

Today's sermon is titled "The God Who Meets Us in the Valley".

Our scripture lesson comes from Second Corinthians 12:7-10 (N, I, V) - "Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh... Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'"

And Psalm 23:4 - "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me."

Church, let me ask you a question: How many of you have ever felt like your life has been reduced to a waiting room? You're sitting in a sterile hospital corridor, or lying in a bed that isn't yours, or staring at a ceiling at 3 AM wondering, "God, where are You in this? Why is this battle lasting so long?"

We are living through hard times. Some of you are fighting a medical battle that feels like it has no end. Others are watching a loved one suffer, and you feel helpless. And the enemy whispers, "If God loved you, He would have healed you by now. If God cared, this wouldn't be happening."

But today, I want to tell you that the valley is not a place of abandonment—it is a place of encounter. The Apostle Paul knew this intimately. He had a "thorn in the flesh"—a chronic, painful, unshakable trial. And in that place of weakness, he discovered something the healthy and the comfortable never find: the sufficiency of grace.

Let's look at three truths for those living through tough times and medical battles.

The Thorn is Not a Punishment—It's a Platform.

Second Corinthians 12:7 - "To keep me from becoming conceited... I was given a thorn in my flesh."

Paul doesn't tell us exactly what his thorn was—some scholars say it was a physical ailment, perhaps an eye disease or a recurring fever. But he tells us its purpose: to keep him humble.

We often think, "If I just had more faith, God would remove this." But Paul prayed three times for removal, and God said, "No." Why? Because the thorn wasn't a sign of God's anger—it was a safeguard for Paul's soul. God knew that without the thorn, Paul's success, revelations, and ministry would have inflated his ego.

Church, your medical battle is not a punishment for sin. It is not a sign that God has forgotten you. It is a platform for God to display His power in a way that only weakness can reveal. When you are strong, people say, "Look at them!" When you are weak and God sustains you, people say, "Look at God!"

Stop asking, "Why is this happening to me?" and start asking, "What is God protecting in me, and what is He preparing to reveal through me?"

Grace is Not a Feeling—It's a Fuel.

Second Corinthians 12:9 - "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

We often think of grace as a warm feeling of forgiveness. But here, grace is sustaining power. It's the strength to get through one more chemo treatment. It's the peace that passes understanding when the test results come back worse than expected. It's the courage to keep trusting when your body is failing.

Paul says, "My power is made perfect in weakness." The Greek word for "perfect" means "to be brought to its goal" or "to be completed." God's power is completed—it reaches its full potential—when you are at your weakest.

Think of it this way: A flashlight doesn't shine in the daylight. It shines in the dark. Your weakness is the darkness that allows God's light to be seen. When you can't, He can. When you are empty, He fills. When you are broken, He mends.

Today, instead of begging God to change your circumstances, ask Him to give you grace for your circumstances. Say, "Lord, I don't understand this battle, but I trust that

Your grace is enough for today."

Weakness is Not a Liability—It's a License to Boast.

Second Corinthians 12:9-10 - "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

This sounds like spiritual nonsense to the world. How can weakness be strength? But Paul is saying something radical: Your weakness is your testimony.

When you are in a medical battle, you have a choice. You can complain about the pain, or you can boast about the God who walks with you through it. You can focus on the illness, or you can focus on the Healer. You can let the battle define you, or you can let the victory in Christ define your story.

Boasting in weakness doesn't mean pretending you're not hurting. It means declaring, "I am hurting, but my God is greater. I am weak, but He is strong. I don't know the outcome, but I know the One who holds the outcome."

Write down one area of your health struggle that feels overwhelming. Now, write next to it: "But God's power is made perfect here." Read it out loud. That is your boast.

Three Steps for the Battle

1. Change Your Prayer Focus. Instead of praying only for removal of the trial, pray for revelation in the trial. Ask God, "What do You want me to see about Your character in this valley?"

2. Find One Promise to Cling To. Write down a scripture like Psalm 46:1 ("God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble") or Isaiah 43:2 ("When you pass through the waters, I will be with you"). Post it on your mirror, your fridge, or your hospital room wall. Let it be your anchor.

3. Share Your Weakness. Don't isolate yourself. Tell your church family how they can pray. Let them carry you when you can't walk. The body of Christ is meant to be the hands and feet of Jesus—and sometimes, those hands are holding yours in the waiting room.

I want to invite you to come forward if you are living through tough times or a medical battle. Maybe you are here today and you feel like you can't take another step. You're exhausted. You're afraid. You're angry.

Come to this altar. You don't have to have the right words. You don't have to have perfect faith. Just come and lay your thorn at His feet.

And if you are here and you have never surrendered your life to Jesus, I want you to know that He doesn't promise a life without pain—but He promises to walk through every valley with you. He proved His love on the cross, and He proved His power in the resurrection. Today, you can trade your weakness for His strength. Come to Him.

Father, we come before You as weak people in a broken world. Some of us are fighting for our lives. Some of us are watching those we love suffer. Some of us are tired, discouraged, and wondering if You see us.

Lord, we don't always understand Your timing. We don't always understand why the thorn remains. But we trust that Your grace is sufficient—not because we feel it, but because You promised it.

Today, we release our grip on control. We stop demanding answers and start trusting Your character. We boast not in our own strength, but in Your power that is made perfect in our weakness.

For those in medical battles, we pray for wisdom for doctors, strength for bodies, and peace for minds. For those in emotional battles, we pray for hope that does not disappoint. For those who feel alone, we pray for the comfort of Your presence.

And for every person here, we declare: The valley is not our home. Our home is with You. And until we get there, You will carry us.

In the mighty name of Jesus, who overcame the grave, we pray. Amen.

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76 Go in peace. Your weakness is not the end of your story—it is the beginning of His
power. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you and give
you peace. Amen.

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