

Trusting God's Sufficiency

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[0 : 00] This morning as we continue on in our series here looking about faith that triumphs, talking about trust and what does trust look like?

! How does trust apply in our lives? Go ahead and take your Bible and turn over to 2 Corinthians chapter 12. 2 Corinthians chapter 12 this morning.

We're going to look here at trusting His sufficiency. You know, this is one of the areas I think that we struggle with because we can say it intellectually, I trust God for this, or that I know God can supply all my needs, but now today we're going to be looking at trusting His sufficiency.

That's the practical dynamic of it. Moving it from thought and intellectual argument to practicality.

Because, you know, life doesn't deal in intellectual stuff. You know, there's things we need to know, but you know, the practical and how we play it out makes a difference. And it's critical.

[1 : 10] You know, look here in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 this morning. Look down at verse 9. And we'll talk about this passage here a little bit. But we'll just start out here.

And He said unto me, this is Paul, talk about what God said unto him. And he says, Let's pray.

Heavenly Fathers, we just come before you this morning. Lord, we just thank you for your word. Lord, thankful that we can confidently trust you. Lord, that you are the one that meets the needs.

Lord, that you're the one that brings us through. Lord, help us just to draw close to you even here this morning as we look and think about this principle, this reality of trusting what you have is sufficient to meet the need.

Lord, we pray we just might grab a hold of that truth in our lives. And Lord, we ask it all in your precious name. Amen. You know, as we learn about the early moments of the church and the spreading of the gospel in the book of Acts, you know, we come across the reality of all these things, of what's taking place.

[2 : 44] You know, Acts chapter 14, Paul says, And when they had preached the gospel to that city and it taught me, they returned again to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples and exhorting them to continue in the faith that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

You know, that tribulation that's going to come. And why would one mention of tribulation of all things be to new Christians? You know, how would that be encouraging?

You know, you'd think telling them, hey, you're going to have problems would be discouraging. You know, but he wants us to be encouraged in the reality, not because of the problem, but because who we have with us in the midst of the problem.

That's the encouragement, because the reason is very simple. You know, the tribulation, you know, tribulation in our life, not the tribulation, but tribulation and troubles in our life is just part of life.

You know, we don't get an exemption card, you know. Over Christmas, I was playing Monopoly with my grandkids, and, you know, you get the get out of jail free card. You know, nobody in life gets to draw the card that says, I get trouble free.

[3 : 59] You know, where you turn your card in and say, hey, I drew the card. Hey, this problem's not mine. You know what? None of us get that, do we? All of us have to face the realities, the problems, the struggles of this life and sin that is there.

And, you know, and God allows not only bad things, you know, struggles to come, but he also blesses us with many good things. You know, the blessings that God gives to us and comes into our life, for a purpose.

Because not only the struggles, but the blessings are there for a purpose, too. You know, think about Romans chapter 8, when Paul's writing there in verse 28, and he tells us this, he says, For we know that all things work together for good to them that, what?

Love God and are called according to his purpose. All things. That doesn't just include the good things, it includes the struggles and the trials, and the not so good things, but I want you to understand it does include the good things, the blessings.

God says when he blesses, and when he allows trouble and trials, both of them are working together for our good, for our benefit.

[5 : 11] You know, we don't always see that dynamic, but the reality is, that's what it is. And one of the reasons God allows difficulties and even failures into our lives, so that we can learn his sufficiency.

It's helping us to know him. When God takes care of us, walks with us through things, we realize what God means to us.

helps us realize who he is. You know, knowing very importantly, though, that there's nothing, you know, like we looked last week at Job, to realize God allows nothing into your life that he hasn't first filtered.

That no matter what takes place in your life, God has said, I will allow it. Because this is the purpose or the outcome. We find that our natural tendency, though, is we don't like those and we want to run away from the problems.

But we look at Paul today, Paul said, you know, I came to the conclusion I can't run away. And there's certain things that God's not just going to absolve me of having to deal with.

