

Grace For Every Thorn

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2 Corinthians 12:8-9

Twenty-six-year-old Zion Clark was born with Caudal Regression Syndrome, a rare birth defect that caused him to be born without legs. Since his mother couldn't take care of him and his father wasn't in the picture, he was placed in several different foster homes and labeled a problem child. When he was finally placed in a loving home at 16 years old, he realized that what we perceive as weaknesses can, in fact, help shape, not hinder, purpose.

Zion's story reminds me of the Apostle Paul's thorn in the flesh.

In 2 Corinthians 12:7-9, Paul wrote, "So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 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 of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

We don't have to know what Paul's thorn was in order to learn from his experience and wisdom. Like a loving brother, his vulnerable confession provides us a warning, lesson, and promise.

- **Warning:** We need to carefully watch out for pride and entitlement in our lives and lifestyles. God allowed Paul to suffer from this thorn to keep him from being prideful (v. 7). God hates pride so there's no doubt he'll allow us to experience some hardships to keep us humble and reliant on Him.
- **Lesson:** Even though God is always good, life won't always be easy, pleasant and worry free. Thorns exist and God won't always answer our prayers the way we want Him to. Paul begged God to remove his thorn three different times, but

God's thoughts were not Paul's thoughts. Paul thought he needed the thorn removed. God knew Paul needed to be reminded of His promise of grace.

- **Promise:** Instead of taking away Paul's suffering, God gave him a promise: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (v. 9). In Greek, grace is *charis*, a word rich with meanings like undeserved kindness, favor, and goodwill. The word sufficient comes from the Greek *arkei*, which means to assist and satisfy. God's kindness, goodwill, and favor assists and satisfies us in every, and I do mean, every season. When we lean into this promise, God's power—*dynamis* in Greek, meaning ability—will gently take over our weaknesses and do miraculous and seemingly impossible things.

As believers, our purpose is to glorify God, and we do that best by letting His power be revealed in our weaknesses. So let's invite God into our situations and trust Him. There is grace for every thorn.

Embracing our weaknesses isn't natural, but being weak and desperate is good for our souls. Weaknesses, suffering, brokenness, and desperation force us to run to God. Isn't that what our souls truly need?

Reflect:

- What thorns are currently plaguing you? Ask God to display His power in your weaknesses.
- Recall some times in your life when God displayed His power in the midst of your weakness. What did you learn then that can encourage you now?

Dig A Little Deeper:

- 2 Peter 1:3 says we have everything we need to live a life that pleases God. Meditate on this scripture and ask God to show you all that He's given you to do His will despite the current thorn in your flesh.
- Read through some of the following stories that display God's strength in the midst of human weakness.
 - Gideon's story in Judges 6

- David's story of defeating Goliath in 1 Samuel 17:41-52
- Samson's final victory in Judges 16:23-30
- Jesus overcoming great distress and anxiety in the Garden of Gethsemane in Matthew 26:36-56
- Father, you told us that we were going to have trouble in this life. As heavy and as painful as some circumstances and seasons can be, we know that You are with us. You have promised to strengthen and help us (Isaiah 41:10). So open our eyes to see the ways Your kindness and favor satisfies and strengthens us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

REFERENCES

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