

Why Does God Allow This

by Carter Conlon

This sermon focuses on the truth that sets us free, even in the midst of affliction that may not go away. It delves into the victory promised by Christ during seasons of trial, addressing the question of why God allows afflictions in our lives. Through the story of the Apostle Paul's thorn in the flesh, the message explores finding strength and dependence on God in the midst of afflictions, understanding that God's grace is sufficient and His strength is made perfect in weakness.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 12:7, Psalms 119:67, Psalms 119:71, Psalms 119:75, Romans 8:28, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Romans 8:18, Hebrews 13:5, John 14:6

Topics: "Freedom in Affliction", "Strength in Weakness"

Description

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Transcript

I want to share something from the Word of God based on the Scripture that says you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. It's not you and I trying to bend truth into our viewpoint of what we think God should be saying or what our lives should be, but it's the actual truth that sets us free. And I want to talk tonight about being set free in the midst of affliction even if the affliction doesn't go away.

Even if you still have to go through trial, difficulty, even if you are battling some battle inside your own heart, your own life that we're not aware of but you are and God is and maybe that battle is going to be a part of your life for quite a season. I want to talk to you about the victory that Christ promises even in the midst of these seasons of affliction that all of us have to go through. My message title tonight is, Why Does God Allow This? Why does God allow this? If He could deliver us from every trial, which He could, obviously, He's all-powerful.

If He's all-good and all-knowing and all-merciful, why does He let His people from time to time go through seasons of trial and difficulty? And it's a question many saints of God ask of their own heart, say, God, if You truly love me, if You're truly God to me, why am I going through this situation in my life right now? I believe that the Word of God can answer that if you'll let God speak to your heart tonight. So, Father, just

thank You, God, for these few moments of opening Your Word and unlocking truth that can set us free even if we are in the midst of affliction. The Apostle Paul was free long before the prison doors opened in the book of Acts.

He was a free man. The affliction could not take away his freedom, his trust in You and the grace that You supplied to his life was the source of supply no matter where he found himself. His joy was not dependent upon his circumstance.

There was something that passes all understanding that was inside of his life. God, would You give us this understanding and would You unlock truth to our hearts tonight in these few minutes, God, that will set people free online that have come in and placed a condition on You or thought that maybe a relationship with You meant that this certain thing had to go away. Not necessarily so.

So, Father, we just thank You for it, God. Thank You, Lord Jesus Christ, speak to us through Your Word tonight in Your precious name. Amen.

2 Corinthians chapter 12, the words of the Apostle Paul, the great, great... If ever there was somebody you think God would answer his prayer, it would be Paul. Paul was an upright man. Paul could hear the voice of God.

Paul was fully given to the work of God, even to the loss of his own physical health and safety and comfort. Paul was a man that God could entrust and put a quill in his hand and give him the words... He was so in tune actually with the heart of God that God could give him the words of the New Testament that we study today and has guided the lives of hundreds and hundreds of millions of people over the last 2,000 years. But here's Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, beginning at verse 7, he says these words and he talks about, first of all, the great revelation that God had given him, the places that He had taken him in the Spirit, the things that God had shown this man, perhaps things that you and I will never fully understand until we get to heaven, but Paul had a deep understanding of the realm of God, more so than we do.

But in verse 7, he says, And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelation, 2 Corinthians 12, 7, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing, I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. So Paul the apostle went three times.

I believe he got his answer the first time. I believe he got his answer the second time. But he went back and said, God, I'm your servant.

How can this thing be allowed into my life? Please take it away from me. And he said to me, verse 9, My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore most gladly I would rather boast in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. You know, we look upon affliction and we define it this way.

Affliction is something that interferes with the quality of my life as I think it should be. This is affliction. And there are many people online tonight, and I've been there many times myself, and this should not be in my life.

I have decided to be God in this area of my life, and this should not be here, this should not be part of my life, it's interfering with the quality of my life the way I think it should be. And then the question arises in our heart and say, well, if God's all powerful, if God's all merciful, why does he allow something in my life to be there which he obviously could take away from me if he chose to? Is there something about my affliction that I am not seeing? I have a personal story about this. I came to New York City in 1994.

