

God's all sufficient grace for weak and meek souls (Quality: Very good)

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Preacher: Cottingham, Peter (1947 - 2014)

- [0 : 00] The word that I do trust the Lord has led me to come before you with this evening is found in Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians chapter 12 and the first part of verse 9.
- Second epistle to the Corinthians chapter 12 and the first part of verse 9.
- And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.
- Here we have a word of encouragement, a word of exhortation, and even a word of rebuke.
- A word of encouragement to those that feel themselves to be worthless, weak, poor, and insufficient.
- [1 : 23] A word of comfort to those that feel to be cast down, left out.
- And perhaps a word of rebuke to those that are relying upon their own strength, upon their own righteousness, in whatever way it might be, whose hearts have become proud and hardened.
- Paul was brought to this point to know and to realize that in and of himself he was weak. He had no strength at all. And I believe that the Lord's people are continually brought to this point. They know that they have no strength to keep themselves from sin.
- They have no strength to keep themselves in that straight and that narrow way that leads unto eternal life. There may be the good intentions.
- [2 : 43] There may be the good thoughts. But no sooner are those thoughts formed in our minds. Do you not find yourself? We will not say in that way going utterly astray.
- But is it even in those things that you say, those things that you think, that you fall? Fall, yea, a thousand times a day.
- So then, the Lord not only brings his people into that time of weakness, in that time when they know that they have no strength in themselves, but it is that they might rest upon him, that they might gather that strength from the Lord, that through their weakness, that through their weakness, his strength may be made known.
- Through their sin, his righteousness may be made known. Through their folly, his wisdom may be known.
- Would Paul, before he was arrested by sovereign grace, have spoken in this way?
- [4 : 08] When he had obtained for himself those letters to go and apprehend those followers of Christ, would he have spoken this language?
- Before the Lord began a work of grace in our soul, could we speak this language? Would it have any meaning at all to us?
- Does it even now? We know what it is for the Lord to bring us down. Do we know what it is for the Lord to bring us to rely solely upon him for all that we need?

And I mean all. To know that all that we receive comes from his kind and gracious hand. How soon the Lord can take these things from us.

Those things that he has granted. Those things that he has given. And then when they are removed, where are we?

[5 : 16] If we have been resting upon those false props, if we have been relying upon self, where do we stand?

Where do we stand? We don't. We fall. And where do we fall? If the Lord has that purpose of grace toward us, there is only one place that we can fall, only one place that we can find that safety.

And that is in Christ. In whom there is that sufficiency of grace. In whom there is that all to save us from our sins.

To lift us up. To set us up upon our feet. To lift up our eyes. Up unto him. Consider those favoured disciples that were taken by their Lord up into the mount.

They were found upon their faces. It was too much for them. By nature.

[6 : 32] In their own weak selves. Yes, it was shown to them that they were weak. That they had no strength. Could they not glory in the Lord?

Could they not rather see that they should decrease as John spoke of it and the Lord should increase.

That his work should be made manifest in the lives of his people. leading them guiding them and yea strengthening them in their felt weakness.

Their felt insufficiency. But to return to Paul how he was full of his own self and the Lord brought him down to that utter poverty in himself.

that that he had trusted in had been stripped completely away. That that he had been relying upon had all been removed.

[7 : 53] Goes against the flesh doesn't it? When the Lord takes away from us those things that we have trusted upon that are of self that are of man how it hurts us but how it does us good.

How it is for the strengthening of the souls of his people the building up of their most holy faith that drawing near to the Lord that crying unto him for help.

What was it spoken of of Saul of Tarsus? Behold he prayeth knowing his own weakness but gathering and retaining that strength from the Lord.

Here in this account in that that the apostle Paul is speaking of to the church at Corinth he gives that intimation of what the Lord had revealed to him and yet he knew his own weakness his own sinfulness how soon he would go into that proud spirit how soon he would fall to that point where he would take to himself that glory it is not expedient for me doubtless to glory how he speaks of those things that he could not speak of but it was to the glory of God and what does he glory in?

That the Lord's hand is upon him for good that the Lord has not left him that the Lord has kept him and strengthened his faith strengthened his trust in Christ I believe he was brought also to that point to know that there was no hope out of Christ so then he speaks in this way most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me now for a little while I wish to speak of those who retain no strength those whom the Lord has brought down low those whom the Lord has brought to his feet there is that word to be found in the prophecy of

[10 : 59] Zechariah that speaks of the work of the spirit that speaks of that weakness of man and that strength in the Lord not by might nor by power but by my spirit saith the Lord of hosts not by the might of man not by the power of man but it is the work of the spirit to lead to guide to direct to bring out of darkness into light to strengthen those weak hands those feeble knees the spirit of the Lord God is upon me here that that is spoken regarding Christ his work the spirit of the

Lord God is upon me because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted for we go any further my grace is sufficient for thee for my strength is made perfect in weakness who are these that the Lord was ordained to preach those good tidings to well we have it here the meek and I will endeavour to say to you this evening that those good tidings that that the Lord speaks unto souls are only to the meek every other falls outside of that solemn truth but it's true there's no getting away from it it's only the meek that the gospel of

