

Two forms of righteous sufferings:

1. Trials that have to do with enhancing your personal relationship with God.

These are designed to develop Christ-like nature and character in you, prove and develop the quality of your faith, to establish a firm resolve of obedience and to mature you as God's son. These tests have to do specifically with WHO YOU ARE as God's son in the image and likeness of God.

2. Trials associated with your pursuit of the execution of God's will. These tests are encountered usually as obstacles to the attainment of God's purposes, not only for your life personally, but especially for other people within your sphere of influence.

Many people in the Bible can be used to demonstrate the two points above. Joseph was tested personally, and much of his tests and trials had to do with God preparing him to be used to accomplish God's corporate will.

Around these two issues stated above, I cover the general purposes for which God permits His sons to be immersed into suffering :

1. MORE INTIMATE KNOWING OF AND RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

Philippians 3:10 that **I may know Him** and the **power of His resurrection** and **the fellowship of His sufferings**, being conformed to His death;

There is a particular **depth of relationship with God that is only attainable through suffering**. The cry of the Apostle Paul here is that he would know **Jesus 'in the fellowship of his sufferings'**.

Fellowship = koinonia = joint participation, implying intimacy

One of the great positive outcomes of Job's intense trials was that he encountered God in a very personal and deeply intimate way, that would not have been possible without suffering. In his own words, he exclaimed, "I have HEARD of You by the HEARING of the EAR; But now my EYE SEES YOU".

Job 42:10 I have **HEARD of You** by the **HEARING of the EAR**; But now my **EYE SEES YOU**

Job migrates from HEARING to SIGHT. '**Sight**' refers to **greater illumination, revelation and knowledge of the PERSON and POWER of God**. This is subjective and personal. When the eyes see only what the ears have heard, it is more substantive and real. Once God is SEEN in a NEW LIGHT during and after your trials, your life will never be the same again. **Paul speaks of the 'eyes of our understanding being enlightened' (Eph. 1:18), so sight refers to a great capacity to understand and comprehend.**

Many hear; few see. Seeing God denotes intimacy with Him and being transformed by that sight. In your sufferings, like Job, shift from hearing to sight. This sight will deeply affect your perception of God and your entrance into all He has planned for you. You are transformed into being like Him whenever you SEE Him (2 Cor. 3:18).

Faith does come by hearing - yes it does - but faith is tested in trials - and this produces SIGHT. May your sight of God be enhanced in your present suffering saints. See Him! Job's end was glorious and doubly blessed, but before he saw restored prosperity, he saw God in a new way. Prosperity follows an enhanced perception of God's person. See Him!

Moses endured because he saw God, who is unseen. Sight of God results in endurance.

Heb. 11:27b "... for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen."

2. TEACHES OBEDIENCE

Hebrews 5:8 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.

Learned = manthano = to experience or to bring into experience;
to learn by use and practice;
to be in the habit of; accustomed to

'Obedience' was brought into the experience of Jesus by the things which He suffered or experienced. Obeying the will of His Father was a resolve which was strengthened within His life through every successive experience of suffering. He became so 'accustomed' to obeying the Father that even at contemplating entering into the climax of His suffering, viz. the cross, His courage and willingness to embrace His Father's will above His own prevailed: *'Not my will but Yours be done'*.

Suffering does produce in us a habit or custom of obedience!

3. DISCIPLINE OF A FATHER PRODUCES THE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Righteousness refers to compliance to God's predetermined standards or principles for how all sons of God should live in every part of their lives. While we are positionally righteous, having received the gift of righteousness, we are to grow in our practical expression of this righteousness in every part of life.

Hebrews 12:4-11

- 4 You have not yet **resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;**
5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him;
5 For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives."
7 **It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons;** for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?
8 But if you are without **discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.**
9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?
10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, **so that we may share His holiness.**
11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be **joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.**

4. PURGES FROM SIN AND UNRIGHTEOUSNESS

Refine = ṣārap = to refine, to test.

This word describes the purifying process of a refiner, who heats metal, takes away the dross, and is left with a pure substance (Prov. 25:4).

