Why UNanswered Prayer?

Sometimes it is obvious as to why God does not answer prayer:

- James 4:3
- Psalm 66:18
- James 1:6-7
- Isaiah 59:2
- Romans 8:26
- 1 Peter 3:12
- Isaiah 1:15-16
- Proverbs 28:9
- John 9:31
- Proverbs 15:29
- Proverbs 21:13
- Matthew 6:5
- Psalm 145:18
- Mark 11:25-26

There are certain prerequisites to receiving answers to prayer.

Before you can pray <u>effectively</u> there are some requirements that must be met.

Just as a servant would not dare enter the presence of the king in a disrespectful manner we cannot enter the throne room of God any way we please. We must meet God on His terms.

We must be in a right <u>relationship</u> with God (saved).
We must be in a right <u>fellowship</u> with God (sanctified)

1. THE PERSON GOD WILL <u>NOT</u> ANSWER

A. AN <u>UNSAVED</u> PERSON

1. You need to be in God's family
(an unsaved man is <u>not</u> part of God's family - Eph.2:2-3)

God does not answer the Devil's kids (Jn. 8:44)
Ex. Of a child who comes up to some one other than his dad and says "I want you to buy me a new bicycle" He is under no obligation to answer that request.

You need to be born again! (Jn. 3) = born into God's family by
adoption.

How can one pray in “Jesus Name” if they do not belong to Jesus? (John 14:13)

How can one pray “according to His will” when they have not done His will which is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? (I John 5:14-15)

Note: However, God does hear the sincere prayer of one who is seeking His salvation (ex. Cornelius - Acts 10; The Publican, who said: “God, be merciful to me the sinner”)

2. You need to pray in the Spirit

Eph 6:18
Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;
Jude 1:20
But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,
(an unsaved man does not have the Spirit - Rom. 8:9)

God will not answer the prayers of…

B. AN <u>UNSANCTIFIED</u> PERSON (An unholy believer)

(This refers to a person who is unholy; not set apart from sin unto God)

Illustration: Answers to prayer are like water - they meet a basic need in life. Prayer like the pipes through which water passes provides a channel for God's power to flow into our lives. To actually have water in our homes we must tap the main water supply. However the pipes often become <u>blocked up</u> by dirt etc. and our water supply dwindles or stops altogether. This is similar to our prayer lives. God will not and can not answer prayers that come from hearts filled with sin. <u>Sin</u> blocks the channel.

What is it that clogs the channel of our prayer life? The answer is one word - "<u>sin</u>"

GOD WILL NOT ANSWER PRAYER IF THERE IS <u>UNCONFESSED SIN IN THE HEART</u>!

Ps 66:18
If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:
Isa 59:1-2
Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:
But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

God is not demanding "sinless perfection" (but confession is essential - I Jn.1:9)

Don't blame God because He refuses to give you your requests.
His power has not diminished, nor is He losing His hearing, nor has He changed.
<u>You</u> are responsible for God's silence; You are to blame! YOur sins have cut the lifeline of prayer.

Isa 1:13-15
Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.
Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.
And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

The phrase "spread forth your hands" means to hold out the hands (palms up in prayer) expecting to receive from God.

Can you imagine God forbidding a man to pray?

Jer 7:16
Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee.

No one can both sin and pray. "True prayer will prevent us from sinning, or sin will prevent us from praying"

Ex. Simon the Sorcerer (acts 8) who asked Peter to pray for him because he knew he was not able to pray for himself while in such wicked sin.

Obedience is necessary before prayer will be answer.
I Jn 3:22
And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

THE SINS THAT PREVENT GOD FROM ANSWERING YOUR PRAYERS ARE:

A. PRAYING WITH A <u>SELFISH</u> SPIRIT

James 4:3 - Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

Wrong motives in prayer. ex. of selfish praying - Mt. 20:20-ff The mother of James & John.

"seek ye first the kingdom ... and all these things shall be added unto you" Mt.6:33.

Some pray that their spouse will get saved just so that <u>they</u> might enjoy (the benefits of his/her salvation) a peaceful and "happy" home rather than out of concern for their soul.

B. PRAYING <u>WITHOUT FAITH</u>

Mt.21:22 - And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

Unbelief is sin!

