

2 Corinthians 12:10 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

2 CORINTHIANS - PAUL'S MINISTRY IN THE LIGHT OF THE INDESCRIBABLE GIFT
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 Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
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[A Third Chart](#)

Overview of Second Corinthians		
2Co 1:1-7:16 Character of Paul	2Co 8:1-9:15 Collection for the Saints	2Co 10:1-12:21 Credentials of Paul
Testimonial & Didactic	Practical	Apologetic
Past: Misunderstanding & Explanation	Present: Practical Project	Future: Anxieties
Apostle's Conciliation, Ministry & Exhortations	Apostle's Solicitation for Judean Saints	Apostle's Vindication of Himself
Forgiveness, Reconciliation Gratitude	Confidence	Vindication
Ephesus to Macedonia: Change of Itinerary Explained	Macedonia: Preparation for Visit to Corinth	To Corinth: Certainty and Imminence of the Visit
2Co 1:1-7:16	2Co 8:1-9:15	2Co 10:1-12:21
2Corinthians written ~ 56-57AD - see Chronological Table of Paul's Life and Ministry		
Adapted & modified from Jensen's Survey of the New Testament (Highly Recommended Resource) & Wilkinson's Talk Thru the Bible		

INTRODUCTIONS TO SECOND CORINTHIANS:

- **IRVING JENSEN** - [Introduction and study tips](#) - excellent preliminary resource - scroll to page 1877 (Notes on both 1-2 Cor begin on p 1829)
- **JOHN MACARTHUR** [2 Corinthians Introduction - same as in the Study Bible](#)
- **JAMES VAN DINE** [2 Corinthians - Author, Purpose, Outline, Argument](#)
- **CHARLES SWINDOLL** - [2 Corinthians Overview](#)
- **MARK SEIFRID** - [The Message of Second Corinthians: 2 Corinthians as the Legitimation of the Apostle](#)
- **J VERNON MCGEE** - [2 Corinthians Introduction](#)
- **DAN WALLACE** - [2 Corinthians: Introduction, Argument, and Outline](#)
- **DAVID MALICK** - [An Introduction To Second Corinthians](#)

2 Corinthians 12:10 **Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. (NASB: Lockman)**

Greek: [dio eudoko \(1SPA1\) en astheneiais, en hubresin, en anagkais, en diothmois kai stenochoriais, huper Christou; hotan gar astheno, \(1SPAS\) tote dunatos eimi. \(1SPA1\)](#)

Amplified: So for the sake of Christ, I am well pleased and take pleasure in infirmities, insults, hardships, persecutions, perplexities and distresses; for when I am weak [in human strength], then am I [truly] strong (able, powerful in divine strength). ([Lockman](#))

Barclay: Therefore I rejoice in weaknesses, in insults, in inescapable things, in persecutions, in straitened circumstances, for whenever I am weak, then I am strong. ([Westminster Press](#))

ESV: For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

KJV: 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.

NET: Therefore I am content with weaknesses, with insults, with troubles, with persecutions and difficulties for the sake of Christ, for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

NIV: That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

NJB: and that is why I am glad of weaknesses, insults, constraints, persecutions and distress for Christ's sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong.

NLT: That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: I can even enjoy weaknesses, suffering, privations, persecutions and difficulties for Christ's sake. For my very weakness makes me strong in him ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: Wherefore I am well content in weaknesses, in insults, in necessities, in persecutions, and in circumstances under which I am subject to extreme pressure on behalf of Christ, for when I am weak, then I am filled with ability and power.

Young's Literal: wherefore I am well pleased in infirmities, in damages, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses -- for Christ; for whenever I am infirm, then I am powerful;

THEREFORE I AM WELL CONTENT WITH WEAKNESSES, WITH INSULTS, WITH DISTRESSES, WITH PERSECUTIONS, WITH DIFFICULTIES, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE: dio eudoko (1SPA) en astheneiais, en hubresin, en anagkais, en diothmois kai stenochoriais, huper Christou:

- 2 Co 1:4; 4:8, 9, 10,17; 7:4; Acts 5:41; Ro 5:3; 8:35, 36, 37, 38, 39; Phil 1:29; 2:17,18; Col 1:24; James 1:2; 1 Pe 1:6,7; 4:13,14
- Weaknesses - 2 Co 11:23-30
- For Christ's sake - 2 Co 4:5,11; 10:18; Luke 6:22; John 15:21; 1Co 4:10; Rev 2:3
- 2 Co 12:9; 13:4,9; Eph 6:10
- [2 Corinthians 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

How Firm a Foundation

When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,

My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply:

The flame shall not hurt thee, I only design

Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

-John Rippon

For a longer list of adversities see the previous chapter (2Co 11:23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29). Keep in mind that the greater context of Paul's teaching in 2Co 12:9, 10 is the defense of His ministry against false apostles.

Therefore (1352) (dio) explains that in view of the truth that divine power is magnified by human weakness, Paul is well pleased with his condition.

Albert Barnes writes...

Since so many benefits result from trials; since my afflictions are the occasion of obtaining the favor of Christ in so eminent a degree, I rejoice in the privilege of suffering. There is often real pleasure in affliction, paradoxical as it may appear (cp Acts 5:41). Some of the happiest persons I have known are those who have been deeply afflicted; some of the purest joys which I have witnessed have been manifested on a sick bed, and in the prospect of death. And I have no doubt that Paul, in the midst of all his infirmities and reproaches,

had a joy above that which all the wealth and honour of the world could give. See here the power of religion. It not only supports--it comforts. It not only enables one to bear suffering with resignation, but it enables him to rejoice. Philosophy blunts the feelings; infidelity leaves men to murmur and repine in trial; the pleasures of this world have no power even to support or comfort in times of affliction; but Christianity. furnishes positive pleasure in trial, and enables the sufferer to smile through his tears.

Oh, let us rejoice in the Lord, evermore,
When darts of the tempter are flying,
For Satan still dreads, as he oft did of yore,
Our singing much more than our sighing."

I am well content - "I delight" (NIV), "I take pleasure" (NKJV). Below is an example of a saint who models **well content**...

Several years ago the Presbyterian pastor **Lloyd John Ogilvie** underwent the worst year of his life. His wife had undergone five major surgeries, plus radiation and chemotherapy, several of his staff members had departed, large problems loomed, and discouragement assaulted his feelings. But he wrote,

The greatest discovery that I have made in the midst of all the difficulties is that **I can have joy when I can't feel like it**—artesian joy. When I had every reason to feel beaten, I felt joy. In spite of everything, [God] gave me the conviction of being loved and the certainty that nothing could separate me from Him. It was not happiness, gush, or jolliness but a constant flow of the Spirit through me (**Ed**: Sounds like 2Co 12:9 grace!). At no time did He give me the easy confidence that everything would work out as I wanted it on my timetable, but that He was in charge and would give me and my family enough courage for each day: **grace**. Joy is always the result of that. (Hughes, R. K.. James : Faith that Works. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books)

I am well content (2106) ([eudokeo](#) from **eu** = good, well + **dokeo** = to think ; see word study on related word **eudokia**) means literally to think good, and so to be pleased or delighted.

The **present tense** emphasizes that taking pleasure in variegated negative circumstances was Paul's continual mindset. The adverse circumstances did not deter him from "taking pleasure" (not of course in a masochistic way but with an understanding of what these circumstances were producing). James calls (commands) his readers to a similar mindset in James 1, not because of the trials themselves but because of what the trials were working out in their lives.

Zodhiates explains that **eudokeo**...

means to think well of something by understanding not only what is right and good, as in **dokeo**, but stressing the willingness and freedom of an intention or resolve regarding what is good (Lk 12:32; Ro 15:26, 27; 1Co 1:21; Ga 1:15; Col 1:19; 1Th 2:8). ([Zodhiates, S. The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament. AMG](#))

Adam Clarke paraphrases this verse...

I not only endure them patiently, but am pleased when they occur; for I do it for Christ's sake-on his account; for on his account I suffer.

Illustration - The hymn writer **Fanny Crosby** was blinded shortly after birth as a result of a doctor's mistake. But this remarkable woman overcame her disability to live a long and productive life. She provided the church with countless hymns, and gave a joyful testimony for Christ. Mrs. Crosby often said she was glad to be blind, since it meant the first thing she would see was the face of Jesus.

William Wilberforce, who led the fight to abolish slavery in the British Empire, was physically weak and frail, but he had deep faith in God. Boswell said of him, "I saw what seemed to me a shrimp become a whale."

Martin Luther wrote that...

Christ's kingdom grows through tribulations and declines in times of peace, ease and luxury.

With weaknesses, etc - As **Matthew Henry** is careful to remind us Paul is not referring to...

his sinful infirmities (those we have reason to be ashamed of and grieved at), but he means his afflictions, his reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses for Christ's sake

We see a similar attitude regarding adverse circumstances in Romans where **Paul** writes to those who are justified by faith in Christ...

And not only this (see Ro 5:1,2-note), but we also exult in our **tribulations** (note plural! - thipsis [word study]),

knowing that tribulation **brings about** (katergazomai [word study] in the present tense= continually) **perseverance** (hupomone [word study]) and perseverance, **proven character**; and proven character, **hope** (elpis [word study]) and hope does not disappoint, because the **love of God** has been poured out (ekcheo [word study]; in the perfect tense = speaks of the enduring effect of this outpouring!) within our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who was given to us. (Ro 5:3-note, Ro 5:4, 5-note)

Weaknesses (769) (**astheneia** from **a** = without + **sthénos** = strength, bodily vigor) means literally without strength or bodily vigor = want of strength = lacking strength. Literally **astheneia** refers to bodily diseases or ailments (Lk 5:15, 13:11, 12, Jn 5:5, 11:4, 28:9). Another meaning of **astheneia** is incapacity to do or experience something, an inability to produce results, a state of weakness or limitation (1Co 15:43; 2Co 11:30; 12:5, 9, 10, 13:4; Ro 8:27; Heb 4:15; 5:2; 7:28; 11:34) Paul's use in 1Co 2:3 conveys the sense of weakness in terms of courage.

Richards writes that "This group of words expresses powerlessness. The weak are without strength, incapacitated in some serious way. (Expository Dictionary)

NIDNTT writes that this group of words (astheneia [noun], astheneo [verb], asthenes [adjective])

is formed from its opposite **sthénos**, strength, with the Alpha-privative prefixed. It conveys the meaning of powerlessness, weakness, lack of strength, and includes particularly the verb astheneo (Eur., Thuc.), the noun astheneia (Hdt., Thuc.) and the adjective asthenes (Pindar, Hdt.). All three denote primarily bodily weakness, i.e. sickness (Hdt., 4, 135; cf. also Josephus, War 1, 76), and overlap here with the specific meaning of nosos (state of being diseased = a malady, disease, sickness). In more general contexts, the **astheneia** word-group can be used in a wider sense as the opposite of dunamis, power (Might), or ischuros, strong, to express other sorts of weakness, e.g. the frailty of woman, the weakness of human nature (Plato, Leges 854a), or of human life (Hdt., 2, 47; 8, 51), but also economic weakness, i.e. lack of influence, or poverty (Hdt., 2, 88). Only rarely is it used for lack of conviction, moral weakness (**Ed**: but see use in Heb 5:2) (Thuc., 2, 61, 2; Epictetus, Dissertationes 1, 8, 8; cf. Aristotle, Eth. Nic. 1150b 19).

Here are the 24 uses of **astheneia** in 23 verses -- ailments(1), diseases(1), illness(1), infirmities(1), sickness(4), sicknesses(2), weak(1), weakness(8), weaknesses(4), what weakness(1)...

Matthew 8:17 in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "He Himself took our **infirmities**, and carried away our diseases." (Quote from Isa 53:4)

Comment: To help understand the meaning of **infirmities (astheneia)** in this context refer to **John MacArthur's** message [What Keeps Men from Christ?](#)

Luke 5:15 But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and great multitudes were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their **sicknesses**.

Luke 8:2 and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and **sicknesses**: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,

Luke 13:11 And behold, there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a **sickness** caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all. **12** And when Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your sickness."

John 5:5 And a certain man was there, who had been thirty-eight years in his **sickness**.

John 11:4 But when Jesus heard it, He said, "This **sickness** is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it."

Acts 28:9 And after this had happened, the rest of the people on the island who had **diseases** were coming to him and getting cured.