Prov 25:4 Take away the **dross from the silver**, And there **comes out a vessel for the smith**

Psalm 66:10 For You have **tried us**, O God; You have **refined us as silver is refined**.

Isaiah 48:10 Behold, I have **refined you**, but not as silver; I have **tested you in the furnace of affliction**.

When applied to people, this word refers to the purifying effects of external trials that God often uses to purify His people from sin.

Gold is symbolic of the Divine Nature of Christ. **Silver** symbolises redemption, and hence suffering is God's method of fully accomplishing the practical aspects of His redemption processes in us.

Zech. 13:9 “And I will bring the third part through the fire, **Refine them as silver is refined**, And **test them as gold is tested**. They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, ‘**They are My people,**’ And they will say, ‘**The Lord is my God.**’”

1 Peter 4:1,2 THEREFORE, since Christ has **suffered in the flesh**, arm yourselves also with the same purpose (or mind), because **he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin**, so as to **live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men**, but for the **will of God**.

At times, God allows us to suffer in order to bring us to a place where we firmly resolve to confront and deal with serious issues of sin, error or carnal habits. It is in a time of suffering that we are more prone to be yielded to and comply with Divine requirements and commandments.

Matthew 3:11,12

... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and **fire**. His **winnowing fork is in His hand**, and He will thoroughly clear **His threshing floor**; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but **He will burn up the chaff** with unquenchable fire.”

In this verse, the experience of being baptised in fire is likened unto the separation process between wheat and chaff on the threshing floor. Note that Jesus is the one who separates. A winnowing fork is a pitch fork used to toss wheat into the air to separate it from the chaff. The wheat is the useful part of the plant, but the chaff is the useless outer shell. Because chaff is useless, it is burned, but wheat is gathered into the barn to be put to productive use. The act of ‘winnowing’ and the subsequent ‘burning’ with fire is representative of what takes place when God allows us to suffer, in order to purge us further. He wants to remove the aspects of our lives that work against the effective fulfillment of His will in our lives. Fire in the natural is also a purifier. Gold or silver is purified by fire which removes any impurities from these metals. So too, will God purify His Church through suffering.

Psalms 119:67

Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.

Psalms 119 :71

It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.

Throughout his intense trials, Job was convinced that God would produce more substantial expressions of His Divine nature in and through his life.

Job 23:10

But He knows the way I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

The phrase, “the way I take”, in the original Hebrew is rendered as “the way with me”. Allow God to have His way with you. Surrender to His dealings internally within you. Allow Him, the Potter, to break you, the vessel of clay, and then shape you again into what He has predetermined you to be.

5. PRUNING RESULTS IN PROGRESSION FROM FRUIT TO MORE FRUIT TO MUCH FRUIT

John 15:1-7

- 1 “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.
- 2 Every branch in Me that does not **bear fruit**, He takes away; and **every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.**
- 3 You are already **clean because of the word** which I have spoken to you.

- 4 **Abide in Me, and I in you.** As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it **abides in the vine**, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.
 - 5 I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, **he bears much fruit**, for apart from Me you can do nothing.
 - 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.
 - 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.**
- a. Fruits is twofold – character and the successful execution of God’s purposes. Noah was a righteous and upright man in his day (character) – and – he also built an ARK (purpose).
 - b. Pruning is directly linked to the cleansing dynamic in God’s Word – “Now are you clean through the words I have spoken”.
 - c. Abiding in Christ, the Vine, is contextually interpreted as the capacity to endure His pruning.
 - d. Pruning is symbolic of suffering. The pruning is not because you are doing something wrong, but because you are bearing fruit.
 - e. Note the progression from FRUIT (v.2) to MORE FRUIT (v.2) to MUCH FRUIT (v.7). It is MUCH FRUIT that glorifies the Father and proves us as disciples of Jesus. ‘Much fruit’ requires a pruning process.

Prunes = kathairō = To cleanse from filth, purify.

