



August 16 – Sufficient Grace

Weekly Reading – 2 Corinthians 9-13

This Week's Passage – 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Main Point

God may not remove every weakness, but His grace is sufficient, and His power is displayed as we depend on Him.

Key Verse

2 Corinthians 12:9a – “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness.’”

Life Group – The Flow

• 15 minutes - Conversation and relationship-building • 5 minutes - Looking back • 5 minutes - Introduction, Background, and Christ Connection • 30 minutes - Study and apply the Bible • 5 minutes - Application exercise • 10 minutes - Pray Through the Passage & Prayer Requests • 5 minutes - Conclusion	If Time is Limited... Focus on: • Main Point & Key Verse • Read 2 Cor. 12:7-10 • Passage 1 Questions 1 & 3 • Passage 2 Questions 2 & 4 • Application Exercise • Pray Through the Passage • Final Takeaway & This Week's Challenge
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Looking Back (5 min)



Use this time to celebrate obedience and encourage growth. Invite members to share how they sought to apply last week's challenge and what God taught them along the way. Focus on God's faithfulness and the progress He is making in our lives, not on perfect execution. Scan or click the QR code for last week's challenge.

Last week, we studied Paul's words that believers are ambassadors for Christ. Each person was encouraged to identify one person, one prayer, and one step.

Ask

- Did you have an opportunity this week to pray for, encourage, or take a step toward the person God placed on your heart?

Avoid making anyone feel pressured to report a dramatic result. Faithfulness may have looked like praying consistently, starting a conversation, listening carefully, or simply becoming more attentive to an opportunity.

Transition to Introduction:

"Last week, we considered how Christ sends us to represent Him. But what happens when we feel too limited, discouraged, or weak to do what He has called us to do? Paul's answer may surprise us."

Introduction (5 min)

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Ask

- When we pray about a difficult situation, what kind of answer are we usually hoping God will give?

Allow members to respond. Most of us naturally hope God will remove the problem, change the circumstances, heal the pain, or provide a clear solution.

Follow-Up

- Why can it be difficult to recognize God’s help when the problem itself remains?

Say

“We often assume that if God is working, the situation will begin to improve. But sometimes God’s answer is not to remove the difficulty. Instead, He promises to meet us within it.

In today’s passage, Paul repeatedly asked Christ to remove a painful weakness from his life. Christ answered his prayer—but not in the way Paul expected.”

Transition to Background:

“To understand Christ’s answer, we first need to understand why Paul was discussing his weakness at all.”

Background

The Background and Christ Connection sections are designed to provide context and a gospel lens for the lesson. Feel free to summarize these sections rather than reading them word-for-word.

Throughout 2 Corinthians, Paul contrasts genuine Christian ministry with the outward standards valued by some of his critics. They boasted about impressive credentials, spiritual experiences, eloquence, and visible strength. Paul reluctantly described an extraordinary revelation he had received, but he refused to make that experience the foundation of his ministry or identity.

Instead, Paul turned the attention toward what he called a thorn in the flesh.

Scripture does not identify the exact nature of Paul’s thorn. It may have been a physical affliction, ongoing persecution, or another persistent difficulty. Rather than encouraging speculation, the passage directs our attention toward its effect: the thorn kept Paul humble and continually dependent upon Christ.

Paul understood that Satan intended the thorn to torment him. At the same time, God sovereignly used it to protect Paul from pride and teach him the sufficiency of divine grace.

Transition to Christ Connection:

“Paul’s weakness did not make him useless to God. In fact, it became the setting in which God’s power was most clearly displayed. This pattern—power revealed through apparent weakness—is seen most fully in Jesus.”

Christ Connection

At the cross, Jesus appeared weak, rejected, and defeated. Yet through His suffering and death, He accomplished what human strength never could: the salvation of sinners.

The resurrection revealed that the apparent weakness of the cross was the power and wisdom of God. Jesus conquered sin and death, and the risen Christ now supplies His people with the grace they need to endure, obey, and remain faithful.

We do not come to Jesus because we are strong enough. We come because He is gracious, powerful, and sufficient for us.

Transition to Passage 1:

“The cross shows us that God’s power does not always look the way the world expects. Now let’s see how Paul learned that same truth through a painful weakness that Christ chose not to remove.”

Study and Apply (30 min)

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says and how we can apply it in our lives this week.

Passage 1 - 2 Corinthians 12:7–9a

READ THE PASSAGE - Have a volunteer read 2 Corinthians 12:7–9a.

[7] So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

[8] Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.

[9a] But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (ESV)

Commentary

Use the following commentary to prepare ahead of time. As you lead, feel free to summarize key insights rather than reading it word-for-word.

Verse 12:7

Paul had received extraordinary revelations from God, but those experiences could have become a source of pride. The repeated phrase “so that I would not exalt myself” identifies the purpose the thorn served in Paul’s life: it kept him humble and dependent upon God.

The word translated thorn could describe a sharp stake, splinter, or other painful object. Paul did not identify the exact nature of his thorn. Suggestions have included physical illness, persecution, spiritual opposition, or another persistent difficulty. Because Scripture leaves it unnamed, the primary emphasis should remain on what the thorn accomplished rather than on speculation about what it was.

