

I asked for health that I might do greater things,
I was given infirmity that I do might do better things.
I asked for riches that I might be happy,
I was given poverty that I might be wise...
I asked for power that I might have the praise of men,
I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God....
I asked for all things that I might enjoy life,
I was given life that I might enjoy all things...
I got nothing that I asked for but everything that I hoped
for.
Almost despite myself my unspoken prayers were
answered.
I am among all men most richly blessed.

We have God's grace, and God's grace is all we need.
We thank God for giving us sufficient grace!

Questions for Reflection

1. What is your thorn in the flesh? What is your weakness in life?
2. The Lord told Paul, saying *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect"* (2 Cor. 12:9)? If the Lord tells you the same words, how would you respond on it?
3. Do you experience God's loving embrace when you are struggling with life issues?
4. Reflect on the poem of a confederate soldier.

October 21, 2018

My Power Is Made Perfect In Weakness

2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Rev. Dr. Charles Yoon

The Apostle Paul, like us all, suffered with weakness. He had what he called a thorn in the flesh. And three times, he prayed that this weakness, this affliction, might be removed, that he might be cured. In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul says, *"in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me."* (7) We don't know what exactly this thorn was. We know it was something that continually bothered him. Satan used it as a "messenger," as an obstacle, supposed to hinder Paul in his trips and ministry. Some think it might have been recurring malaria. Perhaps it was arthritis setting in from all the beatings. Others think it may have been very poor eyesight. Whatever it was, it tormented Paul. It was so bad that he could only compare it to a thorn lodged in the flesh.

So he pleaded with the Lord to remove it. Certainly Paul was a man that prayed continually. He begged. He beseeched. He called out. He pleaded. What might that prayer have sounded like? "Lord! Take this weakness away! Restore my health! Why have you let me suffer like this? I have endured so much! This "thorn" is hindering my ministry!"

Paul finally shares with us what God's response was: *"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'" (9) "Paul, you have all that you need because you have my grace."* He learned that the most important thing in life is not physical health or family or friends or money or Paul's skill in writing or his ability to preach and do mission work. The most important thing in Paul's life was God's undeserved love for him. When we have family problems, or when we are struggling with money, when we are sick and tired

of trials and troubles, or when we are weary from battling sin, or when we are worn out from living in this world, God comes to us with His loving embrace and says, *“My grace is sufficient for you.”* (9)

Indeed, what does anything else matter? What if we suffer? What if we have trials and troubles? What if there are problems and complications in life? What if we are weak? In all these things we are only reminded whom to rely on. Listen to Paul in verse 9: *“Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in my weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

“When I am weak, then I am strong.” In the view of ordinary people this is nonsense. Power and strength are valued by most people, and weakness is despised. We tend to conceal our vulnerability. We try to hide our weakness. We want to have self-confidence, self-reliance and self-assurance, so that we can be a better person whom many people want us to be. We think that we can help ourselves, that we can do what we need to do on our own, and that we can find all the answers we need in ourselves.

Our weaknesses, our hardships, and our tribulations are not a blessing. They are real problems for us. They can create problems for how we get along with others. But, instead of relying on our own skill and wisdom and strength to save us, when we acknowledge our weaknesses and our needs, and when we turn to God and ask for God’s help, then we can discover that God’s grace is sufficient for us. We can realize that

God’s power is made perfect in our weakness. Finally, we can understand that when we are weak, then we can be strong.

We all are weak and struggling in some problems such as finance, health, or relationships in our life. We are weak in many ways. But God’s power comes to us and helps us in the way that we need help. Have you gone through some difficult times lately? Have you shed a few tears recently? Have you suffered with heartache and headache? Have you been tired and worn out?

Our weakness may remain, as Paul’s thorn remained, but God’s power inhabits it and turns it to strength for us. God’s power and strength help us to do what we as followers of Christ are meant to do and need to do. God wants to sustain us, strengthen us, and bless us.

A small boy was trying to lift a stone much too heavy for him. His father walked by, and seeing his struggles he said "Are you using all your strength?" The boy said that indeed he was. But the father replied “No son, you aren’t, for you haven’t asked me.”

How much haven’t we asked God about? How much of our weakness do we keep locked up inside us? Many times we think that there is no help for us. We think that other things are more important. Our strength comes from our relationship to God. God is able to help us and willing to help us. But first we need to realize our need for God, and then we must ask God to take control. Doing our best always includes asking God to help us do what we are striving to do. God makes His power perfect in our weaknesses.

I would like to conclude with a poem that sums up what I have talked about this morning. It was written by a confederate soldier after the Civil War: