

2 Corinthians

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[0 : 00] The second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, reading from the ninth verse of the twelfth chapter. The second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, reading from the ninth verse of the twelfth chapter.

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee. My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore would I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

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As the apostle did frequently in his epistles and writings, here he reveals his own spiritual experience.

[1 : 18] And he speaks, in the simplest language, principles of truth which are known by every child of God.

Something that even the youngest here tonight can understand. And he said unto me, When I do ask you, youngest to the oldest here tonight, what has he said to you?

Now that brings us to this question, Has he said anything to me? Have I heard his voice?

And you know, it is so simple, isn't it? If you know your Bibles, you know so simply the nature of that truth.

My sheep hear my voice. And I know them. And they follow me. Think of it like this.

[2 : 32] If you never hear his voice here below, you'll never meet him above, except at the left hand of his throne. We must know him here below.

The apostle Paul reveals in these epistles and letters, not only the promises that God had spoken to him, and not only what the effect of them was in his soul, but he reveals his prayers.

He opens to us how he prayed. You read the letter to the Ephesians, and he tells us there exactly what he prayed for the church at Ephesus. These scriptures, if we look at them closely, show the whole of his experience, from beginning to end.

And it centers in this, what he wrote to the church at Philippi, that I might know him. Not about him. You know about me.

You've heard my name. But you don't know me. You know your parents better than you know me. A lot better.

[4 : 06] I know my father. He's been in the grave now for nearly 17 years. And I still know, when I have a problem today, what he would tell me to do.

How long that he was here. It wasn't always that I wanted to listen to his advice, I tell you. But, I knew him.

And we knew each other heart to heart, not only naturally, but spiritually. We were very, very close. But the apostle, speaking of Christ, as the apostle speaks of him here, he prayed in his letter to the church at Philippi, that I might know him.

Now here, we see somewhat of that answer to prayer. And he said unto me, and I would come to this aspect, to this portion of God's word, and stick well within the context of it.

This was not what he wanted to hear. How strange.

[5 : 34] This was not the answer to prayer expected. Don't be surprised if the Lord doesn't answer your prayers in the way you expect.

The apostle, for the most remarkable reasons, and we see here in his experience, the sovereignty of God. The Lord in divine sovereignty saw fit to grant him blessed revelations of Christ, but lest he should be exalted above measure.

He says that twice here. Having blessed him, having blessed him, in his fallen and ruined nature, the Lord saw the danger of him becoming proud, self-sufficient.

You see, when Elijah went to Mount Carmel, and the Lord gave him such a glorious blessing there, that in answer to his prayer, the fire descended, and then the rain, and go again seven times, and the rain came, and it did come, and then he ran in the mighty strength of it before the chariot of Ael, lest he should be exalted.

The Lord left him. And he fell, and he fled from Jezebel, and he bowed his head and asked the Lord to take his life away, and the Lord drew near, and he provided for him.

[7 : 10] But the blessed nature of the Lord's dealing with him was this, arise and eat, the journey's too great for thee. The Lord was dealing all the mysteries of divine sovereignty in the hearts of God's dear people.

And he gave the apostle a thorn in the flesh. Messenger of Satan to Buckethead. What a remarkable description. And what is equally remarkable is this.

He doesn't say what it was. And I believe that was because the Lord would use this in divine teaching in the lives of his dear people.

And they might not be left to say, ah, my thorn isn't what the apostle had. The Lord gives thorns in the flesh.

He gave this to the apostle. And then we see his human nature. Instead of all the grace that had been manifested, all that catalogue of suffering that I read to you, what did he do?

[8 : 16] He asked the Lord, take it away. He didn't see the need of it. He didn't see the depths of his fallen nature and the solemn pride, as the hymn writer says, making grace a snare.

He didn't understand what was going on. And so he prayed. And this was not the prayer, the answer you expected.

this was something vastly different. But you know, when the Lord deals, his work is perfect. Oh, to be brought to realise the perfection of the Lord's work.

And the apostle was. In this text, there are two parts of it. One is the word of God to his dear apostle, and the other is the fruit of that word in his soul.

It had a gracious effect. And when the Lord speaks, he works. He says, I will work. And who shall let it?

[9 : 26] Nobody will stop it. I will work. And the Lord worked in the apostle's life. And there wasn't a fourth request for it to be taken away.

Three were sufficient. And what is so beautiful here is this. The apostle's honest. He shows us everything.

He didn't tell us that he had this word and not mention the three times he prayed to have the thorn taken away. He shows us there his carnal nature. that he wanted an easy path.

He didn't bow under that thorn immediately. But the Lord brought him in speaking to him to give him grace and wisdom to bow beneath his thorn in the flesh and to come to that place where our mind has rested lately.