6. MANIFESTS THE QUALITY/LEVELS OF FAITH YOU HAVE AND IS THE CONTEXT FOR FAITH TO GROW AND INCREASE

1 Peter 1:6-8

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have Been **distressed by various trials**, so that **the proof of your faith**, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even **though tested by fire**, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Your faith is more precious than gold and is tested by fire, by “various trials”, and it must be found to result in “praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Only a test can reveal the quality of faith that you possess. Faith is 'proved' in suffering. It is in times of suffering, that you truly know the quality and magnitude of your faith in God. You can only really know if you have faith to be healed when you are sick. You can only really know if you have faith that God's will for your life will prevail, if circumstances seem to threaten that will.

There is absolutely no contradiction between faith and trials. Trials reveal or expose faith's presence or absence. Trials test the pedigree and strength of our faith. Trials are also the context in which faith is deigned to grow, increase or mature. The Gymnasium of Faith is suffering. Trials develop faith's muscle and strength.

The fiery darts of satan are quenched by faith – your belief and trust in God. (Ephesians 6:16)

Jesus calmed a storm while sailing in a boat on a lake because his disciples feared. He said they had 'LITTLE FAITH' (Matthew 8:26). The storm revealed that they had little faith, but the storm was also an occasion for them to express their faith.

7. PRODUCES PATIENCE / PERSEVERANCE / ENDURANCE

Romans 5:3 - KJV And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that **tribulation worketh patience;**

Romans 5:3 - Nasb And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that **tribulation brings about perseverance;**

The Greek word for 'patience/perseverance' is the same for endurance.

Patience - Perseverance - Endurance = **hupomone** = to stay up under
= to patiently persevere and not to swerve from the path

Patience, a fruit of the Spirit, can only be developed within the context of suffering. It is that which causes you not to buckle under the pressure, and to remain steadfast and constant in your faith position.

James 1:3-4 - Nasb Consider it all joy my brethren, **when you encounter various trials**, knowing that the testing of your **faith produces endurance** And **let endurance have its perfect result**, that you may be **perfect and complete**, lacking nothing.

James 1:3-4 - NJKV knowing that the testing of your **faith produces patience**. But **let patience have its perfect work**, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing

Patience and endurance are necessary while you wait for the promise of God to be manifested in your life. Faith needs to couple with patience in order to fulfil prophetic promises.

Heb. 6:12 So that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who **through faith and patience inherit the promises**.

Abraham, through impatience, agreed to sleep with Hagar and produced Ishmael. Through impatience, he produced something in the flesh that would rival the promised son – Isaac. When you suffer, the temptation is to produce something in the flesh as a result of impatience.

Abraham received the promise that he would be the father of nations when he was 75 years old. This promise was realised when he was 100 years. While he waited, he gave God the glory (Rom. 4:20).

8. TO ACCOMPLISH THE WILL OF GOD

There is absolutely no person in the Bible whom God used to a significant degree, without that person going through some form of equally significant trials. Through the experience of suffering, **the will of the Lord is facilitated and accelerated**. This might not be so apparent at the time, but with hindsight you will see that through the suffering, your character is more Christ-like and that you are far more closer to the attainment and fulfillment of the will of God for your life than you would have been without the suffering. What seems like a 'set-back' is a 'set-up' for forward propulsion and momentum into God's design for your life. Trials are the trail toward the fulfillment of purpose and destiny.

This can be seen in Joseph's life. He suffered much in life, but each suffering propelled him closer towards his ultimate destiny. He had great dreams concerning his future destiny in God, but God

had to, through trials and testings, test HIM first, refine him, prove him, before he could occupy the place of rulership in Egypt.

Psalm 105:19 Until the time that his word came to pass, The word of the Lord tested him.

Joseph passed the personal purity test, sexual purity test, stewardship test, patience test and finally, the forgiveness test.

Abraham, too, was tested when God asked him to sacrifice his only son, Isaac (Gen. 22) He obeyed and passed the test, but this requirement of God on his life was an expression of suffering. All suffering is designed to perfect obedience in us.

God will never fulfil His prophetic will for your life if He has not first prepared your nature and character to sustain and uphold you in the context of a fulfilled prophetic word.