The word "amen" comes from the Hebrew word [ ] which is most often translated "believed".
Example: Gen 15:6 "Abraham believed God..." Transliterated it reads "Abraham amened the Lord" When you conclude your prayer with "amen" you are actually saying "so be it" or "it will truly happen" This is faith!

C. PRAYING WITH <u>UNFORGIVENESS</u>

Mark 11:25 - And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

Bitterness and holding grudges are the equivalent of hatred. Such attitudes grieve the Holy Spirit.

We are to forgive 70 times 7 (Mt. 18:21-22)

We must forgive as Christ forgave us (Eph.4:32)

D. PRAYING WHEN THERE IS <u>DISOBEDIENCE IN YOUR MARRIAGE</u>

1 Pet 3:7 - Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

Wives not submitting (v.1) "hinders" your prayers v.7.
Husbands not loving (v.7) "hinders" your prayers v.7.

"hindered" = cut in on (interfered with)
You will not pray together if your relationship is not right.
God will not answer you if your relationship is not right (because you are living disobediently to His commands)

2. THE PERSON GOD WILL ANSWER

God will absolutely answer your prayers, if you meet these 4 Conditions:

A. THE ONE WHO PRAYS IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOD'S WILL

I Jn 5:14 - And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

Praying in Christ's name is praying in Christ's will.

John 14:13 - And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

B. THE ONE WHO ABIDES (REMAINS) IN RIGHT FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST

John 15:7- If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Our relationship never changes, but our fellowship may.
Our union with Christ never changes, but our communion with Him may.

The one who pleases Him recieves answers to prayer:
Ps 66:18-20 -
If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:
But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.
Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

C. THE ONE WHO IS OBEDIENT TO GOD'S WORD

I John 3:22 - And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

D. THE ONE WHO PRAYS - BELIEVING!

Mark 11:24- Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

James 1:6-7 - But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.
For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

If you are not experiencing answers to your prayers you must make sure that you have 1) a right relationship to God (saved), and if you are saved 2) a right fellowship with God (sanctified).

But what about when you DO qualify for answers to prayer, and yet God does not seem to answer?

Why does this occur?

- **God may be answering, but in a way which differs from what you expected**
    - Due to the differences between a Holy God and a sinful people (Isaiah 55:8-9)
    - Due to God accomplishing His purpose and will (John 11:21)
    - He may be answering an older prayer request (this is why He is not answering the current one)

        Sometimes new prayer request items are actually ANSWERS to another, older prayer request! I just don't yet see what the Lord is doing. For Ex: I'm praying for my neighbor's salvation, and then she gets cancer. It's a new prayer request - but also it may be an answer to my prayer for her salvation. God will use the cancer to draw her to Himself.

        Cp Habakuk 2:3b - "if it seems slow in coming, wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed." NLT

- **God may be intending to answer, but on His timetable**
    - In Daniel 9, God sent Gabriel with an immediate answer to Daniel's prayers
    - However, in Daniel 10, God dispatched an immediate answer, but allowed a delay in getting that answer to Daniel (Dan. 10:12-13)

- **God may choose to not answer right away so as to test the persistence and endurance of our faith** (Luke 18:1-43)

- **God may choose not to answer, because He is doing something else in the situation; something we may not ever understand in this life.** He may be forming patience and character in our lives.
    - Will we <u>trust</u> Him even if He does not seem to respond to our request (ex. Job)
    - Will we <u>love</u> Him even if He does not answer us in the way we think is best for us (ex. Those martyred for Christ)

Here are some examples of <u>unanswered</u> prayers in the Bible:

1. **Moses prayed that God would change His mind and let him go into the Promised Land, but God said NO** (Deuteronomy 3:23-26).

In the Bible, God shows no distinction (dichotomy) between faith (trust), and obedience. Faith always results in obedience, and unbelief always results in disobedience, as was the case with Moses.

See Numbers 20:1-13 – Moses' disobedience at Meribah

In Numbers 20:12, God's response to Moses' disobedience reveals his disbelief. The Lord said: "you did not believe (trust in) Me"

<u>Commands omitted</u>. The external manifestation of Moses' sin was two-fold:
1) He did what he was not told to do (struck the rock), and
2) He did not do what he was told to do (speak to the rock).