Be still and know that I am God. Sit still, my daughter, till they see how the matter will fall. stand still and see the salvation of the Lord for the Lord will fight for you and you shall hold your peace.

[10 : 36] They're beautiful words. I see such a beauty in that word still. Such a glory. Right in the heart of that word still lies faith in Christ.

Faith in the only sacrifice that did for sin atoned to cast our eyes. to fix our hopes on Christ on Christ alone.

But we need us all in the flesh to bring us to that place. And he said unto me I would just open up another aspect of that and that's this.

the Lord in all his glory and majesty as he did on earth if you know your Bibles you'll know this is absolutely true went to one and another alone.

That's just what happened here in our text and he said unto me. I may speak reverently the Lord doesn't speak to all the congregation at once he speaks to them individually in particular circumstances at a particular time he knows when they need a word from him spoken into their heart.

[12 : 07] he says to them come apart and rescue all and he separates them to himself and he deals with them alone.

A beautiful example of that is the woman at the well. He dealt with her alone and he said unto me come see a man that showed me all things that ever I did.

Is not this a cry Christ. And again and again the dear man we spoke with on Sunday a Bethesda pool he's lain there thirty and eight years the Lord said to him rise and he rose why?

Because the Lord gave him strength to rise and a divine commandment spoken with authority or when the Lord speaks I go to Elijah in the cave I go to Elijah in the cave how was it said in that still small voice of God what do you know about the still small voice of God?

I had to chair a church meeting some time ago and a young man came forward for baptism what has remained with me ever since was this it was at the age of six that the Lord first left a mark in his heart and he said unto me it was under a dear minister who I love speaking about his own experience in the navy in the last war that fastened on his heart as a child at the age of six I look back in my own life to an impression that was left in my heart which I shall never forget which the Lord used to speak to me but it was this it was a dear godly old minister Harvey Carr pastor at Chippenham for many years died about 1966 worked here in the north in Sheffield the silversmith but he used to preach and often relay the same story and many people said oh we've heard all that before but not to me as a child you know how to a young person they don't mind the same story being told again and again and he repeated that many times in my hearing I've never forgotten it and the story was this he used to say I took my dear wife to Sheffield and I took her to the very spot and I said to her there the

[14 : 59] Lord met with me and I can see him now with his old hand over the pulpit there the Lord met with me and you know that as a child that fastened in my heart I thought yes there's something in that I don't know about he hasn't met with me well there came a day when he did meet with me I knew then what that dear old man meant and I loved him loved him dear Harvey Carl and he said unto me I hope some of you young ones here tonight will have a desire in your heart for God to meet with you I mark the spot and the place where he met with me as a young lad in Manningford Chapel in Wiltshire under the ministry of the old Ebbin Clark of Barton ever shall I forget that night and it was this through much tribulation you shall enter the kingdom oh if ever the Lord spoke to me he spoke to me that night my ears were brought to the doorpost

I many times sat in our chapels and I could drift myself away to Australia anywhere under the ministry and not listen to a word I sat under my father's ministry many times and I never never listened to him but that night my ears were fastened to the doorpost and he said unto me and little did I know fifty years have gone since then and more what that tribulation was then through much tribulation what has the Lord said to you what mark has he left on your heart what mark I carry on my arm here here in my body on my arm I carry a two inch scar in the shape of an L which I formed on the arm when I put it through a window at the age of seven and drew it out again and ripped my arm right open and would see the main artery pumping away and that mark has never left me and never will

I showed it to my wife the other night it stays all those years later over sixty years later that stays on my arm now what is on your soul what mark has the Lord left I say that in regard to this word the apostle prayed and the Lord said unto him and now what did he say my grace is sufficient for thee for my strength is made perfect in weakness they're the words of God spoken to one man and yet you know all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable all this has been with me do you know back in 2000 I was asked to go to America on September the 11th as you well know 4,000 people died in New York under a terrorist attack and I was due to go out on

October the 8th a few weeks later and the country was in turmoil and everyone said to me will you go will you go will you go what will you do and the night I was due to go out America was bombed Afghanistan the tension became even worse will you go how did I go I crossed out of this country nine hours from Gatwick to Minneapolis in absolute peace of heart and mind in the strength of this word my grace is sufficient for thee I preached in this word three times in Chateau and Sheboygan and Grand Rapids and I felt the sacred savour and sweetness of this word he said unto me my grace oh you know King George VI in the last war and I heard it live when I was a child I was about ten he spoke in one of his broadcasts to the nation in the great crisis of that war putting our hand into the hand of God going out into the dark and it is a great blessing maestro grace is sufficient for thee that is exactly