Romans 6:19-note I am speaking in human terms because of the **weakness** of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

Comment: Paul uses **astheneia** figuratively to describe human frailty and weakness in itself. **Newman and Nida** write that "Paul's use of the phrase the **weakness of your natural selves** is not intended here to have moral or ethical implications; it is only a reference to the fact that he believes these people incapable of understanding profound truths unless he uses analogies from everyday life... it may be necessary to qualify "weakness" as "weakness of your understanding" or "weakness of the way

in which you, as just a human being, understand things.” (A Handbook on Paul's letter to the Romans. UBS Handbook Series)

Romans 8:26-note And in the same way the Spirit also helps our **weakness**; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;

Comment: In this verse the meaning of **astheneia** is not physical infirmity but spiritual weakness. The weakness is defined by the context which speaks of prayer, one of the things in the spiritual realm in which our **weakness** needs His **power**. The weakness in context is the inability of the saint to know what to pray for. Yes, we know the general objects of prayer, but we do not know the specific, detailed objects of prayer in a given emergency or situation.

Denney says it this way...

Broadly speaking, we do know what we are to pray for—the perfecting of salvation, but we do not know what we are to pray for according to what is necessary—according as the need is at the moment; we know the end, which is common to all prayers, but not what is necessary at each crisis of need in order to enable us to attain this end. (Expositor's Greek Testament)

1 Corinthians 2:3+ And I was with you in **weakness** and in fear and in much trembling.

1 Corinthians 15:43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in **weakness**, it is raised in power

Comment: MacArthur writes that "Our present bodies are characterized by **weakness**. We are weak not only in physical strength and endurance but also in resistance to disease and harm. Despite the marvelous natural protective mechanisms of the human body, no one is immune from breaking a bone, cutting a leg, catching various infections, and eventually from dying. We can and should minimize unnecessary dangers and risks to our bodies, which for believers are temples of the Holy Spirit (1Co 6:19, 20). But we cannot completely protect them from harm, much less from death. Our earthly "temples" are inescapably temporary and fragile.

2 Corinthians 11:30 If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my **weakness**.

2 Corinthians 12:5 On behalf of such a man will I boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my **weaknesses**.

2 Corinthians 12:9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my **weaknesses**, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. **10** Therefore I am well content with **weaknesses**, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 13:4 For indeed He was crucified because of **weakness**, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we shall live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you.

Comment: "He was crucified because of weakness" means in respect of the physical sufferings to which Christ voluntarily submitted in giving Himself up to the death of the cross. **MacArthur** adds that "The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is the unmistakable and supreme evidence of His weakness. His human nature was so weak as to be fully susceptible to death."

Galatians 4:13+ but you know that it was because of a bodily **illness** that I preached the gospel to you the first time;

1 Timothy 5:23 No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent **ailments**.

Comment: In a secular Greek writing we find the text of a memorandum requesting the purchase of a jar of wine according to the doctor's orders!

Hebrews 4:15-note For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our **weaknesses**, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

Comment: Weaknesses in context refers to all the natural limitations of humanity (moral and physical), which undermine our resistance to temptation and make it difficult for us to keep from sinning.

Hebrews 5:2-note he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset (The priest himself has weakness lying around him like a chain) with **weakness**;

Comment: Weakness in context of referring to Aaron speaks of moral weakness which makes men capable of sinning. In other words, weakness in this context is virtually synonymous with the totally depraved nature, the moral weakness which makes men capable of sin.

Hebrews 7:28-note For the Law appoints men as high priests who are **weak**, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law,

appoints a Son, made perfect forever.

Comment:

Hebrews 11:34-note quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from **weakness** were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

There are 5 uses of **astheneia** in the Septuagint (LXX) - Ps 15:4; Eccl 12:4; Job 37:7; Jer 6:21; 18:23

Barnhouse in his massive exposition of Romans reiterates the importance of a proper understanding of ministry out of our weakness rather than out of our supposed "power"...

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for without me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). **How many Christians read it, "Without me you cannot do very much," cling to their own imagined ability, and so fail to bear fruit! God never mingles His power with ours. Only when we recognize our own absolute nothingness does He work in full power.** Paul learned this when he asked for deliverance from his "thorn in the flesh." The Lord replied, "My grace is sufficient for you; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (Romans)

Insults (5196) (hubris) describes injurious treatment or insulting injury - wanton insolence, the basic problem being the pride which erects itself against God and man alike. It refers to treatment which is deliberately calculated publicly to insult and openly humiliate the person who suffers from it. It describes the experience of insolence, shame, insult or mistreatment. Hubris includes the idea of vile treatment which is not just with words but can also be with violence and assault. Hubris describes harm done to another by mistreatment or by insults meant to shame. **Zodhiates** adds the other sense of **hubris** in the NT is "Metonymically injury, harm, damage to a person or property arising from the insolence or violence, even of the sea (Acts 27:10, 21)." (Complete Word Study Dictionary)

Friberg - only in a passive sense in the NT; (1) as the result of presumptuous invasion of one's rights by others through words or actions insult, outrage, ignominious mistreatment (2C 12:10); (2) as the result of natural forces, such as wind and weather damage, injury, hardship (Acts 27:10) (Borrow [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#))

Louw-Nida - (1) the condition resulting from violence or mistreatment - 'harm, damage, injury.' (Acts 27:10), (2) to be insolently mistreated - 'maltreatment, insolence and mistreatment.' (2 Cor 12:10); (3) the content of an insulting statement - 'insult. (Borrow [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : based on semantic domains](#))

NIDNTT Classic Use and OT Use of Hubris - CL & OT hybris is a very ancient compound (E. Schwyzer, Griechische Grammatik, I, 19532, 495), formed from y (Cypriot, Rhodian equivalent of epi) and bri (cf. briaros, weighty; brithō, weigh, be heavy). Originally it meant excess weight, excess power; sometimes more concretely, ill-treatment, abuse, insult; sometimes more abstractly, arrogance, insolence, brutality. The word is frequently used in the Odyssey, to denote Penelope's suitors (e.g. 1, 227; 24, 352). hybris appears objectively as an infringement of the order of justice established by Zeus, which enabled community-life in the Greek polis to be maintained. It is the opposite of eunomia, good order, to the observance of which the gods pay close attention (as early as Homer, Od. 17, 487) and of noos theoudēs, the attitude that fears the gods. Classical tragedy contrasted hybris to sōphrosynē, modesty, which respects the limits laid down for men. Therefore hybris is not, strictly speaking, directed against the gods (J. J. Fraenkel, Hybris, 1942, 73). What the malefactor harms is good order. In the 5th century B.C. hybris became the classical expression of "numinous fear, i.e., of the Greek sense of sin from the religious standpoint" (G. Bertram, TDNT VIII 297; cf. Soph., Trach. 280; OT. 873). But in Euripides human norms replace those set by fate (Heraclidae 388; Or. 708). There are many derivatives as early as the language of Homer; hybridō, to act arrogantly, ill-treat, insult (after Homer: of animals, to be uncontrollable; of plants, to grow luxuriantly; as a legal term to inflict bodily harm); ephybridō, insult; hybristēs, violent, dissolute, insolent man (after Homer: of animals, uncontrollable, restive; also of things, e.g. new wine). Of the numerous more recent formations the adj. hybristikos is important: arrogant, wanton, insolent (Plato onwards). (See [NIDNTT for longer discussion of the Greek meaning](#))

Gilbrant - In **classical** usage **hubris** has a wide variety of meanings. According to Bertram it originally meant "an act which invades the sphere of another to his hurt, a 'trespass,' a 'transgression' of the true norm in violation of divine and human right" ("hubris," Kittel, 8:295). Involved in hubris are arrogance, insult, violence, and contempt. In fact, the term describes any act or attitude associated with a lack of self-control and with attempts to seize what the gods have not allotted. Sōphrosynē (4849), "restraint, self-control," is the antonym of hubris. Hubris is not necessarily an act "directed against the gods" (Güting, "Pride," Colin Brown, 3:27); rather, it is "the overbearing attitude of man toward both the gods and his fellow men," hence, "egotism" (Ehrenberg, From Solon to Socrates, p.184). It can, however, be the "classical expression . . . of the Greek sense of sin from the religious standpoint," especially in certain tragedians (Bertram, "hubris," Kittel, 8:297). **In the Septuagint hubris** appears approximately 50 times. Its main Hebrew equivalents are words derived from the root g'h, "to be high, lofty, arrogant." Hubris only translates this word group in the negative

sense. Proverbs 29:23 states, "A man's pride brings him low" (NIV). A wide variety of meanings also appears in the Septuagint including "presumptuousness" (Proverbs 11:2) or "rebellion" (LXX Job 15:26). According to Bertram, it "can denote disposition, attitude, and conduct, sinful turning from or provocation of God, secularism, as well as vainglorious arrogance, encroachment, and tyranny against one's fellows" (ibid., p.301). ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

Aristotle wrote that "**Hubris** means to hurt and to grieve people, in such a way that shame comes to the man who is hurt and grieved, and that not that the person who inflicts the hurt and injury may gain anything else in addition to what he already possesses, but simply that he may find delight in his own cruelty and in the suffering of the other person."

Barclay - Hubris was to the Greek the vice which supremely courted destruction at the hand of the gods. It has two main lines of thought in it. (i) It describes the spirit of the man who is so proud that he defies God. It is the insolent pride that goes before a fall. It is the forgetting that man is a creature. It is the spirit of the man who is so confident in his wealth, his power and his strength that he thinks that he can live life alone. (ii) It describes the man who is wantonly and sadistically cruel and insulting. Aristotle describes it as the spirit which harms and grieves someone else, not for the sake of revenge and not for any advantage that may be gained from it, but simply for the sheer pleasure of hurting. There are people who get pleasure from seeing someone wince at a cruel saying. There are people who take a devilish delight in inflicting mental and physical pain on others. That is hubris; it is the sadism which finds delight in hurting others simply for the sake of hurting them... hubris, wanton insolence, is the spirit which hurts someone in a cold, detached way, and then stands back to see the other person wince. It is hurting for hurting's sake, and it always involves deliberate humiliation of the person injured. ([Daily Study Bible-online](#))

There are only 3 NT uses of **hubris**...

Acts 27:10+ and said to them, "Men, I perceive that the voyage will certainly be attended with **damage** and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives."

Acts 27:21+ And when they had gone a long time without food, then Paul stood up in their midst and said, "Men, you ought to have followed my advice and not to have set sail from Crete, and incurred this **damage** and loss.

2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with **insults**, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

There are 45 uses of **hubris** in the Septuagint (LXX) - Lev 26:19; Esther 4:17; Job 15:26; 22:12; 35:12; 37:4; Pr 1:22; 8:13; 11:2; 13:10; 14:3, 10; 16:18; 19:10, 18; 21:4; 29:23; Isa 9:9; 10:33; 13:11; 16:6; 23:7, 9; 25:11; 28:1, 3; Jer 13:9f, 17; 48:29; 50:32; Ezek 7:5; 30:6, 18; 32:12; 33:28; Hos 5:5; 7:10; Amos 6:8; Mic 6:10; Nah 2:2; Zeph 2:10; 3:11; Zech 9:6; 10:11

John Piper defines **insults** this way...when people think of clever ways of making your faith or your lifestyle or your words look stupid or weird or inconsistent. When we were giving out "Finding Your Field of Dreams" at the dome, I heard one man say mockingly, "And the Lord said, Play ball." And all his friends laughed. Hardships—circumstances forced upon you, reversals of fortune against your will. This could refer to any situation where you feel trapped. You didn't plan it or think it would be this way. But there you are, and it's hard. ([Ibid](#))

Distresses ([318](#)) (**anagke** {also transliterated as **ananke**} from **ana** = up, again, back, renewal, repetition, intensity, reversal + **agkale** = arm when bent) refers to any necessity or compulsion, outer or inner, brought on by a variety of circumstances. It can mean necessity imposed either by external conditions or by the law of duty. The other meaning is the idea of trouble, distress or hardship and this is the predominant sense in Luke 21:23; 1Co 7:26; 2Co 6:4; 2Co 12:10. In 1Th 3:7 Paul uses **anagke** to describe difficult circumstances that come on one with compelling force. Anagke usually refers to outward calamities or distresses.

Anagke - 17x in 17 verses - Matt 18:7; Luke 14:18; 21:23; Rom 13:5; 1 Cor 7:26, 37; 9:16; 2 Cor 6:4; 9:7; 12:10; 1Th 3:7; Philemon 1:14; Heb 7:12, 27; 9:16, 23; Jude 1:3. The **NAS** renders **anagke** as by compulsion(1), compulsion(2), constraint(1), distress(3), distresses(1), hardships(1), inevitable(1), it is necessary(1), it was necessary(1), necessity(1), need(2), obliged*(1), of necessity(2).

