

The Potters House



THE GIFT YOU DIDN'T WANT

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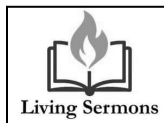
The Gift You Didn't Want

Source: The Potters House

Preacher: Pastor Don Johnson

Publisher: LivingSermons.com

Watch Live Video [Here](#)



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For Kingdom impact worldwide.



Foreword

Every generation needs voices that remind the Church that God's greatest gifts are not always wrapped in comfort.

*In **The Gift You Didn't Want**, Pastor Don Johnson delivers a timely and deeply biblical message from 2 Corinthians 12:6–10, challenging the modern tendency to equate God's favor with ease and His presence with the absence of adversity. Instead, this sermon confronts us with a profound Kingdom truth: some of God's greatest works in our lives are accomplished through the very trials we pray to escape.*

This message does not minimize pain, nor does it glorify suffering for its own sake. Rather, it reveals how God, in His perfect wisdom, can use weakness to display His strength, hardship to cultivate humility, and adversity to prepare His servants for greater purpose. The apostle Paul's "thorn in the flesh" becomes more than an isolated biblical account—it becomes a mirror through which every believer can view the difficult seasons of life with renewed hope and spiritual understanding.

Pastor Johnson faithfully reminds us that not every unanswered prayer is an unanswered God. Sometimes the answer is not deliverance from the trial but sustaining grace within it. That distinction lies at the heart of this message and offers encouragement to every believer walking through disappointment, delay, opposition, or personal struggle.

As editors at LivingSermons.com, our commitment has been to preserve the preacher's voice while presenting this message in a polished, readable format suitable for personal study, discipleship, and ministry. Care has been taken to maintain the passion, biblical emphasis, and pastoral warmth that characterized the original sermon while improving readability for this ebook edition. Scripture quotations have been aligned with the King James Version (KJV) where appropriate, in keeping with our editorial standards.

We encourage you to read this message prayerfully rather than hurriedly. Pause at the Scriptures. Reflect on the questions it raises. Allow the Holy Spirit to illuminate areas where God may be using present difficulties not as punishment, but as preparation. You may discover that the very burden you've been asking God to remove has become the instrument through which He is forming Christ within you.

If you are presently carrying a thorn, enduring a season of weakness, or struggling to understand God's purpose in your circumstances, our prayer is that these pages will strengthen your faith and renew your confidence in the sufficiency of His grace.

May this message remind you that God never wastes pain, never abandons His people in the fire, and never permits a trial without an eternal purpose. What appears to be the gift you never wanted may, in the hands of a loving Father, become the very gift that shapes you into the person He has called you to be.

May the Lord richly bless you as you read, meditate, and grow in His Word.

Grace and peace,

— Wisdom Epsi

Chief Editor, LivingSermons.com

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Publisher's Note

This book is a faithful transcript of a live sermon delivered by the preacher under the inspiration and unction of the Holy Spirit. Every effort has been made to preserve the preacher's exact words, tone, flow, and spiritual authority, while carefully proofreading and formatting the message into a clear and readable ebook format.

The message you are about to read was originally ministered in a live congregational setting. As such, it carries the weight, urgency, and atmosphere of that sacred gathering. Minor grammatical and structural adjustments have been made solely to enhance readability, without altering the substance, intent, or power of the original delivery.

Watch the live sermon from which this message was transcribed on YouTube, at [the Potters House Official YouTube Channel](#)

Livingsermons.com does not claim ownership of this message. All spiritual credit and ministerial authority belong to the preacher through whom the Word was delivered. Our role is that of stewards and editors—serving the Body of Christ by preserving and distributing life-giving messages in accessible digital formats.

Our commitment is excellence without dilution.

Our standard is reverence for the Word of God.

Our daily goal is to transform powerful live sermons into polished PDF and ebook editions for the edification of the Body of Christ.

It is our prayer that as you read, the same grace, conviction, clarity, and impartation present in the live service will minister to you afresh.

— *Livingsermons.com*

A Spirit-led Publishing Stewardship

Main Message

Begins Here



Introduction

Scripture Reading

2 Corinthians 12:6–10 (Referenced by the preacher)

"Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me... For when I am weak, then am I strong."

(See 2 Corinthians 12:6–10, KJV.)

The Gift You Didn't Want

Quickly, let's go to the Word of God.

Turn with me to **2 Corinthians chapter 12**. As is our custom, and as we already know, we believe in standing for the reading of God's Word.

I want to read from **2 Corinthians 12**, beginning at verse 6. For many of you, this is a familiar passage of Scripture.