Paul also called the thorn “a messenger of Satan.” Satan intended the affliction to torment and discourage Paul. Nevertheless, Satan remained under God’s sovereign authority. God did not delight in Paul’s pain, but He permitted the thorn and used it to protect Paul from pride. What Satan intended for torment, God used to deepen Paul’s dependence upon Christ.

Verse 12:8

Paul responded to the thorn by praying for its removal. He did not pretend the pain was insignificant or assume that mature faith required him to remain silent about his desire for relief. He pleaded earnestly and repeatedly with the Lord.

The phrase “three times” may indicate three distinct seasons of intense prayer rather than only three brief requests. Paul’s persistence demonstrates that repeated prayer is appropriate when a burden remains. His example also shows that asking God to remove suffering is not evidence of weak faith.

However, faithful prayer does not guarantee that God will answer in the precise way we request. Paul’s prayer was heard, but the answer was not the removal of the thorn.

Verse 12:9a

Christ answered Paul with a promise rather than an explanation. Paul was not told why the thorn had to remain or how long he would endure it. He was assured that Christ’s grace would be sufficient.

The word sufficient means adequate, enough, or fully able to meet a need. Christ did not promise Paul a limited supply of grace that he would need to stretch carefully. His grace would remain continually sufficient for every moment of Paul’s weakness.

Christ also declared that His power is “perfected in weakness.” The word does not suggest that God’s power is incomplete. Rather, His power reaches its intended expression and becomes most visible when human strength is inadequate. When people can no longer credit success to their own ability, the sustaining power of Christ is more clearly displayed.

Guide Discussion

You do not need to cover every question. Use the questions that best help your group engage with the passage. I do encourage you to use the Reflective question to provide more engagement from your Life Group.

1. **Good for Students:** What did Paul repeatedly ask Christ to do, and what did Christ give him instead?
2. **Discuss:** What does Christ's word "sufficient" teach us about the kind of grace He provides?
3. **Deeper Dive:** What is the difference between depending on Christ's grace and simply trying harder to endure a problem?
4. ★ **Reflective — Index Card:** Where are you tempted to believe that God could use you more effectively if He first removed a weakness or limitation?

Teaching Insight

The Teaching Insight is intended to help you identify and emphasize the main truth of the passage. Consider using it as a brief summary after discussion or a way to clarify the lesson's central message if your group gets off track.

Say:

"Paul's unanswered request was not evidence that Christ had ignored or abandoned him. Christ gave Paul something deeper than immediate relief: the assurance that His presence, power, and grace would remain sufficient while the difficulty continued.

God sometimes demonstrates His power by removing hardship. At other times, He demonstrates His power by sustaining His people within it."

Transition to Passage 2:

"Christ's answer did more than help Paul tolerate his weakness. It completely changed the way Paul understood it."

Passage 2 – 2 Corinthians 12:9b–10

READ THE PASSAGE – Have volunteers read 2 Corinthians 12:9b–10.

[9b] Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

[10] For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (ESV)

Commentary

Verse 12:9b

Paul therefore chose to boast in his weaknesses. He was not celebrating pain itself or suggesting that suffering should be pursued. He was acknowledging that his limitations created opportunities for Christ's power to "reside" upon him. The term conveys the picture of Christ's power resting or dwelling over Paul.

Verse 12:10

Paul expanded the principle beyond his particular thorn. Weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties all exposed the limits of his human ability. His statement that he took pleasure in these experiences does not mean that pain had become enjoyable. Paul took pleasure in what Christ could accomplish through circumstances that forced him to depend upon divine strength.

The phrase "for the sake of Christ" is important. Paul was not praising every form of suffering indiscriminately. He was describing hardships encountered while faithfully following and serving Jesus.

The final declaration, "when I am weak, then I am strong," summarizes the passage's central paradox. Weakness itself is not strength. Rather, recognizing weakness moves believers away from self-sufficiency and toward dependence upon Christ. Paul was strongest when he stopped relying upon himself and rested in the sufficient power of Jesus.



Consider This -

Optional illustration to reinforce the passage.

At seventeen, Joni Eareckson Tada broke her neck in a diving accident and became quadriplegic. In the months that followed, she wrestled with depression and asked God why He would not heal her.

Her paralysis never went away. Decades later, Joni still lives with quadriplegia and chronic pain, but she describes God's grace as the strength that has carried her through each season. Through her continuing weakness, God has used her to establish an international ministry serving people and families affected by disability.

God did not display His power by removing Joni's weakness. He displayed it by sustaining her and working through her while the weakness remained.

Guide Discussion

1. **Good for Students:** How did Paul's attitude toward his weaknesses change after hearing Christ's answer?
2. **Discuss:** How can weakness expose what we have been relying on for security, confidence, or control?
3. **Deeper Dive:** How does this passage challenge the belief that strong faith should always produce health, comfort, or visible success?
4. ★ **Reflective — Index Card:** What would it look like to stop treating one of your limitations as a disqualification and begin asking Christ to work through it?