Piper defines **distresses** (hardships) as...

circumstances forced upon you, reversals of fortune against your will. This could refer to any situation where you feel trapped. You didn't plan it or think it would be this way. But there you are, and it's hard. ([Ibid](#))

Let me but hear my Savior say,
"Strength shall be equal to thy day,"
Then I rejoice in deep distress,
Leaning on all-sufficient grace.

I glory in infirmity,

That Christ's own power may rest on me:
When I am weak, then am I strong,
Grace is my shield, and Christ my song.

I can do all things, or can bear
All suff'rings, if my Lord be there;
Sweet pleasures mingle with the pains,
While his left hand my head sustains.

But if the Lord be once withdrawn,
And we attempt the work alone,
When new temptations spring and rise,
We find how great our weakness is.

So Samson, when his hair was lost,
Met the Philistines to his cost;
Shook his vain limbs with sad surprise,
Made feeble fight, and lost his eyes.

--Isaac Watts

Persecutions (1375) (**diogmos** from **dioko** = to follow, persecute, pursue, put to flight) literally describes pursuit, a chase or a putting to flight and thus conveys ideas such as harassment, oppression, persecution. It can be a program or process designed to harass and oppress someone. It can be a program which is systematically organized to oppress and harass others. **Diogmos** is often used of used of hunters tracking their prey! Some have commented that Paul may have in mind the Judaizers who dog his trail.

There are 10 uses in 9 verse (in Lxx only in Pr 11:19, Lam 3:19)...

Matthew 13:21 yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or **persecution** arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.

Mark 4:17 and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or **persecution** arises because of the word, immediately they fall away.

Mark 10:30 but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with **persecutions**; and in the age to come, eternal life.

Acts 8:1 And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great **persecution** arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Acts 13:50 But the Jews aroused the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated **persecution** against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.

Romans 8:35-note Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or **persecution**, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with **persecutions**, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Thessalonians 1:4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your **persecutions** and afflictions which you endure.

2 Timothy 3:11-note **persecutions**, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what **persecutions** I endured, and out of them all the Lord delivered me!

Comment: Because of their refusal to compromise their proclamation of the gospel, Paul often had been put to flight as fugitive from the persecutions of both Jewish and Gentile unbelievers.

Piper defines **persecutions** as...

wounds or abuses or painful circumstances or acts of prejudice or exploitation from people because of your Christian faith or your Christian moral commitments. It's when you are not treated fairly. You get a raw deal.
([Ibid](#))

An anonymous author wrote the following poem which describes the Master Weaver's plan which includes **weaknesses... insults ... distresses ... persecutions ... difficulties...** all calculated to make us more like His Son...

My life is but a weaving,
between my Lord and me;
I cannot choose the colours.
He worketh steadily.

Oft times He weaveth sorrow
and I in foolish pride,
Forget He sees the upper
and I the under side.

Not till the loom is silent
and the shuttles cease to fly,
Shall God unroll the canvas
and explain the reason why,

The dark threads are as needful
in the Weaver's skillful hand,
As the threads of gold and silver,
in the pattern He has planned.

Difficulties (4730) (**stenochoria** [word study] from **stenos** = narrow + **chora** = place) is literally a narrow place, a narrow, tight or confined space and then the painfulness of associated with this condition. Anguish, torturing confinement, hemmed in with no way out. In our modern language we would say Paul was often in a "tight spot".

Vincent comments that the "dominant idea is constraint." **Stenochoria** pictures finding oneself in a "tight corner", hemmed in with no way out, in a narrow strait without the possibility of escape.

Stenochoria might be used of an army caught in a narrow, rocky defile with space neither to maneuver nor to escape. It might be used of a ship caught in a storm with no room either to ride it or to run before it. There are moments when a man seems to be in a situation in which the walls of life are closing round him -- that is the picture inherent in stenochoria. The opposite state, of being in a large place, was metaphorically used to describe a state of joy as in Ps 118:5 ([Spurgeon's note](#)) where the psalmist writes

From my distress I called upon the LORD. The LORD answered me and set me in a large place.

Albert Barnes writes that **stenochoria**

means literally narrowness of place, lack of room, and then the anxiety and distress of mind which a man experiences who is pressed on every side by afflictions, and trials, and want, or by punishment, and who does not know where he may turn himself to find relief. It is thus expressive of the punishment of the wicked. It means that they shall be compressed with the manifestations of God's displeasure, so as to be in deep distress, and so as not to know where to find relief.

Stenochoria metaphorically refers to great anxiety and distress of mind, such as arises when a man does not know where to turn himself or what to do for relief. It conveys the idea of anguish (which Webster defines as extreme pain; distress of mind and suggests torturing grief or dread), dire calamity, extreme affliction or distress. In three of the four NT uses (Ro 2:9; Ro 8:35; 2Co 6:4) **stenochoria** is found with **thlipsis**. Whereas **tribulation** (thlipsis) emphasizes troubles pressing upon us from without (e.g., persecution, etc). **Stenochoria** has in view the distress which arises from **within** (usually caused by thlipsis), such as anguish or discomfort. Trench concludes that stenochoria is the "stronger" of the two words.

Besides capital punishment, solitary confinement has long been considered the worst form of punishment, being the absolute, lonely confinement of a prisoner who is already strictly confined. Part of hell's torment will be its absolute, isolated, lonely, and eternal confinement, with no possible hope of release or escape.

FOR CHRIST'S SAKE

For Christ's sake - Not as easy to interpret as one might surmise.

David Garland...

The phrase *hyper Christou* (“for the sake of Christ”) is interpreted by the NIV (RSV, REB) as connected to the phrase, “*I delight in.*” Paul placed it at the end of the lists of hardships, however; so it is better to connect it to the weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ (NRSV). This means that he is not pleased with them for Christ’s sake but endures them for Christ’s sake. (Garland, D. E. 2 Corinthians. The New American Commentary. Page 527. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers)

John Phillips...

I remember when, as a boy, I first learned to swim. On the surface of it, it seemed impossible to believe that water could actually hold a person up! All my previous experience had been the opposite. When I fell into water I sank to the bottom. When, naturally enough, I struggled in wild panic that only made matters worse. It proved the obvious—water was too tenuous a substance to hold a person up. But when I learned not to struggle, when I learned how to let go and float and then to actually swim it became as natural as walking on dry land. John Phillips Commentary Series, The - The John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring 2 Corinthians: An Expository Commentary... The waves of adversity might come. Paul did not struggle, he yielded. And, wonder of wonders, he was borne up! No matter what came his way, he saw Christ in it. He accepted it for Christ’s sake. He did not fight it. He did not trust his strength, he resorted to his weakness and found that, indeed, underneath were those everlasting arms (Deut. 33:27). The Lord Jesus would never let him down. If he struggled, he would sink. If he surrendered, he would swim. (John Phillips Exploring 2 Corinthians: An Expository Commentary)

R Kent Hughes...

There is no value in the endurance of hardships and indignities in themselves. There is no virtue in suffering. Everything turns on the phrase “**for the sake of Christ.**” Only a fanatic would find contentment in self-inflicted suffering and miseries. But a Christian will find a special contentment in sufferings endured “for the sake of Christ.” (Ibid)

Phillip Hughes addresses the significance of suffering **for Christ’s sake...**

Not that in itself the endurance of hardships and indignities is of value. As we have previously indicated, the concept, so pernicious in the Church at a later date, of courting martyrdom, of practicing asceticism, and even of embracing dirt, disease, and destitution as means to the acquisition of favour before God, is diametrically opposed to the Apostle’s mind and to the whole tenor of the gospel in the New Testament, for it is a concept governing a way of life for one’s own sake, with a view to making oneself righteous and acceptable before God—a concept of works, not faith. The weaknesses and sufferings in which Paul takes pleasure are, on the contrary, those endured for Christ’s sake by one who has already been fully and freely justified by the grace of God. Christ Himself pronounced the blessedness of those who endure reproaches, persecutions, and injustices for His sake (Mt. 5:11, 19:29, etc.). To welcome sufferings for any other reason is to miss that blessedness of which our Lord speaks. (Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians)

William MacDonald...

Naturally speaking, it is quite impossible for us to take pleasure in the type of experiences listed here. But the key to the understanding of the verse is found in the expression, **for Christ’s sake.** We should be willing to endure in His cause, and in the furtherance of His gospel, things which we would not ordinarily endure for ourselves or for the sake of some loved one. It is when we are conscious of our own weakness and nothingness that we most depend on the power of God. And it is when we are thus cast on Him in complete dependence that His power is manifested to us, and we are truly strong. William Wilberforce, who led the fight to abolish slavery in the British Empire, was physically weak and frail, but he had deep faith in God. Boswell said of him, “I saw what seemed to me a shrimp become a whale.” In this verse Paul is obeying the word of the Lord in Matthew 5:11, 12. He is rejoicing when men reviled and persecuted him.

Bruce Barton...

THE TAPESTRY OF LIFE - What God allowed Paul to experience was for “Christ’s good” (12:10). This means that the kingdom over which Christ rules was served by the circumstances the apostle encountered. Even though daily hardships and failure are not easily graphed on a chart of personal achievement, they are by no means wasted. Consider the underside of a handmade tapestry. The elaborate coordinated threads on the exterior side of the fabric, woven with precision and creativity, produce a work of art intended by the weaver. The side that will not be seen, however, is a tangled mess of thread, yarn, and knots. How similar to life! Christ

uses what appears to be random circumstances with no meaning—simply knots and tangles—and makes something beautiful out of them. We must not draw undue attention to ourselves, even in our suffering. He can produce spiritual renewal out of great difficulty and conflict. (2 Corinthians. Life application Bible commentary. Page 455. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House)

As **Robertson** rightly says...

The enemies of Paul will have a hard time now in making Paul unhappy by persecutions even unto death (Php 1:20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26). He is not courting martyrdom, but he does not fear it or anything that is **“for Christ’s sake”**

Matthew Henry...

Here is the use which the apostle makes of this dispensation: He gloried in his infirmities (v. 9), and took pleasure in them, v. 10. He does not mean his sinful infirmities (those we have reason to be ashamed of and grieved at), but he means his afflictions, his reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses for Christ’s sake, v. 10. And the reason of his glory and joy on account of these things was this—they were fair opportunities for Christ to manifest the power and sufficiency of his grace resting upon him, by which he had so much experience of the strength of divine grace that he could say, When I am weak, then am I strong. This is a Christian paradox: when we are weak in ourselves, then we are strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; when we see ourselves weak in ourselves, then we go out of ourselves to Christ, and are qualified to receive strength from him, and experience most of the supplies of divine strength and grace.

Marvin Vincent (he Covenant of Peace, p. 96)...

Strength in Weakness - God’s answer to Paul’s prayer lays down a general law. God does not merely promise to perfect Paul’s strength in that particular weakness: He states the general truth, a truth not peculiar to the spiritual life, though appearing there in its noblest aspect, that strength is perfected in weakness.

I. Strength perfected in weakness. We know that the converse is true: that weakness is perfected in strength; for both our reading and our experience show us that the greatest manifestations of weakness are constantly seen in those whom the world deems the strongest. On the other hand, illustrations are equally abundant of strength perfected in weakness. They are all about us in our ordinary life. The consciousness of infirmity often makes its subject so cautious, and puts him under such careful discipline, that he accomplishes more than another who is free from infirmity.

II. Look at the truth on its religious side. Then it comes into even stronger relief, because in the Christian economy weakness is assumed to be an universal condition, and dependence⁹⁸ is therefore the universal law of the Christian life. There it is invariably true that real strength comes only out of that weakness which, distrustful of itself, gives itself up to God. There it is invariably true that God’s strength shines through human infirmity, and often selects for its best and richest expressions the poorest, weakest, most burdened, of mankind.

III. In the text there is no encouragement to cherish weakness. Weakness is not commended as a good thing in itself. The object of Christian training is to make men strong; and the Psalmist tells us that God’s children go from strength to strength. But weakness is a universal fact in human nature. Our Lord covers all humanity with the statement that the flesh is weak, and the text does tell us to recognise the fact and to provide against it by taking Another’s strength. The thing which it does commend is the permission of conscious weakness to have Another’s strength push up through itself and pervade and transform it, a

Holy strength whose ground
Is in the heavenly land.

John MacArthur...

Paul’s weakness was not self-induced or artificial; it was not a superficial psychological self-esteem game he played with himself. It was real and God-given. He did not love the pain caused by the false apostles, knowing it was satanic in origin. Yet he embraced it as the means by which God released His power through him...

