

Made Perfect in Weakness

#0405

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—June 17, 1972

“O to be like Thee! Blessed Redeemer;
This is my constant longing and prayer;
Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures,
Jesus, Thy perfect likeness to wear.

[Refrain] O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee!
Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art;
Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness,
Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.

O to be like Thee! Full of compassion,
Loving, forgiving, tender and kind,
Helping the helpless, cheering the fainting,
Seeking the wandering sinners to find.

[Refrain]

O to be like Thee! Lowly in spirit,
Holy and harmless, patient and brave;
Meekly enduring cruel reproaches,
Willing to suffer, others to save.

[Refrain.]”

“O to Be Like Thee!,” by Thomas O. Chisholm, first three stanzas.

Oh, I'm so glad that prayer can be answered, aren't you, and that it's being answered right here tonight. Praise the Lord.

Just yesterday I was sitting with a gentleman who had traveled a good many miles to spend a little time in counsel and study. It was the first time I'd met this man. He hasn't been a Christian more than a couple of years, perhaps, and has only come in contact with this message just a few weeks ago. So, he had a number of questions to ask.

And the thing that he began with was the question of divine healing because the group that he had been associated with made a good deal of this, and he was burdened about the healing of someone connected with this movement that had cancer, and that he was anxious to have healed. And it was apparent from his questions that he thought that according to the Scripture, if a man had enough faith that certainly there would be no question about the healing.

So, we opened the Word of God and began to look at some things. I asked him to look at 2 Timothy, the 4th chapter, and the 20th verse. You might like to look at

it. Because really this is an interesting question, isn't it, friends? If we have enough faith, will we be healed? If we have enough faith, will the people we pray for be healed? If we pray for somebody to be healed and that person isn't healed, does it prove that either we or the individual that we're praying for lacks faith? What is the answer to this?

Well, here's Paul writing from Rome to Timothy, his dearly beloved son in the ministry:

"Erastus abode at Corinth..." 2 Timothy 4:20.

That's one of Paul's helpers.

"...but Trophimus..." 2 Timothy 4:20.

That's another of his fellow ministers.

"...Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick" 2 Timothy 4:20.

So, I asked my new friend, I said, "Now, what about that? Why in the world did Paul go off and leave Trophimus sick in Miletum? Why didn't he heal him like that?"

By the way, had Paul healed a great many people? Oh yes, and my friend was familiar with that. He was familiar with the fact that Paul had healed hundreds, perhaps thousands of people. Why didn't he heal Trophimus, one of his own fellow ministers? Well, this doesn't say. The point is Paul had faith enough to heal hundreds of people, but somehow Trophimus wasn't healed.

Now then, we went to 1 Timothy, the 5th chapter, and the 23rd verse. Here's an earlier letter Paul wrote to Timothy, and here he's dealing with Timothy himself. And Timothy apparently has sick spells from time to time. And what does he tell Timothy?

Does he say, "Timothy, you need to pray more, you need to have more faith"?

What does he say? He puts him on some practical suggestions:

"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine..." 1 Timothy 5:23.

That is, pure grape juice.

"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" 1 Timothy 5:23.

So, this wasn't just once that Timothy felt bad, under the weather as we'd say. But it happened every now and then.

And Paul said, "Timothy, you need something more than water. Get some grape juice when you feel like this, for your often infirmities."

Why didn't Paul up and heal him? Why didn't he tell Timothy, "Timothy, if you'll just pray harder and exercise more faith, you'd get well"?

Well, my new friend began to see some points. He saw some things in the Bible he hadn't seen before. And then, we went to the experience of the apostle Paul himself, the man that was writing these words to Timothy. Let's take a look at it in 2 Corinthians the 12th chapter.

In the earlier part of this chapter, Paul is describing some of the visions that the Lord gave him, wonderful visions of glorious things in heaven. But now, in the seventh verse, he tells the program God allowed him to be on so that he wouldn't get exalted about all this:

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord..." 2 Corinthians 12:7-8.

How many times?