Sometimes, before God gives you a message to preach, He first makes you walk through the message yourself. I must confess that this message was difficult for me. But I understand why it was difficult, because God told me:

"I'm laying the framework for you to become a platform for others to jump from."

Listen to what Paul says:

"Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, or because of these surpassingly great revelations.

Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me.

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.'

Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest upon me.

That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, and in difficulties.

For when I am weak, then am I strong."

Amen.

Before you take your seats, I want to center your attention on **verse 7**.

Paul says:

"So that I would not become conceited... there was given to me a thorn."

Let me say it again.

So that I would not become conceited... there was given to me a thorn.

For the next few moments, I want to preach from this subject:

As beautiful as the box is...

As lovely as the ribbon is...

Sometimes God gives you...

The gift you didn't want.

You may be seated.

Let's go to work.

We Are Losing Biblical Depth

Dr. James, I have become increasingly concerned.

Not just about the Church.

I am concerned about the way we are delivering God's Word.

I am concerned about how we are dissecting Scripture.

I am concerned about how we peel back the layers of God's Word and try to make everything simple.

We're taking biblical depth and exchanging it for surface-level revelation.

In this digital generation, we have become obsessed with viral moments.

We chase catchy quotes.

"If you name it, you can claim it."

We deliver emotional messages with very little sound doctrine.

The culture is beginning to shape the Bible instead of allowing the Bible to shape the culture.

That concerns me.

We're no longer asking,

"What is God saying?"

Instead, we're asking,

"What can people tolerate?"

If culture becomes the filter through which we interpret Scripture, then truth becomes negotiable.

Let me say that again.

If culture becomes the filter through which Scripture is interpreted, then truth becomes negotiable.

But the truth is **non-negotiable**.

I don't care how much it hurts your feelings.

The truth is still the truth.

Motivation Without Transformation

I'm concerned because we are replacing transformation with motivation.

Now, don't misunderstand me.

I believe in motivation.

But I believe motivation should come **after** transformation.

We're avoiding words like:

- Obedience.
- Sacrifice.
- The Holy Ghost.

We simply want to feel good.

But holiness is still right.

I'm concerned that many people are looking for a **feel-good message** instead of a **get-me-right message**.

Being right with God still matters.

The Bible means exactly what it says.

It says what it means.

And it means what it says.

I refuse to dilute God's Word just to make people feel comfortable.

I cannot convert Scripture into something more acceptable just because it offends our culture.

The Word is still the Word.

If we're not careful, we'll become angry with God over things He never even said.

Not Everything Difficult Comes from the Devil

If we're not careful, we'll begin believing that everything is supposed to feel good.

We'll think:

If it's good, it's God.

If it's bad, it's the devil.

But let me make a public announcement.

The same God who gives you a promise may also give you a problem.

Let me say it again.

The same God who gives you a promise can also give you a problem.

If we're immature in our understanding...

If we're lazy in our interpretation...

We'll always search for the easy way out.

But sometimes God intends for us to go **through** the hard place.

Because it's in the "through" that you become who He called you to be.

It's during difficult seasons that I learn I can still make it.

It's during hard times that I truly learn how to pray.

Many of us didn't develop a genuine prayer life until hell started knocking on our front door.

You didn't really learn how to seek God until everything around you began falling apart.

Stop Looking for Thirty Seconds of Encouragement

Today we live in a culture that says,

"Give me thirty seconds to feel better."

Now preachers feel pressured to rush through God's Word so everyone can get home.

People say,

"Pastor, I've got to prepare for tomorrow."

But the Word I'm preaching today is exactly what prepares you for tomorrow.

Why rush the very thing God intends to strengthen you for what lies ahead?

Mature Believers Praise Through Both

I've learned something over the years. Immature Christians only praise God for the promise. But mature believers—those who have truly walked with God—understand something deeper. The problem doesn't change my praise. Whether I'm standing in a promise...

Or walking through a problem...

My praise stays the same. The Apostle Paul declared:

"For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."
(Philippians 4:11, KJV.)

James wrote:

"Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."
(James 1:2, KJV.)

People ask,

"How didn't you lose your mind?"

Because while others were panicking...

I was praising.

What would have driven someone else crazy...

Drove me deeper into worship.

Understanding the Context of Paul's Thorn

Now, as we come to **2 Corinthians chapter 12**, one thing I never like doing is beginning in the middle of a story.

That's like walking into the middle of a movie and asking someone to explain everything that happened before you arrived.

So before we celebrate Paul's thorn...

Before we shout over, "My strength is made perfect in weakness..."

Let's understand why Paul wrote this letter.

The story doesn't begin in chapter 12.