**Having a proper perspective on trouble, trials, and suffering
is the cornerstone of Christian living.**

Focusing all one’s efforts on removing difficulties is not the answer. Believers need to embrace the trials God allows them to undergo, knowing that those trials reveal their character, humble them, draw them closer to

God, and allow Him to display His grace and power in their lives (cp Jas 1:2-note, Jas 1:3, 4-note). (2 Corinthians Commentary)

F. W. Robertson...

The sanctifying power of sorrow: -- "**For Christ's sake**," that is the main point: the apostle took pleasure in pain, not as pain, but **for Christ's sake**. In itself sorrow is not sanctifying. It is like fire, whose effect depends upon the substance with which it comes in contact. Fire melts wax, inflames straw, and hardens clay. So it is only in afflictions borne for Christ's sake, that is, in Christ's name, and with Christ's spirit, that we can rejoice. Forasmuch as Christ hath suffered in the flesh, arm yourself likewise with the same mind. The Cross alone extracts life out of pain; without this it is death-giving.

Just what I need He gives,
Close to my side He lives;
Honor and glory be to His name,
Just what I need He gives.

FOR WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN I AM STRONG : hotan gar astheno (1SPAS) tote dunatos eimi. (1SPAI):

- [2 Corinthians 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

In the "hall of faith" chapter, Hebrews 11, we see that the principle of divine strength (power) in human weakness which Paul expresses here in the NT has always been God's way of dealing with men who "**from weakness were made strong**" (Hebrews 11:34-note)

ONGOING WEAKNESS AND ONGOING POWER

Hughes adds that...

the persistent motif of authentic ministry is **power in weakness**... But what we most need to see is that **power in weakness** is shorthand for the cross of Christ (cp Mk 8:34). In God's plan of redemption, there had to be weakness (crucifixion) before there was power (resurrection). And this **power-in-weakness** connection is what Paul reflected on when he contemplated Christ's praying three times amidst His weakness and powerlessness in Gethsemane before His death on the cross (Mt 26:39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, Mk 14:35, 36, 39, 41, Lk 22:41, 42, 43, 44), which was followed by the power of the resurrection! Paul came to understand and embrace the fact that his thorn in the flesh was essential to his **ongoing weakness** and the experience of Christ's **ongoing power**. (Hughes, R. K. 2Corinthians: Power in Weakness. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books)

Barnett notes that

Power in weakness,' therefore, runs as a thread throughout the letter (read 2Co 1:8, 9, 2:14, 4:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 6:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10), reaching its most powerful expression here".

For when - "For whenever" speaks of an indefinite time. At whatever time. The idea is at any or every time that he is weak. This is the mindset of a man who has learned the secret of the school of suffering and thus who is ever ready to surrender his will to the will of his Lord and Master. This powerful paradox teaches that Paul has real, spiritual strength just when he acknowledges his weakness and dependence on Christ.

The great hindrance for effective ministry is that too many of us perceive ourselves as strong in our own abilities or resources, and thus are tempted to try to accomplish God's supernatural work in our own natural strength, which tends to bolster our ego and inflate our pride. It is only as we are willing to acknowledge our weaknesses (and that may include a propensity to self-exaltation or pride) that the Spirit can fill us with his power for effective God glorifying ministry.

Weak (770) (**asthene** from **asthenes** = without strength, powerless from **a** = without + **sthenos** = strength, bodily vigor) means to be feeble (in any sense), to be diseased, impotent, sick, to lack strength, to be infirm, to be weak.

I am (1510) (**eimi**) is in the **present tense** which emphasizes that Paul is and remains strong in the Lord. What a contrast Paul is to

Samson in the Old Testament. The Spirit of God came upon Samson and he became strong. People marveled at his physical strength, but there came a day when he was very weak. The strong are made weak, and the weak are made strong. God can use the weak man.

As **Wiersbe** writes...

God has to balance privileges with responsibilities, blessings with burdens, or else you and I will become spoiled, pampered children. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#))

Strong (1415) (**dunatos [word study]** from **dunamai [word study]** = referring to power one has by virtue of inherent ability and resources; see also word study of **dunamis**) means powerful, able, strong.

TDNT notes that all words deriving from the stem **duna-** have the basic meaning of "being able," of "capacity" in virtue of an ability) pertains to being **capable, able** (having the ability to perform some function; having sufficient power, skill, or resources to accomplish an objective), **adept** (highly skilled or well-trained implying aptitude as well as proficiency) or **competent** (being what is necessary; having requisite or adequate ability or qualities).

Our **weakness** as believers is like a live drama on stage before a watching world (an example to both believers and unbelievers alike), where our weakness becomes the occasion for the manifestation of Christ's power, our inadequacy for His adequacy, our poverty for His riches, our inarticulation for His articulation, our tentativeness for His confidence. Indeed, when we are weak (as in Ro 8:36-note), we prove ourselves in all these things to be more than conquerors through Christ Who loved us (Ro 8:37NIV-note) and Christ our Lord receives the glory (Ro 11:36-note, Ps 115:1-note)

Charles Hodge writes that...

When we are really weak in ourselves and are conscious of that weakness, we are in the state suited to the manifestation of God's power. When we are emptied of ourselves, we are filled with God. **Those who think they can change their own hearts, atone for their own sins, subdue the power of evil in their own souls or in the souls of others, who feel able to sustain themselves under affliction, God leaves to their own resources.** But when they feel and acknowledge their weakness, He imparts divine strength to them.

Gingrich comments that...

If Christ is glorified in our afflictions, we ought not only to be resigned to them but also to rejoice because of them and to thank God for them. (Gingrich, R. E.. The Book of 2 Corinthians. Memphis, TN.: Riverside Printing)

Matthew Poole writes that...

A child of God seldom walks so much in the view of God as his God, and in the view of his own sincerity, as when, as to his outward condition and circumstances in the world, he walks in the dark and sees no light.

Albert Barnes...

When I feel weak; when I am subjected to trial, and nature faints and fails, then strength is imparted to me, and I am enabled to bear all. The more I am borne down with trials, the more do I feel my need of Divine assistance, and the more do I feel the efficacy of Divine grace. Such was the promise in Dt 33:25KJV, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." So in Hebrews 11:34-note, "Who out of weakness were made strong." **What Christian has not experienced this, and been able to say that when he felt himself weak, and felt like sinking under the accumulation of many trials, he has found his strength according to his day, and felt an arm of power supporting him?** It is then that the Redeemer manifests Himself in a peculiar manner; and then that the excellency of the religion of Christ is truly seen, and its (His) power appreciated and felt.

J Vernon McGee...

What a contrast this man is to Samson in the Old Testament. The Spirit of God came upon Samson and he became strong. People marveled at his physical strength, but there came a day when he was very weak. The strong are made weak, and the weak are made strong. God can use the weak man. ([2Corinthians 12:10-12 Mp3](#))

Hughes explains that we are well content and...

We exult in suffering because it is the path to spiritual maturity and glory. The great saints of God all agree. Ask Abraham and he will direct your attention to the sacrifice on Mount Moriah. Ask Jacob and he will point

you to his stone pillow. Ask Joseph and he will tell you about the dungeon. Ask Moses and he will remind you of his trials with Pharaoh. David will tell you his songs came in the night. Peter will speak of his denial, John of Patmos, and Jesus of the cross. Blessings are poured out in bitter cups. ([Hughes, R. K. Romans: Righteousness from heaven. Preaching the Word. Crossway Books](#))

We need to embrace this paradox, for the men and women God has used have always lived with the reality that they are clay (cp 2Co 4:7NIV). When they saw Jesus Christ, they became unconscious of all they used to call their wisdom and strength (cp Jn 3:30). Rather than focusing on their weaknesses, they made it their business to rely on Him (cp Php 4:11, 12-note, Php 4:13-note). From this flowed the surpassing greatness of His power (cp Ep 1:19-note). (Luke: Preaching the Word) (Scripture annotations added)

Arnot gives these illustrations from nature - Some living creatures maintain their hold by foot or body on flat surfaces by a method that seems like magic, and with a tenacity that amazes the observer. A fly marching at ease with feet uppermost on a plastered ceiling, and a **mollusk** sticking to the smooth water-worn surface of a basaltic rock, while the long swell of the Atlantic at every pulse sends a huge white billow roaring and hissing and cracking and crunching over it, are objects of wonder to the onlooker. That apparently supernatural solidity is the most natural thing in the world. It is emptiness that imparts so much strength to these feeble creatures. A vacuum, on the one side within a web-foot, and on the other within the shell, is the secret of their power. By dint of that emptiness in itself the creature quietly and easily clings to the wall or the rock, so making all the strength of the wall or rock its own. By its emptiness it is held fast; the moment it becomes full it drops off. Ah! it is the self-emptiness of a humble, trustful soul that makes the Redeemer's strength his own, and so keeps him safe in an evil world.

THE "FOOLISHNESS OF GOD"...1 Co 1:25 THE SPIRITUAL PARADOX OF STRENGTH OUT OF WEAKNESS

A **paradox** is defined as a seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement that is actually true. In the Bible spiritual paradoxes abound and confound the secular unsaved mind... in fact the wise of this world consider believers are considered to be fools for Christ's sake. The wise of this world scoff and laugh at God's answers to questions like...

Do you want to be strong?

You must boast about your weaknesses!

"Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me... for when I am weak, then I am strong. (2Co 12:9, 10)

Do you want to be rich?

You must become poor in spirit.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Mt 5:3-note)

Do you want to be first?

You must be willing to be last.

And sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all." (Mk 9:35, cp Mt 19:30, 20:8, 16, Mk 10:31, Lk 13:30)

Do you want to be exalted?

You must be willing to be brought low!

Humble (aorist imperative) yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time (1Pe 5:6-note). (cp Jas 4:6- note, Jas 4:10- note) (cp Mt. 23:12)

Do you want to rule?

You must be willing to serve.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Mk

10:45, cp Mk 9:35)

Do you want to life?

You must die.

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me. (Gal 2:20; cp 2Co 4: 10, 11)

Do you want to be fruitful?

You must die.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (Jn 12:24).

Some other spiritual paradoxes:

We see unseen things (2 Co 4:18, Heb 11:27)

We conquer by yielding (Ro 6:16, 17, 18)

We find rest under a yoke (Mt. 11:28, 29, 30)

We reign by serving (Mk 10:42, 43, 44)

We are made great by becoming little (Lk 9:48)

We become wise by being fools for Christ's sake (1Co 1:20, 21)

We find victory by glorying in our infirmities (2 Co 12:5)

As **Hughes** says

Unless there is death, the vast possibilities inside us will not be released. We will shrivel and remain alone. **We must die.** (Ed: compare the similar spiritual principle in Mk 8:34, 35, 36, 37, Mt 10:38, 39, Lk 9:23, 24, 25) Those who are beginning the Christian life or are awakening to their spiritual potential must learn that we live by dying. This has been true in my own life. (Hughes, R. K. 1999. John : That You May Believe. Preaching the Word. Page 301. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books)

JUXTAPOSITION OF WEAKNESS <> POWER IN CORINTHIANS

PASSAGE	WEAKNESS	POWER
1 Cor 1:25	Weakness of God	Stronger than men
1 Cor 1:27	God chose weak things	To shame the strong things
1 Cor 2:3, 5	Was with you in weakness	Faith rests on power of God
1 Cor 15:43	Body sown in weakness	Body raised in power
2 Co 12:9	My weaknesses	Power of Christ
2 Co 13:3	Christ not weak toward you	Mighty in you
2 Co 13:4	Christ crucified because of weakness	He lives because of the power of God
2 Co 13:4	We are weak in Christ	We live with Him because of the power of God
2 Co 13:9	Rejoice when we are weak	Rejoice when you are strong

Calvin comments that "The more deficiency there is in me, so much the more liberally does the Lord, from his strength, supply me with whatever he sees to be needful for me." For the fortitude of philosophers is nothing else than contumacy, or rather a mad enthusiasm, such as fanatics are accustomed to have. "If a man is desirous to be truly strong, let him not refuse to be at the same time weak Let him," I say, "be weak in himself that he may be strong in the Lord." (Ep 6:10.)... All these things are exercises for discovering to us our own weakness; for if God had not exercised Paul with such trials, he would never have perceived so clearly his weakness. Hence, he has in view not merely poverty, and hardships of every kind, but also those effects that arise from them, as, for

example, a feeling of our own weakness, self-distrust, and humility. ([Commentary on Corinthians](#))

Spurgeon gives an illustration of the power of "infirmities"

Some of the arable land along the shore on the south-east coast of Sutherland is almost covered with shore stones, from the size of a turkey's egg to eight pounds weight. Several experiments have been made to collect these off the land, expecting a better crop; but in every case the land proved less productive by removing them; and on some small spots of land it was found so evident, that they were spread on the land again, to ensure their usual crop of oats or peas. **We would fain (glad) be rid of all our infirmities which, to our superficial conceptions, appear to be great hindrances to our usefulness, and yet it is most questionable if we should bring forth any fruit unto God without them.** Much rather, therefore, will I glory in infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

When You Think You've Failed -

Charles Haddon Spurgeon "the prince of preachers," felt he delivered his sermon so poorly one Sunday that he was ashamed of himself. As he walked away from his church, the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, he wondered how any good could come from that message. When he arrived home, he dropped to his knees and prayed, "Lord God, You can do something with nothing. Bless that poor sermon." In the months that followed, 41 people said that they had decided to trust Christ as Saviour because of that "weak" message. The following Sunday, to make up for his previous "failure," Spurgeon had prepared a "great" sermon—but no one responded. Spurgeon's experience underscores two important lessons for all who serve the Lord. First, we need the blessing of God on our efforts. Solomon said in Ps 127:1-[note](#), "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it." And second, our weakness is an occasion for the working of God's power. The apostle Paul said, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2Co 12:10).