Christ is for let us then seek to bring out the truth of this word continues in this way the meek the broken hearted the captives them that are bound those that mourn those that have the spirit of heaviness here it is also spoken that they might be called trees of righteousness the planting of the Lord that he might be glorified yes here we have the summing up of it those that the Lord has begun a work within what is the beginning of that work to bring self down to nothing to bring them to that meekness in

Christ do you see a proud haughty sinner before God no you see a meek weak sinner on their knees before God for a proud haughty sinner will go their own way they will delight in their own self how can we speak of these things have we not known it have you not known it that pride that has kept you from God those that are meek have that need of strength they know their want of the righteousness of Christ they know their sin they know their want of that true forgiveness within them they know that they need the

Lord to do all for them so then just a few thoughts on those that the Lord brings to that meekness that lowliness that man out of whom the Lord cast that legion of devils no man can tame him precious truth that is does it not speak of every sinner no man can tame them no man can bring them to Christ no the most able servant of God can stand up and speak but it must be the work of the spirit not by the might of man not by the power of man but by my spirit saith the Lord of hosts no man could tame him no man could tame me the work of the spirit what do we read of that one do you envy that one do you long to be found in that one's place clothed in his right mind at the feet of

[16 : 25] Christ do you also have those desires that he had to follow Christ yet the Lord suffered him not well the Lord is a sovereign in his dealings with his people go home to thy friends tell them how great things the Lord has done for you not by might not by power of man of your own righteousness of your own strength but by my spirit saith the Lord of hosts we have that precious truth here in the 61st chapter of Isaiah the building up of the Lord's people the strengthening of them of

Zion the establishing of his church the promise of those continuing favors to his people they shall build the old ways they shall raise up the former desolations and they shall repair the waste cities the desolations of many generations nevertheless when the son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth where do we stand in relation to these solemn truths not by might nor by power but by my spirit saith the Lord of hosts so then how can we look for these things how can we walk in these ways well it is in that that Paul had to walk in to know the

Lord speaking that word unto his soul bringing him into that time of great weakness my grace is sufficient for thee for my strength is made perfect in weakness to speak to speak to speak just a little while longer and those that the Lord was anointed and is anointed so to comfort so to help so to bring out so to release so to bring out of darkness into light out of the prison out of the captivity of Satan out of the bondage of Egypt to bring them all to bring them all to gather them up unto him he has sent me to bind up the broken hearted here we have yet again the Lord's work precious indeed it is to souls knowing that it is the Lord's work how we do desire that it might be known more and more in our souls his work carrying on if thou art broken hearted if thou art broken hearted will not the Lord bind up that that he has brought low to proclaim liberty to the captives the opening of the prison to them that are bound few thoughts here regarding that none none are free from the evil designs of Satan we will put it in this way

I think of Jeremiah how there were those that took him and cast him into that pit and there was no man that could bring him out that could bring him out except the Lord raised one up to plead for him and not only to plead for him but there was that way open that that one with others could go and lift him out of that pit but what was found at the bottom of that pit that mire that he sunk in so then if you feel to be in a pit to be sunk in that mire there is no hope there is hope there is hope there is hope there is hope in your weakness in your distress in your despair there is one that you can indeed turn to one that said my grace is sufficient for thee for my strength is made perfect in weakness to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God to comfort all that mourn the time of the Lord that appointed time who knoweth the ways of the Lord who can tell the work of the Spirit except it is known and felt within

I think of the woman at the well as she came unconcerned you've seen this power have you seen the strength of the Lord have you seen his Spirit's work not only in your own soul but in others also but most especially in your own soul can you not look back to that time when you came as that woman to the well perhaps to the house of God as you had been wont to do many many times that woman obviously had been in the habit in the custom of going to that well daily or even twice daily with no concern and the Lord met with her can you remember that time when the Lord met with you with your soul was it not by the might the power of the Holy Spirit there may be those times when you are tempted that these things are not of the Lord but could you have walked by faith in that pathway since that time if it was not of the Lord we know that this is a question that so often comes up in the minds of his people is there that true work that is begun in my soul is this really of the Lord or is it of man is it of mine own thoughts well look back at what the Lord has done for you how he has led you remember all these 40 years that the Lord hath led thee through the wilderness to humble thee to prove thee whether thou wilt serve the Lord thy God or no how he fed thee with that manna in the wilderness how he strengthened thee how he supported thee was there not that time when he came between you and your enemies hedged about on every side no way of escape and the enemies behind what did the Lord do what did he say they shall not see these enemies anymore but thine eyes shall see my salvation that way that was opened up that way that was impossible to man my strength is made perfect in weakness so then that that you are passing through is it not to his purpose is it not to his glory that you are passing through it what did Paul have to say why was this word given to him it was because of this that lest he should be exhorted above measure in that that the Lord had revealed unto him there was that balancing of the clients the Lord permitted Satan to tempt to try

