



**Educate
+ Engage**



THE GIFT NO
ONE WANTS: ~~TH~~

Thorn
in the Flesh

Lesson 4

OVERVIEW

Paul often faced pain points—times and even seasons of life that were extremely difficult. However, even in the midst of pain, whether being blinded, shipwrecked, or even jailed, God used it to get glory out of his story. Though pain is the gift nobody wants, God is with us through it and uses it for a purpose.

Scripture Passage

II Corinthians 12:7–10 (NKJV)

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

ENGAGE

Dr. Brand spent much of his career working with people who had leprosy. In his book, *The Gift of Pain*, he shares a story about a little girl named Tanya who had a rare condition called Congenital Insensitivity to Pain, similar to leprosy. Despite being otherwise healthy, Tanya couldn't feel pain at all.

Tanya's mother first noticed something was wrong when Tanya was eighteen months old. She left her daughter playing in a playpen and returned to find her finger painting with blood, having bitten off the end of her own finger.

Seven years later, Tanya had lost both legs and most of her fingers to amputation. Her elbows were constantly dislocated, and she suffered from severe infections due to untreated injuries. She had chewed her tongue so badly it was swollen and lacerated.

THORN IN THE FLESH



Lesson 4

Tanya's story is an extreme reminder of the importance of pain in our lives. We must not let life's pain harden us.

Pain produced three things in Paul's life. The thorn produced revelation of God's grace, dependence on God, and strength.

Pain makes us stronger! When I am weak, He is stronger!

Point 1: The thorn produced revelation of God's grace.

Paul pleaded with the Lord three times for the thorn to be removed, but God responded, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." This revealed to Paul a profound truth: God's grace is all-encompassing and sufficient, even in our weakest moments.

Discussion Question: What do you think the "thorn in the flesh" represented in Paul's life, and why do you think God allowed Paul to have it?

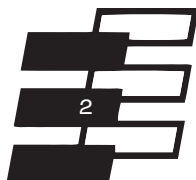
In times of personal crisis—such as dealing with the death of a loved one, going through a rough season in life, or facing an unfavorable diagnosis—remember that God's grace is sufficient for you. These painful experiences can bring you to a deeper understanding of God's unfailing grace and love, which can sustain you through the hardest times.

When we experience pain, much like Paul did with the thorn in his side, it highlights the goodness of God's grace. Pain serves as a reminder that we are alive. Every living being encounters pain; the absence of it would indicate sickness or lifelessness.

The statement in II Corinthians 12:8 "My strength is made perfect in weakness" should resonate deeply with us. It provides a secret to handling life's pains and trials: when we are weak, God is stronger. Without pain in our lives, we may mistakenly believe that our strength comes from our own doing.

Therefore, do not curse the pain or the thorn because it's causing you to be stronger. Face the pain that hurts so badly, even though you might not understand why God allows it, whether it's a diagnosis of cancer or the loss of a loved one. Remember: "My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Let's remember today how Paul addressed the thorn in his side and apply it to how we address pain in our lives. God's grace is much bigger than just one dark situation in your life.



Lesson 4

Discussion Question: Can you think of a time in your life when a difficult situation helped you understand God's grace more deeply? How did that experience change your perspective?

Point 2: The thorn produced dependence on God.

Paul's thorn kept him humble and made him constantly rely on God. It reminded him of his limitations and the need to trust God's strength over his own.

When we face personal crises, they often strip away our sense of control and self-sufficiency. These moments of vulnerability and pain can lead us to depend more on God. Trust in God's plan and lean on Him for support, knowing His strength is perfect in our weakness.

C.S. Lewis once said, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." We need to understand what God is telling us through our pain.

Instead of pushing away pain when it enters our lives, we should become quiet and ask God what He is trying to tell us.

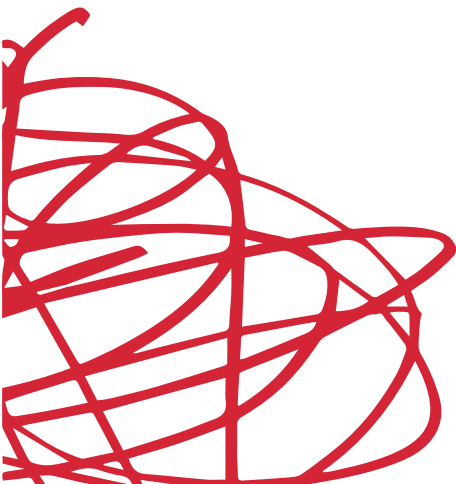
Pain, like in the story at the beginning of this lesson, prevents us from losing parts of our body. Without pain, we might let a simple task like unlocking a door hurt us because we wouldn't feel the key cutting into our skin. We would keep going until we see the blood.

Pain shows us our weakness and dependence on God. Without God, we are nothing, and without pain, we would fall apart.

Discussion Question: In what ways do personal crises challenge our sense of control and self-sufficiency? How can these experiences help us develop a deeper dependence on God?

Point 3: The thorn produced strength.

Paul's acceptance of his weaknesses allowed him to experience Christ's power resting upon him. He found that when he was weak, he was strong because Christ's strength was working through him.



Lesson 4

Enduring painful situations can lead to greater spiritual strength. Embrace your weaknesses and let God's power work through them. Just as Paul took pleasure in his infirmities and hardships, seeing them as opportunities for Christ's power to be manifested, you too can find strength and growth in your pain.

When Paul realized his weakness, it made him strong. He said, "My strength is made perfect in weakness."

What if we leaned into our pain like Paul did?

Paul is considered one of the most important and powerful figures in the Bible. However, if Paul walked into this room today, he might be seen as weak. Why? Because he was beaten almost to death, shipwrecked, and endured many hardships. Yet, his willingness to embrace his weakness made him a mighty spiritual man.

Discussion Question: How does God's response to Paul ("My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness") shape our understanding of dealing with personal struggles?

Let's learn from Paul today. Be willing to learn from our pain and grow closer to God.

This is why Paul said in I Corinthians 15:31, "I die daily." He understood that there was power in pain.

Closing

Today's lesson from II Corinthians 12:7–10 teaches us that embracing our weaknesses allows God's strength to shine through us. Paul's thorn in the flesh reminded him that God's grace is sufficient and His power is perfected in weakness. By accepting our pain and vulnerabilities, we grow spiritually and deepen our reliance on God. Let us lean into our pain, trusting in God's perfect strength and plan, just as Paul did.

ENGAGE

When we are weak God is strong. We must decrease so he can increase.

Discussion Question: How can embracing our weaknesses and allowing God's power to work through them lead to greater spiritual strength? Share an example of how you or someone you know has experienced this in their life.