Charles Simeon ([Brief Bio from John Piper = Brothers, We Must Not Mind a Little Suffering](#)) has the following thoughts on 2Co 12:10...

When the champion of the Philistines defied, and terrified, the whole army of Israel, David, "a stripling," without armor, defensive or offensive (except a sling and a stone), went forth against him; and, though unused to war himself, entered into combat with that experienced and mighty warrior. But the weaker he was in himself, the more confident was he in his God; and instead of being intimidated by the threatening aspect and boasting menaces of his adversary, he was as assured of victory, as if he had seen his enemy already under his feet (1Sa 17:45, 46, 47)

Editorial Comment: Read the full story for context of God's sufficient grace made strong in David's weakness [1Sa 17:31-44] including Saul's ["man's way"] vain attempt to "strengthen" David [1Sa 17:38, 39]! David "understood" the principle which is paradoxical to the natural man [1Co 2:14] that only in his natural weakness could David say with utmost confidence "This day the LORD will deliver you up into my hands" [1Sa 17:46], understanding that only in this way would "all the earth... know that there is a God in Israel and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the LORD'S and He will give you into our hands." [1Sa 17:47] - in other words in David's weakness Jehovah would be His strength and He alone would get the glory, which emphasizes one of the primary reasons this paradoxical principle is so vitally important to put into practice in our own daily "battles" with the giants!

Paul labored under a heavy trial, which he calls a thorn in his flesh. Apprehensive that this would counteract his usefulness in the world, he cried most earnestly to the Lord Jesus Christ to remove it from him. But the Lord, not judging it expedient to grant him his request, promised him (what was incomparably better) more abundant communications of grace, whereby he should obtain in a more advantageous manner the desires of his soul. Observe the effect—Paul remained as weak as ever; but, being persuaded that Christ's power should be the more magnified through his weakness, he was satisfied; yea, rather, he made that a matter of joy and triumph, which had just before been a source of the greatest trouble. He was well assured that, however unable he was in himself either to bear his trials, or to fulfil his duties, he could not but succeed, when his Almighty Friend was pledged to succour and support him.

The Apostle's assertion being equally applicable to all believers, we shall, confirm it—**A sense of weakness necessarily tends to make us strong**, inasmuch as it makes us,

1. Watchful against temptations—If we conceive ourselves to be strong, we shall be fearless of temptation; and by exposing ourselves to it, shall be in greater danger of falling (cp 1Co 10:12): whereas, if we feel our utter weakness, we shall not only pray, “Lead us not into temptation,” (Mt 6:13-note) but shall carefully shun the places, the books, the company, that may ensnare us (cp 1Pe 2:11-note). Like Joseph, we shall not parley with the tempter, but flee in haste (Ge 39:9, 12, Pr 6:5, 1Co 6:18, 10:14, 1Ti 6:10,11, 2Ti 2:22-note): or, if we cannot flee, we shall oppose our enemy at first (Jas 4:7, 8, 9, 10); and thus vanquish that, which, if it had time to gather strength, would soon vanquish us.

2. Importunate in prayer—It is the sick alone who calls for a physician; they who are strong in their own conceit, will never pray in earnest; but he who feels his need of divine assistance will seek it at a throne of grace (He 4:16-note). Now if we do not pray for God’s aid, we cannot receive it; and therefore in the hour of trial shall surely fail (Mt 26:41). But, if we pray with importunity and faith, we shall obtain the things we ask for (1Jn 5:14, 15); and consequently shall be upheld, while others fall. It was by this means that Paul obtained strength; “he prayed to the Lord thrice:” the answer vouchsafed to his petition dissipated all his fears, and strengthened him with might in his inner man (cp Ep 3:16-note): and similar means will always be attended with similar success.

3. Dependent on the Lord Jesus Christ—In proportion as we fancy ourselves strong, we must of necessity confide in our own strength; the consequence of which may be sufficiently seen in the repeated falls of Peter (Mt 26:33,34, 35, 74, 75) . Being strong in his own apprehension, he proved himself lamentably weak. But, if we are conscious that we are wholly without strength, and can do nothing of ourselves, we shall be more simple and uniform in our dependence on Christ (cp Acts 2:14, 4:8ff). Now Christ will never suffer those who trust in him to be confounded (cp Ro 10:11-note). He would consider it as an impeachment of His own veracity, if He did not give them “grace sufficient for them.” **Consequently we never are so truly strong, as when we are deeply convinced of our own utter impotence.**

This truth enters deeply into the experience of all the Lord’s people. we shall therefore endeavour to improve it —Among the various lessons which it teaches us, let us especially learn two:

1. Not to be too much elated on account of any manifestations of the Divine favor—Paul was caught up into the third heavens; but soon afterwards we behold him crying, with much anguish of mind, under a severe affliction. Thus it may soon be with us. Indeed the seasons most distinguished by God’s favor to us, are often most distinguished also by Satan’s malice. It was immediately after they had received peculiar tokens of God’s love, that he assaulted Paul, and Peter, and Christ himself. Let us then, when most highly favored, “rejoice with trembling,” and not while harnessed, boast as if we had put off our armor.

2. Not to be too much dejected on account of our manifold infirmities—Jacob was lamed by God himself, that he might know he had not prevailed by his own strength (Ge 32:32). And Paul had a thorn in the flesh given him, “lest he should be exalted above measure.” Now our infirmities are very painful: but they are necessary, in order to keep alive in our minds a remembrance of our own weakness and vileness: and, if we do but carry them to God in fervent prayer, he will glorify himself by means of them, and “perfect his strength in our weakness.” “Let the weak then say, I am strong;” let them “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;” and, doubtless, they shall receive that effectual succour which believers, in all ages, have experienced, and shall invariably find their “strength according to their day” of trial. (Simeon, C. 1832-63. Horae Homileticae Vol. 16: 1 and 2 Corinthians. London)

Alan Carr applies these Scriptures...

Are you being buffeted right now? Are the harsh blows of life landing on you, leaving you bleeding, bruised and battered before the Lord? Are you being pierced by the cruel, sharp thorns of physical, emotional or spiritual affliction? If you are, then just let me remind you that God’s promises are still true! His mercies are new every day, La 3:21, 22! Do you need to come before Him today to get grace for your race? Do you need help for your valley? Do you need to find that prize in your pain? If you do, I want you to come before the Lord right now. I want you to stop asking Him “Why?”. I want you to get before Him and ask Him to show you what He is doing in your life. I want you to ask Him for grace to praise Him “in” your buffetings. I want you to bow before the Lord and thank Him for your thorn. You say, “I can’t do that!”, then you need to come and ask Him to help you reach that place. Listen, none of us have arrived! This is hard for me too, but part of healing our hurts is coming to the place where we yield to God and to what He is doing in our lives. This altar is open; bring your thorn to Him right now! ([Blessing Out of Buffetings](#))

BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE - Paul Van Gorder asks do you **thank God for the thorns?**...

We don't often thank God for our trials, heartaches, and difficulties (1Th 5:18, Jas 1:2, 3). Although we are willing to praise Him for His goodness, we sometimes fail to realize that even adverse circumstances are blessings in disguise.

Scottish preacher **George Matheson** had that problem. He realized that he was not as ready to praise God when things went wrong as he was when they went right. However, after he began to lose his eyesight, he changed his thinking. He struggled for some months with this weary burden until he reached the point where he could pray,

"My God, I have never thanked You for my thorn. I have thanked You a thousand times for my roses, but not once for my thorn. I have been looking forward to a world where I shall get compensated for my cross, but I have never thought of my cross as itself a present glory. Teach me the value of my thorn."

When we count our blessings, we should include the weaknesses, the hardships, the burdens, and the trials we face. If we do, we might find that God has used our difficulties more than the "good" things to help us grow spiritually. Why is that? Because it is in those difficult places that we discover the sufficiency of His grace. In our trials, we turn to God. As we depend on Him, we find that His strength is made perfect in our weakness (2Cor 12:9). Take a moment and think about the way God has led you. When you praise God for your blessings, do you remember to thank Him for the **thorns**? ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

A MODERN ILLUSTRATION OF WEAKNESS MADE STRONG - Henrietta Mears, who was used so mightily to strengthen the evangelical church through her discipleship and writing, suffered from her childhood and through the rest of her life with extreme myopia and general eye weakness and irritation. She, like Paul, cried out for relief, but to no avail. In her maturity Miss Mears often remarked,

"I believe my greatest spiritual asset throughout my entire life has been my failing sight, for it has kept me absolutely dependent upon God."

Henrietta Mears went forward for Christ, still plagued by her increasing disability, to set the standard for Sunday schools in America. She founded Gospel Light and wrote the million-plus best-seller book, *What the Bible Is All About*. In her weakness, she became strong. The grace of God enables you too, to be strong when you are weak and to enjoy God's blessings when you are buffeted. (Treasures from 2 Corinthians, Volume 2)

R Kent Hughes adds that "Henrietta Mears went on, still plagued by her increasing disability, to set the standard for Sunday schools in America. She founded Gospel Light and wrote the million-plus best-seller *What the Bible Is All About*. She was influential in shaping the ministries of Billy Graham in his beginning stages, Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, and Richard Halverson, Chaplain of the United States Senate, to name only a few!" (Hughes, R. K. *2 Corinthians : Power in Weakness*. Preaching the Word. Page 215. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books)

THE STRONG WEAK PEOPLE: If there is anything that we love to hate more than the arrogance of others, it would have to be an awareness of our own weakness. We detest it so much that we invent ways to cover our personal inadequacy.

Even the apostle Paul needed to be reminded of his own frailty. He was jabbed time and again by a "thorn in the flesh" (2Co 12:7). He didn't name this thorn, but J. Oswald Sanders reminds us that whatever it was, "it hurt, humiliated, and restricted Paul." Three times he begged the Lord to take it away, but his request was not granted. Instead, he used his thorn to tap into God's all-sufficient grace. The Lord promised, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2Co 12:9).

Courageously, Paul began to "own" his weakness and put the Lord's grace to the test, a pathway that Sanders calls "a gradual educative process" in the apostle's life. Sanders notes that eventually Paul no longer regarded his thorn as a "limiting handicap" but as a "heavenly advantage." And his advantage was this: When he was weak in himself, he was strong in the Lord.

As we accept our weaknesses, in Christ we can be strong weak people. -- Joanie E. Yoder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

May the Word of God dwell richly
In my heart from hour to hour,

So that all may see I triumph
Only through His power.
-- Wilkinson

To know God's strength, we must know our weakness.

THE ADVANTAGE OF WEAKNESS: It is always a joy to talk with my old college friend Tom and get caught up on what the Lord has been teaching us since we last met.

One time Tom began with a sheepish grin, "You know, I can't believe how many years it's taken me to learn my latest lesson--and I'm a Bible teacher!" He went on to list some of the trials and testings he and his family had been facing and how unworthy he felt teaching an adult Sunday school class. "Week after week I felt I was a total failure," he confided, "and kept wondering if this might be my last Sunday before announcing my resignation."

Then one Sunday Tom noticed a young woman who stayed behind to speak to him. She was a friend of his family, so she knew what they had been going through. "Tom," she said, "I hope you won't take this the wrong way, but you're a much better teacher when you're going through tough times!"

Another sheepish grin crept across Tom's face as he told me, "Only then did I feel I grasped the Lord's response to Paul's thorn in the flesh: 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.'"