Omitting from God's commands is just as dangerously wrong as adding to them. It is important to note that an omission will eventually pave the way for an addition.

Because Aaron was Moses' translator (Ex.4:14-17), the implication is that Moses was to speak to the rock, and Aaron was to repeat his works loud enough for all of the people to hear. The sin was not merely in Moses' striking of the rock, but in both his and Aaron's failure to "speak to" it.

If the sin was exclusively in Moses' striking of the rock, the transgression of Aaron could not be explained (v.12). This truth reveals that sins of omission are just as costly as sins actually committed outwardly.

<u>Sins committed</u>. Along with Moses' failure to speak to the rock as commanded (v.8), his disobedience is seen in his action of striking it. God, by commanding Moses to speak to the rock "before the eyes" of Israel, intended the people to rejoice at the sight of abundant water, and to "doubly and trebly rejoice at the knowledge that their God is with them and is showing Himself by one of his happiest miracles. It is this circumstance which Moses, in a fit of indignation, turns into a bitter denunciation; he curses the people, and in smiting the magic rod against the rock, destroys the hallowed moment that God had so clearly intended."

In order to honor God as "being holy," trust or belief (faith) is a prerequisite. The idea in the Hebrew is that Moses did not have enough trust in God to treat Him as being Holy (v.12). His striking the stone revealed a lack of faith. After all, it was striking the rock that brought results the last time God provided water for the people (Ex.17:6). Consequently, this time, rather than obeying God and trying something new, such as "speaking to it", Moses struck it - and for good measure he struck it twice.
Moses' act of striking the rock twice was so done "as if it depended upon human exertion, and not upon the power of God alone." Moses' disobedience revealed his failure to trust God's faithfulness to His word.

In summary, Moses' sin was an unbelief that manifested itself in 1) mood, 2) words, and 3) action. His anger (the catalyst) prompted him to utter words he was not to speak (compare Hebrews 12:15 which describes a "root of bitterness" that springs up, troubling both the individual and defiling others). Moses' pride underlied his question "must we bring forth water..." and detracted from Yahweh's exclusive ability to provide the necessary water, and his forceful striking of the rock twice indicates his continued anger as well as his lack of faith in regard to the ability and good-will of God to provide water the way He intended. Moses' reaction as a whole - his anger, his words, and his action - can now be seen to have been diametrically opposed to the plan and intention of Yahweh which Moses was made to understand very clearly.

The Bible, in Deuteronomy 1:37 and 4:21, declares that God
was "angry" with Moses. The word God uses literally means "to breathe", or "to emit breath through the nostrils." A very clear statement in Deuteronomy 32:51 records God telling Moses that he would die as Aaron did (v.50) "because you (plural) broke faith with Me in the midst of the sons of Israel...(and) because you did not treat Me as Holy in the midst of the sons of Israel" (v.51).

The result of Moses' disobedience was a limitation on the blessings he could have received. While God no doubt had a desire for Moses to enter the Promised Land, because of sin he was now restricted to merely seeing it from afar - that is from "Abarim," the range of mountains east of the Jordan Valley and Dead Sea (Numbers 27:12; cp. Deut.34:4-5). Moses is limited to a "look" at the Land. In Deuteronomy 32, God commands him to go up Mount Nebo and "look at the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the sons of Israel for a possession. Then die on the mountain...for you shall see the Land at a distance, but you shall not go there..."(vv.49,50,52).

Desecrating Yahweh's name (reputation) is extremely serious, as evidenced by the magnitude of the restriction. "The retribution stands in direct relation to the nature of the transgression and its enormity." It is also very important to note that the severity of the discipline is matched to the sin based on Moses' position as the leader of the people.

