

Grace Bible Church
Tree of Life
A Weekly Review
Week ending 102013

Putting on the Royal Family honor code by responding to suffering for blessing.

As a part of the armor of God (especially the Royal Family Honor Code), God has given us everything that we need to handle and experience every realm of our personal sense of destiny. This is especially true in light of our suffering for blessing. Suffering for blessing is the undeserved pain, hardship, or difficulty that God periodically sends into the life of the spiritually adult believer for the purpose of accelerating his spiritual growth and demonstrating the total sufficiency of His grace. The key here is the word undeserved. God provides the means of dealing with a situation before He applies the pressure so that suffering for blessing never overloads any believer. Now, Paul describes this pattern of momentum in his Second epistle to the Corinthians.

2CO 12:1-10, Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago-- whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man-- whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows-- was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. On behalf of such a man will I boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses. For if I do wish to boast I shall not be foolish, for I shall be speaking the truth; but I refrain from this, so that no one may credit me with more than he sees in me or hears from me. And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me-- to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

What Paul is saying at the end of verse 9 when he says I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me is that God's power is achieved when we pick up the full armor of God as we are going through personal with weakness. This means that personal suffering is necessary for spiritual advance. Remember the Greek noun *dunamis*, means *power*, and it refers to God's

omnipotence as utilized by the believer in the advance through spiritual adulthood: spiritual self-esteem, spiritual autonomy, and spiritual maturity. The adult believer has power because he consistently lives inside the PPOG.

The verb *teleo*, which is translated in [2CO 12:9](#) *for power is perfected* means to finish, to accomplish, to fulfill, to achieve. How is this power achieved? How does the believer advance through the final stages of spiritual growth? The phrase in weakness tells us, it is the Greek preposition *en* plus the adjective *astheneia* in the instrumental case of manner indicates the manner in which the action of the verb is carried out: ***with weakness***.

Weakness refers to the progressive phases of suffering for blessing. Weakness here is not failure or sin but helplessness. Suffering for blessing puts the spiritually adult believer in a situation he cannot resolve with human resources. He is helpless and must totally depend on divine assets that he has acquired by metabolizing Bible doctrine in his soul. The suffering itself does not advance the believer; it is his utilization of God's power in suffering is what advances him. Power and weakness exist together at the same time: the adult believer uses the strength of spiritual self-esteem to move through his weakness in providential preventive suffering. He uses the strength of spiritual autonomy to go through his weakness in momentum testing. And he uses the strength of spiritual maturity to move through his weakness in evidence testing. He not only exercises the power inherent in each stage of spiritual adulthood to meet the test, but when he succeeds in passing each test, he "achieves the power" of the next stage of spiritual adulthood. With each test he passes, he moves up.

What degree of strength is required to endure providential preventive suffering? = Spiritual self-esteem. What power is required to pass momentum testing? = Spiritual autonomy?

And what is needed to pass evidence testing? = Spiritual maturity.

As a result of dealing with the undeserved suffering that God sends, the believer's strength increases so that he is able to cope with the next increment of suffering when it comes. In His perfect wisdom God gives each believer the unique sequence of blessing and suffering, of prosperity and adversity, necessary to bring him to maximum glorification of God.

Prin-Before God administers suffering for blessing, the believer must have the inner strength necessary to endure and profit from the test. In other words, the believer must at least have spiritual self-esteem. God will not send suffering for blessing until first the believer is confident in his relationship with God and in his own ability to use the assets that God has given him. His soul must be inculcated with Bible doctrine so that he loves God and lives by his own doctrinal thinking.

ROM 14:22, The faith [doctrine] which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

For the believer and unbeliever alike, a person's attitude toward self affects his entire outlook on life. Of all the judgments we pass in life, none is as important as the one we pass on ourselves: for that judgment touches the very center of our existence. We stand in the midst of all kinds of relationships: to other people, to things, to the universe. And yet, when we are alone with ourselves, we are aware that the most intimate and powerful of all relationships and the one we can never escape is the relationship to ourselves. No significant aspect of our thinking, motivation, feelings, or behavior is unaffected by our self-evaluation.

This is why many psychologists have made an accurate observation concerning man's genuine need to regard himself in a positive light. However, although self-esteem solves many problems in life, human self-esteem ultimately has a fatal flaw.

What is it?

ISA 1:5-6, Where will you be stricken again, {As} you continue in {your} rebellion? The whole head is sick, And the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot even to the head There is nothing sound in it, {Only} bruises, welts, and raw wounds, Not pressed out or bandaged, Nor softened with oil.

JER 17:9, The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?

The problem is that man is rarely worthy of his own esteem. Since the fall of Adam, the human race has been inherently depraved. Man is born spiritually dead, utterly isolated from his Creator, totally incapable of a relationship with God, EPH 2:1. Man proves his depravity by the personal sins he commits and by the human good and evil he practices. Man is commonly arrogant, greedy, self-centered, superficial, cowardly, petty, devious, self-righteous, cruel, violent. Only by a concerted effort of the will can he even partly control his old sin nature, 1JO 1:8.

1JO 1:8-10, If we say [assert] that we have no sin nature, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth or doctrine is not in us. If we acknowledge [name and cite] our sins, He is faithful and righteous, with the result that He forgives us our sins [known sins] and purifies us from all unrighteousness [unknown sins]. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word [Bible doctrine] does not reside in us.

This is why we have two very vital passages that we need to master as Christian

soldiers fighting under the principles and experiences taught in the Art of War. They are found back in [2CO 12:9-10](#).