I left a church in Canada that was in revival, and the Lord spoke to my heart, and I came to New York City to help a man called David Wilkerson, who had just seven years prior founded a church in New York City called Times Square Church. It was a church that needed help, and I was glad to come because the Lord spoke to my heart to come and help, and those first few years were difficult years at Times Square Church. It was a new church, and new churches have to get through a certain hazing to prove their right to exist, and we went through ours, I'll tell you, we really went through ours.

It was a fight, it was a battle, there was only two of us there for several years, five services a week. The easy week, you had to not only do counseling and do some of the business of the church, but then you had to preach at least twice, maybe more. On the tough weeks, you had to preach three times, never the same message, mind you, and then when one of us was gone for any particular reason or sick, you had to preach five times that week.

It was a stretch, we had to dig deep. I think I have a groove where my forehead would rest on the front of my desk every week as I'm saying, God, you have to speak to me, you've got to give me your word. I fought hard, I fought hard for Times Square Church, I fought hard for David Wilkerson, I fought hard for the testimony of God, I gave everything that I physically had for this church called Times Square Church, but in the midst of this season, I began to be sick and I didn't know why.

I started to be short of breath, my energy began to be very, very limited. I didn't know that the home that we had gotten into in New Jersey was, it was a relatively new home, but it had been improperly constructed and it had been infested with black toxic mold, it's called stachybotrys, the mold type, and this mold, if you live in this environment for too long, it can take away your life, it can take away your strength, it scarred my bronchial tubes, it gave me a very real dependence on God. And I remember one night I'm walking down 8th Avenue, 8th Street in New York City, and I've been at the church now for about six or seven years, and we've been fighting hard, and I'm at the place where I can hardly breathe.

When I'm up and I'm preaching, the sweat is pouring off my face and it's just getting difficult to go on. I'm walking down the street and I'm seeing these black flecks all the time in the air, which you do get just before you're about to pass out because I'm not getting enough oxygen. I have horrible headaches every morning and quite often throughout the day.

My strength seems to be leaving by gradually, and I'm just fighting through it, trying not to deal with it. And then finally in exasperation on 8th Street in New York City, one night, I don't remember the time, I just remember it was dark, I stopped on the street and I said, is this really necessary? I fought for you, I fought for this church, I've stood with the man of God, I've walked with integrity before you, I've given everything I've got for the testimony of God and for this church, and you have responded by allowing this affliction into my life. Or may I put it this way, by not taking it away from me.

Is this really necessary? People around me must have thought I was mad, but I was just exasperated. I was just fed up, and I had this argument in a sense against God, and I felt inside this is not righteous. This is not right.

This is not what you do to servants that are serving you. You don't respond like this and allow this kind of affliction to come into somebody's life, and it had been there for several years at this point, almost from the day that I came to New York City. How surprised I was.

After I got it all out, and I just had my little shout, my little rant on 8th Avenue, when I got it all out, I heard a voice that said, yes, it is necessary. And then suddenly, out of nowhere, three verses out of Psalm 119 that I had never even really given much consideration. I just kind of glanced over them, and you know, when you're reading the Bible, you see it and you just kind of quickly move on.

But suddenly they were illuminated. They were just before my face, and one of them is verse 67, where the psalmist says, before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I keep your word. You are good, and you do good.

Teach me your statutes. Before I was afflicted, I didn't consider myself going astray, but that's what the psalm says. In Psalm 70, again 119 verse 71, the psalmist goes on and says, it is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn your statutes.

The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver. And then verse 75, just sealed it, where the psalmist says, I know, Lord, that your judgments are right, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me. Now think that one through.

The psalmist says, in faithfulness, Psalm 119 verse 75, you have afflicted me. Let I pray your merciful kindness be for my comfort, and according to your word to your servant. Let your tender mercies come to me that I may live.

God, you've been faithful to me. And then suddenly, standing on the street, the Lord began to speak to me, and here are the words He spoke to my heart. He said, Carter, you're very strong-willed, which is true.

This is true. I'm not going to deny that. Never mind.

You don't need to laugh. You understand. You know that I am.

He said, Carter, you're very, very strong-willed, but I need to teach you to be dependent on me. You're going to need to know how to be dependent upon me in the future, and it's going to have to be my voice that guides me, not a big budget and a bunch of voices around you. You're going to have to learn to hear my voice and only do that which I ask you to do.

See, at that point, I had no idea I was going to be the senior pastor of Times Square Church in just a short season. Never even entered my mind that I would be the senior pastor of that church, but God knew it. God foreknew it, and He was producing in me a dependence on Him, because if you have a huge budget and a big church, you can do a lot of things.

