

God's Amazing Grace

God Shouts to Us in Our Pain

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

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God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.

C. S. Lewis

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1. Second Corinthians

Some background

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- » In this, the most personal of Paul's letters, Paul is forced to defend his ministry against the attacks of others.
- » Hence he needs to speak of "special spiritual experiences" to compete with false teachers

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- » He speaks (in the third person) of being taken up to the third heaven and to paradise (v1-4)
- » "It delivers to us that the world we see not yet is a real world; that a third heaven is; that paradise is; that the human spirit can be consciously there, can there hear and understand."

H.C.G. Moule

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- » Due to these exceptional experiences a 'thorn in the flesh' is given to Paul to keep him humble (v7).

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II. The Thorn in the Flesh

2 Corinthians 12:7-8

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What's the thorn?

- » Only time the word is used in the New Testament
- » Could refer to:
 1. Physical pain – migraines, epilepsy
 2. Mental state – depression, despair
 3. Spiritual state - temptations

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For Paul the 'thorn' is...

- » Chronic & intermittent
- » Satan is the source
- » it hinders the work of the Gospel (from Paul's perspective)

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Paul's Plea

- » We know Paul wants to get rid of the thorn
- » He appeals to the Lord (3x)
- » Appeals = strong language (begs)
- » He goes to the Lord in prayer - crying out to God

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How do we respond to suffering?

1. We can become embittered
2. We can struggle on in our own resources
3. We can feel stoic above it all – we are strengthened in our character

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III. The Lord's Response to Paul

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

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“My Grace is Sufficient”

- » The thorn is not taken away
- » God’s movement in love toward us is sufficient
- » My presence (person) is sufficient for you
- » The difference between ‘ends’ and ‘means’

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Calvin points out here there are two kinds of answer to prayer, and that we must distinguish between ends and means: the Lord may grant an end that we properly seek, but not by the means we desired.

C. K. Barrett

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Knowing God’s Power

- » It’s not about resignation but knowing God’s power
- v9: “power is made perfect in weakness”
- v9b: “I will boast of my weakness, so that the power of God may dwell in me” (Shekinah glory of God resting on us)
- v10b: “whenever I am weak, then I am strong”

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IV. Going Forward

What does this mean for us?

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1. “My Grace is Sufficient for You

- » This is the mountain top experience for the entire epistle
- » This statement is present tense, is permanent and is for us all – “to be carved in our hands”

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II. Grace ~Weakness ~Power

- » Through grace God’s power is revealed in our weakness
- » God does great things through our weakness/dependence upon him

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When emptied of ourselves we are filled with God. Those who think they can change their own hearts, atone for their own sins, subdue the power of evil in their own souls or in the souls of others, who feel able to sustain themselves under affliction, God leaves to their own resources. But when they feel and acknowledge their weakness he communicates to them divine strength.

Grace
Charles Hodge

III. Discipline and Grace

- » Discipline is a demonstration of God's grace
- » "For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share his holiness." (Hebrews 12:10)

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- » We all carry a form of weakness
- » The invitation is to allow God to use it for our spiritual growth

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