

My Strength is Made Perfect in Weakness

by Tony Warren

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

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.

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."

-2nd Corinthians 12:7-10

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any Christians are confused as to why God would say to the Apostle Paul, "for my strength is made perfect in weakness." It sounds like God wants us to be weak, but weak how? Surely God wants us to be spiritually strong, resilient and optimistic in dealing with all types of situations and problems that may arise. So exactly what does the Lord mean in saying His strength is made perfect in weakness?

The word that is translated both "weaknesses" and "infirmities" is the Greek word [*astheneia*], which means to be "without strength," and by implication to be "weak." Since someone who is ill is weak, by extension it can also be used to mean unwell or feeble. In this context of 2nd Corinthians it is illustrating Paul's inability (lack of strength, or weakness) in that he could not extricate himself from those who reproached, persecuted and caused him distress ([2nd Corinthians 12:10](#)). It is this consideration of this difficulty that Paul was praying it might be removed from him. The problem was, this trouble was given him in the first instance so that in it God's strength could be revealed to him. Paul specifically tells us that this thorn was given him so that he wouldn't be exalted in his own eyes. Clearly this messenger was allowed to vex Paul because God wanted him to stay grounded, meek and humble in spirit. In other words, so that he would not glory in his special office and becoming

haughty, supercilious, arrogant and exalted above measure. That is specifically why God allowed this messenger of Satan to vex him. Our weaknesses or lack of strength to extricate ourselves from trials and tribulations that beset faithful Christians in this sin cursed world is normative, and the Apostle Paul was no exception. The passage in question is quite familiar to most Christians, if not its meaning.

2nd Corinthians 12:7

- "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."

So much has been written (from Reformed Christian perspectives and otherwise) speculating on exactly what this thorn in the flesh was. It has been postulated to be everything from poor eyesight or a speech defect, to some disease like malaria. It is curious that very little has been written of this thorn from the perspective of allowing the Bible to be its own interpreter through comparing Scripture with Scripture. I submit that when we abandon conjecture, the nature of the apostle Paul's weakness is clearly seen as a messenger of Satan that afflicted him as a *proverbial* thorn in his flesh ([Joshua 23:13](#); [Numbers 33:55](#); [Judges 2:3](#)) so that he buffeted and accosted him. It's clearly not speaking of a literal thorn and the thorn cannot be privately interpreted. That means that the thorn "must" be interpreted by consideration of how Scripture defines thorns. Speculation, personal opinion, assumption and supposition are not the way to interpret Scripture. I find it amazing that so many theologians neglect that most basic, fundamental hermeneutic of defining a symbol or imagery by Scripture rather than by speculation. It is a figurative or emblematic thorn that is plainly identified right in the context as being a messenger of Satan that had beat Paul. And the apostle wanted this messenger that afflicted and beat him to be removed. Indeed, in the previous chapter the apostle declared this plainly.

2nd Corinthians 11:25

- "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;"

Three times the apostle says he was beaten and three times the apostle prayed that those who beat him might be removed from him. These were as the proverbial thorns in the flesh that the Old Testament spoke of. The "thorn in the flesh" is outside of the scope of the message of this article and has been dealt with in another article^[1]. I will briefly touch on this subject as it relates to this messenger. Throughout Scripture the thorn is used to signify the character of those who are not God's people and who vex them "as" thorns would aggravate or irritate the flesh. These things are clearly illustrated throughout the Bible. These adversaries of God's people are likened to thorns pricking and irritating God's people.

Numbers 33:55

- "But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be *pricks in*

your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell."

When God talks about those who are the adversaries of His people as thorns in their sides or pricks in their eyes, He's not talking about them getting diseases or poor eyesight as is often speculated with Paul's thorn. He is using that language to illustrate they are people who are an irritation to His servants and (like a thorn) will become a pain in the side to cause them affliction. The thorns are people that are outside of God's family who will become an annoyance and aggravation so that they cause anguish and suffering. That's what God uses the symbol of the thorn to depict. The thorn is someone who caused the apostle Paul anguish and distress so that he wanted him removed, even as one would a thorn stuck in his side or other part of the flesh.

