

J.J.

**THE ONE THING WE NEED
(SPECIALLY DURING TIMES OF TRIAL)
2 Corinthians 12:7-10**

2 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. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." 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.

PRAY

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to pain, the shorter it is, the better. No one likes pain or suffering or trial. If you can avoid it, avoid it. Why does God allow pain in our lives?

Patient: How much will it cost me to have this tooth extracted?

Dentist: \$300

Patient: \$300 for just a few minutes work, that expensive.

Dentist: O.K. I'll pull it out slowly if you prefer.

- Some of you are asking are undergoing extreme difficulties right now and asking "Why Lord?"
- Some of you are in pain right now and asking the Lord to take it away from you and yet, it seems like our Lord is not answering.

Paul was undergoing the same pain.

What was the pain?

thorn in my flesh,

***There are two ways we can look at this.:** When studying the Bible, pay attention to words...in this instance, there is a word,

Therefore (there's something before) in the KJV "and". These are what you call a "connecting" word. It connects one thought to the next.

Once we know the context, you will know what this "thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan" is.

1. **Based on the context**, it seems that what was giving him pain “thorn in the flesh” are the very people he loves. False teachers were undermining him and ruining his reputation and apparently the people are being swayed and that’s causing him pain.

The greatest pain we can experience is the ones caused or that happens to people who are close to us.

2. **Based on etymology**, the original language it was written Some commentators would say that this *“thorn in the flesh”* (**Etymology : skolops “sharp stake”**) is a bodily ailment that is giving him pain.

NOTE : I will NOT be the final arbiter on this, it might be physical pain or emotional pain and the Holy Spirit wasn’t specific on this, WHICH IS GOOD, because we can apply this passage to any kind of pain or suffering that we’re having.

Application : Sometimes, you will go through physical pain (a lingering sickness or etc) that you cannot bear or an emotional pain that you cannot bear (people that you’ve tried to help, accusing you or people that you love turning against you or people close to you suffering)

Where was this pain coming from?

a messenger of Satan

Etymology : messenger “aggelos” angel of Satan,

- In this context, “messenger” might mean the false teachers/apostles (people being used by demons because of their false teaching) who were responsible of trying to turn the church against Paul.
- Or it’s a pain or trial that God has allowed in our lives.

Ultimately, all evil comes from the enemy, whether directly or indirectly, because we live in a sinful and imperfect world.

Biblical Illustrations :

Job chapters 1 and 2 where God was boasting about Job to Satan and **saying that there is no one more righteous than Job.**

Satan challenged God saying that He is just praising you because you are blessing him. **Take away his blessings and see if he would not curse you.**

So God said to Satan, ““Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.” Job 1:12

So, one after the other, misfortune and pain came into Job’s life. First, his wealth and source of livelihood was taken away and then all his children died in an accident.

IMAGINE THE PAIN HERE OF LOSING ALL YOUR WEALTH BUT MORE PAINFUL IS LOSING ALL YOUR CHILDREN AT THE SAME TIME.

Job was mournful and tore out his robe and yet here's what he said,

*Job 1: 21 "Naked I came from my mother's womb,
and naked I will depart.
The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away;
may the name of the Lord be praised."*

But Satan still said to God, that Job praises the Lord because he still has his good health.

Job 1: 4 "Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. 5 But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face."

So here's what God said,

"Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life." Job 2: 6

So Job had painful sores from the soles his feet to his head and Job's wife told him to curse God and die.

But here's what Job said, *"Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" Job 2:10*

We will go back to Job later on and find out one of the reasons why God allowed the pain in Job's life.

How painful was the suffering?

to torment me

Etymology : buffet "kolaphizo" to strike with the fist (closed fist)

IN SHORT : PUNCHED

Special Note : Do you know that this is the same word that was in Matt 26 and Mark 14, when they punched the Lord?

So whether it's physical or emotional pain, no one likes it. We avoid it as much as possible or we want it taken away.

***That's why Paul asks :**

8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

Note : That's the normal reaction, specially if it's a lingering kind of pain. That's why even the psalmist wrote :

Psalm 13 : 1 How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?

