

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

*“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. 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.”*

I am often asked why some godly Christians are not blessed by God for their righteousness as He promised. There are several answers to this question, but there is a clear answer Paul provides in this passage: if God were to bless us according to our works, the blessings would not be very impressive. But when we are weak, God deals with us on the basis of grace. Grace deals abundantly in our lives, according to God's generosity, rather than in response to our merit.

Many will promise God's blessings now based on your righteous acts and even more often on your giving. True servants of Jesus are willing to suffer now for Christ's sake and patiently wait for God to deal with them graciously in their time of weakness. Those who measure blessing with the ruler of self righteous acts hate grace because for them it is a form of charity, something which is not flattering to the one who is blessed. Grace gives the one blessed no grounds for boasting, other than Christ, the source of all blessings.

So then is prayer the answer? If we get enough people to pray for us or come to God with enough faith as we pray, can we get God to remove the “thorn” from our flesh? I think Paul would give us a different answer. Paul does not demand Satan be bound or that the devil depart from him. He pleads with the Lord to remove the thorn and when that petition is declined, Paul accepts God's promise of grace. God's grace is sufficient, and His power is perfected in Paul's weakness. Our prayer life is truly the outward measure of our sense of self-sufficiency, apart from God's grace and power. In prayer we see just how dependent we are on God's grace,

So what is your *thorn in the flesh*? Each one of us has at least one. It may be that the very thing you most want to be rid of in your life is what God wants you to have. It may be that the trial you see as an excuse for ministry actually is the key to the ministry God wants you to have. I urge you to take inventory of your life and consider the thorns in your flesh. And then ask God to use those thorns in your life to manifest His grace and power, to His glory and for your good.