2nd Samuel 23:6

- "But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands:"

Again, sons of Belial, the messengers of Satan are these enemies of God's people and are as thorns that will be thrust away. This imagery is a continuing theme in Scripture. Even as the parable of the sower and the seeds that fell among thorns ([Luke 8:14](#)). The thorns there represent the wicked who choke the Word so that the cares of this world get in the way to prevent God's Word from taking root.

Hebrews 6:7-9

- "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:
- But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.
- But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."

God again is using thorns to represent the accursed of God that will be rejected and burned, while the herbs receive blessings from Him. This image of thorns as messengers of Satan are a continuing portrait that the Bible paints. Indeed, this Biblical, historical imagery defining thorns should be the first thing that we look at with relationship to Paul's problems, not the last.

Moreover, there are other defining characteristics of Paul's thorn in 2nd Corinthians that illustrate it represents an person who is an adversary of God. For one, the thorn is explicitly called the messenger of Satan. A messenger by definition is one who delivers a message, and this messenger is specifically identified as being of the evil spirit Satan. So there really is no reason to speculate about an undocumented sickness or poor eyesight. This is someone bringing the message of the adversary, who was obstructing and hindering ([1st Thessalonians 2:18](#)) Paul's gospel message. A messenger of Satan is a minister of the word of unrighteousness, rather than a minister of the Word of Christ.

Likewise, a third characteristic of this thorn is that Scripture declares this messenger had beaten (KJV translated buffeted) the apostle Paul, lest he should become supercilious and haughty where he might exalt himself. The Judaizers, who Christ called the children of the Devil, hounded Paul ([2nd Corinthians 11:23-25](#)), beat, afflicted and vexed him as a thorn in his side. The Bible tells us that Paul was persecuted, suffered beatings, was afflicted and made to feel weak and powerless (to God's Glory). The messenger of Satan was no stranger to the apostle, nor to any faithful Christian.

1st Peter 2:18-21

- "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.
- For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.
- For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.
- For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:"

Suffering at the hands of Satan's messengers is the occupation of the faithful Christian. Christ said blessed are you when men persecute and revile you ([Matthew 5:11-12](#)), and consequently woe unto you when all men speak well of you ([Luke 6:26](#)), because that's a sign that you are not preaching truthfully, you're just telling people what they want to hear. The apostle Paul clearly had these who reviled and persecuted him throughout his ministry, and one in particular who beat him so that he prayed to God three times that this messenger might be removed. God's Word came back to him both as a declaration of comfort, and as an assurance of His adequate favor of God even in the face of this trial.

2nd Corinthians 12:9

- "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee..."

Paul asked three times that this Messenger be removed, and here the Lord is declaring that His grace is all that the apostle needed. God knows Paul's pains, his frustrations, revilings and persecutions. We should never suppose that God is unaware or unconcerned about our plight in this world, for He is always with us and His grace is adequate to see us through whatever Satan can heap upon us. Faith and Grace is all that is required to sustain us through our times of buffeting, trial and tribulations. Our trust should be totally in Him for help and our well being, though at times His help may not be what we expected.

Psalms 146:3

- "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help."

God helped the apostle, but not as he had imagined and hoped. Indeed many

Christians have questioned why God would deny Paul's simple request to remove this thorn that was causing him such irritation. The answer is that it was God who allowed the proverbial thorn in the flesh in the first place. And clearly He had a very good reason for doing so. Thus the thorn would remain, but so also would God's merciful Grace in helping Paul to persevere through it.

Psalms 116:5-6

- "Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.
- The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me."

God preserves the simple or foolish in spirit that they are guileless and unpretentious ([1st Corinthians 3:18-20](#)) and brought low, that He may be glorified as their help. They are made weak and humbled in order they may be able to see that they are in fact inadequate in themselves and totally dependant upon their God for deliverance. Of course Christians don't enjoy being weak and persecuted, but it is often for our good ([Philippians 1:28-29](#)), a token of our salvation and ultimately exactly what we need ([Philippians 4:19](#)). Because in the end we see that Our God is wise and gracious to supply "not" that which we want, but our each and every need. God had clearly answered Paul's request with a denial of the petition, and the denial was obviously on the grounds that his lack of strength in dealing with this thorn had its divine usefulness. In other words, God's answer to Paul's petition was that he didn't need to be delivered from the buffeting or beatings of this evil messenger of Satan, because the grace or unmerited favor of God upon him was enough to see him through it. He received the assurance of grace from God that he would be sustained in his time of trial, and indeed he was. In His answer, God was declaring that removing these messengers was not in His divine plan, and that his purpose in allowing the messenger to remain is of greater value than His removing him. In other words, what is to be gleaned from Paul's weakness is of greater spiritual profit, worth, benefit, importance and help, than any direct affirmative carnal answer to his three prayers would be.

