

Where is God in the Midst of Suffering?

Read: 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Main Idea: We can overcome the fear of suffering when we begin to see it through the lens of Scripture (from God's perspective) for our good and His glory.

Key Verses: "For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (12:10)

Key Principles:

- Even when you can boast about yourself or your accomplishments, it is always better to boast about God working in and through you.
- Remember that spiritual maturity leads to God's glory and not your glory.
- Many times God uses the difficulties in our lives to remind us of our need for Him so that we will draw close and be dependent.
- God wants us to give Him our burdens, surrender to His will and find peace from His strength.
- Once we have surrendered to God and are strengthened by His power, there is nothing that He can't do through us for His plan.
- Day by day, as we surrender ourselves to Christ, we overcome obstacles and become more mature in our faith and our character.

Discussion:

1. Reread 2 Corinthians 12:7. What could Paul's "thorn in the flesh" be? Does it matter what it was?
2. How can a "thorn in the flesh" prevent conceit and foster humility? Why do you think pride is such a hinderance to God's purpose for our lives?
3. How can a hardship come from both God and Satan? Can you think of any examples from Scripture of hardships or suffering that were from Satan that God used?
4. Can you identify a "thorn in your flesh?" How is God using it to bring about good results?
5. Reread 2 Corinthians 12:8-9a. What does this verse teach us about unanswered prayer?
6. How can focusing on our weaknesses result in a manifestation of Christ's power in our lives? Explain how someone can come to actually "delight" in their weaknesses.

Prayer:

- Focus on truth that God's grace is sufficient to overcome any suffering or hardship.
- Pray:
 - o That God would remind you of His strength and plan for your life.
 - o That we remember that we are dependent upon Him for success and purpose.
 - o That we would respond to God's grace and strength with surrender and rest.

Where is God in the Midst of Suffering?
2 Corinthians 12:1-10

- I. **Spiritual maturity teaches us consistency. 12:1-6**

 - 1. Boasting about experiences is foolish. 12:1-5
 - 2. Setting an example is wise. 12:6

- II. **Personal difficulty guides us to dependency. 12:7-9**

 - 1. See God's purpose. 12:7
 - 2. Seek God in prayer. 12:8
 - 3. Submit to God's plan. 12:9

- III. **Supernatural sufficiency drives us to humility. 12:10**

 - 1. Serve for Christ's sake.
 - 2. Serve in Christ's strength.

NEXT WEEK:
There is An Enemy
Ephesians 6:10-24