enemies); (3) some kind of physical affliction (possibly poor eyesight, malaria fever, or severe migraine headaches); or (4) some kind of demonic harassment ("a messenger of Satan"). Most commentators cautiously prefer some form of the third view, since "thorn in the flesh" would seem to suggest a physical condition.

The thorn is a messenger from Satan designed to torment Paul. But God has a purpose for the thorn. What Satan intended for evil; God turned for good. *Like Joseph the Dreamer, in Genesis 50:19-21, *"But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? **You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.** So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children."* And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them. (Also, in Job's life).

When confronted by this weakness, Paul like any other human being asked God to remove it. Three times, he asked God to take it away from him. Yet, God said "no". God has another plan. Like Jesus' prayer, Paul missionary journey. (Mark 14:32-41; Jesus' threefold prayer).

Jesus did not take away the thorn; Jesus gave Paul more of himself (v 9). Jesus said, "what you need is more of me".

Al Mohler commented, "God's solution to earthly suffering is not to take away the trials to make earth a paradise. His answer to suffering is to give us more of himself and his all-sufficient grace so that we have enough to endure the trials."

This changes Paul's response from praying to remove his weakness to boasting about his weakness (v. 10).

APPLICATION: Let me show you a picture of a plateau. A state of being in a plateau means = to reach a particular level and then stay the same. We all have experienced that and maybe we are experiencing it now. Pastor? Are there any biblical examples of this? Moses, Elijah, Judges, David, Israel, and even Paul (Romans 7).

Learning from Paul's address to the Church at Corinth we need to embrace three things: first, **Growing through Trials.**

Second, **Grasping the all-sufficient Grace of Christ.** In verse 9, "underscoring the ever-present availability and sufficiency of God's grace, for Paul and for every believer, regardless of how critical one's circumstances may be." This all-sufficiency argument of Paul is extending even today where our society, schools, and other faith religions are drawing everyone to self-sufficiency; being dependent on yourself and living apart from Christ.

Third, **Glorifying God's Power in Our Lives.** God can bring out something good out of bad situations in our lives.

CONCLUSION: We need extraordinary measures in extraordinary times. We do not want a stagnant kind of life—no progress and is bound to fail. We ought to mitigate this situation both in our personal lives and communal life by depending in the grace of God by growing through trials, grasping Christ more, and glorifying God in all circumstances.