You can have a lot of plans. You can craft a lot of schemes, but God says, I don't want your ideas. I don't want your strength.

I want your obedience, and I'm going to teach you how to be dependent on me. It's amazing. Over the course of the next few years, when I would go out somewhere to speak somewhere, and I wasn't called by the Holy Spirit to do that, I'd come back and it would take me days to recover.

I'd be exhausted. If I went out and I was guided by the Spirit when I would come home, I'd be stronger when I come home than when I went out. Truly amazing.

When God initiates something, He empowers it. You learn that, and sometimes you learn it through the faithful afflictions of God. Now, in the case of the apostle Paul, God gave him the revelation of why he had this thorn in his flesh.

This messenger of Satan that was sent to buffet him. He said, lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelation. So Paul understood that there was a danger that he could become proud because of the knowledge he had, because of the things that the Holy Spirit was going to reveal to him in the writing of the New Testament as we have it.

There was this inherent danger in Paul towards pride. He knew that. And he knew because of that pride, God allowed this affliction to come into his life to keep him.

We don't like afflictions. And quite often we come to prayer meetings and we say, God, why have you allowed this into my life? May I suggest to you, sir or ma'am that's online tonight, if you didn't have an affliction, you wouldn't even be in this prayer meeting. Your affliction brought you here.

If it weren't for the affliction, you'd be, if your life was all smooth sailing, you'd get in your boat, you'd hoist your sail and you'd sail right past heaven and right into hell and not even be aware of it. But the mercy of God allows something into your life that causes you to realize I can't get through this on my own. I don't have the strength to do this.

I need a strength that is bigger than what I have. And thank God. Thank God.

Many of us in the kingdom of God, are you thankful for what brought you to Christ? Are you thankful? Are you thankful tonight for the depression, the discouragement? I know they're not good things, all of them. Are you thankful for what came to buffet your mind and buffet your body because it brought you into the kingdom of God? Glory to God. Glory to God.

Glory, glory to God. I only speak from my own heart. If everything had gone smooth for me, I might not be a believer today, might not be saved today.

I might've gone my own way and done my own thing, but God did His mercy. Hallelujah. He will allow what needs to come into our lives to bring us firstly to Him and then secondly to keep us in Him.

Your affliction and mine made us aware of our need of grace. We wouldn't even know we need grace. We'd get saved and say, hey, I can take it from here, God.

I got this. I got this. Go back to heaven.

Sit on your throne. Enjoy your time there. I'm going to represent you real good down here on planet earth.

But all of a sudden we run into something in our character, something we have to face, something that comes our way. We can't get through it without the grace of God. And your affliction made you, as it did the Apostle Paul, aware of our need of grace.

Concerning this thing, I pleaded the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, my grace is sufficient for you. My carrying power, the presence of my life within yours, my promises to keep

you in the midst of your storm, your difficulty and your trial, hallelujah.

My grace is sufficient and my strength is made perfect in your weakness, hallelujah. When I need Him and when I'm aware I need Him, that's when His strength comes into my life. Now, whether you find a deliverance from the circumstance or strength to endure it, in either case, it will keep you close to and dependent on God.

Whether we get through, and some do, some find deliverance. And thank God for those who do. Thank God that not every trial, we can't just keep piling on trials because it would overwhelm us.

God sometimes just gives us the strength to endure it. Maybe the struggle will not go away. Maybe it is allowed there to keep us dependent on Him.

Have you ever thought of that? There's no evidence that this thing in Paul's life ever departed. But God never departed either. God's purpose never departed.

God's pen in His hand never departed. God's victory in Paul's life never departed. And the fruit that God had ordained to be born into the earth through Paul's life never departed either.

Praise be to God. That's why Paul could say these words. He said, my grace is sufficient for you.

My strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, he says, I will rather boast, gladly, I'd rather boast in my infirmities. I'm not going to look to my strengths.

I'm now looking to my weaknesses that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Paul said, I have another perspective. I'm not being encompassed in thoughts of my own abilities.

I'm aware of my own inabilities because I know it's in those areas I need the grace of God. And I know it's there that the power of God will rest upon me. Therefore, he says, I take pleasure in infirmities.

Come on, who can say that tonight? I take pleasure in my weaknesses. I take pleasure in reproaches. I take pleasure when I have needs that I can't meet in my own strength.

