

## ***GOD'S PURPOSE IN OUR SUFFERING***

*(2 Corinthians 12:7-10)*

Suffering is said to be the gift nobody wants. But no matter how much we try to avoid pain, we are not exempted from the affliction and suffering in this fallen world (Job 14:1; 1 Peter 4:12; John 16:33). Instead of viewing suffering as a dreadful, bitter and hated enemy, we who are in Christ must embrace suffering as a sovereign and gracious gift from God which is designed to work out its divine intention in our lives. Reflecting on how the Apostle Paul dealt with his own thorn in the flesh, let's consider three divine purposes of suffering.

**1. *God uses suffering to* \_\_\_\_\_.**

Paul understood that one divine intention behind his suffering was *"to keep him from becoming proud"* (2 Corinthians 12:7). Because of the ministerial achievements and special visions he received from God, Paul was in danger of pride and self-exaltation. Hence, God took steps to keep him humble (2 Corinthians 12:1-7). God uses our sufferings to prevent us from looking at ourselves as self-sufficient and thus lose our sense of dependence, confidence and security in the Lord Himself (Ezekiel 28:2; 2 Chronicles 32:24-26; Deuteronomy 8:2-3).

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**2. *God uses suffering to* \_\_\_\_\_.**

Paul, in his severe anguish, turned to God in intimate prayer (2 Corinthians 12:8). His prayer was marked by persistence and fervency for he prayed to the God of Comfort in three successive occasions (Matthew 26:44; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Hebrews 4:15-16). God uses our adversities to drive us to the path of our deepest, richest and sweetest communion with Him (Psalm 13).

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**3. *God uses suffering to display His* \_\_\_\_\_.**

Paul's suffering became a monument of God's sustaining grace (2 Corinthians 12:9). The Lord may not remove our pain, but He will surely increase His enabling grace to persevere which fortifies our confidence in His faithfulness. Paul also realized that his suffering was a living demonstration of God's power over Satan (2 Corinthians 12:7). God can overrule Satan's attack against us and turn it into a wonderful blessing (Job 1:12, 20-22). Praise God that our human weakness is the path of divine strength. Our suffering unleashes Christ's power in our life. When we acknowledge these amazing blessings of pain, we will learn to joyfully embrace our sufferings. And with Paul, we could say: *"For Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong"* (2 Corinthians 12:10).

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