It actually begins much earlier.

Titus eventually catches up with Paul while he is in Macedonia.

Here's the Pastor Don Johnson version.

Titus says,

"Paul, remember all that chaos happening in Corinth?"

"They've changed."

The Corinthians had repented.

Not only had they repented, they had rejected the false apostles and false teaching.

Even more than that...

They wanted reconciliation.

They wanted to come back.

So in chapters 1 through 7, Paul celebrates reconciliation.

His message is simple:

"Come back home."

God is not waiting to destroy you.

Come back home.

Come Back Without Conditions

One of the problems with today's Church is that we invite people back—but with conditions.

We expect people to clean themselves up before they can come home.

Meanwhile, many of us suffer from what I call **convenient amnesia**.

We've forgotten where God brought us from.

Some of you look good now.

You have businesses.

You own property.

God has blessed your life.

But there was a time...

You remember.

You may not drink Hennessy anymore.

You may not be drinking Old English anymore.

You may not be going to the club anymore.

But don't forget...

You used to.

The same enemy that tried to destroy your generation is trying to destroy this generation.

Yet somehow we've convinced ourselves that our sins were different.

No.

Sin is still sin.

The Church cannot tell broken people,

"You can come—but only if you come our way."

How dare we forget where God found us?

There was a time when the Holy Ghost was not ruling every area of our lives.

There was a time when we were doing things we shouldn't have been doing.

Yet God still drew us to Himself.

Thank God He didn't require perfection before extending grace.

Reconciliation Leads to Assignment

So in chapters 1 through 7, Paul celebrates reconciliation.

Then in chapters 8 and 9, the conversation changes.

Paul begins talking about giving.

He encourages the Corinthians to support the believers in Jerusalem.

In other words:

Now that God has brought you back...

You have an assignment.

Let me pause there.

If you think God saved you simply to occupy a seat in church...

You've missed it.

God brought you back because there is purpose attached to your life.

He is calling you to serve.

He didn't restore you so you could remain spiritually idle.

And ministry is much bigger than standing on a platform behind a microphone.

God is saying:

"Come back home... because I still have work for you to do."

The Cost of Defending Your Calling

Now, here is the paradigm shift.

Everything changes in **2 Corinthians chapters 10 through 13**.

Paul receives another revelation.

At the same time, opposition begins to rise.

The critics begin attacking him, claiming he is not a true apostle.

Now Paul finds himself in the uncomfortable position of defending the calling God placed on his life.

Can I pause right there for somebody?

If you really want to know whether you're gifted, understand this:

You're going to have some haters.

Matter of fact, if nobody is talking about you, you might not be carrying much.

The more opposition I face, the more convinced I become that God has placed something significant on my life. I'm not wasting time trying to figure out why people don't like me. My anointing attracts attacks. Because of the oil that's on my life, opposition is inevitable.

So bring your best shot.

I know who I am.

More importantly, I know whose I am.

Because of what God has placed on my life, attacks are part of the assignment.

Your Identity Is Not Rooted in People's Validation

This brings us to **verse 6**.

Paul says, in essence,

"I don't have to boast, but if I wanted to boast, everything I said would be true."

He continues,

"But I choose not to, because I don't want people thinking more highly of me than they should."

The real issue in the text is this:

Paul refuses to let people believe that his identity depends on their validation.

Who he is has nothing to do with whether others approve of him.

That's the struggle for many believers today.

We're waiting for people to confirm what God has already declared.

Let me put it another way.

I can say whatever I want about Dr. Jill.

She's still a doctor.

Whether I like her or not does not remove her credentials.

Likewise, my opinion does not change the anointing God has placed on someone's life.

When you truly know who you are, you stop living for people's approval.

If someone cannot recognize what God has placed in your life, that says more about their inability to see than it does about your calling.

Let me help some single people for just a moment.

You keep asking,

"Pastor, why am I still single?"

Maybe they simply don't see you yet.

Charisma Is Not Character

We have another problem in the Church.

We've begun valuing gifting above character.

We've elevated charisma over integrity.

We assume that because someone has a large following, they must have something worth saying.

No.

A following doesn't automatically validate a message.

Far too many people are living for applause.

But hear me carefully:

If the applause of people fuels you, then their criticism will destroy you.

Let me say that again.

If applause is what gives you life...

Criticism will eventually kill your confidence.

I've learned something.

Even if nobody applauds me, God has already blessed me.

Sometimes you've got to encourage yourself.

If nobody claps for you, God gave you two hands.

Clap for yourself.

David didn't wait for someone else to strengthen him.

The Bible says:

"But David encouraged himself in the LORD his God."