[25 : 40] Paul there was given to me a thorn in the flesh the messenger of Satan to buffet me lest I should be exalted above measure do you feel sometimes that you cannot lift yourself up oh you do desire that there might be those times of favour those times of blessing perhaps you hear of others speak in this way or that and you cannot enter into these things you feel that you are just grovelling here below well is it that the Lord knows your heart how that if there was that abundance given to you without that thorn in the flesh that messenger of Satan to buffet you to try you that you would soon turn away from the Lord although the Lord has kept you low it is the Lord that has been with you and it is the Lord that has brought you through to this time here a little and there a little line upon line he has not left you he has supported you he has been with you and he will be with you to the end make no mistake about it he will be with you if you feel your strength your faith your trust you're all to be failing my grace is sufficient for thee for my strength is made perfect in weakness then our thoughts have gone in this line in this way has the Lord spoken in a particular way to your soul has he spoken that that you have shrunk from have you said but how can this be my portion how can this be my lot those that have walked in this pathway would indeed say this

Lord why have you shown such mercy unto me I am unworthy of it yes that is why the Lord has shown his favour to you but to those that feel that I have no strength I cannot walk in this way I have been deceived how can the Lord mean that this is for me well not my words not Paul's words but the words of the Lord himself my grace is sufficient for thee perhaps it be right for me to speak in this way to you there was a time in my life when I desired of the Lord that he might give me a word a token an evidence that what he had spoken was of the Lord and his right so to do but that was not sufficient for me no I sought to make those excuses sought to seek those further signs and the Lord knew that

I could not leave that there yet I would plead for another sign and what did the Lord say I believe in these very words my grace is sufficient for thee for my strength is made perfect in weakness is there then that has been before you for such a long time that that your soul has trembled indeed over that pathway oh you long to walk in that pathway of obedience to his commands and yet you feel how can I my grace is sufficient for thee for my strength is made perfect in weakness let us then turn from those thoughts to the soul that journeys on through this pilgrimage in life those times when perhaps there might be many things in their life many things in their circumstances that go against them they say to themselves but how can I continue in this way it is all wrong they maybe look around upon others and see them having that time of ease that time when everything seems to go right for them what are you seeking after are you seeking after that you might have that smooth easy pilgrimage through this life

I don't mean that we should deliberately purposely seek that we should have a rough way no it is this that whatever the Lord might will toward us he may give us that grace he may give us that strength so to walk in his way another thought that has come to me how often rebellion how often hardness of our heart brings us into that time when we are fighting against the Lord I would not seek to speak wrongly in this but we are fighting against the Lord we would muster up our whole energy our whole being in rebellion against God we would use our whole might and all our strength to go against his command you find yourself walking in that way what has he done as the

Lord had mercy has he brought you down into that weak low place that you have cried out for mercy and when he has brought you down down so low that you have felt even perhaps to despair of life your whole strength is God that he has been unto you all that you need with that strength and that grace sufficient for your day to bring you through and then in our closing thoughts my grace is sufficient for thee for my strength is made perfect in weakness it is in this way as the Lord leads his people on to that time when they will leave all here below at the thought of it does your strength fail you let us just turn to what

[34 : 13] Paul had to say to the church at Rome and I would speak to you in this way right through your life when you do feel your utter weakness when you do feel those temptations and those trials coming in like a flood when you feel that you are without that vital matter that you so desire in your soul the root of the matter in you that one thing needful who is he that condemn it it is Christ that died yea rather that is risen again who is even at the right hand of God who also maketh intercession for us who then shall separate us from the love of Christ shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword

I am persuaded the words of Paul that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus those precious souls that he has bought with his own life's blood safe secure love of if it was anything to do with man do we not see the truth here how man's weakness soon comes out how man would soon turn aside how man would soon fall utterly weak utterly helpless but there is that strength that all that is found in

Christ and he will sustain he will hold up he will bring through and then in the swellings of Jordan my grace is sufficient for thee for my strength is made perfect in weakness that time when a soul can only rest upon Christ that solemn moment when everything of this life shall be left behind my dear friends what are we resting upon I ask you at this time what are we resting upon for our salvation for our hope for eternity for our hopeful glory is it in

Christ is it in that knowledge that we are weak and he is strong it speaks of through the weakness of flesh that the law is of none effect that the law falls short how the law cannot be fulfilled for there is that weakness in the flesh the soul that sinneth it shall surely die but there is one one who in whom there is no sin no guile one who indeed suffered upon the cross for the sins of his people yes man might look upon Christ upon the cross and say where is his strength if thou art the son of God come down save thyself no as man looked upon

Christ they thought they saw weakness but in his sufferings and in his death there was that strength that hope for poor sinners my grace my sufferings my all is sufficient for thee for my strength is made perfect in weakness therefore could not Paul indeed rejoice in that that he had passed through will you not indeed rejoice in that that you have passed through for it is the Lord that has revealed himself to your soul in his glory and in his strength most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me well I feel that

[39 : 38] I must leave these few remarks there how we need that help to walk in faith and we need that help to walk looking unto Christ for all that we need to know that there is that sufficiency that rests in Christ not only for time but for all eternity not only for us but for all that are found in him may the Lord add his own blessing amen amen he who