I felt in looking at this word coming here what Moses knew when he came to die underneath are the everlasting arms the eternal God is thy refuge my grace that is my sovereign grace I don't add to God's scripture it is divine and sovereign and it's sufficient oh it is eternal everlasting as he said to his dear servant Jeremiah yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love therefore with loving kindness have I drawn me what do you know of the sovereign grace of God here tonight that brought you out of the world and separated you to himself it may be many many years ago what do you know of the grace of God that opened your ears and poured them to the doorpost what do you know of the grace of God that halted you in your mad career and stopped you look back to that grace and we shall need it from that day to a dying day dying grace we shall need in an hour a dying hour we shall and I believe some of you realise it and it cannot be too long here we see the blessedness of this word to the apostle it was related to his thorn in the flesh here at this particular point related to this which the

[21 : 22] Lord had left in his body a messenger of Satan above it him a weakness the Lord describes it as that my strength is made perfect in weakness and the thorn in the flesh was a weakness and it was divinely given and it was given with a purpose and it was given for this reason that he might come to the throne of grace and plead that promise that was given to him because that's the use of the promises they're not to be put in a museum and looked at what do you think happened at Bethel at Peniel when at Bethel the Lord gave his dear servant Jacob a promise I'll be with thee in all places with whichever they're going I'll not leave thee what happened at Peniel why I'll not let thee go except thou bless me why because he had a promise a promise what a glorious diamond that is in the soul of God's dear people it shines in all its glory and indestructibility

God speaks a promise into the hearts of his dear church into the members of his body and it's a link a bond to hold their souls to their God and he is the God of his word we may make a promise we make a vow how foolish to make a vow if you're never going to keep it how many do at the beginning of the year they make all sorts of strange silly vows and what's the result nothing when the Lord speaks all his word stands when he speaks into the heart of his dear child all the power of that word and the power of that word is so beautifully seen in my grace is sufficient for thee that's the promise and the explanation of it my strength is made perfect in weakness the grace of God his presence was that strength and the thorn in the flesh was that weakness and it has a fruit in the heart of the apostle and the fruit is this silence as regards having the thorn taken away now he takes up his cross doesn't ask to have it be removed

I lived for twenty years with a thorn in the flesh angina as you probably know thirty to forty months ago I had a big operation on my heart and the angina was removed but another thorn in the flesh followed and I wasn't surprised can't be the Lord knows that his dear people need something to make them pray need something to bring them to lean upon him need something to bring them to absolute dependence upon him there's a beauty in the words the dying words of Moses there's none like unto the God of Jeshua who rideth upon the heaven in thy hell his excellency upon the sky the eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms you know

Moses was put by his mother in face by face she laid him in the ark of bulrushes it was crocodile infested the gnar and she laid him there and as a little child he didn't know but he was resting in the arms of his God in the court of Pharaoh we read in the Hebrews choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt for he had respect under the recompense and reward beautiful exposition of his conversion separation from Egypt beautiful exposition of it and we follow that dear man through the burning bush to his dying hours and there he rests as he rested in the ark underneath are the everlasting arms no different to when he came into this world what's he doing strength made perfect in weakness he's resting in peace in his

God he's trusting him he is still that's the beauty of that word no unbelief no fear no temptation he is resting in faith in the arms of his God and he's still underneath are the can you see him lying there at peace oh how the Lord would bring his dear people to weakness that they might be still in him and lean upon him and what did he learn when the Lord spoke and he said unto me my grace is sufficient for even my strength is made perfect in weakness then we hear the words of wisdom that flow from the apostle no more requests now he's still what did he say most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities strange isn't it glory in infirmities that's not natural he has said it in the previous chapter he says in the previous chapter if I must need glory

[28 : 14] I will glory in my infirmities and this is exactly what the Lord taught him to glory in his infirmities to take up his cross and to follow his master and there's something here very glorious and that's this in the fourth chapter I read up to the thirteenth verse we have this for though he was crucified through weakness yet he liveth by the power of God for we also are weak in him or weak with him what a beautiful fellowship lies here John the divine says truly our fellowship is with the father and with his son Jesus Christ it's here the fellowship is we are weak with him and the apostle goes on to outline this he says this in the most extraordinary enigma that the world has no understanding of when I'm weak then am

I strong strange isn't it do you know anything about it you see it's two weaknesses isn't it here we see it when I'm weak in body weak in soul brought low and am I strong what's the strength the strength of Christ the power gladly therefore I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me what it tells us doesn't it the power of Christ rests upon his dear people in their weakness you see let me give an example when Moses died and the rains fell upon

Joshua oh what a burden that was and so under the weight of his own weakness felt weakness insufficiency inability because he knew well what lay ahead of him the Lord spoke as I was with Moses so will I be with thee I will not fail thee nor forsake thee here is the strength the apostle the grace of God in him manifestly having been spoken to by his God most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me all the nature of this work of