The number 3 in scripture is often used by God to signify His will and purpose. And in God allowing the three petitions before answering illustrates this is all God's will and is a part of God's divine purpose. In the Reformed doctrines of grace we understand that thorns are all part and parcel of the life that Christians are given to live, that we may grow in sanctification. Lest we should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the spirit of knowledge that the Lord has given us among those who are not given it. This messenger of Satan was so that Paul wouldn't become puffed up, proud or have a haughty spirit in his Blessed state of privilege. This is why the Lord goes on to build upon this truth in declaring in verse nine that Paul's weakness makes him stronger in the Lord:

2nd Corinthians 12:9

- "...for my strength is made perfect in weakness..."

What does "my strength is made perfect in weakness" mean? Consider that the apostle Paul asked for help in the context of his beating, persecution and hardship. This was his weakness or state of being powerless in the face of man's persecution

that he wanted to be delivered from. He desired to be delivered from what he perceived was his weakness (the inability to fend off his attacker). God's answer was that grace was sufficient for him, because in Paul's weakness or inability is revealed God's perfect strength and security. Namely, that it is good that in this is revealed how inadequate Paul felt (and was) and how much he depended upon and needed God. This Spiritual lesson is greater than any lesson of God removing an earthly enemy. Likewise for us today we also see revealed in this that it is our weakness in ourselves, readily realized and confessed, that is the sign of our ultimate dependence upon and strength in Him. Yes, God does want His servants to be strong. But the fact that God wants us to be strong doesn't obscure the fact that in the flesh, in this world, we are weak, powerless and without strength to stop the enmity of the messengers of Satan. We need God's perfect strength, revealed in our perseverance that can only be achieved by the grace of God.

2nd Samuel 22:33

- "God is my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect."

Perfect strength is when we walk in God's ways. God wants us meek and humble, rather than puffed up and arrogant in our own power or in ourselves. God doesn't want us to glory in the carnal idea that we are privileged, invincible or untouchable. Indeed, contrary to false teachings, Christ has made it clear before that on this earth, we will have tribulation. God never promised to keep us from trials and persecution. On the contrary, He plainly said we would experience them. What He promised was Grace wherein He would never leave us or forsake us in this time of need. He didn't forsake Paul at his time of need, it was in His perfect strength that God saw Paul through that times of his weakness. We have no power to overcome on our own, in our physical weakness we are at the mercy of the evil one. But in that inability, God's power and strength is revealed perfectly ([Psalms 18:32](#)) in us. To "live in and unto himself" is the pride and folly of sinful man. He foolishly thinks that this makes him self-sufficient or strong. On the contrary, in being humble and recognizing our true helplessness, we are truly strong and truly wise. Not as the world defines wisdom and strength, but as God defines it. This so that no flesh may glory before Him. Lest the apostle should boast or be proud of his divine revelations and be exalted in himself, he was given this messenger of Satan to beat him and kept him grounded in the Lord. All those who will glory because of human wisdom, position, revelation or greatness will be left in confusion. The truth is, we are given the privilege to be glorified in Him, not to glory before Him.