A TRIAL is a Divinely-determined TRAIL to develop your character and prepare you for your destiny. It is not a dead-end or cul de sac. It is a pathway and portal to maturity and purpose. Walk through your trial with understanding. It is leading somewhere significant. One day, you will look back and thank God for the TRAIL / TRIAL, because through it, God effected His greatest work in you.

If Paul did not go to Jerusalem and endure its intense and multiple trials, he would not have arrived at Rome, a place destined for him to preach. Jerusalem's trials is the free ride to Rome's mandate. Jerusalem's trials are not a cul de sac, but actually the gateway to Rome. Adversity is your free ticket to Destiny. Your suffering and trial is God's TRAIL to purpose and destiny.

David, too, suffered greatly along the path of his development in maturity and movement into God's plans and purposes for his life.

Psalm 57:2 Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, Until these calamities have passed by. ²I will cry out to God Most High, to God who performs all things for me.

Performance = gamar = to complete, to perfect

David wrote this song when he fled from Saul to the Adullam cave. His life and destiny were being threatened. Yet he expressed a confidence in God and His ability to ultimately bring to pass

everything that He promised. Note in verse one, he takes refuge in the shadow of God's wings and expresses a firm belief and understanding that 'these calamities WILL pass'.

But more than this, he realised that even through the dissipating of his trial, that no time or experience is lost, but that in it and through it all, God has been and is still "performing" something. The rest of the Psalm highlights the fact that men attempt to defame him, bringing ruin through mischievous acts and utterances.

Psalm 138:7,8 **Though I walk in the midst of trouble**, You will revive me; You will stretch out Your hand Against the wrath of my enemies, And Your right hand will save me. **⁸The LORD will perfect that which concerns me**; Your mercy, O LORD, endures forever; Do not forsake the works of Your hands.

'Perfect' here is the same Hebrew word for 'perform' - 'gamar'. Again, the performance of the Lord is at work or takes place within the context of 'trouble'.

Trouble = tsârâh = tightness : adversary, adversity, affliction, anguish, distress, tribulation, trouble.

Romans 8:28 And we know that **all things work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose

Work = sunergeo = "to work with or together"

A key word in Rom. 8:28 is **FOR** as opposed to AGAINST. All things are working **for** you, not ***against*** you. All things are designed for my benefit.

If you love God and are walking in His purpose, then every single event and experience is designed **FOR** your benefit and betterment, and will definitely push and propel you further and faster into the complete realisation of your destiny in God. When it seems like circumstances and people are opposing the fulfilment of God's promise in your life, recognise that those circumstances and people are actually pushing you deeper into your destiny; they are actually hastening the process of fulfilment in your life. Remember Joseph: he was sold into slavery by his brothers, yet he concludes that it was God and not his brothers that had sent him to Egypt. Men's **SELLING** of you might just be God's **SENDING** of you. Walk in forgiveness throughout all your trials where relationships become affected.

9. EXPERIENCING THE RESURRECTION POWER OF CHRIST IN A PERSONAL AND SUBJECTIVE WAY

In His wisdom, God has a way of using suffering and trials to put to death certain un-Christlike or unbiblical mentalities, behaviours and decisions in us. He also allows suffering to arrest the death process of things which should be kept alive. In this regard, He uses trials to 'correct' mindsets or intended decisions that could compromise our spiritual well-being or our bid to efficiently accomplish His purposes.

SUFFERINGS CONFORM US TO THE DEATH OF CHRIST, SO THAT THE RESURRECTION LIFE OF CHRIST COULD BE PERSONALLY AND EXPERIENTIALLY KNOWN

Paul's desire was to be **conformed to the death of Christ**. He wanted His entire life to radiate the likeness of the death of Christ. He lived in a spirit of martyrdom. He died daily to his flesh. He wanted his life to be **conformed** to the death of Christ.