God his power to rest in the hearts of his dear children that is the power of faith faith to anchor in Christ and to know what it is for that sacred oil of the gospel to flow through that golden pipe into the hearts of his dear children and to know his strength all the blessed nature of this weaker we are when I'm weak and I'm strong why because the power of Christ rests upon me how does it rest it rests in answer to prayer I spoke of this preaching of London Hill on Sunday from the Moses words stand still and see the salvation of God for the Lord will fight for you and you shall hold your peace and I went on to the verse that followed and the

Lord said unto Moses why cry so unto me and so what was happening at that time at that time Moses was saying to the Lord's dear children trust him he will not deceive you what was he doing he wasn't standing still the Lord as it were took away opened up his heart and shows us that Moses while he said stand still was wrestling with his God to appear he was in the position of the one who wrote neither know I what to do neither know we what to do but our eyes are up unto thee what a blessed sight we have of God's dear children he passed almost gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmity does that mean he just stood and took it it doesn't does it it means that constantly his eyes were on his God in all his weakness and need and his cry was the cry

[33 : 52] Lord help me his cry was the cry dear Hezekiah undertake for me I'm oppressed you know the Lord uses affliction he uses thorns in the flesh we need to be brought to our knees we don't naturally fall upon our knees prayer is a burden to the carnal mind prayer the reading of God's holy word is a burden but when the Lord brings his dear people down under a solemn thorn in the flesh brings them to dependence and brings them to weakness brings them to their need and they cry to him then they come to him then they draw near to him and the Lord works in their heart which gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities that the power of

Christ may rest upon me you know I spoke at the beginning of the he said unto me this is as sacred as it is at the beginning at the end that the power of Christ may rest upon me I asked you at the beginning what do you know about that word he said unto me I ask you tonight what do you know about the power of Christ what do you know about the words when I'm weak then am I strong what do you know about the storms of life and the desired haven now in that psalm the 107th psalm thus he bringeth them to their desired haven what is the thus and it's this and they cried unto the Lord in their affection the storm the prayer the answer the haven the power of Christ the apostle knew it this thorn in the flesh was the storm in the wind it was weakness but it brought him to know the power of Christ resting upon him and it brought him to be still and he goes on in the verse that follows and he says this therefore I take pleasure in infirmities in reproaches in necessities in persecutions in distresses for Christ's sake when I'm weak remarkable line isn't it here he draws his conclusion what do you know about it oh I believe

I've known a little about it when I was undergoing my operation at Bristol for 12 months last March in great weakness after my bypass operation I had two sweet blessings in my soul and lay in bed in utter peace and quiet one was being violently sick just after the operation and great pain and suffering one night and that word came with such sweetness happiness I've been praying and this dropped in they gave him vinegar to drink vinegar with wine oh the with gall they gave him vinegar the sweetness of it I saw the beauty of this truth we are weak with him we have to come to these places to have fellowship with our redeemer

Christ and to know him and the second occasion was in the ward and frequently I was lying in the bed in the night praying quietly to myself and didn't realise I was praying audibly and I heard two of the godless swearing men just next to me heard one of them say the old reverend is praying but you know as he said it and I felt the malice of it all then this came they hated him without a cause all the sweetness of that night I lay and meditated for a long time I could see how they hated Christ without a cause he said he was the son of God it was the origin of their hatred and yet he was the son of God he had done nothing to merit the hatred of the

Jews but come and declare himself I that speak unto thee and they hated him without a cause all to be brought that strength that is divine strength and what is it the power of Christ may rest upon me all to know this sweet communion with him it is in the valley of tribulation that we shall learn it but it is very blessed and he said unto me what about you each here tonight what a sacred favour to have one word from the Lord and he said unto me my grace my everlasting kindness my love my mercy my redeeming blood my grace is sufficient for thee oh the extent of eternal and everlasting sufficient to cover every sin every affliction every valley every trial my strength is made perfect in weakness the words of God himself and the apostles profit from it so as the Lord spoke it out of it flowed submission beautiful submission most gladly therefore with I glory in my infirmities that the power of

[41 : 22] Christ may rest upon me I leave you with this my desire is from the youngest to the oldest and I observe tonight there are many young ones here that you might know him the king eternal immortal invisible God only wise that you might be given grace to remember your creator in the days of your youth while the evil days come not that you might be led to know him whom to know his life eternal and be given a desire never to rest satisfied but that you come to that place Jesus reveals thy self to me come in let's close with him 201 tune 49 grace is a charming sound harmonious to thee heaven with the echo shall resound and all the earth shall hear him 201 tune 49rar

Bä turbines I'm sorry.

I'm sorry.

I'm sorry.

I'm sorry.

[44 : 52] I'm sorry.

I'm sorry.

I'm sorry.

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.