1st Corinthians 1:26-31

- "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:
- 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;
- 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:

- That no flesh should glory in his presence.
- But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:
- That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

When we do that, then are we strong, even though we are weak or helpless in the face of our persecutors. Even as when Stephen was stoned to death, He showed perfect strength in Christ Jesus. When one asks, "Why is the Lord's strength made perfect in weakness," the answer is because when we are weak, we are going to be open to, and indeed looking for the Lord's help. In our earthly inability our eyes are set upon the perfect strength of the Lord as our help. Thus, when we are weak, we see more clearly the perfect strength in the Spirit and power of the Lord. As faithful Christians, we don't grow in grace by becoming self-sufficient (so-called). We grow in grace and become stronger in ourselves by realizing how weak and totally dependent for everything we are upon God's grace. The fact is, every faithful Christian has some sense of his own inherent weakness, else he wouldn't even be a Christian in the first place. He has come to realize that he needs help and that he cannot do it himself. For it is when we are weak that we most learn to look to--and depend upon the Lord for our strength ([2nd Corinthians 12:10](#)). That's what makes us joy in our weakness and understand that it is when we are weak, we can best see the perfect strength of Christ. That's how the Lord is made strong in our weakness. It is then that we understand the true meaning of God's Words, "My grace is sufficient for thee." In other words, by the Lord's grace in giving the apostle the strength to bear these persecutions and beatings of the Messengers of Satan, Paul understands his weakness has prepared him to receive the divine help of perfect strength. If God's servants were not weak, vexed and persecuted, then they wouldn't have known half the glorious consolations of the grace of God. People tend to have doubt that God's grace is sufficient until they are made aware that in their best power and strength, they are insufficient. That they need God, and He is the only one who is always there and can always overcome for us. In this episode in corinthians, God was continuing the work of sanctification in the apostle Paul, just as He is continuing it in us all. Those who depend upon their own inadequate strength can never realize what they could accomplish in the Lord's complete or perfect strength ([Philippians 4:13](#)). When we are needy and humbled ([Matthew 5:3](#)) enough to recognize our human helplessness, rather than stand arrogant in our own perceived strength and pride. Only in the perfect strength of the Spirit of Christ in us can we excel.

Zechariah 4:6

- "Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the Word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."

And this is what God wants us to know. We have no strength or power to overcome in ourselves, it is only when we have the Spirit of the Lord within us that we are strong. In realizing that we cannot overcome by our own hand or by our own might, then is the power of our God revealed. We are called in weakness and are moved to lean daily, hourly, even second by second, upon our Beloved for strength. Those who

glory or take pride in their own perception of power have no real knowledge of their true condition, and so will ultimately be brought down ([1st Corinthians 1:26-29](#)). When we are broken so that we have knowledge that we are actually weak in this world of sin, then are we actually strong where we honor God rather than ourselves. We overcome this world in His perfect strength wherein we find joy in His strength to uphold, in His keeping, and in His assistance. When we have (by grace) been given perfect strength to mount the courage to face our adversaries ([Deuteronomy 31:6](#)), tribulations and pain, even unto death, then is revealed God's glory in His power to uphold us. To illustrate this, the apostle Paul goes on in verse 10 to list exactly what this proverbial thorn that he could take pleasure in represented. He lists what he was facing as weaknesses (infirmities), reproaches (revilings, harm), necessities (constraints), persecutions (harassments, oppression) and distress (anguish, pressures). It is not defined as some disease, a problem with stammering speech or as bad eyesight. It is the tribulation he suffered from men who were messengers of Satan.

2nd Corinthians 12:10

- "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."

Here we have the apostle Paul tell us point blank what this weakness called a thorn in the flesh, consisted of. There is not one word written about epilepsy, malaria, partial blindness or the host of other unsupported speculations. He defines it as an affliction of men and declares in *these*, "*when I am weak, then am I strong*." The apostle Paul glories, joys, takes pleasure in, is content in, the weaknesses of "this" thorn. Because in his weaknesses before the messenger of Satan, Christ's power is revealed not only to him, but made more apparent to us as well. Those who glory in their own accounting and wisdom will be abased. Those who depend upon their own strength will ultimately be overcome and end up discouraged. Those who think that security in Christ means no persecution or no troubled times will have a rude awakening. Whereas those who recognize their weakness, will find grace to recognize the perfect strength of God. Paul's reasoning to joy is sound, logical and biblical. As opposed to the humanistic worldly reasoning wherein they hide their weaknesses and desire to be seen as self-sufficient, prominent, prosperous, knowledgeable, strong and in need of nothing from God. In God's love for us, He is allowing the lack of strength to be revealed in our lives so that it will bring us closer to perfect strength. That is also Paul's desire, and the reason he says that he would rather glory in his infirmities/weaknesses. God's power is revealed through that weakness and so is our cause for joy. When we finally come to the realization of the truth that it is only God that we can depend on, then we are revealed as weak and His power illustrated perfectly to us. A man who trusts in his own strength is a man who is truly weak in that strength. While a man who trusts in the strength of God ([2nd Corinthians 1:8-10](#)) is a man who can see what true strength is. When we hear God answer Paul declaring, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness," we see that it is only when we recognize our earthly weaknesses here is to our spiritual good, that the strength of God is fully revealed.