Phil. 3:10-12 that I may **know Him** and **the power of His resurrection** and the **fellowship of His sufferings**, being **conformed to His death**; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. **(NASB)**

In this text above, Paul lists three interrelated aspects that he passionately desires to KNOW:

- (a) Christ, the Person
- (b) The Power of Christ's Resurrection
- (c) The Fellowship of Christ's Suffering

To know the person of Christ, is to fully know Him inclusive of the power with which He was raised from the dead, and this is only practically experienced in a personal subjective way through suffering for Christ or righteousness.

The WUEST Translation of the N.T. captures this beautifully ...

Phil. 3:10 Yes, for His sake I have been caused to forfeit all things, and I count them but dung, in order **that I might come to know Him in an experiential way**, and to come to know **experientially the power of His resurrection** and a **joint-participation in His sufferings**, being **brought to the place where my life will radiate a likeness to His death,** **(WUEST Translation)**

Paul wanted to know Christ and the power of His resurrection in a personal and subjective way - an experiential way - and he wanted to experience it now. He wanted it to be a current reality, not just a future event. The venue or vehicle to access this is suffering. Suffering is the only way resurrection power will be accessed experientially. Paul wanted to “jointly-participate” in Christ’s suffering - this meant he wanted to be a share-holder in it (the word ‘fellowship’ in the Greek is ‘koinonia’, meaning ‘participation, communion, partnership, sharing, association, the share which one has in anything’).

Jesus had to die in order to be raised from the dead. His death was the height of His sufferings. The Bible calls it His “suffering of death” (Heb. 2:9)

Heb. 2:9 But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the **suffering of death** crowned with glory and honor, so that by the **grace of God He might taste death for everyone**

Suffering is the context for knowing Christ in the power of His resurrection. Resurrection presupposes a death process or state. Sufferings have a way of producing death of unwanted thoughts or actions in us. When we comply with God’s intent for producing death in us, we access resurrection power.

Hence sufferings (of which death is the greatest level) is the context from which resurrection power proceeds. There can be no resurrection without death. Similarly, there can be no experience of resurrection power without sufferings and trials. In sufferings, is where we die - symbolically.

BUT THIS IS IMPORTANT: It is not suffering per se that positions us to access resurrection power, but we must reach the ultimate objective of God in permitting suffering, viz., greater conformity to the nature of Christ and perfection of obedience.

Psalm 71:20,21 You have allowed me to **suffer much hardship**, but you **will restore me to life again and lift me up** from the depths of the earth. **You will restore me to even greater honor and comfort me once again. (NLT)**

Via this YouTube link, refer to my series, “Principles and Power of Resurrection” for more on this point: <https://tinyurl.com/mv9bdrhn>

10. PERFECTS GOD'S POWER AND STRENGTH IN US BY HIS GRACE

2 Corin. 12:10

Therefore **I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.**

Note here that Paul does not say that he is strong, when he is strong. Rather, he is strong when he is weak. This might sound contradictory, but we are not strong when we are strong. We are strongest when we are naturally weakest, because the Scriptures declare that God's strength is perfected in our weakness. Within the context of trial and suffering, we tend to, from a humanistic point of view, be weak. In this context is the most ideal set of circumstances for the grace of God to find its most efficacious working. Being naturally weak, we have no opportunity to boast in our own strength or ability or capacity, and this affords the grace of God to find expression in and through our lives. Thus, when we see positive results, in humility we can only but acknowledge that this is the grace of God at work and not human capacity.

2 Corin. 4:16-18

Therefore we do not lose heart, for though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For **momentary light affliction is producing** for us an **eternal weight of glory** far beyond all comparison.

Note the dual process here: the outer man is decaying - i.e. weakened by the distresses of various trials; but inwardly, the inner man is renewed. Let the inner dynamic be your primary perspective and point of reference so that you do not necessarily grow discouraged.

11. THE GRACE OF GOD IS ACTIVATED TO STRENGTHEN YOU

Jesus tasted death by the GRACE of God. He was only able to endure the cross and its attendant pain and suffering, because the requisite grace to do so was granted to Him by his Father. Grace has the capacity to make you endure any process that includes suffering.

