

**Thursday, March 26, 2020**  
**Devotional Thoughts from Pastor Jim Murr...**

**"So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 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 of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me."**

*(2 Corinthians 12: 7-9)*

So, how much have you been praying these days? And what have your prayers been about? I have prayed as Paul said he prayed ... that this "thorn" (the Coronavirus) would be gone! I have prayed that life could go back to normal again. I admit I am kind of embarrassed about the content of my prayers about this, since not too many things have changed for my family and me. Thanks be to God, we have not contracted the virus, and I pray we never do. The biggest change for me has been related to a "shut-down" of most Church activities, chief of which has been the cancellation of Worship Services. I miss them!

For thousands of people, however, Covid-19 has impacted their lives in a much more direct way. Maybe they have contracted the virus. Maybe a loved one has contracted it, or even died from it. For many people this health crisis has become a financial crisis, even as it is sure to be an economic crisis, at least to some extent. This health crisis has certainly become a "thorn in the flesh" for so many people, and even for our nation in general.

So, it is good for us to continue to pray! We pray that God would grant success to the medical experts who are working tirelessly to create a vaccine. We pray for health care workers of all kinds who are on the front lines in treating patients with the virus. We pray for our nation's President and his team of experts who continue to move things in the direction of victory over the threat of this virus.

But even as we continue to pray, we are blessed to bear in mind God's response to Paul's prayer in the reading above. What a wonderful and gracious reassurance God gave to Paul and that He gives to us! "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." God uses our times of weakness and humility to PERFECT His work in our lives. He uses our weak times to strengthen our faith and to re-focus our attention on our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – to remember the power of the CROSS AND THE EMPTY TOMB! When this happens, then the eyes of our faith become more fully opened to SEE that God is always at work, even when our "thorn" is causing discomfort, or even pain.

Then Paul makes an amazing statement. He says that this new perspective causes him to look at his challenges in a whole new light. He came to view them as holy instruments from God to bless his relationship with God. In fact, he says that he "delights in his challenges" for this reason.

You and I may never get to the point where we "delight" in the crisis that we are experiencing, especially because of the greater pain and suffering that it has caused for many thousands of people. However, perhaps ... just perhaps, we will learn to view this and every difficulty of life as God's instrument for creating greater intimacy with Him!

God's peace.  
Pastor Jim