

Title: Strength Perfected in Weakness

Text: 2 Corinthians 12: 9

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Pride is one of the greatest enemies to a child of God. Even the apostle Paul had to be kept from it. Like us, his old fleshly man was “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” and the Lord had taken him up to the third heaven and shown him things no other believer on earth had seen. So to keep him from being lifted up with pride of grace the Lord gave him a thorn in the flesh—a messenger of Satan to buffet him.

Whatever Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” was we can tell by the description of a “thorn” that it was painful. It was “a messenger of Satan to buffet him”, meaning, God had permitted Satan, like he did Job, to “buffet”—to strike a blow as with a fist, to drive as you would a stake. So this was some powerful, painful, thorn which struck Paul violently like a fist. Paul says,

2 Corinthians 12:8: For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

But instead of taking it away, the Lord Jesus said this—our text is verse 9.

**2 Corinthians 12:9: And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.**

Title: Strength Perfected in Weakness

**Proposition:** Believer, whatever suffering we may encounter, we shall find Christ's grace is sufficient and his strength is made perfect in our weakness.

**Divisions:** 1) Christ’s grace is sufficient—**my grace is sufficient for thee**; 2) Christ’s strength is perfected in weakness—**for my strength is made perfect in weakness**; 3) The power of Christ resting on us—**Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.**

**I. CHRIST’S SUFFICIENT GRACE—V9: My grace is sufficient for thee;**

**My, For Thee**

Notice, the Lord Jesus says, “MY grace is sufficient FOR THEE.” It is the Lord Jesus speaking. He is speaking to you for whom he became Surety in eternity. You, who he redeemed and called by his grace. God our Savior—our Mediator—says—“MY grace is sufficient FOR THEE.”

Illustration: Have you ever gotten a thorn in your finger? You looked at it, held that finger, cared for that finger and you hurt because of that finger.

This is Christ our Head looking at one of the members of his body that has a thorn. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Our Savior looks closely at his suffering member. He holds that member and cares for that member. Through the Holy Spirit he speaks to that member in the heart. And he pours out his grace into the heart of that member. Christ says, “MY grace is sufficient FOR THEE.”

**Application:** Brethren, it will be a great help to our faith to see how truly one, we are with Christ our Head. He is our covenant Head. All fullness dwells in Christ. Of his grace have we received grace for grace. There is no limit to his power and no limit to his grace. Christ’s grace is sufficient. Christ is saying, to Paul,

Isaiah 49:16: Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.

By Christ's grace, Paul was able to comfort the brethren at Philippi, and able to do so by experience, saying,

Philippian 4:19: My God will supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

## Grace

Next, let's look at this word "Grace." It means favor. And here it means his favor in action, effectually working toward you, in you and for you, who believe. When we come into great suffering, especially if it lasts awhile, we sometimes think,

Psalm 77: 9: Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?

But Christ's favor—his grace—never changes toward his child, ever.

- God the Father chose us by grace
- Christ the Son redeemed us by grace
- God the Spirit quickened us by grace

Though we do not realize it, his grace is always at work toward those he eternally loves. Even our thorns are given by God's keeping, preserving grace so that we can better experience Christ's love and grace and to prevent us from becoming puffed up in pride of grace.

**Application:** Brethren, when you come into painful trials never doubt God's unchanging grace and everlasting love.

Romans 11:29: For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

He loves his own with an "everlasting love." And remember, even the thorn IS his grace in action to preserve us. When he will not take it away, that too, IS his grace.

## Sufficient

Before we leave this first point, let's look at this word "sufficient." God's grace in Christ is sufficient because it exactly meets our need and there is always enough grace to meet our need.

Spurgeon's Illustrations: Imagine a tiny fish being afraid of drinking up the ocean. Or imagine the Egyptian granaries being full after seven years of plenty but the little mouse nibbling on a kernel of corn being afraid of starving. Or picture a man standing on a mountain, looking over the expansive landscape, and saying, "I breathe so many cubic feet of air in a year; what if I inhale all the oxygen surrounding the globe." God could say, "My atmosphere is sufficient for thee."

It is just that foolish for us to imagine that we can exhaust the grace of God! God's grace is sufficient:

- Sufficient to justify us freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom 3: 24)
- Sufficient to make the promises of God sure to every elect child of God (Rom 4: 16)
- Sufficient to give us the gift of everlasting righteousness in Christ. (Rom 5: 17)
- Sufficient to super-abound over all our sin (Rom 5: 20)
- Sufficient to "reign unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 5: 21)
- Sufficient to regenerate us who were dead in trespasses and in sins.
- Sufficient to supply us with "gifts according to the grace that is given to us" (Rom 12: 6)
- Sufficient to sanctify us

- Sufficient in health and in sickness
- Sufficient in prosperity and in poverty
- Sufficient in life and in death
- Sufficient to bring us to himself and raise our bodies like unto his glorious body.