In **Deuteronomy 3:23-29**, the lesson to be learned is that sin leaves lasting scars (consequences). In this section Moses unveils, in his personal testimony, his earnest desire to enter the promised land. Moses testified that he pleaded (literally - "sought the favor or grace with Yahweh to enter the Land. "The verb is a strong one, implying a solemn request for the Lord to be compassionate (see Ps.30:7-8 for a similar use)"

In verse 24 Moses addresses God as "Master Yahweh" or "Lord Yahweh" which is a name or title for God used only twice in Deuteronomy and both occasions in prayers of Moses (cp.9:26). The combined title is indicative of a deep personal tone of request. Moses in desperation then appealed to God's character (His greatness, strength, uniqueness, and mighty works) saying that he as Yahweh's servant had only just begun to see all that God would do (v.24). Moses' request shows the deep sorrow and tragedy in his life.

"He had begun to see the marvelous works of the Lord, from the Exodus to the conquest of the lands east of the Jordan. But now, just when the climax was drawing near, he would be unable to see the Lord's fulfillment of the ancient promise. It was a promise to which he had devoted his whole life, and the thought that he would not see its fulfillment was too much for him to accept without question."

In verse 23, Moses next appealed to God's emotions, begging Yahweh to allow him to cross over and see the "fair Land" that is beyond the Jordan, that "good hill country and Lebanon" (v.25). All of this pleading, however, was to no avail. Because God had declared that Moses would not enter the Land, He would not so much as listen to Moses' plea, but said: "Enough! - (I have heard enough); "Do not continue to speak to Me anymore about this matter."

Sometimes, we must bear the consequences (scars) of our choices.

However, even in this God had a divine purpose.
2 pictures of what was accomplished:

1. The Rock a Type of Christ

a. That Rock which followed Israel and provided water was Christ
1 Cor. 10:4 - And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

b. Christ at His first coming into this world would be smitten with the rods of men (He would be beaten, scourged, and nailed to a cross and thereby provide the water of life for our spiritual salvation).

c. However, as His second coming, He will not be so treated. He will literally be cried out to (spoken to). And will provide the water of life to all who call upon His name in faith.
Zech. 12:10 - And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

2. Canaan Land a Type of God's Kingdom of Heaven

a. Moses, who represents the LAW could NOT bring the people into the Promised Land. Joshua (Jehoshua), would bring the people in instead. The LAW cannot save or bring us into Heaven either!

a. Jesus (Jehoshua – Jehovah Saves – Matthew 1:21), is the only One to bring the people into the Kingdom of Heaven
John 1:17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

2. Paul prayed that his "thorn in the flesh" might be removed from him, but God chose to NOT remove it (2 Corinthians 12:1-10)

Why This "Thorn"? 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

As an apostle, Paul had the privilege of being the recipient of **"visions and revelations"** from the Lord.

He saw things ("visions") and was enlightened to previously veiled truth ("revelations") that would give him—on a human level—grounds for a bit of spiritual pride.

v. 2
"I knew a man" - Who is Paul referring to? Evidently to himself, for he himself was the recipient of an "abundance of…revelations" (v. 7).

Why then does he speak in the third person? Perhaps a rhetorical device to gain a hearing and to show humility. He in a sense shows that he himself did not matter nearly as much as the Lord and the truth which was to him.

"The third heaven" - identified as "Paradise" (v. 4); a reference to the abode of God (the same place Jesus took the repentant thief who died on the cross next to him – Luke 23:43).

The Bible describes three heavens:
1) Sky (the atmosphere around planet earth) (the first heaven)
2) Space (out space where the various stars and galaxies exist) (the second heaven)
3) Heaven (the place where God dwells) (the third heaven)

v. 3
"I knew such a man" - the experience was so surreal that Paul viewed it as if he were someone else experiencing what felt like an "out of body experience."

v. 4
"Caught up" - *harpage* from *harpazo* – to seize and carry off by force; to snatch away. The same word is used of the ascension of Christ (Rev. 12:5) and of the Rapture of the saints (1 Thes. 4:17).

"Heard unspeakable words" - inexpressible words; unspoken words because of their sacredness. Words that were so holy and sacred that no language could express the full meaning.

"Not lawful for a man to utter" – Paul heard many things that God did not permit him to repeat; he heard words that man is not allowed to tell. Some things we will have to wait till we get to heaven to fully know.

