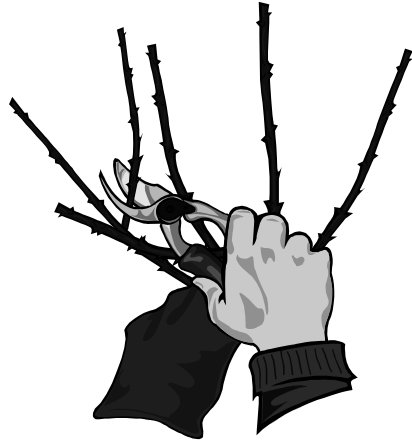


PLEAD

To the right is thorn bush (maybe a rose bush), and the hands of a likely gardener who is pruning the bush. As you may know, a plant or tree may be pruned as a method of increasing its produce or fruit; cutting-back the stems or limbs usually enables the tree to increase its bloom or fruit production.



The notion that cutting actually brings increased health should not be to foreign to you – since you must know of medical surgery that is intended to bring healing through cutting as one step in the process. As the adage is somehow worded,

sometimes pain (in the form of surgery) must be incurred to effect healing.

When Wesley was very young, he has his adenoids removed: which is a form of surgery that removes swollen tissue from the throat to improve breathing and swallowing. In order to improve Wesley's health, surgery and removal had to occur.

To associate this concept with the word “plead” is to describe the life of Paul and, in particular, this problem that he described as *a thorn in his flesh, a messenger from Satan*. In 2 Corinthians, Paul says: “Three times, I pleaded with the Lord to take it (the thorn in the flesh) away”. But in that the Lord did not take it away, God's response did not deter or decrease Paul's faith; indeed, it increased his faith by increasing dependence on God. God or Jesus' response was: *My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in your weakness*. Paul realized that God's grace in his life (on the Damascus Road and beyond) was sufficient; thus, he could delight in his own weaknesses or embrace the suffering caused by *the thorn in the flesh* as well as other sources of suffering for Christ's sake. Basically, his faith was not contingent on God's removal of the thorn or any other suffering; but his faith was based solely on God's grace through Jesus Christ.

In our lives, trouble and difficulty will likely draw us to God – when our own methods fail to render a sufficient response, we may turn desperately to God. Though his response may not be to our satisfaction at the time, God still listens to his children and answers their pleas according to his desire and will. Through these times or trials, he is pruning us like the gardener prunes the plant – such that we can be stronger, healthier, more fruitful and stronger in faith. Though we have weaknesses in our lives, yet through the realization that grace is sufficient, do we find the freedom to say, “not my will, but your will be done”.

In a

WORD