(1 Samuel 30:6, KJV.)

That tells me there will be seasons when nobody else shows up for you.

There will be moments of isolation.

But when everybody else walks away...

You still have to know how to encourage yourself in the Lord.

Sometimes the only person guaranteed to show up for you...

Is you.

God Wants Intimacy, Not Image

Paul's desire is clear. He doesn't want people focusing on his image. He wants them to understand intimacy with God. Stop worrying about appearances. Pursue intimacy.

Years ago, Bishop taught us something powerful. He broke the word **intimacy** into these words: "**Into me see.**"

God desires transparency. He wants access to every part of us. And if you believe He is only the God who gives promises...

Then you've misunderstood His nature. He is also the God who allows problems.

Verse 7 says,

"...because of the abundance of the revelations..."

Think about that.

If Paul had been punished because of sin, I could understand.

If he had rebelled against God...

If he had made a terrible mistake...

Then perhaps the thorn would make sense.

But that's not what happened.

The thorn came because of revelation.

God showed him something.

Then God gave him something.

The closer Paul came to God...

The more uncomfortable his journey became.

Isn't that amazing?

Sometimes the deeper your relationship with God becomes, the more uncomfortable your walk becomes.

Then the Lord showed me something else.

Paul writes:

"...lest I should be exalted above measure..."

Notice this carefully.

Paul had not yet become proud.

God wasn't correcting pride.

He was preventing it.

God Protects You From the Person You Could Become

Think about that. God gave Paul something before Paul ever became what he could have become. Sometimes God protects us from a version of ourselves we've never met. You are becoming something.

Every one of us is. Every now and then, God places something in your life to keep you from becoming someone you were never meant to be.

If I asked everyone in this room, "Are you a good person?"

Most hands would go up.

"I'm nice."

"I don't bother anybody."

Really?

You don't bother anybody...

Until somebody messes with your children.

The atmosphere shifts immediately.

Why?

Because there's something inside you that hasn't been introduced yet.

Touch something you love...

And another side of you appears.

There's something inside every one of us capable of becoming something dangerous.

I know I'm preaching the truth.

There's something inside Don Johnson that, if you touch something I love...

Before I become that person...

You better start praying. Here's what many of us fail to understand. It wasn't punishment. It was protection.

God says, "I don't want you becoming conceited."

"I don't want you stepping out of line."

"So I'm going to make you uncomfortable."

There are sides of ourselves we've never met.

God sees them long before we do.

So He gives us tools that keep us humble.

The Gift I Never Asked For

Paul says,

"There was given to me..."

Notice those words.

I was given it.

I didn't request it.

I didn't ask for it.

Truthfully...

If God had explained everything beforehand...

I probably would have told Him no. Has God ever given you something... Only for you to discover later what it would cost?

You wanted to return it. "God, You can have this oil back." "You can have this ministry back." "You can have this anointing back." Because if You had shown me the price tag...

I might never have accepted the gift.

What Was Paul's Thorn?

Theologians have debated this question for centuries. What exactly was the thorn?

Some believe it was people. I'll move on from that one quickly. Others suggest it was a physical condition. Some believe it involved Paul's eyesight. Still others believe it related to his physical appearance. I don't know which, if any, of those explanations is correct.

But I am glad Scripture never identifies the thorn specifically. Because now there's room for every believer to identify with Paul's experience.

Anything that continually irritates...

Anything that continually humbles...

Anything that continually presses you...

May very well be your thorn.

A Messenger of Satan, Allowed by God

The text says it was:

"...a messenger of Satan to buffet me."

Think about that.

God gave Paul the revelation.

The messenger came from Satan.

That means somewhere behind the scenes, God permitted what Satan wanted to do.

It almost sounds like Job.

Can you imagine?

Perhaps heaven's conversation sounded something like this:

"Have you considered My servant Paul?"

Maybe Satan replied, "I've tried him before."

God answers, "You may buffet him this time."

"Why?"

"Because I gave him revelation."

"What did You show him?"

"I showed him the glory you lost when you were cast out of heaven."

No wonder the enemy came with such fury.

The Enemy Keeps Hitting the Same Place

The King James Version says Satan came to **buffet** Paul. That word means to strike repeatedly.

Again.

And again.

And again.

One translation even suggests repeated blows to the ear.

That made me think.

Where does the enemy attack believers most?

What we hear.

The Bible says:

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
(*Romans 10:17, KJV.*)

If the enemy can continually whisper, "You can't make it."

"You'll never survive."

"You'll never recover."

"You'll never become who God called you to be."

He keeps striking the same place over and over again. The tense of the passage shows continuous action. The assault never seemed to stop.

