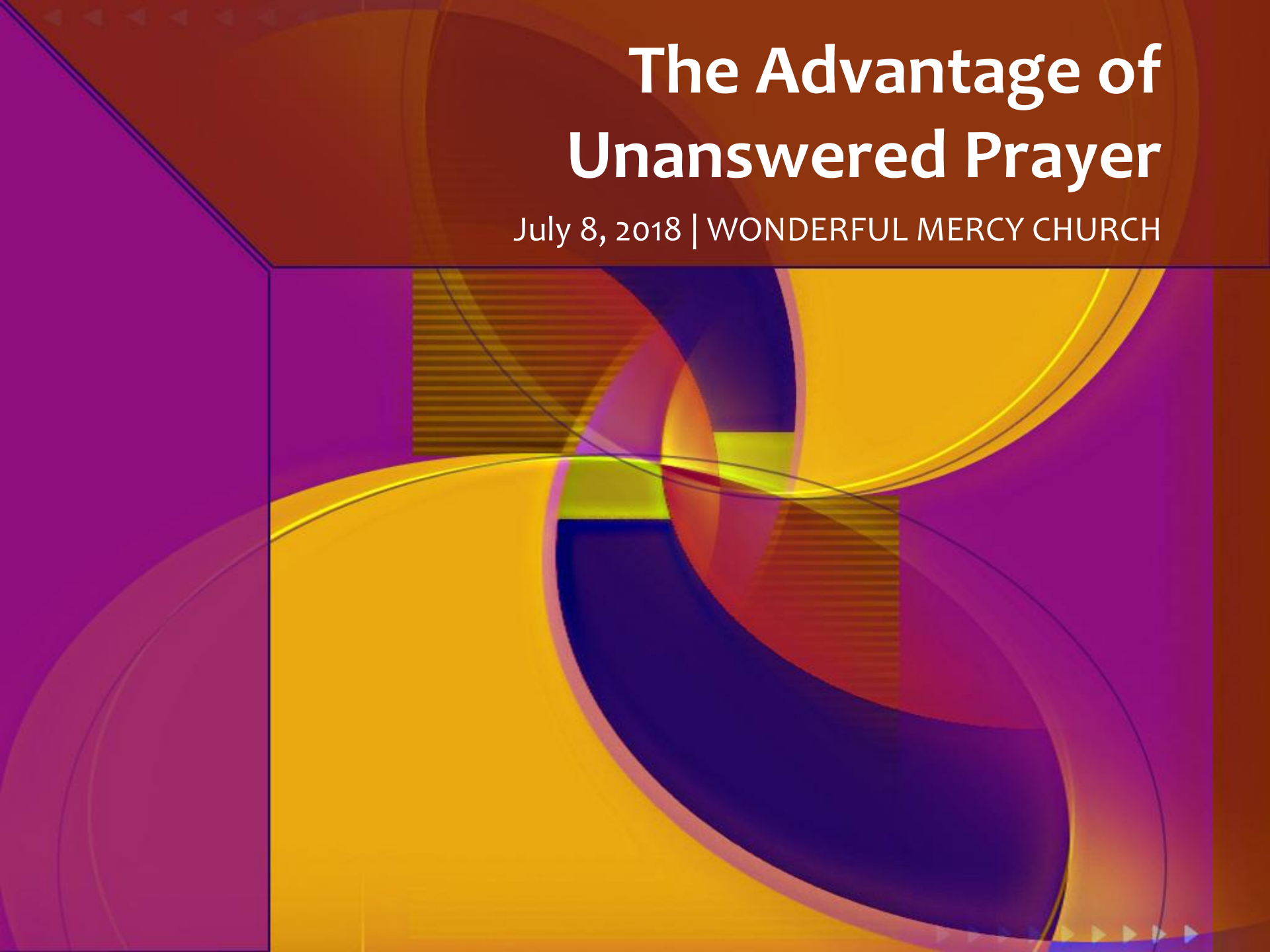


# The Advantage of Unanswered Prayer

July 8, 2018 | WONDERFUL MERCY CHURCH





## Paul's Experience in Prayer

- 2 Corinthians 12:2-10
- **2 Corinthians 12:8-9a** PASSION TRANSLATION  
“Three times I pleaded with the Lord to relieve me of this. But he answered me, “My grace is always more than enough for you, and my power finds its full expression through your weakness.””



# Selecting the Twelve Apostles

- **Luke 6:12-13** PASSION TRANSLATION

“After this, Jesus went up into the high hills to spend the whole night in prayer to God. <sup>13</sup> At daybreak he called together all of his followers and selected twelve from among them, and he appointed them to be his apostles.”