I take pleasure when I'm persecuted and I need the strength of God to love my enemies. I take pleasure in distresses when I find myself in places that I can't get out of or into or through in my own strength. Paul says, I take pleasure in these places because it's in these places when I'm weak for the sake of Christ, then I am strong.

Talk about a different perspective than modern day Christianity when all we do is live to get out of the very places that God is using to draw us close to himself. Oh, thank God. So, the power of Christ will only come to you, my friend, online through a relationship with God through his son, Jesus Christ.

You don't get the power of Christ any other way. And don't set terms and conditions on God because he's not our servant. We are his servants.

And whatever he sees fit to allow in any one of our lives for his divine purpose, Paul was able to pen the words that all things work together for good to those who love God and are the called according to his purpose. Not just some things or a few things, not just the good things, all things. That's what the word of God says.

That's the truth that can set you free. Wherever you are right now, God is working that all out for his intended purpose in your life. He's producing in your prayer life maybe that you would never have otherwise.

You ever think of that? If everything went our way, if we were 100% successful, calm, peaceful all the time, do you think you'd even be here tonight? Not on your life. Well, the students would be because you have to be, but the rest of us wouldn't be. We come to prayer because we need God.

We come to prayer because we're aware of our need of God. We come to prayer to pray for others who need God. We come to prayer because God in his mercy has allowed something in our lives that's causing us to pray.

We come to prayer because we have family members we can't reach on our own and with our own strength. We come to prayer because we have sorrows that can't be healed apart from the healing of Christ. We come to prayer because we have fears that we can't overcome without the love and the strength of God in our hearts.

We come to prayer because we need a secure future that God alone promises that he can give to us. The power of Christ comes through this relationship. When you and I come to the cross and we say, God, I need you.

Jesus Christ, I need you. Thank you for dying for me. Thank you for giving your life for mine on the cross.

Thank you for wanting me with all my struggles and all my failures and my questions and my trials and my stupid speech and everything else I do. Yet somehow you want me, you love me. God thank you.

God thank you. You're not offended with all of my questions and yet you still went to the cross for me and all you asked me to do is believe that you took my place so that I could be forgiven and have eternal life. Then you promised that you'd stay with me.

You promised you'd not leave me or forsake me all of my days. You didn't say it would always be smooth sailing. Scripture doesn't bear witness to that.

Many of your choices saints lost their lives for the testimony you gave to them throughout history and you just told me if I would confess you as my savior and believe in my heart that you were the son of God and been raised from the dead for my salvation, that I would be saved. And so tonight I want to encourage somebody who's online tonight. You just need to do this.

This is where you start. You may or may not get through your affliction. I don't know what your affliction is and it may lessen, it may stay.

I don't know what the situation is, but I do know that God will be faithful to you. I do know that he will not fail you, he will not forsake you, you will not be left as an orphan. I do know according to the word of God that the thing in your life is not strong enough to overpower you because God promises that he will not give you a trial or temptation that is greater than you can bear, but with your trial he will show you a way to escape that you may be able to bear it.

He doesn't say that you might be able to escape it, but you might be able to bear it. He'll show you the way. It's his grace, it's his presence, it's his goodness, it's his love, it's his life.

It's the things that God promises to be in you and through you, to carry you and to keep you. And Paul concludes elsewhere in the scripture by saying the sufferings of this present time are not even worthy to be compared to the glory that will one day be revealed in us. Can you just imagine? One day, one day, not too far down the road we're going to be in a place where you can't cry, you can't sigh, there is no sorrow there.

You don't even have a memory that causes sorrow in your heart. Can you imagine? If you're going to sigh, you might as well do it now because you're not going to be able to do it there. There's no sighing in heaven, hallelujah, a place of perfect peace.

Pray this prayer with me, those that are online. Please pray it out loud too in the sanctuary for the sake of those that are online with us tonight. Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for loving me and promising me that I could be forgiven if I will turn my heart to you.

So tonight I open my heart. I don't understand it all, but I feel your love for me and I ask you to come into my life and be my Lord and be my Savior. I believe that you'll be God to me.

You'll be God inside of me and you'll be the God who keeps me to the end. You'll give me a reason to live and your mercy and your presence in my life will be all that I need until I get home to heaven. Jesus, I love you and I thank you for loving me.

From this day forward, you are my God and I am your child. In Jesus' name, amen and amen. Praise God.

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