Yet Paul Was Still Standing

Then the Lord showed me something I had never seen before. The enemy kept striking Paul. But Paul was still there. No matter how many times he was hit...

He was still standing. I said, "Lord, prove it." He directed me to **verse 8**.

Paul says,

"Three times I besought the Lord..."

The emphasis isn't simply that Paul prayed. The emphasis is that he prayed **with** the Lord. The Lord was present while Paul prayed. Think about that. Paul is praying in the company of the One who already knows the answer. Doesn't that remind you of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane?

Three times Jesus prayed,

"O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me..."

Yet each time, the prayer ended with surrender.

"Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

(Matthew 26:39–44, KJV.)

Perhaps the Lord stood beside Paul as a testimony, saying,

"I know you're praying about this."

"I know you want this thorn removed."

"But just as it wasn't ultimately about My will in Gethsemane..."

"It isn't about yours either." Sometimes God's greatest answer is not immediate deliverance. Sometimes His greater purpose is accomplished through complete surrender.

Struggling With Unanswered Prayer

The text says Paul prayed about it **three times**. Here is my first struggle with the passage:

Unanswered prayer.

But my argument with Paul is this:

It wasn't that God failed to answer your prayer.

It was that He didn't give you the answer you wanted.

Most of us, if we're honest with God, have experienced the same thing.

It wasn't that heaven was silent.

It was that heaven said something different from what we hoped to hear.

"Lord, can I do this?"

"No."

"Lord... can I really, really do this?"

"No."

God says,

"I already told you no."

Many times we keep praying because our minds are already made up. We're not seeking God's will. We're trying to persuade God to agree with ours. Just as culture attempts to reshape Scripture, we sometimes try to reshape God's answer until a divinely appointed "No" becomes the "Yes" we wanted all along.

But God refuses to be manipulated.

A Prayer Without Image

Verse 8 says,

"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice..."

That word **besought** carries the idea of pleading earnestly.

It is praying without concern for appearances.

Without protecting your image.

I remember hearing about a generation that prayed like that.

They weren't worried about how they looked. Makeup running down their faces. Jackets falling off. Shirts untucked. Lying prostrate on the floor before God. Those old prayer mothers knew how to pray. I'm not talking about polished, eloquent prayers. I'm talking about desperate prayers.

"God, I need You to move."

"I need You to touch my family."

"I need You to save my children."

"I need You to intervene."

There is something powerful about heartfelt prayer. James declares:

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

(James 5:16, KJV.)

God isn't impressed by polished speeches. He responds to sincere hearts. Paul prayed from his heart. "Lord... Please... Take this away from me."

Delays Test Our Trust

Here's what delayed answers do. They challenge our trust. If we're honest, the longer we wait...

The more questions begin to surface. Do I really trust God?

Do I really believe He's working?

Do I truly understand His plan?

Then Paul arrives at one of the greatest statements in Scripture.

Sustaining Grace

Verse 9 says,

"And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee..."

(2 Corinthians 12:9, KJV.)

We have to handle this verse carefully.

This isn't the grace most people immediately think about.

Most believers think of grace as God's unmerited favor...

The grace that withholds the judgment we deserve.

That is saving grace.

But Paul is talking about something different.

There is a difference between **saving grace** and **sustaining grace**.

Most of us pray,

"God, get me out."

God replies,

"No.

I'm giving you grace to stay in."

I'm not giving you grace to escape the storm.

I'm giving you grace to survive it.

If I choose not to remove it...

I've already placed enough grace inside you to endure it.

Come hell or high water...

You'll make it.

I don't know who I'm preaching to today, but I hear the Holy Ghost saying,

"If I don't bring you out...

I've already given you grace to keep you while you're in it."

That is sustaining grace.

Grace in the Fire

What does sustaining grace look like?

It looks like the three Hebrew boys in the fiery furnace.

They were thrown into the fire...

Still bound.

Think about that.

Grace didn't stop them from entering the fire.

But when the king looked inside...

He saw four men walking.

Here's my question.

If they were free inside the fire...

Why didn't they simply walk out?

If it were me, I'd have walked right out.

But when grace is in the fire...

And not outside the fire...

Everything changes.

God sometimes gives sustaining grace instead of immediate deliverance.

Outside the fire...

They were bound.

Inside the fire...

They were free.

Outside the fire...

People pushed them around.

Inside the fire...

They walked in the presence of the Son of God.

So why would they rush to leave the very place where God's presence was most evident?

Sometimes the fire isn't destroying you.

It's protecting you.

I don't know who I'm preaching to today...