Well, here they are. The corrected translation of [2CO 12:7](#), **And for this reason, that I should not begin to become arrogant because of the extraordinary quality of revelations, I was given a thorn in the flesh, an angel from Satan that he might torment me, that I should not begin to become arrogant. Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He had assured me for my benefit, “My grace has been and still is sufficient for you. For My power is made operational in a state of weakness [human incapability to solve the problem; helplessness].” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ [the operational spiritual life] may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.**

Verse 9, notice the phrase **Most gladly therefore rather**, which is made up of two adverbs. What does this mean? In this passage, as noted in [2CO 12:8](#), **Paul is going to teach us that there is something that he discovered to solve his greatest problem, his thorn in the flesh problem, and that something is even greater than prayer.**

Paul prayed to God three times that it might be removed. One of the most controversial and sought after question has always been what was Paul's thorn in the flesh? Some believe it was a demon assigned to haunt Paul consistently and constantly. Others believe it was a physical problem with his eyes which is why he wrote to the Galatian church, which is why he wrote. Others believe it was his ex-wife because it was an unwritten law that to be a Pharisee you had to be married. Whatever it was, Paul discovered that prayer was not the solution to his problem or thorn. Too many believers use prayer to try and get out of some difficult situation that they're in. They use prayer to try and get their own way, not God's way. That's why prayer must be compatible with God's will and God's way, not our will and our way.

That's why [1JO 5:14](#), And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything *according to His will*, He hears us. Prayer is not designed to get us out of trouble. In [2CO 12:7-10](#), Paul prayed three times that God would remove his thorn in the flesh. This was a prayer that could not be answered. The motivation was wrong and the prayer was wrong. The prayer was not answered to teach Paul the importance of handling suffering for blessing with the two power options and the three spiritual skills and the ten problem solving devices.

The two power options are: 1. The filling of the Spirit. 2. Bible doctrine in the mind, the heart and the soul.

The three spiritual skills, 1. The filling of the Spirit. 2. Bible doctrine in the stream of consciousness, mind, the heart and the soul. 3. Functioning under the PPOG.

The 10 PSD's: 1. Rebound and Recovery, [1JO 1:9](#). 2. The Filling of the Spirit. 3. The Faith Rest Life. 4. Grace Orientation. 5. Doctrinal Orientation. 6. A Personal Sense of Destiny. 7. Personal Love for God the Father. 8. Impersonal Unconditional Love for All. 9. Contentment and Perfect Happiness with God. 10. The Ultimate-Occupation with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Four of the thorns are mentioned in verse 10, insults or slandering (people testing), distresses or pressure (thought testing), persecutions (system testing or injustice), difficulties or troubles (disaster testing). He is going to teach us that there is something that he discovered to solve his problems with that is ever greater than prayer and he is very happy or "Most gladly" willing to use what he discovered. For example, in [2PE 1:4](#), Peter learned from the apostle Paul, [2PE 1:4](#), **For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature,**

Paul is going to teach us this same principle in [2CO 12:9](#). He is going to say look I am facing insults or slandering (people testing), distresses or pressure (thought testing), persecutions (system testing or injustice), difficulties or troubles (disaster testing), and Most gladly I rejoice because of the power of God.

[2CO 12:9](#)...Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ [the operational spiritual life] may dwell in me.

He is saying there's something greater than my weakness and problems translated rather, and that something is found in the greater adverb *most gladly*. He is saying that the power that God has provided with the two power options and the three spiritual skills and the ten problem solving devices are God's answers to our problems and the absolute and the only solution to our problems. He discovered that there was something greater behind his personal sufferings and his problems and that something greater was his personal sense of destiny and using the two power options and the three spiritual skills and the ten problem solving devices that God had provided for him.

[2CO 12:10](#), Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

There is a reason for everything that happens to the believer. Paul was not out of fellowship. It is not wrong for people who are sick to pray for help, but remember that prayer is not a problem-solving device.

Four of the thorns are mentioned in verse 10, slandering (people testing), pressure (thought testing), persecutions (system testing or injustice), troubles (terrible anguish). Whatever the function of the thorn demon, it brought Paul to a state of

preventative suffering. Being in fellowship, Paul offered a prayer that could not and was not answered. Prayer was the wrong solution, therefore, it was not answered. Offering this prayer three times was an abuse of prayer by Paul. If God had answered Paul's prayer, Paul would have missed out on one of the greatest blessings of life. The Lord did not even answer Paul and then after he had prayed the wrong prayer three times, he remembered and recalled what the Lord had said.

2CO 12:9-10, And He had assured me for my benefit, My grace has been and still is sufficient for you. For My power is made operational in a state of weakness [human incapability to solve the problem; helplessness]. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ [the operational spiritual life] may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

There is a reason for everything that happens to the believer. Paul was not out of fellowship. We live in an age of the greatest power that has ever been given to the ordinary believer. The power at your disposal is phenomenal, but you will never touch it without straightening out your values and functioning on a consistent basis with the spiritual skills. You do not need a miracle from God; you have far superior power to miracles. God does not need to perform miracles, when He has given us assets that were pioneered and tested by Christ in the dispensation of the hypostatic union.

You have more power available to you than all of the Old Testament miracles put together.

God gave Paul grace solutions to solve his problems. Since grace solutions are divine solutions, they exclude human solutions and human viewpoint--such as in this context the misuse of prayer. But there are other human viewpoint solutions besides prayer. Human viewpoint solutions in psychology. Human viewpoint solutions in philosophy. The arrogance skills and the defense mechanisms. Legalism instead of grace. Ignorance instead of cognition, gimmicks instead of doctrine. This is how an invisible hero is manufactured.