Deuteronomy 29:29
The secret *things belong* unto the LORD our God: but those *things which are* revealed *belong* unto us and to our children for ever, that *we* may do all the words of this law.

v. 5
Such a privileged man could be proudly spoken about, but Paul chose not to brag about anything concerning himself except about that which would bring God glory – His great working through Paul's **"infirmities"** (weaknesses or areas of his life that were without strength).

"Most people, had they been granted an ecstasy like Paul's wherein they actually had been raptured to paradise (to God, to his Son, to the Holy Spirit, to the souls of the departed, to the discourse of Heaven), would scarcely be able to contain themselves. Today they would write a best-seller – *My Rapture: A Personal Account of My Trip to Heaven and Back*. Seminars on "5 Steps to Your Own Rapture" would be sold out." (p. 211, Hughes).

- ***Why "thorns" in the flesh? Why does God allow physical afflictions in the life of the believer?***

Before we see the specific reasons given by Paul in 2 Cor. 12:7-10, there are some general reasons given to us in God's Word as to why God would allow physical affliction or sickness in the lives of His people.

1) Sickness is a natural result of the fall of man into s in. It is part of the curse God placed upon Adam and his descendents. All sickness is due to the principle of sin, but not all sickness is due to personal sin. Sin inevitably leads to death (Rom. 6:23), and along the pathway to death there will be ailments due to aging.

2) Sickness is often allowed to give God the opportunity to glorify Himself.

Example: the man born blind –
John 9:2-3
And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

Example: Lazarus of Bethany –
John 11:4
When Jesus heard *that*, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

3) Sickness may be due to God's desire to chasten or discipline His erring children

This connection is made in:
-- ***James 5:14-15 -*** Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.
--1 Cor. 11:30 – inappropriate partaking of the Lord's supper results in people becoming "weak and sickly" and even dying
--Psalm 32:3-4
When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. [4] For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

4) Sickness may be God's way of purifying one's faith and producing patience or some other virtue in one's life

Job 23:10
But he knoweth the way that I take: *when* he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

James 1:2-3
My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

God allows "thorns" and sometimes does not remove them

A. To keep His servants <u>HUMBLE</u>

so that they do not become <u>conceited</u> over their <u>gifts</u> and <u>spiritual privileges</u> (v.7)

To ensure that Paul would not view himself or be viewed as greater than he actually was, God did something to keep him humble. He gave him a "thorn" in the flesh.

Because of the overflowing abundance of direct revelations from God, Paul may have encountered the human temptation of spiritual pride. To prevent this from occurring to Paul's ruin, God in love gave him a physical affliction.

I believe that Paul's "thorn" was a <u>recurrent</u> <u>physical</u> ailment.

--<u>Recurrent</u> because it had now been 14 years since he received his visions and revelations.

--<u>Physical</u> because it is said to be in his **"<u>flesh</u>"**

--Ailment – apparently something that affected his ability to <u>function</u> and which might negatively affect his visible <u>appearance</u>.

While several suggestions have been offered as what exactly his problem was, Paul chose to leave it unstated so that all of us could apply the "thorn in the flesh" principle to our own situations and circumstances. However, if I was to make a guess as to what his problem was, I would say it was a form of ophthalmia or eye trouble (SEE: Gal. 4:12-15).

"The messenger of Satan" - a demonic spirit (lit. an angel of Satan) would be allowed to continually afflict (lit. "beat or buffet") Paul. As God allowed Satan to afflict Job, so God allowed a demon to afflict Paul.

Can God use even demons to accomplish His purpose? Yes. He did this so as to accomplish a good purpose in Paul. So that Paul would not exalt himself and thereby be ruined by pride.

God allows "thorns" and sometimes does not remove them

2. To keep His servants <u>DEPENDANT</u>

So that they rely upon <u>Christ's power and strength</u> and not their own (v.8-10)

v. 8

"I besought the Lord" – Paul didn't merely make a simple request, he literally pleaded or implored God to remove it; and he did so three times before he stopped.

v. 9

Paul may have continued beseeching God to remove his "thorn" beyond the three requests, but God gives Paul an answer that would satisfy him.

"My grace is sufficient for thee" – God says: "The grace I will give you, Paul, will be enough for you to bear the thorn and continue to serve Me."