Psalms 28:7

- "The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him."

The message of the Lord is that the servants of Christ must anticipate and expect that they will receive revilings and persecutions in this world from the wicked because as messengers of Christ we are in an adversarial relationship with them. But as Paul, God's grace is sufficient, because Christ has overcome all tribulation in this world for us. In this knowledge we can have peace of mind.

John 16:33

- These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

It is normative for us to be hatred and have tribulations because we are those chosen out of the world. When we are in the midst of our human weakness, that is when the power of God is revealed perfectly that we can come boldly before the throne of grace in perfect assurance.

Hebrews 4:15-16

- "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.
- Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

That word translated *infirmities* is the same Greek word [*astheneia*] that is translated weaknesses. His perfect power is the strength that sustains us in our hour of need. In our human frailness, inability or strengthlessness, that is when God's power is vividly seen. God desires of us a consciousness of weakness, one that doesn't conceal the power of the Lord in victory over it. His strength is made perfect in its triumph over our weakness because every weakness and trial points to our deliverance by this perfect strength. The work that any man accomplishes and is unaided by God's divine strength, isn't done in perfect righteousness nor in the consciousness of our weakness. It is done in man's own strength, and thus is a dead and fruitless work that is without faith.

When the question is posed, what does my strength is made perfect in weakness mean, it is answered 'that God would allow no flesh to glory in His presence.' The same reason that God would not simply just accommodate the apostle in his request. It was quite obviously not God's will that Paul be spared the affliction of Satan's messengers. Why? Well for one thing, God is from everlasting and knows the end from the beginning ([Isaiah 46:9-10](#)), meaning He wanted both Paul's three petitions and God's answer to them to be recorded in Holy writ for generations to come. This episode has become Scripture so that God's people might be educated, exhorted and

edified by it. That in persecution of His saints, His grace is sufficient is the moral of the story and the great lesson that God wants His people to hear. Had He simply removed this messenger who beat Paul, we would not have these wonderful and comforting passages of 2nd Corinthians to educate us about how in our weakness the strength of God is revealed. In these verses we come to understand that God often has some better thing in store for us than would be accomplished by any affirmative answer to our often carnal or selfish prayers. Of course, this was most certainly true of the apostle Paul as God went on to reveal the gospel and to show His magnificent salvation plan in him over the following years. Indeed, as the Lord promised, His grace was sufficient for Paul. There was more value in the tribulations of the apostle to the gospel message than would have ever been if God had simply removed his thorn, persecution and affliction.

The glory of God's grace is now seen in that the apostle humbly receives the Lord's assessment with all readiness of mind and due honor. Most of the time God orders his people with an invisible hand (not recorded in Scripture) working through normal actions and decisions to bring about His desired end. Would many professing Christians today receive God's Word with such humility as the apostle Paul did? Or would many think God's answer seems to be insensitive, a breach of promise or even a cause for failing faith. The apostle Paul received gratefully as intended and his response was:

2nd Corinthians 12:9b

- ...Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

The trials, tribulations, and revilings of a Christian assures, tests and increases our faith by revealing vulnerability and dependence. God obviously had a reason for giving Paul this thorn, and Scripture declares it was so that he would not be exalted above measure. There were Judaizers and many false teachers who came in to deceive the disciples and undermine Paul's authority, and God allowed it so that Paul would not be puffed up or unduly exalted. His inability to get away from these wicked messengers was the opportunity for God to show forth His strength and glory. Thus Paul with joy and gladness would rather glory in his strengthlessness, that the power of Christ might be revealed in it.

