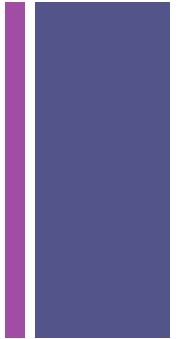
A paved path lined with trees and a hedge in autumn. The path is covered with fallen yellow and orange leaves. The trees have vibrant autumn foliage, and a dense green hedge runs along the right side of the path. The scene is bright and colorful, suggesting a sunny day in a park or garden.

Seven Prayers
that Changed the
World and Can
Change Your
Life



Paul's Thorn in the
Flesh
2 Corinthians 12:7-10

+ 2 Corinthians 12:7-10



...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. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.



Prayers that Changed the World and Can Change You



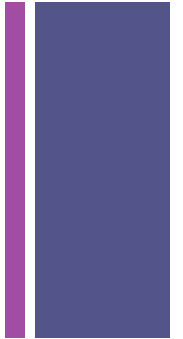
1. Lord, I trust you with the details of my life. Bless me according to Your will and plan.
2. Lord, my heart is hungry for You. Show me Your glory.
3. Lord, contemporize my faith for today. I commit my life into Your hands for You to use now.
4. Lord, make me holy through Your Word. Your Word is truth.
5. Lord, I commit my heart to passionately pursue the center of Your will in my life.

+ Paul had...



- Already prayed all of these prayers that we have studied.
- Paul was already in the center of God's will for His life. He aimed not for what was permissible, but what was the center of the will of God.
- Yet in seeking to do the will of God he found that his own "thorn in the flesh" prevented him.

+ 2 Corinthians is Paul's great teaching on the Christian Life



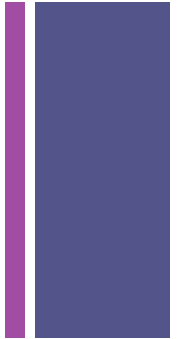
- Chapter 1: When overwhelmed he and his companions did not quit, but relied on God.
- Chapters 3-4: We have the treasure of the Holy Spirit living in us – we are “jars of clay.”
- Chapter 5-7: He wrote, “We are ambassadors for Christ,” and recorded his hardships in his service.
- Chapters -8-9: He wrote of his admiration of those who gave gladly and joyfully out of their poverty to the work of God.

+ What is a “thorn in the flesh”?



- It is NOT some inconvenience, physical or otherwise, that prevents us from enjoying our own self-centered plans.
- “For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). Here he is saying, “God, I cannot do for You what I want to do for You.” This is the idea.
- In the Bible, a “thorn in the flesh” is some limitation that prevents us from doing what we want to do for God, that even prevents us from doing what God is calling us to do for Him.

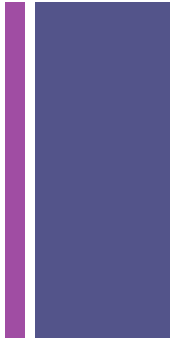
+ What is the prayer that Paul prayed?



- He prayed for the “thorn” to be taken away three times so he could go on with his service unimpeded. God said, “No.”
- God said, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”
- **“Lord, teach me to look past my challenges and find my sufficiency in Your grace and in Your grace alone.”**



1. Maximizing Our Weakness



- Three seasons of prayer Paul prayed for his “thorn” to be taken away.
- Paul went on to explain that this principle applied to hardships, difficulties, insults, and even persecutions.
- A closed door can be God’s instrument to teach us humility, and a bit of humility goes a long way to making us more profound and useful people.

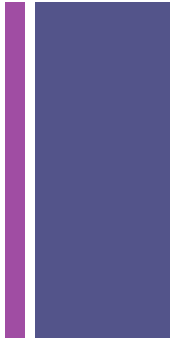
+ Gideon: 32,000 to 10,000, to 300 Judges 6-7

- God said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel.” Gideon said, “My clan is the weakest ... and I am the least.”
- God: “I will be with you and you will strike down all the Midianites together.”
- God: “You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her.”



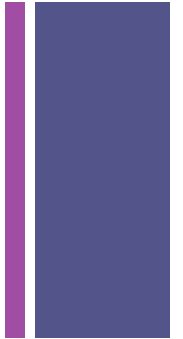


Matthew Henry observed about Gideon's army of 300:



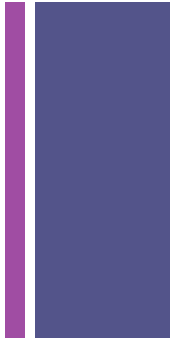
...None were retained but hearty men, that were resolved to do their utmost for retrieving the liberties of Israel; but by this further distinction it was provided that none should be made use of but ... those that were hardy, that could endure long fatigue, without complaining of thirst or weariness, that had not in them any dregs either of sloth or luxury. ...preferring the service of God and their country before their necessary refreshment; such as these God chooses to employ...

+ 2. Sufficiency of God's Grace



- All we really need is Christ and our limitations protect us from temptations that distract from Him.
- It was a benefit to Paul to close some doors, so that he could enjoy his relationship with God.
- Our true satisfaction is in knowing that we are loved in Christ and that nothing can take that away.
- When we are assured of God's love, then we can achieve things without fear, for our successes will not define us, no more than our failures do.

+ Living every moment in the sufficiency of God's grace



- “Sufficiency” means the condition or quality of being enough. (“Meine Gnade ist alles, was du brauchst!”)
- To stand in the spiritual sufficiency of God's grace is to be able to say in our heart of hearts, “Through Christ I have enough and am fully satisfied.”
- If we think the achievement of earthly plans, dreams and hopes will make us more significant people, will bring true satisfaction in life, we will not have understood the truth proclaimed in this passage.

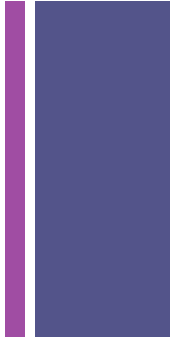
+ The False Gods We Worship

- The god of Career Success
- The god of Popularity
- The god of Comfort
- The god of Respectability
- The god of Family
- The god of Wealth
- None of these satisfy the heart





3. Dependence on God's Strength



- “For my power is made perfect in weakness’...For when I am weak, then I am strong.”
- We are all servants – pastor, parent, businessman, soldier, student, doctor, neighbor, etc.
- We should always do our best, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might” (Eccl. 9:10).
- When we feel that we are unable to do the task God has called us to do, that is not the time to quit, but rather to trust in the Lord’s power to enable us to serve in His strength.

+ David Livingstone, 1813-1873



“If you have men who will only come if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all.”

+ The Prayer that changed Paul and can change you

- “Lord, teach me to look past my challenges and find my sufficiency in Your grace and in Your grace alone.”
- Enough when I am weak
- Enough for my heart’s true satisfaction
- Enough for the strength I need

