

Weakness and Strength

2 Cor. 12: 1-10.

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Immediately upon redemption weakness comes in — "He was crucified through weakness:" "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." He could have gone up to heaven as the Son of David, but then He would have had no one with Him.

If the Spirit were given where atonement was not known it could only produce fearful conflict in the soul. There was no such thing as redemption, bringing back, except by the humiliation of His Son. If He had not become Man, He could not have gone to death, He could not have been the Head of the Gentiles, He could not have been the One amongst men meeting every need. He came down to measure out every thing in His own personal presence in grace. He did not stay in heaven and do the work; He said, "I choose to recognize Satan's power, but I will go down and worst him on his own ground." but He was not only crucified through weakness; the great point is, He was raised from the dead — Himself the Resurrection and the Life; and we can look into the grave and say, "I know Him as the resurrection and the life:" How does this power work in us? It is resurrection from the dead; when known it brings in the taste of death into everything connected with ourselves. Look at Saul of Tarsus; he had everything planned in his own mind for his service, and the Lord Jesus speaks to him from heaven. His first word, "Who art Thou, Lord?" shows that he was conscious of the entire end of everything connected with self. Then the next thing was, "What wilt *Thou* have me to do?" You will not find until Christ really looks into you that you will look at Him as the revelation of the glory of God. Then you say, "There is a Man up there in heaven raised from the dead, the One in whose face all the glory of God shines. If I want to know anything connected with God, I must learn it from that Man; the answer to every question, above, around, within, is found in the face of that One. God centralizes all in that Person!"

We often think of this passage as the experience of the apostle. True, it was so; but in it we get the principle of Christ's dealing with a soul. God shows me the Man in the glory, but after that I look up and see that One bearing me on His heart before God, and that He never forgets me. We get here the principle of God's dealing with a man down here. There is more than one principle on which the apostle was quite willing to have the fare of a pilgrim down here; but this is one, "My grace is sufficient for thee." If it be a question of service, of suffering, of any power at all, where do I get it? In Christ.

We get another ground in Philippians 3. There his heart was so entranced with Christ, that he wanted in everything to be like Him; because Christ suffered, he wants to bear the marks of suffering too; to be like Him in every possible way, in moral character, in suffering, even in "being made conformable unto His death." Christ was down here as a pilgrim and stranger, and so he wanted to have the marks of one of His disciples, in being conformed to His sufferings; and why? For the love he had to Christ.

But here it is another thing, "My grace is sufficient for thee," etc. I mean to conform you as My disciple to that principle of death and resurrection that was made good in Me before you got any blessing from it, that in everyday life you may have My strength. Look at the bearing of this on a person down here, the light it casts on his face. It was not only a question of the danger Christ saw, but

He used Satan. People lose much when they forget that Christ uses Satan to guard them from sin; he is one of the powers by which He works. Satan gave Paul the thorn in the flesh. Christ's purpose is to perfect His strength in his servant's weakness. The whole scene down here is under His band; and not only are the difficulties here for us to get through, but they are arranged by Christ that He may glorify Himself by taking you through them. Who made the wilderness? God. And had He any special purpose in making it as it was? Why did He not make it like Canaan? Because He wanted a place for His people where He would have to supply their need every day. The secret of quietness and peace of heart is not to look at things and say, I have got to face them; but Christ has prepared the things as they are that I may not be able to get along a single day without Himself. Have I no bread? no work? Am I sick? Where is Christ? All the things are not only overruled, but *used* by Him that we may learn His strength of love that cripples us that He may be able to say, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

As I go along and see in my path a large rock, what do I think? How can I ever get over it? No; Christ has allowed it. He has put it in my path to try my faith, and somehow or other He will get me over it. You cannot say in ease and prosperity, There is Christ; but directly the storm begins, the weakness is felt, the sickness comes, we can certainly count on Christ. An extremity never takes Him by surprise, though often it may be an extremity entirely opposed to His moral character. If He leave a person to himself, it is not that He gives him up, but to prove his heart. If He see a man full of himself, even though his face may be beaming with the glory, He must leave him to himself a little. If the heart will not bow to Christ it must be left to itself. If we do not learn in the quiet of the sanctuary, we shall find ourselves outside to learn what poor things we are. Christ would rather have His name dishonoured and Peter brought low, than keep him in the ranks of the Church, "making a fair show in the flesh:"

Look at John in Rev. 1. There, an exile in Patmos, he might have thought his apostleship ended; but Christ comes and gives him a book to write, unfolding things of deep moment to the Church in all ages. What should we do without the Revelation? We get another instance in Rom. 8. I know not what to ask, but the Spirit makes intercession with groanings, and He that searcheth the heart knoweth it. Do I know what I want? No; but we present our desires before Him, often unable to form them into sentences, but Christ is up there, He knows what the Spirit wants for us. It is only an instance of redemption, working through Almighty power, connecting God, Christ in heaven, with *me*, a little insignificant individual down here. That God is so occupied with me that He brings me into desires after spiritual things connected with the glory of Christ. I present the desire, Christ understands (take the figure in Psalm 107; the sailors at their wits' end, then they learn the poverty of nature) I am brought to a sense of weakness by this character of communion, by His "strength made perfect in weakness." A great deal of the defective Christianity nowadays is owing to the Lord's people coming short in seeing that. Do we understand that the whole wilderness is to be a book of death and resurrection to us? Very often sorrow is taken up from love to Christ; but *here* it is my lifetime all developed by Christ, and He acting upon all to develop the principle of death and resurrection, and that to let me know "My grace is sufficient." If you look at *Satan* as one of the powers by which God works, at *the wilderness* as the place prepared by Christ, where the tokens of His love are shown out, and at *yourselves*, crippled by Christ in order that you may have no strength but His to act on, you will find sweetness and refreshing of soul. G.V.W.