But the Lord says,

"The fire is protecting you."

Mature Believers Stay in the Fire

This is the difference between saving grace...

And sustaining grace.

Saving grace rescues.

Sustaining grace keeps.

The difference between mature and immature believers is often revealed by how they handle what they're going through.

The enemy knows many believers spend their lives running from the fire...

While God is waiting for them in the fire.

Grace is in the fire.

Paul hears the Lord say,

"My grace is sufficient for thee."

Notice something else.

God says,

"It is sufficient **for you.**"

This grace wasn't given to everyone.

It was given specifically to Paul.

That's why you must be careful trying to imitate someone else's journey.

The grace that keeps me may not be the grace assigned to you.

When God calls me into the fire...

He has already equipped me for what I'm about to face.

Once I'm in it...

I'm not running.

Because once I'm in it...

God is going to reveal something I've never seen before.

Somebody shout,

"I'm in it right now!"

And I'm glad you're in it.

Because His grace is sufficient.

God's Presence Does Not Mean the Absence of Problems

Many people assume that if God is present...

There shouldn't be problems.

But often...

God's presence is what attracts the problem.

The Lord continues,

"For My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Notice those words carefully.

He doesn't say His strength **is** perfect.

He says it is **made** perfect.

God Is Still Making You

I'm not much of a baker.

I can cook.

But baking is another story.

I remember watching my mother make cakes.

She didn't have one of these modern mixers.

She had a bowl...

A spoon...

And strong arms.

She would stir...

And stir...

And stir...

I used to think,

"One or two turns ought to be enough."

She would smile and say,

"No.

You keep mixing until everything becomes consistent."

Then the Lord gave me a revelation.

Sometimes we think God is whipping us to punish us.

No.

He's mixing us until we become consistent.

He can't put you into the oven yet.

He's still making you.

Jeremiah said:

"As the clay is in the potter's hand..."

(Jeremiah 18:6, KJV.)

The Potter keeps shaping.

Keeps pressing.

Keeps working.

Why?

Because He's still making you.

He can't release you yet.

You're not consistent enough.

Weakness Is Part of the Process

Verse 9 says,

"My strength is made perfect in your weakness."

That means He continues working until we become weak enough to depend entirely on Him.

The problem isn't God's strength.

The problem is that we're still too strong.

Too self-reliant.

Too many hard places remain in the clay.

If God puts us into the fire before we're ready...

The whole process is affected.

So He keeps working.

He keeps shaping.

He keeps pressing.

Until weakness produces dependence.

Sometimes we cry because God is making us weak.

But perhaps our prayer should become,

"Lord...

Make me weak.

Because when I'm weak...

I'm finally positioned for Your strength."

Here's where we ought to rejoice.

Even while He's making me weak...

His hand never leaves me.

He's still holding me.

He's still forming me.

He's still creating something beautiful from my life.

Though He slay me...

Yet will I trust Him.

Weakness Is the Vessel of God's Power

Paul says,

"My strength is made perfect in your weakness."

Not God's weakness. **Your weakness.** That means weakness becomes the vessel.

The weaker the vessel...

The more room there is for God's power to fill it.

What's in the Box?

Verse 10 becomes critical.

Paul writes:

"Therefore I take pleasure..."

Hold on.

Somebody shout,

"What's in the box?"

Everybody admires the wrapping.

Everybody notices the beautiful bow.

This morning, as I carried this gift box into church, several people stopped me.

"Pastor, thank you for thinking of me."

I laughed.

Others said,

"Thank you for the gift."

I smiled again.

Then I told them,

"When this message is over..."

Come find me."

Because what you think is beautiful on the outside...

Contains something you probably don't want on the inside.

Somebody shout,

"What's in the box?"

What's inside is not a new car.

It's not a new house.

It's not a surprise financial blessing.

What's in the box is something you never would have asked for.

Weakness.

Paul says,

"I delight in weaknesses."

The word carries the idea of becoming feeble.

Fragile.

Dependent.

God is gifting us the ability to become weak.

Most of us don't celebrate that.

We want blessings.

Promotion.

Increase.

But what if the greatest gift God could give you today...

Is the very thing that prepares you for tomorrow?

Gifts That Don't Feel Like Gifts

Paul continues the list.

"Insults."

Here's your gift.

Insults.

Nobody wants that.

The word suggests reproach.

Damage to your reputation.

Then come hardships.

Afflictions.

Pressure.

Does any of that sound like a gift?

No.

And do you know why?

Because our perspective is wrong.

Eventually, if I reach into the box—somebody shout, **"What's in the box?"**—I'm going to pull out something that looks like hardship.

