



## REFLECT

1. How would you summarize this weeks' sermon for someone who didn't hear it?

## ENCOUNTER

Not all suffering is because of direct sin. But suffering is a furnace that God uses to refine the dross from our lives, exposing our sin, idols, and self-dependence. Elihu reminded Job that God uses affliction to confront self-sufficiency. He said, "If people are bound with a chain and trapped by the cords of affliction, God tells them what they have done and how arrogantly they have transgressed. He opens their ears to correction and tells them to repent from iniquity" (Job 36:8-10).

The apostle Paul tells his story of how God refined him in 2 Corinthians: "A thorn in the flesh" was given to him. The thorn may have been physical suffering, the anxiety of ministry, or even persecution. We don't know. Even though we don't know what the thorn was, we do know what it accomplished within his life. Like in the book of Job, God sovereignly orchestrated suffering, even satanic suffering, to accomplish his good purposes.

2. Read and study 2 Corinthians 12:6-10 together. What sin did the thorn save Paul from?

3. How did Paul respond to the thorn?

4. What was God's response?

5. What did Paul learn about the power of Christ and his own weakness?

## TRANSFORM

6. How has God used suffering to expose idols and self-sufficiency within your own heart?

7. Paul says that he prayed three times for God to remove the thorn. Use these verses to outline a prayer of petition, confession, and trust, related to suffering.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

*"I have learned to kiss the wave that throws me against the Rock of Ages."*

*~ Charles Spurgeon ~*