Weakness helps us to relate to others and lets God's power work in our lives. That may be our greatest asset. --J E Yoder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Inadequate but mighty--
How strange, yet wholly true;
Weak ones endued with power
The Lord's great work shall do. --HGB

**We may face situations beyond our reserves,
but never beyond God's resources**

WEAKNESSES AND STRENGTHS: "Out of weakness (they) were made strong." -- Hebrews 11:34

I'm always amused when I watch the loons lift into flight off Piatt Lake in Michigan's upper peninsula. They half-run, half-flap across the water for hundreds of feet before getting enough speed to lift into the air. I wondered why until I learned that unlike most birds, loons have solid bones. Their added weight makes it difficult for them to get airborne.

I also learned that loons are clumsy on land because their legs are set farther back on their bodies than other birds. Walking is so difficult that many loons simply scoot across land to their nesting places. But these disadvantages -- heavy bones, legs set far back - - are also tremendous advantages. Because of their weight and leg placement, loons can dive deeper, farther, and faster. This is essential for catching fish and escaping predators.

What we see as disadvantages in our lives can be turned into advantages, and apparent weaknesses can be transformed into strengths. That was true of the apostle Paul, whose "thorn in the flesh" became an opportunity for God's strength to be seen in his weakness (2Co 12:7, 8, 9).

Is a weakness holding you down? Is it shyness or a physical limitation? Ask God to turn it into a strength for His glory.-- David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Inadequate but mighty --
How strange, yet wholly true!
Weak persons filled with power
The father's work shall do.
- Henry G. Bosch

Our limited potential accents God's limitless power.

From an unknown source - Why? Why me? Why my family? What is the meaning of this suffering?

These are familiar questions which are asked by Christians and non-Christians alike. No one is immune to suffering and adversity. "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7KJV). There are the pressures of want, need, sorrow, persecution, unpopularity, and loneliness. Some suffer for what they have done; others suffer because of what people do to them. Many suffer because they are victims of circumstances which they cannot control.

Pain is distressing. There can be nights of agony when God seems so unfair and it seems that there is no possible help or answer. Temporary relief may seem adequate, but the real solution to suffering is not to isolate it in an attempt to do away with it, nor even to grit our teeth and endure it. The solution, rather, is to condition our attitudes so that we learn to triumph in and through suffering. When the Apostle Paul sought relief from his "thorn in the flesh," God did not take it away, but reassured him with: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2Co12:9KJV). In another encouragement to the Corinthians, he wrote, "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2Cor 9:8KJV).

Except for physical pain, handling suffering seems to be a question of attitude: "What am I going to do in the face of suffering in order to learn from it and use it for my advantage as far as God's eternal purposes are concerned?"

Billy Graham comments: "Nowhere does the Bible teach that Christians are exempt from the tribulations and natural disasters that come upon the world. Scripture does teach that the Christian can face tribulation, crisis, calamity, and personal suffering with a supernatural power that is not available to the person outside of Christ."

Some of the most pathetic people in the world are those who, in the midst of adversity, indulge themselves by wallowing in self-pity and bitterness, all the while taking a sort of delight in blaming God for their problems. Job's attitude is an inspiration: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15). The sufferer will be blessed if, in the midst of great agony and despair, he can look into the face of his Heavenly Father and, because of His eternal love and presence, be grateful. Our response to suffering should lead us to look beyond it in the attempt to see God's higher purposes and what He wants to teach us.

C H Spurgeon - Periods of weakness will occur. A great strain may be placed on us. We become exhausted or severely depressed, and we may imagine that we are ready to die. At times like this, God will supply strength. Our extreme distress will be His opportunity; our famine, His hour of plenty. "His strength is made perfect in weakness" (2Co 12:9- note). "He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength" (Is 40:29).

David sung, "He satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's (Ps. 103:5-[note](#)). David expected this to happen always. "He restores my soul" (Ps. 23:3- [note](#)), he says. Often, David's Psalms start in painful depression but conclude with exultation because heavenly love has poured fresh life into his fainting soul. From much soul sickness, Jesse's son has recovered; from many a sinking, he has been lifted in holy joy.

Expect this, believer. God will give you strength as you need it. "As your days, so shall your strength be" (Deut. 33:25). "He gives more grace" (James 4:6- note). Revel in God's smile. Find a haven in His manifested love. Have faith and be of good cheer. There are even richer mercies to come. You will be baptized again into the Holy Spirit. You will receive anew the spirit of adoption, and your joy shall be full. Therefore, lift up your head. (Spurgeon, C., & Clarke, R. H. *Beside Still Waters: Words of Comfort for the Soul*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers)

John MacDuff's Devotional - GRACE SUFFICIENT:

Nothing affords such sweet comfort in a time of sickness and trial as the thought of the "all-sufficiency" of Christ our Redeemer. Be our case ever so trying, our needs ever so numerous, our enemies ever so strong, our fears ever so appalling, our danger ever so imminent—Jesus is "all-sufficient." It is only our weak faith that makes us to become downcast and sad at heart. What is the assurance of Scripture? "He is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you always, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good word and work." "All grace!"—"all sufficiency!"—in "all things"—and these to "abound." "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him."

Here there is enough surely to afford comfort—"grace," "sufficiency," "pity."

Christian, what is your sorrow—your trial—your temptation?

Is it, "I have had a lengthened time of sickness and pain—my strength has failed, and the skill of man has been unavailing. Around me I can see no ray of hope; no symptom of returning health—no indication of the removal of my disease—and my prayers have returned to me unanswered."

Ah, Christian, it is to be feared there is within you a 'spirit of murmuring'. Whose hand is laid upon you? Your Father's. Why has He chastened you? To bring your will fully into conformity with His own. Does not He, "to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hidden," know best when His gracious purpose has been accomplished in you, His child? Is it not a token for good that your days have been prolonged? He waits but to see you bowing submissively before Him—saying from your inmost soul, "Do with me what seems good to Your sight"—and He will either remove the cross from off you, or give you the blessedness of realizing the truth of these words, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

But perhaps you are distressed by doubts and fears that God is angry with you—that in displeasure—not in love—He has laid you low. Oftentimes you are compelled to look backward, and the retrospect is gloomy—a retrospect of ingratitude, forgetfulness, wandering—of warnings unheeded, providences disregarded, mercies received unthankfully; and the thought arises—"For these transgressions I am chastened of the Lord; they are too aggravated, too numerous, to be forgiven."

"Forgiven!" "My grace is sufficient for you." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin." "If any man sins, we have an advocate with the Father."

It is well to look backward—well to recall the past; but not in a gloomy, despairing spirit—not as if by present or future suffering we could atone for sin. No, assuredly—but to lead us "to believe on Him who is able to save unto the uttermost"—to "believe, and be saved." All our woe and misery could not atone for any one transgression; and it is not by a painful counting up of duties undone, and sins committed, or by a resolving ever so earnestly to be more careful in all these things for the time to come, that we can be saved. Salvation is alone in Christ. To Him we must go—to Him who, by His death, purchased for Himself the heirs of death, that they might become heirs of glory, and who sends sickness and trial to check and restrain us—to make us bethink ourselves—to bring us to Him, the only Savior and Redeemer—that we may be driven from the world, and from ourselves, to Him, and in Him find rest unto our souls.

Christian, look away then from self and sin—so vile and loathsome—to Jesus your Brother, Savior, God. He will not cast you off, guilty as you are; He will not fail to welcome you; but He will say unto you, "Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven!" And if at any time you are becoming faint and weary in the pilgrimage of life, oh, turn hopefully—turn without a misgiving to these words, "My grace is sufficient for you; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

But perhaps this is not your case. You tell us, "I feel and acknowledge the infinity of God's mercy in Christ. For years have I tasted that the Lord is gracious, and He has borne with me amid countless sins and shortcomings; but I have an evil heart of unbelief, against whose suggestions I have continually to struggle, and whose temptings I sometimes feel myself unable to resist. No sooner have I gained a victory over some besetting sin, some evil temper, some worldly desire—than another, equally powerful and seductive, presents itself, and from day to day I am engaged in a conflict, battling with some enemy, resisting some onset of temptation, and hardly able to keep my ground."

Reader, yours is precisely the Christian's experience, just what you were told to expect when you entered the narrow way—and what you may continue to anticipate until you "enter the rest which remains for the people of God." But why be discouraged? He who has sustained you hitherto will be "with you" still. Your strength has often been fast failing, but you have not been overcome; why then should you dread that defeat awaits you? The very struggles you have maintained have added to your strength, and given you fresh vigor; the very fear of being vanquished has been a stimulus to new exertion, and is a sign that you "will finally prevail." Your enemies are strong and mighty—yes, but not stronger than those whom your blessed Savior met and trampled underfoot. He will nerve your arm afresh for the struggle. He will help you not only to maintain your ground, but to gain the victory; and if ever you feel within you the risings of fear, or doubt, or despondency, oh, be cheered by these two precious assurances—"My grace is sufficient for you;" and again, "To him who overcomes will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father on his throne."

Christian, whatever your trial, distress, or sorrow—have faith in the promise of your Savior. All else may fail you, but "His word stands sure." You will have your struggles and conflicts, you will have dark and gloomy days

and nights of storm and tempest; but fear not—you will be carried safely through them all. You may be wounded and torn, and, covered with many scars, bearing the marks of many a hard-fought battle—with the dust of a weary journey on your garments—with the sword not resting in its scabbard, but grasped as if for another onset—you may be summoned from the battle-plain—but what then?

Away from conflict, from tumult, and strife—away from sin, temptation, and sorrow—away, in that blessed home of peace and purity, where no fear shall again disturb, no foe again attack, no evil heart again lead astray—you will "rest from all your labors." The trumpet will no more summon to the battle; its last clarion-note will be "Victory!" and amid the glad hosannas of the heavenly hosts, you will be welcomed as another conqueror—a conqueror through Him whose grace was sufficient for you, and whose strength was made perfect in weakness.

O most gracious Father, who has invited all who feel their need of Your grace to come unto You—have mercy upon me, for I am in trouble. I am deeply sensible that I am far from exercising that unreserved submission to Your will which I ought to exercise. Help me, I beseech You, so to trust in Your infinite goodness and unerring wisdom, that I may be able to say from my very heart, "May Your will be done." Oh, teach me to be grateful for the manifold comforts allotted me, and support me graciously, that my soul be not cast down and disturbed within me. Keep me from all repining thoughts, and make Your grace at all times sufficient for me, and perfect Your strength in my weakness. Let my soul be supported by faith, hope, and patience, under all the sufferings I may yet endure. Bless the means that are used, and make them effectual, if it be Your good pleasure, for restoring me to health, that I may again praise You in the assembly of Your saints. Make me willing to glorify You either by life or by death. Give me a simple dependence upon You, and enable me in all things to commit my way unto You, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.

"Who among you fears the Lord and obeys his servant? If you are walking in darkness, without a ray of light, trust in the Lord and rely on your God." Isaiah 50:10 (John MacDuff. Encouragements to Patient Waiting)

SUFFICIENT GRACE "How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God!" "My grace is sufficient for you: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." 2Cor. 12:9

The apostle's 'thoughts' were desponding ones, when his God whispered in his ear this precious thought of comfort. A thorn in the flesh—a messenger from Satan—had been sent to buffet him. We know not specially what this thorn may have been. It is purposely left indeterminate, that each may make an individual application to his own case and circumstances.

But who, in their diversified and chequered experience, has not to tell of some similar trial?—some dead fly in life's otherwise fragrant ointment—some sorrow which casts a softened shadow over perhaps an otherwise sunny path? Infirm health, worldly loss, domestic anxiety, family bereavement, the discharge of arduous and painful duty, the treachery of tried and trusted friends, the sting of wounded pride or disappointed ambition, the fierce struggle with inward corruption and unmortified sin, the scorpion-dart of a violated and accusing conscience; the world all the time, perhaps little knowing or dreaming of the inward conflict, the life-long trial, the fountain of tears, though "a fountain sealed."

As the apostle earnestly entreated that his thorn might be taken away, so may you, reader, also have prayed fervently and long, that your trial might be averted, your sorrow mitigated, if not removed; and you doubtless imagine that it would be far better, were this messenger of Satan, this spirit of evil exorcized and cast out. But here again, God's thoughts are often not our thoughts. What was the answer to the apostle's earnest petition when "three times he pleaded with the Lord to take it away." It was not granting the removal of the trial—but it was better. It was the promise of grace to bear it. "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for you." It was enough; he asked no more. He may have demurred at first to the strange answer—so unlike what he expected, so unlike what he wished. But he was led before long, not only joyfully to acquiesce, but heartily to own and acknowledge the higher and better wisdom of the Divine procedure—"Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

This, too, may be God's dealings with you. Often and again, it may be, have you taken your hidden sorrow—the burdening secret of your heart—laid it on the mercy-seat, and with importunate tears implored that it might be taken away. Yet the sorrow still remains! But, nevertheless, remember, the prayer is not unanswered. It has been answered—not perhaps according to your thoughts or desires, but according to the better thoughts and purposes of your heavenly Father.

