

GROWTHguide

"When God Seems Uncooperative"

June 11, 2017



THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES Luke 22:41-42, Matthew 6:10 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (MSG)

DAY 1

On Sunday, Pastor Bob spoke about two prayers, one an insignificant request to find lost car keys, which was answered. And another, asking that a damaged marriage be healed, which wasn't. When things like this happen, we can't help but ask God why he answers one prayer and not the other.

The life of the Apostle Paul helps us get closer to understanding the answer to the question, "Where is God?" True prayer isn't about having it our way. True prayer is about surrendering our will. Remember, this is exactly how Jesus prayed in the garden. Anguishing over his impending arrest, humiliation and crucifixion he prayed, **"Father, if possible, remove this cup from me; but not my will, but your will, be done."** (Luke 22:42) Jesus also taught us to pray, **"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."** (Matthew 6:10)

- **What do you do when God doesn't seem fair or cooperative?**
- **What do you do when God chooses not to answer your prayer?**

DAY 2

God used Paul to perform miracles, to heal broken churches, and to lead people to Christ. Paul accomplished

great things for the lord, and remained faithful even when he was stoned, imprisoned, beaten, and shipwrecked. And what was his reward? A handicap that the NIV translates to, **"A thorn in my flesh to torment me."** The Message version describes it this way:

Because of the extravagance of those revelations, and so I wouldn't get a big head, I was given the gift of a handicap to keep me in constant touch with my limitations. Satan's angel did his best to get me down; what he in fact did was push me to my knees.

Many of you have a thorn in your life - an issue or challenge that you have prayed and prayed about for God to take away from you, but it hasn't gone away. Remember, praying to God can't just be about having it our own way. Prayer has to also be about surrendering obediently to God. It requires trust.

- **What does Paul mean when he describes his handicap as a "gift?"**
- **How do you feel when you surrender to God's will?**
- **What is keeping you from fully trusting God?**

DAY 3

Paul prays to God, asking him to remove the thorn in his side, but the answer that God gives him is not healing his handicap. His answer is, **"My grace is enough; it's all you need. My strength comes into its own in your weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:9 (The Message)**

What is grace? It's when God freely extends himself, leaning and reaching to us because He is disposed to bless and be near to us. We tend to say, "God, this is what I need. This is what I want. And if you will give me what I need..." God says, "No. This is not what you need... **I** am what you need. **I** am what you want. **I** am sufficient and

this situation is what you need. Grace is leaning into the presence of God.

- **Have you ever lived through a tragedy or a life difficulty through the grace of God?**
- **How have you experienced the grace of God in your life?**

DAY 4

Paul looks back on his situation and he concludes that the thing he suffers from, God actually used to keep him from becoming too proud. "

Once Paul understands that God's grace is sufficient, his attitude changes. He even says, "I delight in these hardships." Why? Because it was in and through them that he experienced the power, grace and presence of God. It wasn't the successes that drew him closest to God, but the times when he was weak and had to depend on God. Notice how Paul said the answer came when he quit focusing on the handicap and began appreciating the gift.

- **What if you changed your perspective? Is there a handicap in your life that you can begin appreciating as a gift?**
- **How can the struggles you are currently facing help you to depend on and trust God more?**

DAY 5

God wishes to love us and allow us to experience his presence as never before and to know his grace is sufficient. God says to you each morning, "*For reasons you may never understand, my grace is sufficient for you.*" We need to know that prayer is not about getting our way but it's about surrendering our will to God. God does not exist to please us or to serve us, but we are here to

please and serve God. We pray to seek God, and even in our prayer we need to acknowledge before the Almighty, "even if you don't do this God, I continue to trust in you."

- **How would it change the way you pray if you were praying as an act of surrender?**
- **As you pray today, acknowledge that no matter what the answer you will trust in God.**

DAY 6

When difficult times come we are to pray, not to get what we want, but to be reminded we are not in control. Prayer brings us into the presence of the One who is. Take some time today to thank God for his grace and ask him to help you draw closer to Him, the One who makes all things new again.

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