It's going to look like persecution.

It's going to look like difficulties.

Wait a minute. Put verse 10 back on the screen.

The Bible says:

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

— **2 Corinthians 12:10 (KJV)**

See, I knew the shouting would change right there. Because we all want to shout over the **strong**, but nobody wants to open the box and become **weak**. You want to be strong. My question is: **What gift has God given you to make you weak?**

That's what's inside the box. Paul says, *"Then am I strong."*

Sometimes the Gift Feels Like a Whooping

I've learned something over the years. Whoopings are not comfortable. I have a problem with whoopings. Let me tell you a story. This happened decades ago. When my son was born, he didn't make a sound. He didn't cry. He didn't move.

The doctor reached over...

...and hit my son. Now, I told y'all earlier—I don't play about my children. He hit my son. I said, "Doc, let me tell you what's about to happen. You're about to be in the next room because you just hit my son." I remember how startled I was. The doctor looked at me and said, "Wait a minute.

Let me explain."

He said, "Your son is being born from one season into another, and he's not making a sound."

Then he explained something I'll never forget. "There is a possibility that amniotic fluid is still on his lungs. I need him to make a sound in this new season. This strike isn't punishment. This strike is going to jar his lungs so he can open his mouth and identify that he has entered a new season."

Church...

I don't know who I'm talking to today...

...but every now and then God says, "You're in a new season. You're in a new season. You're in a new season."

Leave the Old Season Behind

That wasn't even the part that made me shout. I was already excited about the new season. But then the doctor said something I'll never forget. He said, "The baby still has amniotic fluid on his lungs. What I cannot do is allow him to carry the residue of the last season into the new season. He has to open his mouth and get rid of the old."

I heard the Holy Ghost say, "I need you to open your mouth and get rid of the old."

Yes...

He's been whooping me.

Yes...

He's given me a thorn.

Yes...

It's been painful.

But maybe... it wasn't the gift I wanted. Maybe... it was the gift I needed.

A New Season

I feel like running all over this place. If you feel like the Lord has been whooping you in this season...

If you feel like God has been birthing something new...

Run to this altar like God has just brought you through a birthing canal.

New season!

New season!

New season!

You're in a new season!

Everything is becoming new!

I'm in a new season!

I can't go back.

I won't go back.

I can't return to where I came from.

When I Am Weak, Then I Am Strong

That's the meaning of the last clause of verse 10.

"...for when I am weak, then am I strong."

— **2 Corinthians 12:10 (KJV)**

The doctor told me something else that day.

He said,

"Your son can never go back to where he came from.

He can't breathe the same way anymore."

While he was in the womb, he didn't need his lungs.

He was nourished through the umbilical cord.

But now...

that season is over. Now he has to breathe on his own. Can I prophesy to somebody?

Some of you are upset because God has disconnected certain people from your life.

But God says,

"It's time for you to breathe on your own."

Let Everything That Has Breath Praise the Lord

The doctor said, "The first thing I was looking for wasn't language. I was looking for a sound."

Immediately, I thought about Scripture.

"Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD."

— **Psalm 150:6 (KJV)**

Somebody needs to declare today: "I can breathe again."

"I can praise again."

"I can worship again."

Where you're going...

you're going to need your breath.

Every time you breathe...

remember why God gave it back to you.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

The Thorn Was Preparing You

As I watched people moving from every aisle...

coming out of the balcony...

walking toward this altar...

the Lord showed me something. It looked like people were moving through birthing canals. Leaving one season...

and entering another. To everyone under the sound of my voice—whether you're in this sanctuary...

or watching online—I believe this with all my heart: The whooping you endured...

The thorn you've been carrying...

The hardship you've been facing...

wasn't the gift you wanted. It was the gift you needed. Somebody shout, **"I needed that!"** The truth is...

you usually don't know you needed it while you're going through it. You realize you needed it only after God brings you through it.

Closing Prayer

Father, I pray today for every person under the sound of my voice. For everyone who has heard this Word, I ask that You strengthen them by Your Spirit. Though the thorn may not have been the gift they wanted, let them recognize that it is accomplishing Your purpose in their lives.

Give them sustaining grace.

Give them strength in weakness.

Let every hardship produce Christlike character.

Let every delay deepen their trust.

Let every trial reveal Your power.

Bring them boldly into the new season You have prepared for them.

And may they never forget that Your grace is sufficient.

In Jesus' mighty name,

Amen.

Father, I pray that every person under the sound of my voice would understand this truth.

It may have been thorns...

...but, God, they were not without purpose.

In fact, it's not merely that they **were** for a reason—

they still are for a reason.

