

**Topic: Blessings of Afflictions**  
**Text: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (NIV)**  
**Theme: “Afflictions can make us better and not bitter”**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

- Every student hates assignments, projects, quizzes, tests, and assessments; they require painful preparations. While in the midst of these insurmountable tasks, they feel like breathing is a luxury.
- On the positive note, students learn more through these “intellectual afflictions”; hence, their learning range becomes broad.
- The same is true with Christian life. Trials, afflictions, tribulations are all blessings turned upside down. They are blessings soaked in tears and decorated with pain, but are all meant to make our life victorious. Romans 5:3 exhorts “... we glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience.” (KJV)

## **I. AFFLICTIONS KEEP US HUMBLING**

*V7 “To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me”*

- Paul's thorn in the flesh has countless explanations such as: incessant temptation, chronic maladies (like eye problems, malaria, migraine headaches, and epilepsy), and a speech disability.
- Its Greek word is “aggelos,” which means angel or messenger; hence it is translated as messenger of Satan.

### **A. Wisdom or gifts from God might cause us to boast.**

*V7a “To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations” (NIV)*

*2 Peter 3:15 “... even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you.”(KJV)*

1. Paul spent three years in Arabia to receive revelations from Jesus (Galatians 1:12).

2. Paul wrote 13 NT books. His own words became part of the Word of God like in 1 Corinthians 7:25-26, talking about virgins, getting married and not getting married:

*"Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. Because of the present crisis, **I think...**"*

SOME NOTABLE REVELATIONS TO PAUL:

- Salvation by grace through faith and not by law nor good works (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- Circumcision of the heart (Romans 2:29)
- Eating food offered to idols (1 Corinthians 8)
- Rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17)
- Fruit and gifts of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10)
- Armour of God (Ephesians 6:11-17)
- How to disciple ministers like Timothy (1 & 2 Timothy)

**B. Wisdom or gifts from God might cause us to rebel.**

*7d to torment me*

*7d to keep me from being excessively exalted. (Amp)*

*7d and keep me from becoming proud (NLT)*

*7d lest I should be exalted above measure. (KJV)*

- Two famous rebellions ("be exalted above measure") in the Bible that tried and will try to exceed God's stature:
  - 1) **Past rebellion:** The rebellion of Lucifer that caused his fall (Isaiah 14:12-14)
  - 2) **Future rebellion:** The rebellion of the Antichrist exalting himself above all (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)

**II. AFFLICTIONS KEEP US PRAYING**

*V8 "Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me." (NIV)*

*"Three times I called upon the Lord, and besought Him about this and begged that it might depart from me." (Amp)*

**A. Calling to the Lord for an answer**

*V8a "Three times..."*

1. Mary and Martha called for Jesus when their brother Lazarus was dying. Their call was answered; Lazarus rose from the dead.
2. When we were newly born-again Christians, our prayers were answered with lightning speed. But as we get older in the Lord, sometimes the prayers are so slow or may require fasting to get an answer.
3. Whether the Lord answers our prayers quickly or with a delay, He has always a purpose.

**B. Beseeching/pleading/begging to the Lord for an answer**

*V8b, c "I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me."  
(NIV)*

*"and besought Him about this and begged that it might depart from me" (Amp)*

1. **"To beseech"** means to implore urgently; to beg eagerly and piteously; to make an urgent appeal.
2. Abraham was a beseecher. He pleaded for Sodom and Gomorrah to get spared from destruction. He was heard, but the cities were still destroyed as no righteous people were found.
3. Moses was a beseecher. He pleaded for the Israelites not to be blotted out in the Book of Life, and he was heard.
4. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, was a beseecher. She incessantly prayed in the Temple to have a son, and she was heard.
5. The founder of the Uniting Church (Methodist), John Wesley, was a beseecher. He had a terrible wife who tormented him beyond measure. He said he became successful and victorious because of his wife who kept him on his knees and prayer that made him victorious.

6. Bartimeaus, the blind man, was a beseecher. He cried out: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." Hushed by people to hold his peace, he cried all the more and Jesus healed him. (Mark 10:46-52).
7. Paul was a beseecher too. He was heard and was answered, but not the way he wanted it to be, he wasn't healed.

### **III. AFFLICTIONS KEEP US GROWING (vv9-10)**

*VV9-10 "9But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10That is why, 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." (NIV)*

#### **A. Through afflictions, God's grace is sufficient.**

*V9a "My grace is sufficient for you" (NIV)*

*"My grace (My favor and loving-kindness and mercy) is enough for you [sufficient against any danger and enables you to bear the trouble manfully]" (Amp)*

1. "Sufficient" means adequate or enough for something; doesn't run out.
2. It's like when your children were still toddlers, they were helpless "and afflicted." That is why, parents give them SUFFICIENT support, care, and protection.
3. Jesus invites those who are weary and burdened to come to Him for rest (Matthew 11:28).

#### **B. Through afflictions, God's power is displayed upon us.**

*V9b,c "For my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."*

- God's power in a poor country like the Philippines is always displayed: God's presence manifests in forms like His Shekinah glory (smoke) in some prayer meetings; churches sprout like mushrooms.

**C. Delight in afflictions of any forms**

*V10a,b,c "For Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties."*

**D. Through afflictions, we become strong.**

*V10d "For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

1. When we pass one form of affliction and on to a higher level, looking back at those past ones seem basic.
2. See how Paul became so strong through his afflictions: He received 39 lashes, five times; three times was beaten with rod; stoned once; three times he was shipwrecked; was in danger in the city, at sea; spent days and nights without sleep and food while ministering; pressure from the church.