[6 : 18] There's going to be situations and things happen that I have to rely upon him as we walk through. Trials and infirmities can lead us to a greater understanding of God's sufficiency.

You know what? You learn more about somebody supplying your need when the need is met than you do if it's a blessing. You know, we really don't learn much through excess. We learn through necessity when we need those things.

And so we're going to look here this morning and the first thing we're going to see here that Paul's pointing out here is sufficiency of God's purpose. You know, God has a purpose for what goes on in our life.

We don't always understand it. We're not given all the answers. Our difficulties, though, aren't meaningless. The situations in our lives we need to understand God has put there for us to grow and to mature.

To understand, understand in Paul's case, Paul talks about here in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, he talks about, he says, the thorn in the flesh. Now that sounds enjoyable, doesn't it? You know, the thorn in the flesh.

[7 : 34] You know, it's like nobody looks forward to it. You know, have you ever grabbed a hold of a rose and had that thorn get you? Or everybody's favorite on the farm, you know, the old cockaburl, stick to you and everything get to you.

Needles that get you, you know, cactus. You know, you walk through and the cactus gets you. Or if you like critters, you know, that porcupine. Those thorns in the flesh that you remember.

Excuse me. But Paul talks about this as a thorn in the flesh. But the apostle Paul had been given much and he had received a direct revelation from God.

You know, oftentimes we forget that Paul talks about the thorn in the flesh, but Paul talks about, he says, all the blessings I've had, all the things I've seen, God still allowed this in my life. Because if you thought about how Paul had been exalted above others of his day, God lifted up Paul for a purpose.

Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. Paul had been exalted, you might say. The apostle Paul had been given much. He had received direct revelation from God. He had heard and seen things that others had not.

[8 : 49] You know, look up here in our chapter here in chapter 12. Notice what he tells him here. Now it tells us in verse 2, he says, I knew a man in Christ above 14 years ago. Whether in the body I cannot tell or whether out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth.

Such is one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth. How he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words which were not lawful for man to utter.

Of such a one will I glory, yet of myself I will not glory but in mine infirmities. Now I want you to understand, Paul said, I'm not going to boast and part of the infirmities was to actually keep Paul in the right mindset in his life.

You know, sometimes God allows things to keep our mind focused on the right things. I want you to understand, you know, there's a lot of people who write books about going to heaven. You know what Paul said?

I firmly believe the scripture teaches us when Paul was stoned, he went up to heaven. This 14 years brings it back to when Paul was stoned. You know, the Jews were pretty efficient at stoning people.

[10 : 05] When they drug him out of the city, they were pretty sure he was dead. That's the reason I think you find Paul here rephrasing this. He says, whether in the body or out of the body, I don't know. Because I don't think he fully understood the reality of everything that took place right there.

But it tells us that after they drug him out of the city, after he was stoned, you say, preacher, how do you know he was almost like resurrected because it says he just stood up and walked back in the city. Then he gets loaded up the next day and walks miles and miles to the next town.

I tell you what, if somebody beats you to death with stones, you're not going to stand up the next day. The older you get, the more you realize that's true. You know, when you're young, one stone, you'll hobble along, but when they pile it on, it's like, no, that ain't going to work.

We're camping out for a few weeks here to get the body functioning again. But you know what, God did something miraculous. But Paul talks about this event here. He says he was caught up in the paradise, into the third heaven.

Paul was exalted to a point that we have a hard time understanding that Paul says that I heard and saw things that ought not to be uttered.

[11 : 18] In other words, he says I understand some things about heaven. He had a glimpse into glory. And he just comes back and says, hey, be ready. Because the maturity of Paul's faith is seen in his ability to experience both great blessing and great loss and find God's sufficiency in both.

You know, when Paul had the right perspective of those things, it changed what he did. Even though he had been lifted up by the Lord, Paul said, I appreciate and understand even when I'm abased.