Heb. 2:9

But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, **so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.**

SUFFICIENT GRACE

1 Peter 5:10

**After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace,
who called you to His eternal glory in Christ,
will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.**

One of the most profound expressions and experiences of God's Grace is within the context of suffering, trial, tribulation or hardship. In these times, grace is active, sustains, energises, invigorates and produces specific results relative to the image, nature and character of Christ.

2 Corinthians 12:1-12

- 1 Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.
- 2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago - whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows - such a man was caught up to the third heaven.
- 3 And I know how such a man - whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows -
- 4 was caught up into Paradise and **heard inexpressible words**, which a man is not permitted to speak.
- 5 On behalf of such a man I will boast; but on my own behalf **I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses.**
- 6 For if I do wish to boast I will not be foolish, for I will be speaking the truth; but I refrain from this, so that no one will credit me with more than he sees in me or hears from me.
- 7 **Because of the surpassing greatness of the** revelations, for this reason, **to keep me from exalting myself**, there was given me a **thorn in the flesh**, a messenger of Satan to **torment me** - to keep me from exalting myself!
- 8 Concerning this **I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.**
- 9 And He has said to me, "**My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.**" Most gladly, therefore, I will rather **boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.**
- 10 **Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.**

To keep Paul from becoming puffed up and proud because of the abundance of revelations given to him, God allowed 'a messenger from satan' to torment him. He describes this as his 'thorn in the flesh'. 'Flesh' has reference to his body. His spirit and soul were not affected by this 'torment' – so it was something physical. We do not actually know exactly what it was. Whatever physical infirmity it

might have been, it was obviously painful and tormenting. This trial might have been a direct physical onslaught (like illness or weakness) or it may have been an attack by certain persons which brought much persecution to Paul at some level. The exact nature of Paul's thorn in the flesh is not conclusively known and is not the focus of our present study. In this study, it is simply highlighted with the specific emphasis on the severity and length of his trial, and that sufficient grace was given by God to him. The phrase 'thorn in my flesh', in contemporary meaning, usually indicates a severe trial that is painful, either physically, emotionally, psychologically, AND long lasting. So this is not a reference to a fleeting or momentary affliction, but something allowed by God for some considerable length of time to torment you, or be an irritating pain, bringing discomfort to a degree.

Paul described the effect of this thorn in his flesh as 'torment', which in the Greek has literal application to an effect on his body.

Torment = ***kolaphízō*** = to strike with the fist, to buffet,

He sought God three times to remove this, but God did not, stating that He will allow it, but that His grace would be SUFFICIENT.

2 Cor. 12:9,10 And He has said to me, "**My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.**" Most gladly, therefore, I will rather **boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.**

Sufficient = ***arkéō*** = **to suffice, be sufficient, satisfy, to be content;**
by implication to be **strong and able to assist** someone;
properly to ***ward off***, that is, (by implication) to ***avail***.

To break it down, this word sufficient means the following:

- a. Grace would be **ENOUGH** – there would be a sufficient deposit of grace attendant with the degree of the trial or suffering.
- b. Grace would make one **STRONG**. The grace would not just simply be there to sustain and bear one through the ordeal (although this is the case), but also the person being sustained would also be strengthened.
- c. Grace would **ASSIST** and bring support to the person.

- d. Grace would act as 'insulation', providing a **PROTECTIVE** mechanism against any injury or harm at any level.
- e. Grace would bring a level of **CONTENTMENT**, satisfaction and joy during the trial, so that the negative emotions and states usually attendant with hardship, would not be the case. Hence Paul would say, *Most **GLADLY**, therefore, I will rather **boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I AM WELL CONTENT with weaknesses' (1 Cor 12:9,10a).***
- f. To **ward off and avail** – this grace is powerful enough to resist the onslaught of the enemy against you. Grace prevents harm from coming to you.