Let's see what is the purpose of God behind this?

2 Corinthians 12: 7... Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited,

Etymology : conceited “hyperairo” to hyperlift one’s self up “hyper” “airo”

Context : In 2 Corinthians 12:1-6, Paul was talking about being taken to the third heaven v. 2 (God’s dwelling place “paradise” v.4) and heard inexpressible things

Note : You have to put yourself in the shoes of Paul, he is being accused of not being an apostle, being insulted, etc. and he could have asserted himself because of what he experienced saying, “Obviously I am chosen by God. You have never experienced what I experienced.” “I’m better than you all.”

Note : Spiritual pride is the most dangerous kind of pride.

It’s saying to God, “Lord, I deserve blessing because I follow you or I’m a good person or I did this for you.” Or we say the reverse, “Lord, I don’t deserve this pain because I follow you, or I’m a good person or I did this for you.”

Illustration : There’s the popular book written by a Jewish author Harold Kushner and its title is “When Bad Things Happen to Good People” R.C. Sproul a prominent Christian theologian, pastor and author was asked what he thought about the book and someone asked him, “Why do bad things happen to good people?” His answer was classic. **He said, “I haven’t seen any good people yet, so I don’t know.”**

Romans 3 :10 10 As it is written:

“There is no one righteous, not even one;

11 there is no one who understands;

there is no one who seeks God.

12 All have turned away,

they have together become worthless;

there is no one who does good,

not even one.

What is at the center of pride? SELF

Quote : Pride is the dandelion of the soul. Its root goes deep; only a little left behind sprouts again. Its seeds lodge in the tiniest encouraging cracks. And it flourishes in good soil: The danger of pride is that it feeds on goodness. - *David Rhodes*

Illustration : In the middle of Chicay’s battle with cancer, I was hurting so much and crying in the car and I talked with him saying, “Lord, why? I don’t deserve this. I am serving you, I am following you, I did this for you and etc...etc.” Until God allowed me to hear myself and it showed my pride because of the many “I”, “I”, “I”

The sin of pride by Lucifer before he was cast down in Isaiah 14, was full of “I”, “I”, “I”

What did the Lord Jesus say?

Psalm 16: 2...I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord, apart from you I have no good thing."

John 15:5... apart from me you can do nothing.

Illustration: Dave Ramsay, a Christian radio host who advises people on how to get out of debt and build wealth. People will usually call to ask for advice. Of course, the usual greeting would be, "Hi Dave, how are you?" Dave will answer back, "Better than I deserve."

One time, I tried that reply at work and somebody greeted me, "Hi Jerry, how are you?" I replied, "Better than I deserve." That person immediately said, "No, no, no Jerry... you deserve everything because you're a nice person."

Remember, this, GOD ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS NOT BECAUSE WE ARE GOOD BUT BECAUSE HE IS GOOD.

Remember the Canaanite woman? Our Lord Jesus Christ seemingly ignored her, then said to her, "*I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel*" – which means, you don't deserve this and the woman just kept on going to our Lord for help and final thing

Matthew 15: 26 He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." 27 "Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

Her answer has no pride, no conceit. She only looked at Jesus and at His mercy and goodness.

This now leads to that thing that MAKES Christianity different from all kinds of religion.... GRACE!!!

⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you,

Note : Grace, it is the most wonderful word in the Bible.
Most of the greetings in the EPISTLES are "Grace be to you..."

***Grace is used to describe who our Lord Jesus is.**

John 1: ¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Grace is the reason why :

- We have been saved
- We have a relationship with God
- We know and understand the Word of God
- We are being changed (sanctified)
- We will go to heaven
- ...and many more.

But the question we're going to talk about today is "What is grace?" in order for us to understand *My grace is sufficient for you* we have to see where the word "grace" was used.

It has been used 156 times in the NT

Etymology : grace "charis" gift. It means favor, empowerment, lovingkindness, delight, joy.

