

## SUFFERING GRACE

Today's request comes in from our church website.

**Request:** "Would you teach an encouraging lesson on God's perfect timing? I work with a wonderful 25 year-old single Christian lady who is fighting a deadly cancer. She struggles with her lot in life. She especially struggles whenever she attends a classmate's marriage or celebrates childbirth. She struggles with both "why me" and "why now" and I have run out of things to say to her."

Before we begin our lesson let me speak to the lady who wrote to me. I may not be able to give you some new word of revelation that you have not already found on this subject, but this lesson may familiarize you with those truths that may be used when ministering to the suffering, whether it is this lady or to others.

I commend you that you are not like the friends of Job – (Job 16:2-3) "Sorry comforters are you all. Is there no limit to windy words?"

It is my desire that together we could minister to her needs. Job reminds us of one thing she needs – "For the despairing man (in this case woman) there should be kindness from his friends, lest he forsake the fear (reverence) of the Almighty." (Job 6:14 / NAS)

**This lesson will share five biblical truths that will help us understand how to minister  
Suffering Grace to others as well as to ourselves.**

### **1. Our lesson text comes from Paul's similar struggle with what he called a "thorn in his flesh."**

Paul did what every spiritual mature believer does with news like this, he prayed – "Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that **it** might depart from me." (2 Cor.12:8)

Paul and Job prayed what every spiritually mature believer prays, for healing and health.

Job expressed this struggle in Job 6:8 (NIV) "Oh that my request might come to pass, and that God would grant my longing."

Before he began his fourth prayer, he received an important answer.

### **2. By undeserved suffering, the Lord taught both Job and Paul the important doctrinal concept of Suffering Grace**

"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." (2 Cor.12:9a)

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Pet.3:18)

God taught them that His grace was sufficient to deliver them **in** as well as **from** it (Heb.4:16).

One of Job's friends asked him, "Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty? (Job 11:7) (Zophar)

God taught them that as believers that the power they had access to was omnipotent power (Almighty).

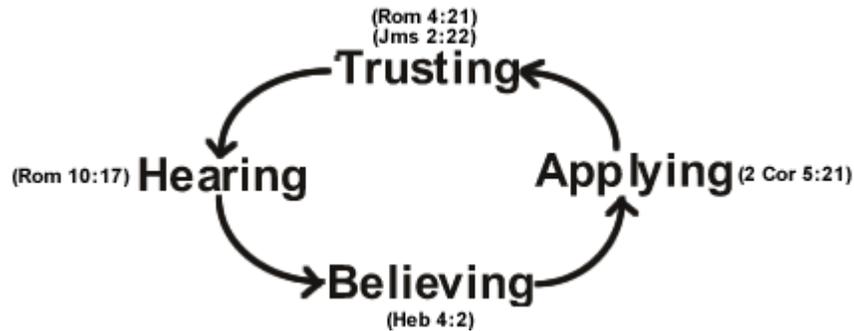
### **3. God's omnipotent power is perfected (teleioo) [completed, to reach a goal] in our weakness (our thorn in the flesh).**

Weakness is our inability to change our suffering status medically, financially, socially, physically, or religiously.

“Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him.” (Job 13:15).

This is where the **faith cycle** completes or perfects God’s omnipotent power by suffering grace.

“You see that faith (he pistis) was working with his works, and as a result of the works, **faith was perfected** (teleioo /a.p.ind).” (James 2:22)



**4. Paul reminds us that one reason for undeserved suffering is to keep us from exalting ourselves above the directive will of God (12:7).**

There are three classifications of the Will of God: Directive, Permissive, and Over-Ruling.

The Directive Will of God for undeserved suffering (US) is given by Paul in the book of Philippians:

(Phil.1:29) “For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, **not only** to believe in Him, **but also** to suffer for His sake.”

(Phil.1:20) “According to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, **Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.**”

And again in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter:

(1 Pet.5:6-7) “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, **that He may exalt you** at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.”

**5. Paul’s testimony to those under Undeserved Suffering is to surrender to both the directive (Phil.1:29) and over-ruling will of God (2 Cor.12:9) because God’s grace is sufficient (arkeo / p.a.ind) [ENOUGH]**

**Jesus said:** “Yet not as I will, but as Thou Wilt.” (Matt.26:39b; Phil.2:8-9)

**Paul said:** “And He 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, 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.**” (2Cor.12:9-10)

Paul’s point is that this doctrinal lesson can be applied to many different categories of Undeserved Suffering.

“Behold, we count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the **endurance of Job** and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings that the **Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.**” (James 5:10)

“Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.” (Job 1:22)