"...thrice..." 2 Corinthians 12:8.

How many times is that? Three times.

"...that it might depart from me. And He said unto me..."
2 Corinthians 12:8-9.

Now notice, did He say, "Paul, what's the matter with you is you don't have enough faith, and you haven't prayed long enough"?

No.

"And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.

Well, we had a good time studying these things together. You see, here the apostle Paul, one of the men greatest in faith perhaps in all the sacred Scripture history, was not only able to heal hundreds of people, he was able to win thousands to Christ and the message. But here he himself has to put up with infirmities.

And he prayed so earnestly about it that finally, the Lord said, "Paul, that's enough."

Like He told Moses, you remember, about something Moses asked him about. He said, "Moses, don't talk to Me anymore about this. It's that way."

You see, God was more anxious to save Paul than He was to heal him. And apparently, God saw that if Paul was too full of zip and energy and had these wonderful revelations and felt good every day, he might get what? Exalted.

Do you know what happens to folks that get exalted? What happened to Lucifer? He fell. Now, don't misunderstand. A person that's exalted doesn't *have* to fall. Lucifer didn't have to fall. But God saw that Paul was in danger because of the abundance of the revelations He'd given him.

And so He said, "Paul, this is the way it's going to have to be. That thorn in your flesh is going to hurt you every now and then. But never mind. I've got it all taken care of."

"...My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness..." 2 Corinthians 12:9.

The man I was talking with yesterday raised this question. He said, "You know, I don't know how to put all this together."

He said, "What thermometer is there, then, for measuring faith?"

Do you know, I never heard it put that way, but I thought, "Now, that is a good question. There is a very interesting question."

The man had in his mind, you see, that the more faith a person had, the more answers to prayer they'd have. And if they prayed for people and they got well, that proved they had a lot of faith. And if they prayed for people and they didn't get well. Well, that was a thermometer that showed the temperature wasn't very high, you understand.

And I said, "Well, my friend is that what faith is?"

I said, "I think you're thinking about hope. Hope and faith aren't the same thing at all. I can hope for a lot of things."

"But," I said, "what is faith?"

So, we turned over to Romans 10:17. Maybe you'd like to look at that one, too. I'm just telling you what we talked about together. And when I get through that little story, then we'll want to build on it a little.

How does faith come? What's it based on? What are we talking about when we talk about faith?

"So then faith cometh by..." Romans 10:17.

What?

“...hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” Romans 10:17.

Faith comes by hearing what? The Word of God. Now, we sometimes use the word “faith” in a rather loose way, as I explained to him. We may speak of a man buying some stocks on the stock exchange.

And we may say, “Well, he has faith in that company.”

I’d say he has hope in it, and faith after a fashion, in a manner. But what the Bible is talking about when it’s talking about faith (and don’t miss this, dear congregation), what the Bible is talking about when it talks about faith is not in believing *something*, it’s believing *God*, it’s believing what God says, it’s believing that what God has promised will come to pass. That’s faith.

Now, I can hope for all kinds of things, but I can only have faith when the thing that I ask for and expect is what God has promised.

Well, it began to open up to his mind, and then he began to help me finish the little study. His mind was led to the Savior’s prayer in Gethsemane. Three times Jesus prayed what? That the cup might, what? Pass. But each time He added, what?

“...Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt” Matthew 26:39.

Was that a lack of faith? Oh, no, friends. That was the highest expression of faith, wasn’t it? Wasn’t it? Can you think of any greater expression of faith than for Jesus there in the garden, faced with that awful agony and longing to be relieved from it and hoping that He might? Yet His faith says, “Father, I know that You will do the thing that is best, and so not what I ask but what You see is best; not what I will but what You will.”

He had taken our humanity, and in our human flesh ,He was crying out as we cry out sometimes, only the burden was infinitely more heavy with Him. I say that was faith, in the ultimate. What do you say?

And so, my dear friends, tonight I want to study with you from this text back in 2 Corinthians 12 something more that I think is wonderful. It has encouraged me since yesterday and today as I’ve been meditating on these matters, God has blessed my own heart.