- Result of answered prayer for Jesus? Twelve men who are the spiritual equivalent of The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight
- Judas the traitor, betrayer of Jesus, is an answer to prayer

## The Kings of Israel (see 1 Samuel 8)

- Four kings before kingdom split: one evil (Saul), one did right (David), one was mixed (Solomon). A fourth, Ishbosheth, reigned for 2 years and is not assessed
- **Judah** (c 925-586 BC) 20 kings: 2 mixed; 6 did right; 12 evil
- **Israel** (c 925-721 BC) 19 kings: 1 mixed; 0 did right; 18 evil
- Result of answered prayer: 43 kings, 31 of whom it is written, “he did evil in the eyes of the Lord”



# The King Who Didn't Want to Die

- 2 Kings 20:1-6
- In those fifteen bonus years Hezekiah fathers Manasseh, who grows up to be possibly the most evil king in Judah's history
- **2 Kings 21:16** NEW LIVING TRANSLATION  
“Manasseh also murdered many innocent people until Jerusalem was filled from one end to the other with innocent blood. This was in addition to the sin that he caused the people of Judah to commit, leading them to do evil in the LORD's sight.”



## **We Don't Know What's Good for Us**

We do not know what is to our advantage in [prayer] the way God does. The result is, then, that succeeding or failing we ought to give thanks. Why are you surprised that we don't know what is to our advantage? Paul, a man of such quality and stature, judged worthy of ineffable blessings, did not know what was advantageous in his requests: when he saw himself beset with trouble and diverse tribulations, he prayed to be rid of them, not once or twice but many times.

“Three times I asked the Lord,” he says. “Three” means he asked frequently without success. [Chrysostom, Homilies on Genesis 30.16. *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*]



# Father Knows Best

- **2 Corinthians 12:9a** PASSION TRANSLATION

“But he answered me, ‘My grace is always more than enough for you, and my power finds its full expression through your weakness.’”





## How Do We Bear Up When We Are Denied?

- **2 Corinthians 12:9b-10** PASSION TRANSLATION

“So I will celebrate my weaknesses, for when I’m weak I sense more deeply the mighty power of Christ living in me. <sup>10</sup> So I’m *not defeated* by my weakness, but delighted! For when I feel my weakness and endure mistreatment—when I’m surrounded with troubles on every side and face persecution *because of my love* for Christ—I am made yet stronger. For my weakness becomes a portal to God’s power.”

- **AMBROSE:** “Humility like this does away with frailty.”

[LETTER 1. *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*]