You know, look over to Philippians 4. Philippians 4 and verse 12 says this, it says, I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound.

You know what Paul said? My life is filled full of things that went well and things that didn't go well. My life is filled with things that went the way I thought they were going to go and filled with things the way I didn't think they were going to go. Now notice this, it says, everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

Paul said, you know, sometimes you're going to have needs. Things you don't know how to deal with. I want you to understand Paul had been exalted but Paul was also humbled. You know, Satan, Paul could have barely easy, boasted about all the things God did for him.

[12 : 34] I mean, you think about it, he saw the resurrected Savior on the road to Damascus. Jesus spoke personally to him after he resurrected. Here we find he was caught up into heaven and God gave him revelation and he heard things and saw things to understand beyond and Paul yet was humble.

You know, we like to boast of the victories but think that we are something or to take credit of what God has done. But you know what? Pride always gets us in trouble.

Proverbs 16 tells us this in verse 18, Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better it to be of a humble spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud.

You know, Paul understood and God made it clear to Paul here that the thorn in the flesh was in part allowed to help Paul live with a humble dependence upon God.

No matter how much God blessed him he understood that he still needed the Lord. You know what happens sometimes in our life if everything keeps going just hunky-dory and smooth we have a tendency to forget God.

[13 : 42] We have a tendency to be prideful about things but when we struggle or have needs it really brings back reality, doesn't it? It brings back the reality of what God of who God is.

You know, look at our text here notice what Paul tells me look at verse 7 here in chapter 12 and it says lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh the messenger of Satan to buffet me lest I should be exalted above measure.

You know, sometimes God develops humility in us by allowing trials into our life. God permitted him notice here God permitted this is very similar and runs parallel because notice who buffeted him?

God allowed who to do it? Satan. That's very similar to what we talked about with Job last week wasn't it? In other words God allowed some things for Paul to experience that would keep things in perspective.

perspective. You know, this is one of those areas you hear a lot of people talk a lot of things about Paul's thorn in the flesh. What was this or it was that or something else. You know what? No place in Scripture is it directly spoken of of exactly what it was.

[15 : 06] I think there's a reason for that. I think it's important because Paul said you know what my thorn in the flesh was wasn't a critical thing it's the fact that it was there. The fact that it was needed.

The fact that God allowed it. You know it might have been physical it might have been just issues with people. You know Galatians chapter 4 talks about an affinity of the flesh and it's a context that goes on to describe how the Galatian believers would be gladly given even his own eyes to him.

You know I think Paul had a lot of problems but I think you know think about it he got stoned beat with rocks. beaten with rods. He was shipwrecked.

I mean you look through the trials that Paul lists he says I'm thinking to myself man you're going to be a pretty decrepit person. I imagine Paul woke up in the morning to the snap, crackle, and pop.

Why? Because of the things that had happened to his physical body. He had issues that went on but notice in Galatians 4 in verse 13 it says this you know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first and my temptation was that in my flesh you despised not nor rejected but received me as an angel of God even as Christ Jesus which then the blessedness you spake of for I bear you record that if it had been possible you would have plucked out your own eyes and had given them to me.

[16:36] You know when we realize what's happening here the possibility of Paul's thorn might have been something that was there it might have been the Jews that hounded him you know you think over in Acts chapter 20 it talks about Paul here and it tells in verse 29 for I know this that after I am departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you not sparing the flock.

Paul understood that the trials and even the thorn in the flesh can come from multiple sources. A multi-pronged attack. You know the longer I live I realize that usually you don't have one problem you have many.

You ever notice that problems seem to multiply? You have this problem over here and this problem over here and this problem over here and this problem over here but we understand they come in different sources and different natures sometimes it's physical sometimes it's spiritual but no matter what the case is God can use them to humble us because it teaches us we need to rely upon him.

You know notice what Paul says he says about this he says that I should be exalted above measure. You know think about that Paul recognizes he says hey you know God's blessed me and given me so much he says people need to see that I do have real problems because there's a benefit there not only for myself but for others.

