

THE POWER OF CHRIST

Today's request came as a result of a recent study on Paul's "thorn in the flesh".

Request: "Usually this text has been applied to serious illnesses or major testing in CWL. I'm wondering if Paul was teaching us to "deem ourselves weak in our flesh" in order for "the Power of Christ" to be evidenced in and through us?"

If by flesh, we are talking about the struggle with undeserved suffering of the angelic conflict and not about weaknesses of the OSN. Then I am in agreement with this premise.

This request is thinking about the solution rather than on the problem of undeserved suffering in the Angelic Conflict (AC). You will recall from our previous study that the underlying theme of Paul's thorn in flesh was his boasting (kauchomai) (2 Cor.12:1, 5-7, 9)

(2 Cor.11:30) "If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness."

(2 Cor.12:9b) "Therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

This lesson will study FIVE aspects of the weaknesses in the Christian Way of Life (CWL) that bring the Power of Christ to tabernacle over the suffering Believer.

1. Paul refers to boasting about confidence in the flesh as foolishness (2 Cor.11:17).

Paul is not speaking of the weaknesses of the Old Sin Nature (OSN) (Gal.5:16-17) or weaknesses of faith (Rom.14-15). He is talking about the Believer's reliance upon the flesh and Old Man Cosmos Diabolicus (OMCD) thinking rather than applying the Divine Operating Assets (DOA) given to the Believer upon the basis of God's grace.

"On behalf of such a man will I boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses. For if I do wish to boast I shall not be foolish, for I shall be speaking the truth; but I refrain from this, so that no one may credit me with more than he sees in me or hears from me." (2 Cor.12:5-6)

What brought Paul to accept weaknesses of the flesh as a positive spiritual experience?

2. Paul states that it was the undeserving suffering (US) of the thorn in flesh, "a messenger of Satan to buffet me – to keep me from exalting myself!" (2 Cor.12:7b)

The idea of **exalting self** was used twice by Paul in 2 Cor.12:7.

Background: You recall that Paul had been stoned to death at Lystra (Acts 14) and was caught up into the third heaven and "heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak." (2 Cor.12:1-4) Paul called these inexpressible words as "the surpassing greatness of the revelation." (2 Cor.12:7)

3. Paul told the Lord three times that he had learned the lesson – "I get it, now remove the thorn." (2 Cor.12:8)

Yet the thorn remained as a reminder of what lesson for Paul? "**And He has said to me** (God's will), 'My grace (he charis) is sufficient (arkeo / p.a.ind) [enough, adequate] for you (soi / dsm) [dative of advantage], for (gar) [contrary to Human Viewpoint] power (he dunamis) is perfected (teleios / p.p.ind) [process of accomplishing an end] in [en+loc of accompanying circumstances] weakness (astheneia)'" (2 Cor.12:9a)

“Rather than praying against his infirmity, now he is boasting about it.” (Renaissance of NT, pg.532)

4. Paul had been put through “enforced humility” of undeserved suffering to learn contentment with weaknesses of the flesh through the power of Christ.

“Most gladly, therefore (change of mental attitude), I will rather (mallon) boast (kauchomai / f.m.ind) about (en+loc. of accompanying circumstance) my (mou / gsm of personal possession) weaknesses (tais astheneia) that (hina+subj of divine purpose) the power (he dunamis) of Christ (tou christos) may dwell (episkenoo / p.a.subj) [to pitch a tent over] (shechinah glory over the OT tabernacle) in (epi+acc of extent) me.” (2 Cor.12:9b; Zech.4:6)

“Therefore (dio) [because of this] (2 Cor.12:1-9) I am well content (eudokeo/ p.a.ind)

[Note that weaknesses are 1 of 5 areas for the power of Christ]

- **with** (en+accompanying circumstances) weaknesses,
- **with** insults,
- **with** distresses,
- **with** persecutions and
- **with** difficulties, for (huper+gen. of on behalf of) Christ’s sake;

[the following statement is conditioned on Paul’s Positive Volition (PV) towards the will of God]

- **for when** (gar hotan+subj) [conditional] **I am weak** (astheneo / p.a.subj), **then** (tote) [temporal adverb / truth] **I am strong.**” (12:10)

“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” (Phil.4:13)

“If Paul should backslide and think himself sufficient to the task of serving Christ, he would lose God’s power.” (Renaissance, pg.533)

5. Paul said that that the power of Christ is in the process of working to accomplish the will of God in the CWL when weakness is surrender to it.

- **Promise:** “My grace is sufficient for you,”
- **Principle:** “For power is perfected in weakness.” (2 Cor.12:9a)
- **First Conclusion:** “**Most gladly** therefore, I will **rather** boast about my weaknesses (most gladly and rather show a radical change of viewpoints and attitude in CWL).”
- **Second conclusion:** “That the power of Christ may dwell (episkenoo / pitch a tent over or upon) in me.” (2 Cor.12:9b)

This is the only time episkenoo is used in the entire NT. TD of NT believes Paul used it to emphasize this idea, “in his experience Christ’s strength came to abide in him precisely in his weaknesses.” (pg.387)

“And what is the surpassing greatness of His power towards us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of his might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.” (Eph.1:19-20)

“That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” (Eph.3:16-17)

“But it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” (Gal.6:14)