Grace is used to describe different situation in the Bible :

1. **Saving Grace** – as Christians, this is the reason we have been saved. *Ephesians 2:8 it is by grace you have been saved...*
2. **Encompassing Grace** – it's grace given to everyone, the sun shines on everyone (*Mt 5:45 He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*)
3. **Enabling Grace** – it is the capacity to do the things that God has asked us to do.
4. And as we see here – **SUFFICIENT GRACE.**

Now here's the thing about grace.

***Quote :** Grace : We have done nothing to receive it and we cannot do anything to deserve it.

Story : You will always hear me say "By God's grace" and my family has caught up on it. The history of that is when I read about this story of a 90-year old pastor who was asked by a Bible teacher something like this, "In all of your years of preaching and following the Lord, what is the one greatest lesson, you have learned" The 90-year old pastor said, **"It is all by God's grace."**

Note : Pain has a way of teaching us that lesson. **It humbles us (keeps us from being conceited) and realizing that it is by His grace. It is only through pain and suffering we realize it.**

Quote : "We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

— C.S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain

Note : It is during times of pain that we tend to focus really our attention to God. THAT EVERYTHING IS BY HIS GRACE!!!

So what is this grace that Paul was talking about that we need during times of trouble?

***Now, let's go back to the text since I've already explained to you what grace is, we now have an idea of God's amazing grace**

⁹ But he said to me, "My grace(favor, empowerment, my lovingkindnes, my delight, my joy) is sufficient for you,

Etymology : sufficient "arkeo" to be possessed of unfailing strength; to be contented

LISTEN CAREFULLY...VERY IMPORTANT : This is grace that God gives you to be strong during times of trial... Grace that makes you feel contented and even have joy during times of suffering.

AND you will be amazed on this based on the original language ON WHAT THIS GRACE IS BASED ON THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE

My grace is sufficient for you

Original text :

Ἀρκεῖ / σοι / ἡ / χάρις / μου

Anglicized text :

Arkeo / soi/ n/ charis / moi

Literal Translation :

Sufficient/for you/(pronoun)that / grace / me

QUOTE : God is saying to you in times of trouble : Sufficient for you is the grace of me.”
Sufficient for you is the (grace, gift, favor, lovingkindness, empowerment, joy, delight) of me.

In short : God is saying to Paul, when you are in pain (emotional or physical), when you have been punched, when you are hurting,

I AM sufficient because

I AM your grace

I AM your gift

I AM your favor

I AM your empowerment

I AM your loving kindness

I AM your joy, your pleasure, your delight.

God is holding you in the palm of His hands...

Deuteronomy 33:27 The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms:

Isn't this what God has been saying to His people ever since in the Old Testament.

“I AM MORE THAN ENOUGH” (El Shaddai)

Earlier, I mentioned that I will give you the reason on why God allowed suffering in Job's life. When Job looked for an audience to ask him why this is happening? He answered in Jacob in 4 chapters – chapters 38-40 that I am Sovereign, I am Almighty God, I am All Knowing God, I know what I am doing.... and He is a loving, merciful and compassionate and most importantly...Holy, Holy, Holy God.

That's why the Psalmist said in Psalm 23:4

*Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, **for you are with me;***

THIS IS THE REASON WHY PAUL CAN SAY THIS :

9.... for my power is made perfect in weakness."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.

In short, He delights in these things because to Him GOD IS ALL HE NEEDS AND HE ONLY WANTS GOD IN HIS LIFE. HE ONLY NEEDS HIS GRACE. AND THAT'S POWER! IT'S STRENGTH DURING TIMES OF WEAKNESS IN OUR LIFE!!!! WE CAN ONLY EXPERIENCE THIS THROUGH TIMES OF PAIN and SUFFERING

CONCLUSION :

Story : I heard Professor Bruce Waltke describe a Christian's response to pain this way: We once rescued a bird from the claws of our cat. Thought its wing was broken, the frightened bird struggled to escape my loving hands. Contrast this with my daughter's recent trip to the doctor. Her strep throat meant a shot was necessary. Frightened, she cried, "No, Daddy. No, Daddy, No, Daddy." But all the while she gripped me tightly around the neck. Pain ought to make us more like a sick child than a hurt bird. - Dan Foster

S.G.D.