Teaching Insight

Say:

“Paul did not boast because suffering made him superior or because pain should be celebrated. He boasted because weakness no longer had the final word over his life.

His limitations became places where Christ's sufficiency could be experienced and His power could be seen.”

Transition into Application Exercise:

“Paul could not choose whether the thorn remained, but he could choose where he would look for strength. Let's take a few moments to identify where we need Christ's sufficient grace in our own lives.”

Application Exercise (5-7 min)

The Thorn, The Grace, and the Next Step

Time: 5-7 minutes

Supplies: Index cards and pens, available in the resource cart

Instructions

Write the following three headings on an index card: The Thorn, the Grace, and the Next Step

Give each member a card or space to write privately.

1. The Thorn

- Where are you currently most aware that your own strength is not enough?

This could involve a circumstance, responsibility, relationship, limitation, unanswered prayer, or ongoing hardship.

2. The Grace

- What do you need Christ's grace to provide within that weakness?

Possible examples include:

- endurance
- wisdom
- courage
- patience
- humility
- peace
- help from other believers
- strength to obey

3. The Next Step

- What is one faithful step you can take while trusting that Christ's grace is sufficient?

The next step may be asking for help, continuing to pray, obeying despite fear, receiving support, establishing a boundary, seeking wise counsel, or completing a responsibility that feels beyond your ability.

Say:

"We often postpone obedience until we feel stronger, more confident, or more capable. But Christ does not ask us to manufacture enough strength. He invites us to depend upon His sufficient grace and take the next faithful step."

Transition into Pray Through the Passage:

"We have named an area of weakness, considered the grace we need, and identified a faithful next step. Now let's bring those things directly to Christ in prayer."

Pray Through the Passage (10 min)

Led by the Prayer Champion:

Read the verse/passage, then read the prayer prompt out loud. Allow a few moments between prompts for reflection and prayer. Encourage members to personalize each prayer by filling in the blank with their own response.

Prompt 1 - Adoration (have people pray this prompt out loud)

2 Corinthians 12:9 - "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness."

- Praise Christ for being gracious and powerful. His grace is sufficient, and His power is never limited by our weakness.

Prompt 2 - Confession (can be silent)

2 Corinthians 12:7 - "So that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me."

- Confess the ways you have relied on your own strength, hidden your limitations, or resented God because He did not answer a prayer in the way you hoped.

Prompt 3 - Gratitude (have people pray this prompt out loud)

2 Corinthians 12:9 - "Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may reside in me."

- Jesus, thank You for remaining present in hardship and providing grace when _____.

Prompt 4 - Response/Obedience (have people pray this prompt out loud)

2 Corinthians 12:10 - "For when I am weak, then I am strong."

- Lord, help me depend on your strength when _____.

End the prayer prompt time and transition to the next section:

Prayer Requests, Praises, and Follow-Up

1. Take a few minutes to ask the group for updates from the previous week's prayer requests. Encourage the group to celebrate answered prayers.
2. Next, identify specific needs that can be prayed for throughout this coming week. Encourage members to be vulnerable and open in their needs so members can better and more fully support each other in prayer and in tangible ways.

3. Record requests and praises, share them with the group during the week, and follow up on them at the next gathering.

Transition into Conclusion:

“Our weaknesses may not disappear when we leave today, but neither will Christ’s grace. Let’s close by remembering the truth we can carry with us into the week ahead.”

Conclusion (5 min)



Scan or click the QR code and share the link in your Life Group’s group chat (e.g. GroupMe, text or email thread, etc.) so they can see **This Week’s Challenge**. Encourage your group to keep these questions in mind, review/memorize the Key Verse during the week, and engage in the Year of Prayer reading plan this week.

Final Takeaway

After discussion concludes, read the takeaway statement:

God’s answer is not always the removal of our weakness. Sometimes His answer is the promise that His grace will remain sufficient and His power will meet us there.

This Week’s Challenge

Respond – *What will I do this week?*

Identify one area where you need to stop relying entirely on your own strength and consciously depend upon Christ.

Reflect – *What is God showing me?*

Ask yourself:

- **What is this weakness revealing about what I trust, fear, or try to control?**

Review – *How will I keep God's Word before me?*

Review this week's **Key Verse** each day and ask God to use it to shape your heart and actions throughout the week.

2 Corinthians 12:9a – “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness.’”

Ask God to bring this verse to mind whenever you feel weak, inadequate, or overwhelmed, and to help you rely on Christ's sufficient grace.

Read – *How will I prepare for next week?*

This week's reading is **Galatians 1-5**. You can access the Year of Prayer reading plan [here](#).

Prayer

Either pray something like the guide below, or invite someone in the group to close in prayer.

“Jesus, thank You that Your grace is sufficient for us. Forgive us for relying on ourselves and believing that weakness disqualifies us from being used by You. Meet us in the places where we feel limited, discouraged, or unable. Give us grace for today, strength to obey, and confidence that Your power is greater than our weakness. Amen.”