**Application:** God's grace is sufficient because it is effectual. It always gets the job done! And be sure to get this, believer, Christ's grace is sufficient NOW! It is easy to believe in grace for the past and for the future, but to rest in his grace for the immediate necessity is true faith. So brethren, whatever the situation, whenever the situation, hear these words of our gracious Redeemer, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

## **II. CHRIST'S STRENGTH IS PERFECTED IN WEAKNESS—v9:...for my strength is made perfect in weakness.**

### **His Strength Made Perfect in Weakness for Us**

Christ is the Power of God. His power was made perfect—manifest and shone forth—in weakness.

Philippians 2: 6: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

The Power of God was wrapped in swaddling clothes in a manger. Christ, the Power of God, began fulfilling the law and the prophets while he was in the womb, when Mary and Joseph had to flee from Herod because "it was written." The Power of God was fulfilling the law when he was brought to the temple by his mother "to do for him after the custom of the law." It was the Power of God when Christ gave himself to be made sin for those given him of the Father. The Power of God was made perfect when he allowed himself to be nailed to a cursed tree. It was the Power of God being made perfect when Christ was forsaken of God the Father. By his finished work, by laying down his life, it is the Power by which God is just and the Justifier of those who believe on Christ. Had he saved himself he could not have saved us, but his putting on weakness made him strong to redeem us.

2 Corinthians 13: 4: For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

### **His Strength Made Perfect in Weakness within Us**

Within us, the strength of Christ is made perfect—made to appear, manifest and shines forth—in its perfection and glory, by Christ supplying, supporting, and strengthening his people under all our weakness. When we are brought to the end of 'self', to see that we are weak—without strength—so much so that we cannot do anything to save ourselves—that is when the Strength of Christ is made manifest to us.

Romans 5: 6: When we were yet without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly.

- I have no strength to obey God's law nor to justify myself of my sin—Christ my Righteousness
- I have no strength to give myself life. — Christ is my Life.
- I have no strength to make myself separate and holy—Christ is my Sanctification!
- I have no strength to resist temptation. — Christ is my Preservation.
- I have no strength to resist the devil. — Christ has bruised his head for me.
- I have no strength under this present trial—but Christ "giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." (Is 40: 29)

Sinner, if Christ brings you to see that your sin has left you impotent—unrighteous, unfit and unable—that is when Christ will reveal in your heart that what you thought was weakness on the cross is the Power of God unto salvation! That is when you will see this gospel is the Power of God unto salvation. That is when you will see why God has chosen these saints he has.

1 Corinthians 1:24: But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*: 27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence. 30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

When God has made Christ Jesus Power unto you then his Power will bring you to cry out...

Psalm 18: 2: The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

As Paul is declaring in our text, it is a lesson we never stop learning. All the strength we have to fight the good fight of faith and gain the victory is wholly from the Lord Jesus Christ our Strength. We have no strength to seek him or serve him, to live holy or die happily, except by Christ graciously working in us “both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Php 2: 13) We forget it every day so we have to learn it all over again every day. He brings us to where Paul was brought. Then he speaks into our hearts, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Then we cry with David, "In the day when I cried unto thee thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." (Psalm 138:3.)

**III. THE PURPOSE OF OUR SUFFERING—v9—Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.**

### **The Power of Christ**

The power of Christ Jesus was his total dependence upon the Father, trusting the Faithfulness of God the Father and the Promise of God the Father to raise him and justify him when the work was done. When Christ walked this earth as the righteous servant of the Father it was the power of faith and love which made Christ willing to suffer, to be made the least, to descend to the very depths for love of God and the love of his brethren who could not save themselves.

### **The Power of Christ Resting Upon Us**

Paul says, in verse 10, “**Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.**” When I am entirely weak, with absolutely no strength whatsoever, so that I look away from me and trust Christ to be all my Strength as he promises he shall be—then am I strong. When Christ is my only strength then am I strong.

Philippians 3:10: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

It is only when we are brought to acknowledge our weakness, infirmity, frailty, nothingness, and insufficiency that the power of Christ and his all sufficient grace rests upon us. The moment we think ourselves strong and wise and able then we are walking in our flesh, which is the weakest, most worthless thing there is on earth. When Christ, and Christ alone, is our Strength then we are strong.

Philippians 4:13: I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Now may our gracious Savior make us weak in ourselves that he might make us strong in him!

**Amen!**