God's grace is all we need! If he chooses to allow a trial in your life, it is so that you will cease relying on self or the world, and will rely exclusively on Him and His power.

"My strength is made perfect in weakness" - My dynamic ability is brought to completeness in your weakness.

Those who are strong in themselves are weak in God! This goes for every area of our lives (intelligence, spirituality, and abilities).

God wants us to be co-dependent upon Him!

David had this same testimony.

Psalms 119:67
Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

Psalms 119:71
It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

Rather than boasting about his strengths, Paul would rather glory in his weaknesses because it is in those areas of need that God displays His greatest work!

Whose power was resting on Paul? It was the **"Lord's"** (v. 9a) and it is **"Christ's."**

"I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).

v. 10
If my weakness gives Christ the opportunity to show His strength, then my weaknesses are really good for me.

"I take pleasure in" - I delight in. Wow, what a new way of looking at problems for the believer! I can actually view my "thorns" as occasions for rejoicing, because I know that the Lord wants to display some of His glory through my weaknesses.

Paul, rather than fighting his "thorn" or being mad and angry at his throne, chose to accept it as God's will for his life and as God's means of keeping him reliant upon God for successful living and ministry.

What trials could Paul delight in?

1) **"Infirmities"** (areas of physical weakness – the emphasis in this context; God gives strength where there is a lack of strength)

2) **"Reproaches"** (insults – God defends the defenseless believer)

3) **"Necessities** (calamities or great times of crisis or need; God comes to the rescue)

4) **"Persecutions"** (when people oppress and hunt you down, God becomes your refuge and hiding place)

5) **"Distresses"** (difficulties not due to personal sin, but difficulties **"for Christ's sake"** – "He is a very present help in trouble)

"When I am weak, then am I strong" – When I am without strength then I am made strong. When I am unable, He is able. When I am powerless, then I am made powerful.

The theme of the entire epistle of 2 Corinthians is emphasized in this text "Strength in Weakness" (Compare also: 1:8,9; 4:7-12; 6:4-10)

2 Corinthians 1:9

But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

2 Corinthians 4:7

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

"Forbid it Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ, my God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood."
(Isaac Watts)

HYMNS – "I Need Thee Every Hour"
"Rejoice in the Lord"

3. Jesus prayed that the Father would remove the bitter cup from Him in Gethsemane, but instead He had to drink all of it (Matthew 26:39)

V. 36

"Gethsemane" - The name means "oil press." This ancient garden, which still remains to this day, was on the west side of the Mount of Olives.

V. 39

The cup that Jesus was to drink was <u>not</u> drunk in the Garden, but later that day (Jn. 18:11) at <u>Calvary</u>

Jesus didn't fear death. "Many godly people have been (wrongly) arrested, beaten, and slain because of their faith. But only Jesus experienced being made sin and a curse for mankind" (Wiersbe, p. 97) (II Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13).

"This <u>cup</u>" - not speaking of the mere physical suffering Jesus would have to endure, but of the spiritual agony He would endure and drink for all of humanity.

Later that day from 12:00 - 3:00 p.m., "darkness" would mysteriously cover the earth (Mk. 15:33), as the Son of God would become a *"curse"* by hanging on the cross (Gal. 3:13), bearing the *"iniquity of us all"* (Is. 64:6), and as the Father would turn His back on His own Son (Mt. 27:46).

In that *"cup"* were all of the vile sins you committed, are committing, and would commit.

In that *"cup"* was death, as Christ would *"taste death for every man"* (Heb. 2:9).

The pure, spotless, undefiled, holy soul of Jesus was repulsed by the thought of becoming a sin offering and experiencing the equivalent of our hell on that cross.

"Not as I will, but as thou wilt" - When Christ became man, He totally subjected Himself to the will of the Father (Jn. 6:38 - *"For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."*)

For Him to ever violate the will of the Father would be to sin. This was an impossibility for the Son of God.

Although Jesus wished not to be accursed for those three hours on the cross, severed for the first time in eternity from the presence and power of the Father, He was willing to do the will of the Father no matter what the cost!

God the Father did not answer the request to remove the bitter cup because He had a higher purpose.

Song: Laura Story (Blessings)