

The Stewardship of Suffering: Learning to See Thorns As God Sees Them 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

ACBC Annual Conference workshop
Sun Valley, CA October 2020

Main Idea: A thorn in the flesh is a bad thing, right? Actually, it is a matter of stewardship, according to 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. In this workshop we'll learn how to be faithful stewards of the painful realities of life by applying the promise of sufficient grace.

I. The pain (7)

- A. The thorn was a gift from God.**

- B. The thorn was intended to prevent pride.**

- C. The thorn was a messenger of Satan.**

- D. The thorn produced intense suffering.**

Caution: In a sense, my title could be misleading. "Learning to See *Thorns As God Sees Them*" may seem to indicate that we all have a thorn as Paul did, which I don't believe this text is teaching.

II. The pleading (8)

- A. Paul begged the Lord to remove it.**

- B. Paul stopped begging the Lord to remove it.**

III. The promise (9a)

A. My grace is enough.

B. My power is seen most clearly in your weakness.

IV. The power at work (9b-10)

A. I will boast in my weakness.

B. I am delighting in the difficulties of life.

C. I am experiencing what Jesus promised.

Implications for Biblical Counseling: Ask yourself these questions...

1. *What are you doing with your pain?*

Suggestion: Encourage counselees to get a good hymnbook and sing. While singing my way through the *Hymns of Grace*, I made a list of dozens and dozens of songs that have verses referring to present suffering and trials. We need these reminders.

2. *What are you doing with Jesus' promise?*

Suggestion: Encourage counselees to memorize biblical promises that pertain to suffering (see series "Promises to Live By in the Crucible of Suffering," www.wheelersburgbaptist.com).

3. *What can you do to help others experience this promise?*

Suggestion: Encourage suffering counselees to value the local church (see series "A People to Live With in the Crucible of Suffering," www.wheelersburgbaptist.com).