James 1:2-4

- "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;
- Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.
- But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

Clearly, the testing of our faith in trials works patience. Paul rendered weak in being unable to preventing this messenger from vexing him as a thorn, was the perfect chance for God's strength to be made known. God's strength is what is thus exalted rather than Paul's revelations and knowledge. Of a truth, knowledge can make a person become prideful and vain causing them to be almost unteachable. That is why

God laid Paul low, so that the Lord could be exalted and His perfect strength revealed in Paul's weakness.

Psalms 21:13

- "Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power."

It may be difficult to comprehend, but both thorns and God's grace to overcome them are causes to sing praises to God's power and glory. In reality, this messenger of Satan was part of God's contribution to the well being and growth of the apostle Paul.

2nd 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."

In other words, His strength, His power, is made perfect peace in us in time of weakness. Or to put it another way, in our weakness we see the power of God more evidentially and completely. The apostle has learned that though there is the inability to remove those who persecuted him, there was the grace by which he could be equally content in that suffering--as he is at personal, spiritual ease. This is recorded on the pages of holy writ that God's people might sing and praise His perfect strength, revealed to us through weakness. So many times we Christians may see the beauty of a rose bush in our lives, but miss the part that its thorns actually play. Indeed, it is an integral part of the bush.

I submit that we must learn to surrender to the will of God in all things, understanding that the thorns in this world are a part of God's intricate design in creation. And are placed with us for a reason. Christ takes our weaknesses or powerlessness and turns it into strength in Him. Truly it is in the most trying of times that we will be most strengthened and caused to lift our eyes upon high, from whence our help comes ([Psalms 121:1-2](#)). For when we are faced with trials wherein we become weak in difficult times, that is when the Lord gives us the strength ([1st Peter 5:10](#)) to carry on in the knowledge that His grace or unmerited favor is all that we need. In His perfect peace is power wherein we are comforted and upheld in all things and our weakness is the catalyst by which we are able to recognize the need for His strength.

You will note that as soon as the Lord's answer is given to Paul that "grace was sufficient," the apostle received it honorably, humbly and submitted to the will and wisdom of God in this matter. He confessed that in relation to this weakness, he would most gladly rather glory in it. The moral of the story is this. If you are besieged by some form of weakness or strengthlessness in your life, lift up your head and be at peace, encouraged by the strength of God. As many of you will surely agree, it is when we are going through some of our most difficult times, that God's power is revealed more perfectly or completely. Man in his pridefulness so often prefers the illusion of strength to the reality of his weakness. True strength is in recognizing our powerlessness and petitioning God for the strength to see it through. Although (like

the apostle Paul) we may not get the answer that we want when we petition our Lord for relief, it is most assuredly the answer we need. Our desires may be carnal, may be selfish and borne of vanity, pride or what we euphemistically like to call self-respect. But the answer from God is always the righteous and correct one. It is an answer with much wider implications than simply our physical well being, weaknesses, possessions or monetary gain. As Christians we must come to see that we are totally powerless, so that we understand the only way for us to reach purity of service is through the power or strength that is dealt us in the Grace of God. It is only through the gift of God that we shall grow in fruitful abundance to do His perfect will. When Christ makes us perfect unto all good works ([2nd Timothy 3:17](#)), it is in the strength of the Father, revealed through the Spirit, by the Word. So let us not mourn our weaknesses my friends. It is through them that God illustrates the grandeur of God's perfect plan and the power of the Lord to carry us. It is for this very reason that the apostle Paul could say most gladly, I would "*rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*" For a repentant and meek spirit the Lord will not cast aside or spurn ([Psalms 34:18-19](#); [Psalms 51:16-17](#)). Let us humbly accept that not only are the thorns that are a pain in our sides, divinely appointed, but they are also for our ultimate good. God's grace is sufficient that we may be strengthened to live and serve among them. May we submit ourselves to these circumstances revealing His perfect strength, to His ultimate glory.

Isaiah 40:28-31

- "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.
- He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.
- Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:
- But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Amen!

Peace,

Notes

[1.] [What Was Paul's Thorn in the Flesh](#)

(http://mountainretreatorg.net/bible/what_was_paul's_thorn_in_the_flesh.shtml)

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