You know when it's easy to talk about your faith it's another thing to talk about your faith in the midst of trials. The testimony you have is given more in trials and tribulations than it is in blessing. when we walk through those things and notice what look over to James chapter 4 because when we're humbled God tells us something here in James 4 in verse 6 he tells us this but he giveth more grace wherefore he saith God resisteth the proud and giveth grace unto the humble.

[18:30] God gives grace to the humble. When we're proud and self-sufficient we resist God's grace and the one thing that we need is for God's grace to sustain us through our trials.

You know have you ever stopped to consider why do sometimes we find it hard to trust that even in the midst of struggles God is still good and God is still working.

I'm not going to ask for a show of hands but I think most of us could say there's moments in life when we ask that question isn't it? How is this something good? How is this something wise in purpose for us?

You know how can we be encouraging each other in developing a spirit of trusting God? You know what we learn to trust God because it humbles us when problems and trials and tribulations come.

So when it comes to a trial remember the gift that God gives to us through humility because we receive God's grace when we humble ourselves before Him.

[19 : 41] You know part of the problem is that we overdo our problems because we hold on to them trying to solve them ourselves. In pride we say I can handle this and God says you need to humble be humble before me because my grace is sufficient because not only the sufficiency of God's purpose but the sufficiency of God's promise.

You know Paul reveals to us here some very important elements because God not only had a purpose for the thorn in His flesh that He allowed in Paul's life but He responded to Paul's need with an amazing promise.

You know look at verse 8 here back in 1st and 2nd Corinthians chapter 12 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me.

Now this particular item Paul's talking about here he said what I didn't just ask the Lord to help me deal with it once he says three times I went to the Lord in other words he didn't get an answer right away.

You know have you ever been frustrated when you don't get an answer right away? You know and I want you to understand that as Paul continues to go and to plead Paul's plea before the Lord there in verse 8 this reality this was of course nothing inherently wrong with Paul asking God to remove the thorn I want you to understand notice his reply the promise that was given to him was this he said unto me now notice who said this to Paul?

[21 : 13] The Lord he said my grace is sufficient for thee my grace is sufficient for my strength is made perfect in weakness into Paul's request for this release from suffering God instead of removing it offered his grace to walk through it that God said I'm going to walk through it because why?

because all things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to his purpose you know what God's telling Paul he says God I'm going to get he said Paul I'm going to give you the grace to walk through this because there's a greater purpose in it there's a greater purpose to understand this reality this grace that describes God's undeserved favor towards us it's a dynamic force it totally transforms our lives when you think about God's grace for salvation but God's grace to sustain us as God walks through and when we understand that the principle is this what God does not remove he sustains us through by his grace there's a reason sometimes God doesn't remove things for our benefit and even the benefit of others but he gives us the grace to walk through to speak of grace that's sufficient is to speak of a continual store of God's grace you know every day that we face problems and we understand that we might face problems every day but every day we have God's grace

God says I'm sufficient it's sufficient to do that you know Paul not only recognized that God's grace was sufficient but he realized that he was made complete in God's grace in other words he matured that practical sanctification he became more Christ-like by understanding and trusting and knowing the Lord better through it you know when we realize that the dynamic here of made perfect means to carry through completely to accomplish to finish to bring it into or add to what is yet wanting in order to render a thing full in other words God says I'm going to provide what's needed to complete what I'm going to accomplish because without think about without problems without weakness we tend to think of ourselves what more highly than we ought you know look at what I did but you know what problems remind us that we're not as great as we think we are if you want one benefit that's one right there we realize that we're not God we're not masters of our own universe it helps us realize who God is and when we understand that God uses weakness and needs in our life but the reality is that God is not attracted to our strengths but to our weaknesses there's nothing in us that God needs