2 Cor.12:9 and then he told me, My grace is enough; it's all you need. My strength comes into its own in your weakness. Once I heard that, **I was glad** to let it happen. I quit focusing on the handicap and began appreciating the gift. It was a case of Christ's strength moving in on my weakness. **(Message Bible)**

GRACE RELEASED IN SUFFERING IS THE ONLY MEANS TO PERFECTING OUR STRENGTH

Three phrases used by Paul in the context of suffering and trial are important:

POWER IS PERFECTED IN WEAKNESS

WHEN I AM WEAK THEN I AM STRONG

THE POWER OF CHRIST MIGHT DWELL IN ME

Strength is perfected only within the context of suffering and trial, which is supported by grace. Suffering alone does not result in perfected strength, but grace dispensed from God within the context of suffering, does. Where the trial or tribulation is ordained or allowed by God to accomplish very clear objectives (in Paul's case, it was to keep him from exalting himself because of the abundance of revelation), grace will always be present to bring completion or fullness to one's level of strength or ability in God. The effect of trials might be weakness and loss of strength in the natural, but grace works in the spirit, strengthening all aspects of the person, so that the flesh or natural realm cannot boast of the attainment of perfected strength or the results attained in the execution of the purposes of the Lord. Thus Paul could say, 'When I am weak, then I am strong'. There is a level of spiritual 'power' and 'strength' that is not attainable apart from accessing grace which is given in times of trial.

Within this context, prayer or appeal to God for relief or removal of the tormenting trial is inaccurate and invalid. Paul implored God to remove his 'thorn in the flesh' three times – but God did not. Jesus also prayed three times for God to take the cup of suffering (the cross) away from Him, but submitted to the WILL OF THE LORD being done. We are called upon to endure much so that God's intent and purposes be accomplished. You must see your suffering and trial in this light. There is divine purpose at stake, but also sufficient GRACE to enable and empower you in and through it, so that the will of God, be it personal or corporate, is accomplished.

FOUR GRACE EFFECTS OF SUFFERING FROM THE BOOK OF PETER

1 Peter 5:5:10

After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

Note here that God is referenced as the God of 'ALL GRACE'. In this verse 'grace' and suffering are linked. Grace is always released to the son of God who suffers righteously.

Note that 'AFTER' suffering, specific results are listed. These results are the effect of the work of grace in the one who has suffered.

1. Christ Himself will PERFECT You.

Perfect = katartízō = To put a thing in its appropriate condition,
To establish, set up, equip, arrange, prepare, mend.

This word implies that God will bring you to the place where you are deficient in no respect. There is a level of preparation that only trial will accomplish. There is a level of preparedness, fullness and equipping that will never be learned from attending a seminar, conference or bible study, but one that only suffering is divinely designed to attain. Yet GRACE will accomplish this in the midst of hardship.

2. Christ Himself will CONFIRM You.

Confirm = sterizo = To set fast, to fix firmly, to render constant , to confirm in one's mind,
To turn resolutely in a certain direction

This suggests that grace released in and through suffering has the capacity to bring one to a position of firm resolve, one that's fixed and unalterable. There will come a sense of permanence in the pursuit of the will of the Lord – an unswerving commitment to pursue or embark upon a course of action in reference to the will of the Lord.

3. Christ Himself will STRENGTHEN You.

Strengthen = sthenoo = strengthen; bodily vigour
Synonyms of this word in the Greek imply the following :
to make strong; to engender alive, to make alive, to vitalise,
to revive, to prevail, be of strength; to reinforce, to strengthen
more.

4. Christ Himself will ESTABLISH You.

Establish = themelioo = To found, to lay the foundation of anything.
Metaphorically , to ground, establish, confirm

KJV renders this as '**SETTLE YOU**'.

2 Thess. 2:16,17

- 16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good **hope by grace,**
17 **comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.**

Great Grace and Peace to you,
Randolph Barnwell

You may view my video teaching on this material via YouTube or Facebook in two separate broadcasts - links are here below:

Purpose and Product of Suffering - Part 1 (Points 1 to 5 are discussed)

YouTube : https://youtu.be/VF7a_HTgiQE

Facebook: <https://tinyurl.com/3kbmcmar>

Purpose and Product of Suffering - Part 2 (Points 6 to 11 are discussed)

YouTube: <https://youtu.be/p3-DRplzH34>

Facebook : <https://tinyurl.com/bheunwde>

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