

- I. ONE THING—The One Thing that I'd like to take away from today's class and believe God to accomplish in my life is:

II. MEDITATION

A. Review your class notes from Tuesday.

- Take some time to think about the main ideas of the lesson. If you want to add details to your notes, you'll find the audio message on our website under the Resources tab. (www.DivineDesignDiscipleship.com).
- Which of the scriptures referenced were particularly meaningful to you? Write out those verses below and spend some time studying them this week.

B. Rewrite your One Thing into a prayer, expressing your heart's desire for God to make this truth become your experience.

III. PRINCIPLES

Our heavenly Father, the God of All Comfort, wants to minister to us in all of our troubles, weaknesses, and pain.

A. The Source of All Comfort

- Para (beside) + Kaleo (to call) = Comfort (literally, a calling to one's side)
- Comfort, defined—provision of solace, refreshment, aid, strength, encouragement, or guidance
- 2 Cor 1:3-11 NIV-- Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 5 For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. 6 If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. 7 And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort. 8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. 9 Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11 as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.

Insights:

B. Purpose in Our Pain

- Paul suffered severely and regularly: 39 lashes 5x, shipwrecked 3x, a day in the deep, beaten with rods 3x, etc. (See 2 Cor 11:23ff).
- He saw God's purposed in his pain: 2 Cor 12:7-10 NIV-- Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. 9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.
- Thorns are sharp, irritating, and painful. The Greek root word here = "tent stakes."
- Painful things cannot get to us without permission from God. (See Job 1:12)
- God never allows our suffering without purpose! Three possible reasons include:
 1. Revelation of God
 - God wants us to know Jesus more. Paul got that: Phil 3:10-- that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings
 - We fellowship with Jesus when we share His pain and He shares ours!
 - Trials enable us to experience Him as real & close-by vs. mere words or ideas.
 - Ask the Lord about an area of testing, weakness or pain in your life:
 - *"What do You want me to see I've not seen before?"*

- *“What revelation of Yourself do you want to give me?”*

2. Pride Prevention

- Paul cites this reason in both passages: 1) 2 Cor 12:7—“to keep me from exalting myself,” and 2) 2 Cor 1:9—“that I might not rely on myself.”
- God will address existing or potential sin in our lives. All of our sin is pride-based because it’s independent of God (self-seeking, self-reliant, or self-sufficient).
- God uses pain as a great motivator to keep us dependent on Him. This will improve our prayer life and help us focus on Him instead of our problem.

3. Experience of God’s Grace

- Grace is so much more than “God’s unmerited favor.” Grace includes:
 - Favor--God loves and accepts us despite our sin and weakness
 - Free Access—He’s available to us at all times
 - Faultless Assistance—His perfect power and wisdom is ours to receive
 - Found in the Present Moment—“Now is the time of God’s favor.” (2 Cor 6:2)
- Spurgeon Quote on 1 Cor 12:9--I understand the passage to mean that the grace of our Lord Jesus is sufficient to uphold thee, sufficient to strengthen thee, sufficient to comfort thee, sufficient to make thy trouble useful to thee, sufficient to enable thee to triumph over it, sufficient to bring thee out of it, sufficient to bring thee out of ten thousand like it, sufficient to bring thee home to heaven ... O child of God, I wish it were possible to put into words this all-sufficiency, but it is not. Let me retract my speech: I am glad that it cannot be put into words, for if so it would be finite, but since we never can express it, glory be to God it is inexhaustible, and our demands upon it can never be too great. Here let me press upon you the pleasing duty of taking home the promise personally at this moment, for no believer need be under any fear, since for him also, at this very instant, the grace of the Lord Jesus is sufficient."

Insights:

C. Receiving God’s Power

- God never wastes our pain and He doesn’t want us to either: 2 Cor 1:6--“If we are distressed it is for your comfort...if we are comforted it is for your comfort.”
- When we are faithful to share our trials, weaknesses, and the comfort we’ve received from God with others, they receive power to endure their pain
- 2 Cor 4:7 NLT-- We ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.
- Christ suffered, died, and rose again in order to make possible this truth: Rom 8:11 NLT—The same power that raised Jesus from the dead lives in you.
- *Does your thinking about your troubles help you consistently access God’s comfort and power?* If not, meditate on the passages from 2 Corinthians and the life of Paul.
- To become recipients of God’s empowering comfort we must allow ourselves to be weak. We must expose our flaws and fragility:
 - To God: we receive His power to overcome our trials
 - To others: our lives become truly powerful instruments God can use

- The Lord uses our trials and our pain to give us a testimony that can't be denied. We, like Paul, can say: 2 Cor 12:9 TV--"My grace is enough to cover and sustain you. My power is made perfect in weakness." *So ask me about my thorn*, inquire about my weaknesses, and I will gladly go on and on—I would rather stake my claim in these and have the power of the Anointed One at home within me.

Insights:

D. Reproduction of God's Comfort

- It is comforting to know that someone has walked a difficult road ahead of you.
- It is also comforting to share with others what you gained through your trial.
- Take some time in God's presence. Pray, asking the Holy Spirit bring to mind the times in my relationship with You when I received this kind of comfort:
 - When His grace was enough to cover your weakness, sin, and shame
 - When He sustained you and gave you strength to endure
 - When the Lord's power found "a home within (you)"
 - When you learned beyond a doubt that the same God that delivered you from this would certainly deliver you again the next time
- Ask Him to bring that same kind of comfort in whatever you are going through now!
- Pray for an open heart to receive comfort: 1) Directly from Him and 2) From other people He sends to comfort you and pray for you.
- 2 Cor 1:9-10 MSG-- As it turned out, it was the best thing that could have happened. Instead of trusting in our own strength or wits to get out of it, we were forced to trust God totally—not a bad idea since he's the God who raises the dead! And he did it, rescued us from certain doom. *And he'll do it again, rescuing us as many times as we need rescuing.* You and your prayers are part of the rescue operation—I don't want you in the dark about that either.

Insights:

IV. PERSONALIZATION

A. Cultivate intimacy with God by connecting with Him daily:

- Practice the Middle of the Page technique of journaling with God:
 - Find a quiet spot
 - Fix your eyes of Jesus
 - Find the flow of God's voice (sounds like spontaneous, biblical thoughts)
 - Facilitate communication by journaling

B. Spend time in God's presence through prayer and song using the names of God.

C. Get to know God better by meditating on His names using the Nuggets" booklet.

- Ask the Lord "Who do You want to be for me?" in my day, issue, or season.

D. Keep a written record of how God ministers to you this week. Come back ready to share what you've experienced.