Paul says in my weakness you know God reveals to us that we're weak and we need Him God doesn't need us we need Him the reality is this I'll give you a little clue God's already complete He doesn't need anything He has everything knows everything has the power to do anything but He loved us enough to say I'm going to use what I have to be a blessing have grace in your weakness to be sufficient you know it's only when we recognize our need for Him through our weakness that He can use us you know look over to 1 Corinthians chapter 1 for a moment you know I want you to understand even in our lives God calls us to do things and we use a term today and I'll use the term it's called our comfort zone you know what God calls us to do things outside of what we're comfortable oh I could never do that you know what if God calls you to do something

God will give you what's needed to do it you know because I guarantee you there's two in here this morning that would say they never thought they'd see me up here preaching but you know what when God calls us to do something God equips us God's grace is sufficient we don't understand how things come together sometimes but notice here in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 look down at verse 26 it says for you see your calling brethren how not many wise men after the flesh not many mighty not many noble are called but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty the base things of the world and the things which are despised God hath chosen the things which are not to bring to naught the things that are that no flesh should glory in his presence you know simply this if you want to serve God God's looking for people to give him glory and not themselves you know what you got plenty of people looking for their own glory you don't have to look very far especially in the day of social media you know one of the whole themes of social media is look at me that's really the context of social media look at me that's natural for us to want but you know what

[26 : 38] God wants he doesn't want somebody that says look at me God wants somebody that says look at him look what God's doing look what God has accomplished because when we understand it's such a case he took his greatest servants you think about that Job we talked about last week he was a faithful servant of God that God had blessed he was enjoying all the things God had blessed him with we have the Apostle Paul you know and others that he allowed them to experience infirmities problems that he might receive glory and that's exactly what he does in our lives you know think about what Job said look back in Job chapter 23 for a moment Job 23 in verse 10 God says this for he knoweth the way that I take when he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold you know

Job understood that it wasn't about him what God was doing you know God deals with us the same way that he tried Job always for our benefit and for his glory you know look at the New Testament look over to 1 Peter for a moment 1 Peter chapter 2 or excuse me 1 Peter chapter 1 in verse 7 notice what it tells us here it says what that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth let that sink in from what the trial of your faith in other words your problem your issue your thorn in the flesh though it be tried with fire might be found under the praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ you know what he said it's going to bring glory to God because how God brought you through those things we benefit and God is glorified as we grow in spiritual maturity you know when we understand the importance that sometimes to mature life has to get rough we don't like that you know there's a story told about a zoo keeper wrote a book by name of

Gary Richmond and the book is a jungle out there and he told about the time he watched an Angola giraffe giving birth I stood next to the zoo animal keeper he said to watch and she was standing up and the calves front hooves and head were already visible and he asked you know when is she going to lie down the zoo keeper said she won't but her hindquarters are almost ten feet off the ground as the young giraffe comes out anybody going to catch the giraffe they said the zoo keeper looked at him and says go catch him if you want but he said keep in mind his mother has enough strength in her hind legs to knock your head clean off soon the calf hurled forth landing on its back the mother looking over at waiting a few minutes and kicks her baby sending it sprawling head over heels the guy said I asked him why did she do that and he said simply she wants him to get up whenever the baby ceased struggling to rise the mother prodded it with a hearty kick finally the calf stood wobbly but upright and the mother kicked it off its feet again the reality is she wanted him to remember how to get up because you know in the wild if you don't quickly follow the herd you're going to quickly get picked off you know he said this in his book he says it's a good reminder for us all it's easy to view trials as unwelcome intruders in our lives but they do have a way of prompting us to get up and seek the protection of the heavenly father you know the reality is sometimes life is rough because it needs to be because it's what's needed to prepare us for what is there that mother giraffe we might look at as saying well that's harsh but you know what she's preparing that little baby to survive of what was needed we have sufficiency in God's purpose sufficiently in God's promise but most importantly sufficient in God's power when God assured