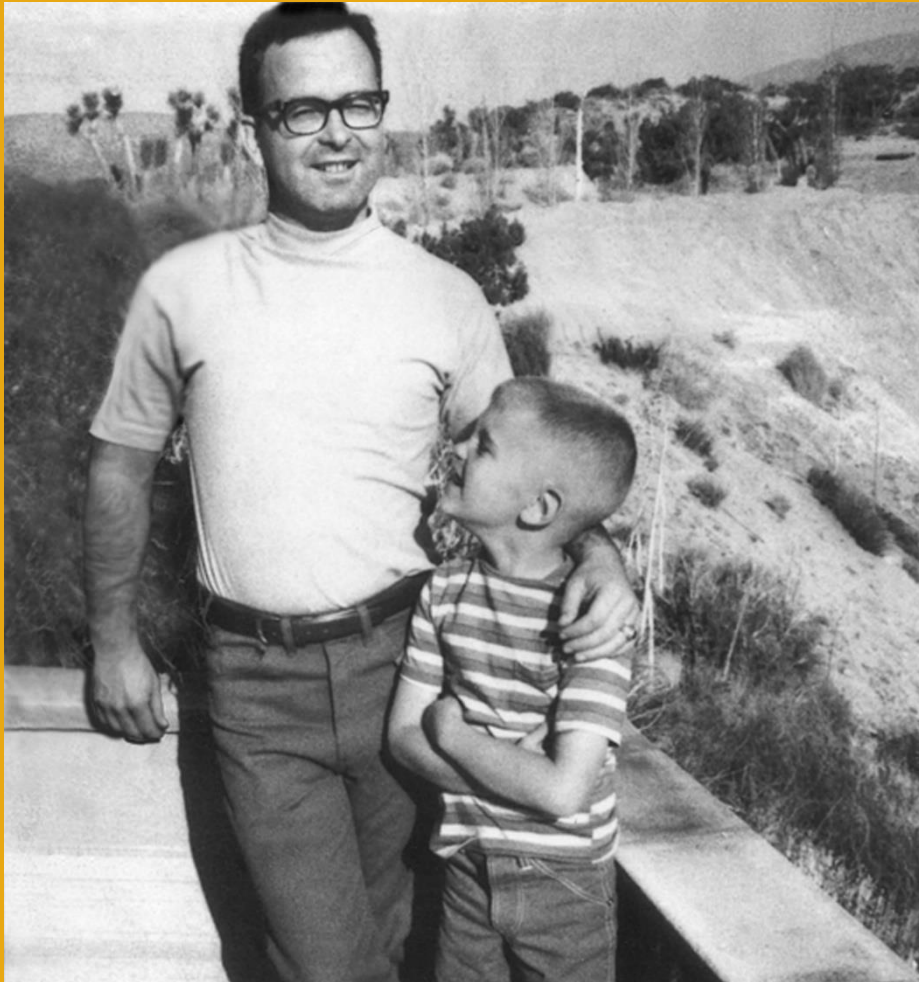




## How Do We Bear Up When We Are Denied?

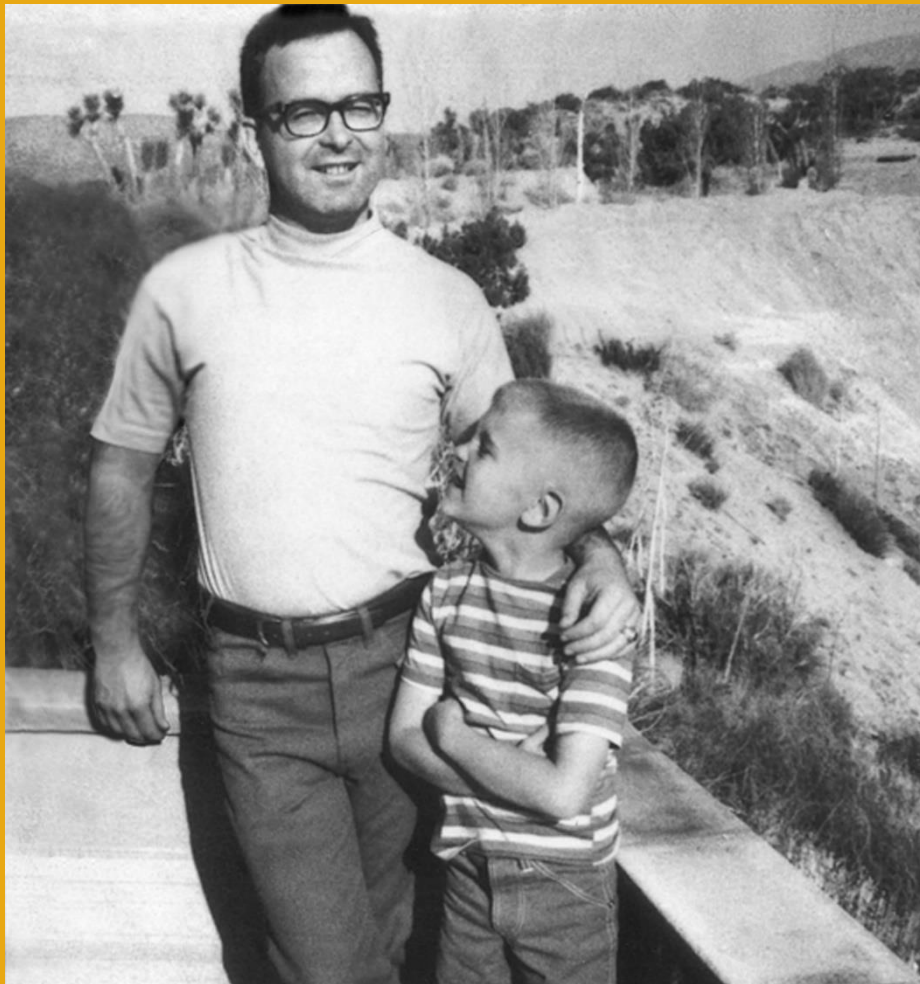
- God's looking to raise up a people—not a *frail* people—who rise to the occasion of his heart for the world
- When will we stop whining and start living? When will we stop falling apart when we don't get our way?
- The advantage of unanswered prayer is that it reminds us we are not our own
- **1 Corinthians 6:19b-20a** NEW LIVING TRANSLATION  
“You do not belong to yourself, <sup>20</sup> for God bought you with a high price.”

# It Comes Down to Being Sons & Daughters



- As a boy you could *never* have convinced me my dad didn't love me, wouldn't provide for or protect me
- He didn't say yes to everything I asked him for but that never threatened to wreck our relationship

# It Comes Down to Being Sons & Daughters



- Because I was a kid I was inclined to throw a fit when things didn't go my way. But guess what? I grew up.
- **1 Corinthians 13:11** “When I was a child, I spoke about childish matters, for I saw things like a child and reasoned like a child. But the day came when I matured, and I set aside my childish ways.”



## **“I Have a Thousand Ways to Set You Free!”**

- The prayer we're praying? That's only one of them.
- When our prayer is unanswered (which is to say, not answered to our satisfaction) there are still 999 ways to go!
- Remember, our response matters because our words create worlds



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