The thorn is still left to pierce and lacerate; but strength has been given to bear it. The trial, be what it may, has taught you, as it did Paul, the lesson of your own weakness and your dependence on Divine aid. It has been a needful drag on your chariot wheels—a needful clipping of your wings—lest, like the great apostle, "you should be exalted above measure." Who can complain of the heaviest of sorrows if they have thus been the means alike of discovering to us our own weakness, and of endearing to us the all-

sufficient grace of a Savior God?

Blessed, comforting assurance—"in all time of our need," that God will deal out the requisite grace. Seated by us like a physician, with His hand on our pulse, He will watch our weakness, and accommodate the supply to our several needs and circumstances. He will not allow the thorn to pierce too far—He will not allow the temptation to go beyond what we are able to endure. "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation." "As your day is so shall your strength be."

Grace "sufficient" will be given—sufficient for every emergency. His arms are ever lower than our troubles. I will go forth bearing my cross, fortified with the assurance, and breathing the prayer, "Your God has commanded your strength. Strengthen O God, that which you have wrought for us."

Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with My victorious right hand. Isaiah 41:10 (John MacDuff. The Thoughts of God)

STRENGTHENETH

Philippians 4:13.

F B Meyer

IT WAS a marvellous statement for a man to make: "I can do all things." At first sight we suppose the speaker had either had but very little experience of the world with its varying conditions; or that he was some favoured child of fortune, who had never known want, because possessing an abundant supply of wealth and power.

But closer consideration removes each supposition; and we find ourselves face to face with a prisoner bound to a Roman soldier, who had run through the whole scale of human experience, now touching its abundant fulness, and anon descending to its most abject want; one who said himself: "I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound; in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want." It was, therefore, after a very profound experience of the extremes of human life, and of all the variations between, that the Apostle made that confident assertion: "I can do all things."

It is a temper of mind which we might well covet. To be superior to every need; to bear prosperity without pride, and adversity without a murmur; to feel that there is no earthly circumstance that can disturb the soul from its equilibrium in God; to be able to yoke the most untameable difficulties to the car of spiritual progress; to have such a sense of power as to laugh at impossibility and to sing in adversity; to help the weak, even though we might seem to need every scrap of power for ourselves; to feel amid the changing conditions of life as a strong swimmer does in the midst of the ocean waves, which he beats back in the proud consciousness of power--all this, and much more, is involved in the expression, "I can do all things."

And when we ask for the talisman, which has given a frail man this marvellous power, it is given in the words: "in Him that strengtheneth Me." The Old Version gave "through Christ;" the New alters it to "in Him." And at once we see the connection with all that line of inner teaching, of which, to the careful student, the Bible is so full. Those words are the keynote of Blessedness, first struck by our Lord, and repeated with unwearying persistence by His immediate followers, to whom they were the secret of an overcoming life. The one main thought of them is this--that the strength which we covet is not given to us in a lump, for us to draw upon as we choose, like electricity stored in boxes for use; it is a life, and it is only to be obtained so long as we are in living union with its source. Apart from Him we can do nothing. Whilst we are abiding in Him, nothing is impossible. The one purpose of our life should therefore be to remain in living and intense union with Christ, guarding against everything that would break it, employing every means of cementing and enlarging it. And just in proportion as we do so, we shall find His strength flowing into us for every possible emergency. We may not always feel its presence; but we shall find it present whenever we begin to draw on it. Or if ever we are more than usually sensible of our weakness, one moment of upward looking will be sufficient to bring it in a tidal wave of fulness into our hearts.

There is no temptation which we cannot master; no privation which we cannot patiently bear; no difficulty with which we cannot cope; no work which we cannot perform; no confession or testimony which we cannot make--if only our souls are living in healthy union with Jesus Christ, for as our day, or hour, is, so shall our strength be: so much so, that we shall be perfectly surprised at ourselves, as we look back on what we have accomplished.

Dwell on that present tense, strengtheneth. (**Ed: In 2Cor 12:9, arkeo is not in the past or future tense but is in the present tense indicating that the divine gift of grace is continually sufficient**) Hour by hour, as the tides of golden sun-heat are quietly absorbed by flowers and giant trees--so will the strength of the living Saviour pass into our receptive natures. He will stand by us; He will dwell in us; He will live through us--strengthening us with strength in our souls.

The dying patriarch told how his favourite child would be made strong, by the mighty God of Jacob putting His Almighty hands

over his trembling fingers; as an archer might lay his brawny skilled hands on the delicate grasp of his child, teaching him how to point the arrow, and enabling him to pull back the bow string. Oh what beauty there is in the comparison! Who would not wish to be such a favoured one, feeling ever the gentle touch of the hands of God, empowering us, and working with us! Yet that portion may be thine, dear reader, and mine. To the prayer first offered by Nehemiah, "O God, strengthen my hand," God answers Himself: "I will strengthen thee." "Wait on the Lord, and He shall strengthen thine heart." "They that wait upon the Lord shall change their strength," i.e. they shall exchange one degree of strength for another, in an ever ascending scale.

The strength of Christ is never found in the heart that boasts its own strength. The two can no more co-exist, than light and darkness can co-exist in the same space. And therefore the Apostle used to glory in anything that reminded him of his utter helplessness and weakness. This thought made him even acquiesce willingly to the thorn in his flesh. It was at first his repeated prayer that it might be removed; but when the Lord explained that His strength could only be perfected in weakness, and that the presence of the thorn was a perpetual indication and reminder of the weakness of his flesh, driving him to the Strong for strength, and making him a fit subject for the conspicuous manifestation of God's might at its full then he protested that he would most gladly glory in his weakness, that the strength of Christ might rest upon him; for when he was weak, in his own deep consciousness, then he was strong in the strength of the strong Son of God (2 Cor. 12:9).

It would be a great help to us all if we could look at difficulties and trials in this way. Considering that they have been sent, not to grieve or annoy us, but to make us despair of ourselves, and to force us to make use of that divine storehouse of power, which is so close to us, but of which we make so little use. Difficulties are God's way of leading us to rely on His almighty sufficiency. They are none of them insurmountable; they are the triumphs of His art; they are meant to reveal to us resources of which, had it not been for their compulsion, we might have lived in perpetual ignorance--just as hunger has led to many of the most wonderful inventions.

What glorious lives might be the lot of the readers of these lines, if only they would abjure their own strength be it wisdom, wealth, station, or any other source of creature aid; and if they would learn that the true strength is to sit still at the source of all might and grace, receiving out of His fulness, and mingling the song of the psalm, with the glad affirmation of the Apostle: "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength;" "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me!" (F. B. Meyer. The present Tenses of the Blessed Life)

POWER IN WEAKNESS

by Andrew Murray

"He said unto me, My strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore will I rather glory in my weakness, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in weakness: for when I am weak, then am I strong" 2Corinthians 12:9,10.

There is almost no word that is so imperfectly understood in the Christian life as the word **weakness**. Sin and shortcoming, sluggishness and disobedience, are given as the reasons for our weakness. With this interpretation of weakness, the true feeling of guilt and the sincere endeavour after progress are impossible. How can I be guilty, when I do not do what it is not in my power to do? The Father cannot demand of His child what He can certainly do independently. That, indeed, was done by the law under the Old Covenant, but the Father, under the New Covenant, does not do that. He requires nothing more of us than what He has prepared for us to do in His Holy Spirit. The new life is a life in the power of Christ through the Spirit.

The error of this mode of thinking is that people estimate their weakness, not too highly, but too meagrely. They would still do something by the exercise of all their powers, and with the help of God. They do not know that they must be nothing before God. You think that you have still a little strength, and that the Father must help you by adding something of His own power to your feeble energy. **This thought is wrong. Your weakness appears in the fact that you can do nothing.** It is better to speak of utter inability, for that is what the Scriptures mean by the word "**weakness**." "**Without me ye can do nothing.**" (cp Jn 15:5, see this principle dramatically illustrated by the resurrected Jesus to His disciples, Jn 21:3, 4, 5, 6, a lesson they need to see again - Lk 5:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11). "**In us is no power.**" (Ed: Of course Murray is referring to nothing of eternal value, nothing supernatural which requires Jesus' power!)

Whenever the young Christian acknowledges and admits to his weakness, then he learns to understand the secret of the power of Jesus (Ed: cp Mt 15:22, 25, 26, 27, 28 [Canaanite woman "Lord, help me!"]; Mk 9:17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 ["I do believe; help my unbelief."]; Mt 14:25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31 [Peter's "weakness" = he began to sink, for his fear had replaced his faith. And yet at the point of weakness, he acknowledged Jesus' power crying out "Lord save me"] Mt 8:24, 25, 26, 27 - **Who brought the great storm?**

What was God testing? And what about the storms He allows in our life? On whose strength will we make a conscious choice to rely when the "storms" come [They will come beloved!]? Do we really trust that His strength is made perfect in our weakness? Then let us act accordingly, rather than reacting out of our old fallen nature). He then sees that he is not to wait and pray to become stronger, to feel stronger. No, in his inability, he is to have the power of Jesus. **By faith he is to receive it** (**Ed:** This is legitimate "name it, claim it"! He is to believe that it is for him, and that Jesus Himself will work in and by him (**Ed:** cp Col 1:28-note, Col 1:29-note, Ep 3:20-note, Heb 13:21-note - In each of these passages, observe the juxtaposition of human responsibility to act/work in faith and God's sovereign power working in and through us). It then becomes clear to him what the Lord means when He says, "My power is made perfect in your weakness." He knows to return the answer, "When I am weak, then am I--yes, then am I--strong." Yes, the weaker I am, the stronger I become. And he learns to sing with Paul, "I shall glory in my weaknesses." "I take pleasure in weaknesses." "We rejoice when we are weak."

"The Lord is my strength and song"

It is wonderful how glorious that life of faith becomes for him who is content to have nothing. How glorious to feel nothing in himself and to always live on the power of his Lord. He learns to understand what a joyful thing it is **to know God as his strength**.

He lives in what the Psalms so often express, "I love Thee, O Lord, **my strength**." (Ex 15:2KJV, Ps 118:14KJV-note) "I will sing of Thy strength: unto Thee, **O my strength**, will I sing praises." (Ps 59:16KJV-note, Ps 59:17KJV-note) He understands what is meant when a psalm says, "Give (ascribe) strength to the Lord (Ps 29:1KJV-note): **the Lord will give strength to His people**" (cp Ps 29:11KJV-note) and when another says, "Give strength to God: the God of Israel, **He giveth strength and power to His people**." (Ps 68:35KJV-note) When we give or attribute all the power to God, then He gives it to us again.

"I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1Jn 2:14). The Christian is strong in his Lord. (Ep 6:10-note, cp 2Ti 4:17-note) Not sometimes strong and sometimes weak, but **always weak**, and therefore **always strong**. He has merely to know and use his strength trustfully. To **be strong** is a command (present imperative; passive voice), a mandate that must be obeyed. From obedience there comes more strength (**Ed:** cp Joshua 1:18 - physical warfare, which pictures our spiritual warfare). "Be of good courage and He shall strengthen thine heart" (Ps 31:24KJV-note). In faith, the Christian must simply obey the command, **Be strong** in the Lord, and in the power of His might." (Ep 6:10-note)

O God of the Lord Jesus, the Father of glory give unto us the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Jesus, so that we may know the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe (Ep 1:17-note, Ep 1:18, 19-note). Amen.

J I Packer writes that...

This (**Ed:** That Paul would carry the thorn in his flesh all his life, and yet it would make perfect the Lord's strength in his life), I believe, is a pattern likely to be worked out again and again in your life and in mine. The Lord first of all makes us conscious of our weakness so that in the face of some particular burden our heart cries out, "I can't cope with this." We go to the Lord, telling him, "I can't handle this. Please take it away!" And the Lord replies, "In my strength you can handle this, and in answer to your prayer, I will strengthen you to handle it." Thus in the end your testimony, like Paul's, will be, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13 NKJV-note). That, I believe, is the fullest expression for any of us of the empowered Christian life. (Packer, J. God's Plans for You)

J C Philpot's Devotional: Trials, temptations, sorrows, perplexities

"There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted excessively. Concerning this thing I begged the Lord three times that it might depart from me. He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest on me." 2Corinthians 12:7-9

Depend upon it, the Lord's family have to go through much tribulation on their way to heaven. So says the unerring word of truth, and so speaks the experience of every God-taught soul. Now, in these seasons of trouble, in these painful exercises, in these perplexing trials, the Lord's people need strength—yet the Lord sends these trials in order to drain and exhaust them of 'creature

strength.' Such is the 'self-righteousness' of our heart—such the 'legality' intertwined with every fiber of our natural disposition—that we cleave to our own righteousness as long as there is a thread to cleave to—we stand in our own strength as long as there is a point to stand upon—we lean upon our own wisdom as long as a particle remains!