Paul that his grace would always be sufficient Paul responded with the confidence in God's power he understood what God was giving to him notice what he tells us here in the verse 9 here in 2nd Corinthians 12 he says for most gladly therefore I would rather glory in my infirmities that what the power of Christ may rest upon me wherefore I take pleasure in infirmities and reproaches and necessities in persecutions and distresses for Christ's sake for when I am weak then I am strong you know why in the world would Paul glory in his weakness you know what he said I know that when I'm weak God's going to step in that God's going to make up more than the difference that's needed to accomplish what's there because of his abiding power God's power is going to be there the word power here is dynamos it's the same word we use today for dynamite you know it's that same dynamic of a building power and strength and agility you know we need that from the Lord you know the rest upon me paints a picture of the power of Christ descending on one and working within and giving help you know often times we have an idea that God only uses strong people or gifted people you know a lot of times

God speaks to somebody about serving or doing or stepping out by faith and they say Lord I can't do that you know what you're exactly the right person if the Lord speaks to you and you say I can't you know what God says I know you can't but I want you to do it anyways he said because I've already got it handled I'm the one that's going to fill in what's needed God says you have to trust me you have to trust what it is trust in his abiding power because remember God doesn't pick the cream of the crop just because everybody else looks at him let's use a good biblical illustration of this you go back to the Old Testament and Israel it always kind of makes me chuckle when I read that because it's so true but Israel wanted to be like everybody else instead of being distinct everybody else who were they excited about they were excited about a man by the name of Saul Saul was big he was powerful he was bold Saul was a mighty warrior

[33 : 16] Israel said yeah he's the one you know the reality they looked on the outward appearance and said hey he's the one we need but the next king Saul was removed because he didn't trust God he thought he was sufficient of himself who did God replace him with a man that everybody looked over you know David when you read through the scriptures I think he was probably the scrawny younger brother that everybody looked at and said his older brothers are so talented his older brothers have so much better potential David will just do his thing but look at his brothers but you know what through David trusting God ultimately the reality just as we trust Christ God took a young shepherd that everybody overlooked and made him a mighty warrior you know why did Saul get upset because David was no Saul has killed his thousands but David is what ten thousands was it because

David was big and mighty what allowed David to do that he trusted God he understood he was not sufficient when he went out to face Goliath why did he face Goliath he didn't come out there and say Goliath you better be prepared I'm going to put a whooping on you today you know that that wasn't David's response he said I don't come out here in the name of David I come out here in the name of God he trusted God you know what as I think back of that story I'm not sure David thought for sure whether he was going to come out of that alive or not why do you ask that because he's human that makes me wonder if David had that thought roll through his head what have I done because those are normal thinking but you know what he says it doesn't matter because I delights in using people who are willing to be used because they know they have to rely upon

God more than people I can do it to understand the need that God assures us he will not give us things that we cannot walk through with his grace you know there's another funny phrase people God won't give you more than you can handle well yeah that's exactly what Paul said the thorn in the flesh is more than I can handle but he says it's more than I can handle but it's not more than what God can handle to trust in his sufficiency his strengthening his abiding power but also his strengthening power when Paul understood the promise of God's strength in his weakness he was so taken by it that he could honestly say I would rather have problems infirmities and God that's the reality what Paul says he says when I am weak God is strong when we understand that reality it's important when he says take pleasure in infirmities and reproaches and necessities and persecutions just for Christ's sake Paul was able to praise

God for the things because he realized that they would force him to rely upon him you know sometimes God needs to allow things in our life that we get our focus in the right place to trust him you know hopefully you can understand the reality look what James tells us we'll finish up here this morning James chapter one verse three tells us this knowing this that the trying of your faith work with patience but let patience have her perfect work that you may be perfect and entire wanting nothing if any of you lack wisdom you know we need to understand that when we're weak God says we can ask him and he'll provide what's needed to walk through the moments of trusting him in our life to trust when trials and struggles and tribulations don't make sense to say God is sufficient in my life let's pray