You may not understand what you're walking through today, but God says it is working for a reason.

The apostle Peter reminds us:

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you."

— **1 Peter 4:12 (KJV)**

And what the enemy meant for evil...

God is turning it for your good.

Honoring the Word

Before we leave today, I want us to honor the Word of God.

If you're joining us online, and if you're able, I want you to prepare a **\$50 seed offering**.

If you're here in the sanctuary and need to give after service, that's perfectly fine.

Stay in this moment. Don't miss what God is doing. No one asked me to do this. I simply sensed the unction of the Holy Ghost. I believe in giving.

I believe in systematic giving.

I also believe in spontaneous giving.

Sometimes when God speaks this clearly, we respond by sowing into what He is doing.

As we honor Him, may He continue to order our steps and work all things together for His glory.

An Invitation to Christ

While you're preparing your offering, there may be someone listening today who would say,

"Pastor, I don't know the Lord as my personal Savior.

I'm carrying these thorns...

I'm carrying these burdens...

but I need Jesus."

If that's you, would you simply raise your hand?

I see your hand.

Yes...

I see your hand.

Hands are being raised all across this building.

Praise God.

Now, church, let's pray this together as one family.

Prayer of Salvation

Repeat after me:

Father,

I believe You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ,

to die on the cross for my sins.

I believe You raised Him from the dead.

I believe that the same power that raised Jesus now lives in me.

Today I receive Him as my Lord and my Savior.

I surrender my life to You.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Stay Connected

If you prayed that prayer today, this is only the beginning. Now you need to become connected to a Bible-believing, Bible-teaching, Christ-centered church. If you don't already have a church home, I would be honored for you to consider **The Potter's House**. If you're here in the sanctuary, our ministry team is waiting to welcome you.

If you're joining us online, simply type **"JOIN"** in the comments, and someone from our team will reach out to you. If you've been attending for a while...

Stop dating the church. Come on home. Become part of the family. We would love to welcome you.

A Word of Gratitude

I'm so thankful for the privilege of serving here.

After more than a decade of serving as a senior pastor, I now have the incredible opportunity to help undergird a vision that I deeply believe in.

For that, I am truly grateful.

Bishop Jakes...

Lady Jakes...

Pastor Sarah...

We love you.

Pastor Sarah, continue to recover.

Take your time, but know that this church is praying for you, and we look forward to seeing you again soon.

To everyone watching from around the world—thank you for worshiping with us today.

Final Prayer

Father, Thank You for this day. Thank You for allowing us to gather in Your presence. We come against every plot, every scheme, and every assignment of the enemy. Satan, the Lord rebuke you, and the blood of Jesus is against you.

We thank You for every person who surrendered their life to Christ today. We thank You for every new member joining this church family. We thank You for every person around the world who received this Word.

May this message transform lives forever.

And, Father, for every person who now understands that what seemed like **the gift they didn't want** has become **the gift they needed**, we pray that You would continue to strengthen them with sustaining grace.

May every thorn produce purpose. May every trial produce maturity. May every hardship reveal Your glory. And may Your name receive all the praise, all the honor, and all the glory. In Jesus' mighty name we pray.

Amen.

Closing Exhortation

Remember this:

The gift you didn't want...

may be the very gift God knew you needed.

At **The Potter's House**, we believe that God is more interested in who you are becoming than simply what you accomplish.

We believe we are better together.

We need one another.

We strengthen one another.

We hold one another accountable.

We grow together in Christ.

As God positions us to serve His Kingdom, every act of giving becomes an act of faith, partnership, and worship.

If this message has blessed your life, don't keep it to yourself.

Share it with someone who needs hope.

Share it with someone who is struggling beneath the weight of a thorn.

It may become the very catalyst God uses to change their life.

No matter where you are...

Remember this:

God sees you.

God loves you.

And we love you too.



About The Potter's House

The Potter's House is an intergenerational church passionately committed to uplifting humanity by embodying Christ's call to salvation while addressing the most pressing challenges facing our world—both locally and globally.

At its core, The Potter's House believes that true transformation requires more than spiritual growth alone. In an ever-changing world, thriving demands a holistic approach to human development—one that nurtures spiritual depth, emotional resilience, meaningful community, intellectual growth, and economic empowerment.

With a mission rooted in faith and innovation, The Potter's House meets people at every stage of life, providing practical solutions, spiritual guidance, and empowering opportunities designed to help individuals and families evolve with purpose, strength, and power.

As a global voice of hope and restoration, The Potter's House remains dedicated to building lives, strengthening communities, and advancing the Kingdom of God through transformative ministry.

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