In order, then, to exhaust us, drain us, strip us, and purge us of this pharisaic leaven, the Lord sends trials, temptations, sorrows, perplexities. What is their effect? To teach us our weakness, and bring us to that one and only spot where God and the sinner meet—the spot of creature helplessness. In order, therefore, to bring us to this spot, to know experimentally the strength of Christ, and feel it to be more than a doctrine, a notion, or a speculation—to know it as an internal reality, tasted by the inward palate of our soul—to have this experience wrought into our hearts with divine power, we must be brought to this spot—to feel our own utter weakness. (J. C. Philpot. RICHES)

The Power Of Weakness - I received a letter from a woman who read about the way I had learned to live a life dependent on God. She was challenged as she read that Christ's strength was manifested through my weakness, particularly when I started a Bible study while recovering from a nervous condition.

She read about my trembling hands, and how my neighbors were encouraged to admit their own weaknesses and to depend on Christ as they saw me learning to do. She wrote, "I laughed and cried as I read your story. I feel deeply encouraged that God can use me, even though I feel weak."

We may think that we attract others to Christ more effectively through our strengths than through our weaknesses. But the Lord used trouble and weakness in the apostle Paul's life to teach him to rely on God's power (2Co 1:9). He testified, "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2Co 12:10).

When Christians act as if they hardly know what weakness is, needy people often think, "I could never be like that." But when Christians admit they experience Christ's strength in their weakness, they proclaim this hope: "The strength Christ gives to me, He can give to you!" Whose strength will you proclaim today—your own, or God's? — Joanie Yoder

God uses weakness to reveal
His great sufficiency;
So if we let Him work through us,
His power we will see. —Sper

To experience God's strength, we must first admit our weakness.

"We must form our estimate of men less from their achievements and failures and more from their sufferings."—**Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

LABORING MORE ABUNDANTLY

Andrew Murray

'By the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed on me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.'--1Co 15:10.

'And He hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My power is made perfect in weakness... In nothing was I behind the chiefest of the apostles, though I am nothing.'--2Co 12:9, 11 .

In both of these passages Paul speaks of how he had abounded in the work of the Lord. 'In nothing was I behind the chiefest of the Apostles: 'I labored more abundantly, than they all.' In both he tells how entirely it was all of God, who worked in Him, and not of himself. In the first he says: 'Not I, but the grace of God which was with me.' And then in the second, showing how this grace is Christ's strength working in us, while we are nothing, he tells us: 'He said unto me: My grace is sufficient for thee: My power is made perfect in weakness.' May God give us 'the Spirit of revelation, enlightened eyes of the heart,' to see this wonderful vision, a man who knows himself to be nothing, glorying in his weakness, that the power of Christ may rest on him, and work through him, and who so labors more abundantly than all. What does this teach us as workers for God[?]

God's work can only be done in God's strength.--It is only by God's power, that is, by God Himself working in us, that we can do effective work. Throughout this little book this truth has been frequently repeated. It is easy to accept of it; it is far from easy to see its full meaning, to give it the mastery over our whole being, to live it out. This will need stillness of soul, and meditation, strong faith and fervent prayer. As it is God alone who can work in us, it is equally God who alone can reveal Himself as the God who works in us. Wait on Him, and the truth that ever appears to be beyond thy reach will be opened up to thee, through the knowledge of who and what God is. When God reveals Himself as 'God who worketh all in all,' thou wilt learn to believe and work

'according to the power of Him who worketh in thee mightily.'

God's strength can only work in weakness.--It is only when we truly say, Not I! that we can fully say, but the grace of God with me. The man who said, In nothing behind the chiefest of the Apostles! had first learnt to say, though I am nothing. He could say: 'I take pleasure in weaknesses, for when I am weak then am I strong.' This is the true relation between the Creator and the creature, between the Divine Father and His child, between God and His servant. Christian worker! learn the lesson of Thine own weakness, as the indispensable condition of God's Power working in thee. Do believe that to take time and in God's presence to realize thy weakness and nothingness is the sure way to be clothed with God's strength. Accept every experience by which God teaches thee thy weakness as His grace preparing thee to receive His strength. Take pleasure in weaknesses!

God's strength comes in our fellowship with Christ and His service.--Paul says: I will glory in my weakness, that the strength of Christ may rest upon me.' 'I take pleasure in weaknesses for Christ's sake.' And he tells how it was when he had besought the Lord that the messenger of Satan might depart from him, that He answered: 'My grace is sufficient for thee.' 'Christ is the wisdom and the power of God.' We do not receive the wisdom to know, or the power to do God's will as something that we can possess and use at discretion. It is in the personal attachment to Christ, in a life of continual communication with Him, that His power rests on us. It is in taking pleasure in weaknesses for Christ's sake that Christ's strength is known.

God's strength is given to faith, and the work that is done in faith.--It needs a living faith to take pleasure in weaknesses, and in weakness to do our work, knowing that God is working in us. Without seeing or feeling anything, to go on in the confidence of a hidden power working in us--this is the highest exercise of a life of faith. To do God's own work in saving souls, in persevering severing prayer and labor; amid outwardly unfavorable circumstances and appearances still to labor more abundantly--this faith alone can do. Let us be strong in faith, giving glory to God. God will show Himself strong towards him whose heart is perfect with Him.

My brother! be willing to yield yourself to the very utmost to God, that His power may rest upon you, may work in you. Do let God work through you. Offer yourself to Him for His work as the one object of your life. Count upon His working all in you, to fit you for His service, to strengthen and bless you in it. Let the faith and love of your Lord Jesus, whose strength is going to be made perfect in your weakness, lead you to live even as He did, to do the Father's will and finish His work.

1. Let every minister seek the full personal experience of Christ's strength made perfect in His weakness: this alone will fit him to teach believers the secret of their strength.
2. Our Lord says: 'My grace, My strength.' It is as, in close personal fellowship and love, we abide in Christ, and have Christ abiding in us, that His grace and strength can work.
3. It is a heart wholly given up to God, to His will and love, that will know his power working in our weakness. (Andrew Murray. Working For God)

HUMILITY AND HAPPINESS

2Co 12:9-10

Andrew Murray

LEST Paul should exalt himself, by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was sent him to keep humble. Paul's first desire was to have it removed, and he besought the Lord thrice that it might depart. The answer came that the trial was a blessing; that, in the weakness and humiliation it brought, the grace and strength of the Lord could be the better manifested. Paul at once entered upon a new stage in his relation to the trial: instead Of simply enduring it, he most gladly gloried in it; instead of asking for deliverance, he took pleasure in it. He had learned that the place of humiliation is the place of blessing, of power, of joy.

Every Christian virtually passes through these two stages in his pursuit of humility. In the first he fears and flees and seeks deliverance from all that can humble him. He has not yet learnt to seek humility at any cost. He has accepted the command to be humble, and seeks to obey it, though only to find how utterly he fails. He prays for humility, at times very earnestly; but in his secret heart he prays more, if not in word, then in wish, to be kept from the very things that will make him humble. He is not yet so in love with humility as the beauty of the Lamb of God, and the joy of heaven, that he would sell all to procure it. In his pursuit of it, and his prayer for it, there is still Somewhat of a sense of burden and of bondage; to humble himself has not yet become the spontaneous expression of a life and a nature that is essentially humble. It has not yet become his joy and only pleasure. He cannot yet say, 'Most gladly do I glory in weakness, I take pleasure in whatever humbles me.'

But can we hope to reach the stage in which this will be the case? Undoubtedly. And what will it be that brings us there? That which brought Paul there, a new revelation of the Lord Jesus. Nothing but the presence of God can reveal and expel self, A

clearer insight was to be given to Paul into the deep truth that the presence of Jesus will banish every desire to seek anything in ourselves, and will make us delight in every humiliation that prepares us for His fuller manifestation. Our humiliations lead us, in the experience of the presence and power of Jesus, to choose humility as our highest blessing. Let us try and learn the lessons the story of Paul teaches us.

We may have advanced believers, eminent teachers, men of heavenly experiences, who have not yet fully learnt the lesson of perfect humility, gladly glorying in weakness. We see this in Paul. The danger of exalting himself was coming very near. He knew not yet perfectly what it was to be nothing; to die, that Christ alone might live in him; to take pleasure in all that brought him low. It appears as if this were the highest lesson that he had to learn, full conformity to his Lord in that self-emptying where he gloried in weakness that God might be all.

The highest lesson a believer has to learn is humility: Oh that every Christian who seeks to advance in holiness may remember this well! There may be intense consecration, and fervent zeal and heavenly experience, and yet, if it is not prevented by very special dealings of the Lord, there may be an unconscious self-exaltation with it all. Let us learn the lesson,--the highest holiness is the deepest humility; and let us remember that it comes not of itself, but only as it is made a matter of special dealing on the part of our faithful Lord and His faithful servant.

Let us look at our lives in the light of this experience, and see whether we gladly glory in weakness, whether we take pleasure, as Paul did, in injuries, in necessities, in distresses. Yes, let us ask whether we have learnt to regard a reproof, just or unjust, a reproach from friend or enemy, an injury, or trouble, or difficulty into which others bring us, as above all an opportunity of proving how Jesus is all to us, how our own pleasure or honour are nothing, and how humiliation is in very truth what we take pleasure in. It is indeed blessed, the deep happiness of heaven, to be so free from self that whatever is said of us or done to us is lost and swallowed up in the thought that Jesus is all.

Let us trust Him who took charge of Paul to take charge of us too.. Paul needed special discipline, and with it special instruction, to learn, what was more precious than even the unutterable things he had heard in heaven--what it is to glory in weakness and lowliness. We need it, too, oh so much. He who cared for him will care for us too. The school in which Jesus taught Paul is our school too. He watches over us with a jealous, loving care, 'lest we exalt ourselves.' When we are doing so, He seeks to discover to us the evil, and deliver us from it, In trial and weakness and trouble He seeks to bring us low, until we so learn that His grace is all, as to take pleasure in the very thing that brings us and keeps us low. His strength made perfect in our weakness, His presence filling and satisfying our emptiness, becomes the secret of a humility that need never fail. It can, as Paul, in full sight of what God works in us and through us, ever say, ' In nothing was I behind the chiefest apostles, though I am nothing.' His humiliations had led him to true humility, with its wonderful gladness and glorying and pleasure in all that humbles.

' Most gladly will I glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me; wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses.' The humble man has learnt the secret of abiding gladness. The weaker he feels, the lower he sinks, the greater his humiliations appear, the more the power and the presence of Christ are his portion, until, as he says, ' I am nothing,' the word of his Lord brings ever deeper joy: 'My grace is sufficient for thee.'

I feel as if I must once again gather up all in the two lessons: the danger of pride is greater and nearer than we think, and the grace for humility too.

The danger of pride is greater and nearer than we think, and that especially at the time of our highest experiences. The preacher of spiritual truth with an admiring congregation hanging on his lips, the gifted speaker on a Holiness platform expounding the secrets of the heavenly life, the Christian giving testimony to a blessed experience, the evangelist moving on as in triumph, and made a blessing to rejoicing multitudes, no man knows the hidden, the unconscious danger to which these are exposed. Paul was in danger without knowing it: what Jesus did for him is written for our admonition, that we may know our danger and know our only safety. If ever it has been said of a teacher or professor of holiness,--he is so full of self; or, he does not practice what he preaches; or, his blessing has not made him humbler or gentler,--let it he said no more. Jesus, in whom we trust, can make us humble.

Yes, the grace for humility is greater and nearer, too, than we think. The humility of Jesus is our salvation: Jesus Himself is our humility. Our humility is His care and His work. His grace is sufficient for us, to meet the temptation of pride too. His strength will be perfected in our weakness. Let us choose to be weak, to be low, to be nothing. Let humility be to us joy and gladness. Let us gladly glory and take pleasure in weakness, in all that can humble us and keep us low; the power of Christ will rest upon us. Christ humbled Himself, therefore God exalted Him. Christ will humble us, and keep us humble; let us heartily consent, let us trustfully and joyfully accept all that humbles; the power of Christ will rest upon us. We shall find that the deepest humility is the secret of the truest happiness, of a joy that nothing can destroy. **(Andrew Murray. Humility - The Beauty of Holiness)**