

"The Necessity of Weakness"

By Joe R Wheeler

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Introduction: Often we face trouble in our life that seems to be more than we can cope with. The struggle is continual, it never goes away. We may have peace with it one day, but the next we arise to find the fears or weakness have returned, and once again we have to "pick ourselves up" and get going. These things frustrate us and we are left to wonder "why can't I overcome this?"

Paul was a man familiar with feelings of weakness. At times he felt that death was imminent, that failure was just around the corner, and that his life's work was perhaps turning out to be for naught.

Most of the Churches he wrote to were in a process of falling from the way that he had taught them, and were instead being ravished by men of corrupt mind. Over and over he writes of being discouraged by news from one congregation or the next that has turned away from the pure gospel he taught them.

He is a man who felt the power of God, and the weakness of personal defeat. These difficulties he experienced led him to seek God's help. The passages we are looking at are written for our instruction from a man who knew whereof he spoke. God has, through the hand of Paul, spoken to us these truths that we should always use to help us to understand WHY we must be, at times, frustrated by weakness.

I. The Recognition of Trial and Affliction in Our Christian Life--

2 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.*

Paul states plainly that he had to suffer with this unknown affliction.

A. The Purpose of It--

2 Corinthians 12:7a *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations,*

Paul had to be kept grounded! He could have been made proud by this knowledge, or perhaps so elated that he would have been unable to focus on earthly matters. In any case, God allowed it to afflict him for a purpose. God did not just stand by and watch him suffer for no reason.

B. The Pain of It--

2 Corinthians 12:7b *there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.*

Paul actually suffered from this affliction of Satan. It could have been physical or emotional suffering; but whatever it was, he had requested God to free him of it...and God had not!

II. The Reason for Denial Of Our Request For Relief From These Trials and Afflictions--

2 Corinthians 12:8-9a *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.*

Sometimes God says no! We go through trials at times that make us wonder if God really cares that we are suffering. These feelings of doubt should humble us and lead us to our knees...We must go to the Lord with our burdens, and find grace to help us in our time of need. God uses humble, weak men to do His

work...If we want to be useful we must be afflicted.

A. To Display God's Grace--

2 Corinthians 2:8-9a *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.*

Paul prayed to God to help him. God answered him, but instead of saying yes He said no! God wanted to use Paul in a weak state so that the glory would be to Him. Paul, knowing his own weakness would see that all of his accomplishments were actually done by God's power, not his own.

B. To Demonstrate God's Power--

2 Corinthians 12:9b *Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

Because he was weak, he was useful. Because he was useful, he had the power of Christ at work through him. He could never have accomplished what he did if he hadn't been given this "thorn in the flesh".

III. The Ultimate Result of Enduring Trials and Afflictions--

2 Corinthians 12:9a-10 *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.*

Paul was made to be perfect by weakness. He could glory in all of his sufferings because he knew that Christ worked through suffering to bring victory. His weakness was actually turned into his strength.

A. Realization of the Power of Christ--

2 Corinthians 12:9a *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*

Before he died, he saw the message preached to most all of the civilized world. His work is known to us some two-thousand years after his passing. The other Apostles are minor characters in the New Testament in comparison to him. All he did was actually done by God. He was able to use Paul by allowing him to be afflicted.

B. Realization of the Pleasure in Infirmities--

2 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.*

His suffering was for the sake of Christ! All he endured, he endured for the purposes of spreading the Gospel of Christ to a lost world. When we suffer for being Christians, we too can glory because of knowing it glorifies God.

IV. The Maturity Formed Through Trials and Suffering--

A.2 Corinthians 12:10b *for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

When we suffer for God, we are being made into something useful. Although this is contrary to what our "common sense" tells us, we operate off of God's promises; not our desires for comfort and ease.

B. Hebrews 12:10 *For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. 11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*

These afflictions and trials MOLD US into the form He has made for us. Like silver or gold, we are refined by the fire of suffering INORDER to remove the impurities from us.

C.2 Corinthians 4:7-10 *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.*

We are not actually being harmed in any way at all. We are being helped! This is to make the life of Jesus manifest in our life. We must lose our life in order to save it!

D. Luke 22:42, 44 *Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done... 44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

Jesus was the Son of God, and yet to accomplish God's plan for the world, He had to suffer. If He suffered even though He was perfect, how much more so do we who are imperfect have to suffer.

E. Matthew 26:43-44 *And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.*

God uses our trials to show us how weak we really are. We have to sleep...God never does! While we may think we are strong, He actually is working while we are resting. Affliction is His work in us being accomplished. We are safe because we let go to let Him!

Conclusion: All men are weak. Some are foolish enough to think that they are the exception to the rule, but they are wrong. Those who want to believe that they don't need God will fail in the end. The Fire will reveal them to be but men...

By the Power of God we have been set free from the power of sin and death...

Romans 8:35-39 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*