

WEEK 6: IF I HAVE ENOUGH FAITH GOD WILL MAKE LIFE EASY

God Time Day 1: God Loves You Enough To Let You Hurt



The Apostle Paul fully dedicated his life to spreading the gospel. Many of the books in the New Testament were written by him. One might think that God would give him an easy life for his heroic efforts, but – in fact – the opposite was true. He suffered a lifetime of persecutions. And, as if that was not enough, the Bible tells us that he had another struggle – a secret “*thorn in the flesh*” which was meant to torment him.



Read 2 Corinthians 12:7b-8
7b Therefore, so that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to torment me so that I would not exalt myself.⁸ Concerning this, I pleaded with the Lord three times that it would leave me.

Underline the source of this “*thorn.*”

Even though Paul pleaded with God to relieve him of this torment, God allowed it. Why?



Rewrite the first eight words of verse 7b.

Paul obviously had an issue with pride (don’t we all) and God needed him to be focused on the mission – so that God’s good purposes could be fulfilled in Paul.

When God refuses to take away our deepest pain, we might begin to question if He is really good, if He is really there, or if He is really able to save.

The truth is that God’s purpose is not to make your life “easy.” It is to expand His kingdom. Struggle keeps us from becoming proud and compassionless; pain keeps us from pretending that we can handle life on our own. Struggles and pain force us to choose whether or not to follow the path Jesus took when He accepted the cross as God’s will.



What thorn are you facing right now? It’s OK to plead with God for relief, but start preparing to use it for His glory.

God Time Day 2: Sustaining Grace



Our world applauds the people who make it big because of how hard they work and reveres those who achieve great things by sheer willpower. But it despises those who seem helpless to change their situation. We even hear fake news like, “God helps those who help themselves.”

The story of Paul’s “*thorn in the flesh*” reveals this false way of thinking. God deliberately let Paul struggle with “*torment*” from this “*messenger of Satan*” because He had a higher purpose. This thorn pricked Paul’s pride. He said, “*so that I would not exalt myself.*” And God told Paul that “*My grace is sufficient (enough).*” The thorn in the flesh would not be Paul’s undoing, but instead an important part of his sanctification (spiritual growth towards holiness).

God did something better for Paul than removing his “*thorn in the flesh.*” God showed Paul that His grace is enough.

Reread yesterday’s verses and then read God’s response to Paul’s pleading.



Read 2 Corinthians 12:9
But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness.”

Underline what God said about His power.



Explain in your own words what you think God means by “*my power is perfected in weakness.*”

We cannot know the full extent of God’s grace and kindness until we find ourselves helpless and weak. God promises that in such moments we will see the perfection of His power to accomplish His purposes in us.



How is your thorn forcing you to surrender to God’s grace and allowing Him to exhibit His power?

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God Time Day 3: Perfect Power



In the Book of Judges, God deliberately thins out the Israelite army to ensure that they would know victory wasn't through their military strength, but His power.



Read Judges 7:2
The Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many troops for me to hand the Midianites over to them, or else Israel might elevate themselves over me and say, 'I saved myself.'

Then God gave Gideon instructions to whittle down the army from 22,000 to 10,000, then down again to a mere 300 to fight against an army whose camels were *"as numerous as the sand on the seashore."* He was serious about making sure it was clear whose power was at work.



For God's power to work through you today, how can you set aside reliance on your own strength and abilities?

God Time Day 4: Eternal Purpose



Like we've seen with Paul, sometimes God is at work in the pain. We don't always know why, but in times like these, it helps to remember that we are not the only ones.

Chapter 11 of the Book of Hebrews includes a well know list of "Heroes of Faith." These Heroes saw amazing miracles and victories. But check out this lesser-known list of heroes:



Read Hebrews 11:36-38a
³⁶ *Others experienced mockings and scourgings, as well as bonds and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and mistreated. ³⁸ The world was not worthy of them.*

It's vitally important to remember that you are not alone, and your struggle can be both a witness and a ministry.



How can you use your struggle, your thorn, to minister?

God Time Day 5: When Life is Not Easy



This week has made clear that a Godly life is not promised to be an easy life. How we manage when life is hard, and it hurts, is important to our witness and ministry.

In addition to remembering that God's grace sustains us through our suffering, God's power is made perfect in our weakness, and God has an eternal purpose for our struggles and pains, there are some practical things we can do:

- Pray – Like Paul, we can and should ask God to remove the torment. What parent would be angry with their child for asking to make the pain stop? God wants us to *"cast all our cares"* on Him, and sometimes He does change the situation and give us relief.
- Listen – When the answer to our prayers is not what we want, we should listen and trust His answer for the moment. Sometimes God is saying "not yet" instead of "no." It may be that it will take some time before His purpose is accomplished.
- Yield – Even if nothing changes, we can still allow God's power to be revealed through us. By praising Him in the midst of pain and hardship we witness His glory to others and minister to those in similar circumstances.



Read Ecclesiastes 3:11 (CEV)
God makes everything happen at the right time. Yet none of us can ever fully understand all he has done, and he puts questions in our minds about the past and the future.

When everything has been said and done, it all boils down to one question: will we trust that God knows best?

Look back at the note card you wrote from Week 5, Day 3 and the verse you rewrote on Week 5, Day 4.



How have they impacted your understanding of God's faithfulness in times of struggle or suffering?