2 Corinthians 12:8–9:

“For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me” 2 Corinthians 12:8.

Come, right now, listen, is there anybody here that has prayed that something might depart from you? Some physical problem, some mental concern, some spiritual struggle? And you’ve prayed that that thing might depart from you. Have you? Listen, Paul had that experience. And what did God say?

“And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness...” 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Did He honor the apostle’s faith by taking away the thing that Paul longed to get rid of? Did He? No. What did He do? Oh, He gave him the grace to bear it and to go ahead and accomplish something for God with that thorn in the flesh bothering him. Do you see, friend?

And you know, as I’ve been thinking about it, it thrills my heart that I can bring you tonight this wonderful fact, that you don’t have to wait till you get your problems solved to come to God. And you don’t have to wait until God removes all the difficulties from your life before you step out to *do* something for Him.

The glorious good news of the Gospel (that’s what the Gospel means is good news), the glorious good news of the Gospel is this, that no matter what situation you’re in, no matter how many problems are around you, no matter how many weaknesses and infirmities you have, God has a way to use you right where you are with all the difficulties and problems that are besetting you and upsetting you. He’s got a way to do it. He says so.

“...My grace is sufficient for thee...” 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Why, do you know, there are people that have been praying a lot longer than Paul prayed for something to be removed so they could *do* something. Bless your heart, my dear friends, the good news tonight is Jesus says:

“...My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect...” 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Where?

“...in weakness...” 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Listen, have you got the weakness to furnish? Well, He’s got the strength to go with it. And which do you think is bigger in quantity, your weakness or His strength? Which do you think, really, is bigger? Why, you know that an infinite God has infinite power, infinite might, infinite strength. And if you were 10 times as weak as you are, He could still handle the matter.

“Oh,” you say, “I wish then He’d do it so that I’d just *feel* strong.”

That isn’t the answer. See what He says here?

“And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory...” 2 Corinthians 12:9.

In the fact that I don’t have any more infirmities? Or did I read it right? What? No, I put in some words that aren’t there. Now, let me read it right, friends. I read it

the way a lot of people wish it would read. There might be some here tonight. My poor human heart wishes it read the way I read it, but it doesn't.

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

Oh, my dear friends, I'd rather have God work through a weak man than to be strong and God not have so much chance to work. Wouldn't you? Would you really? Listen.

Somebody says, “But can't God work through a strong man?”

Yes, He could, if they'd let Him. You remember who the strongest man that ever lived was? Samson, wasn't it? Yes. Did he get something done? Something. But listen, there were plenty of weak men that got 10 times more done for God than Samson ever did. Am I correct? God had a *very* hard time with Samson. Do you know what was the matter with Samson? He was so strong, and he knew it. That was his problem.

Now, God had him born for that very job and gave him his strength for that job. But I tell you, I think the reason God had the story written down in the Bible is so that you and I could understand that being strong isn't always the answer. It has its problem. It's so easy for a strong man, whether strong in muscle or strong any other way, it's so easy to depend upon that.

Think of Solomon. How was Solomon unique? The wisest man that ever lived. Do you know of anybody that ever did any more foolish things than Solomon? What was the matter? Well, he got to the place he depended on his wisdom. He had—don't miss it—he had the right answer so many times he got to the place where he thought he *a/ways* had the right answer.

But some of us, thank the Lord, get the wrong answer often enough to get humble. And if that's what it takes, friend, so be it, so be it.

Oh, I wish, friends, that God could trust a lot of us with a lot more power and strength and wisdom than we've ever thought of having. He'd like to. God takes no pleasure in our sickness, our infirmities, these thorns in the flesh. He'd like to deliver all of us from ulcers, cancers, high blood pressure, nervous breakdowns and all the rest. He'd like to lift us out of every trial and difficulty. When we weep, He weeps.

But listen, He's taking the long view. He wants to save us. And He'd rather that we'd have some problems now that help us to feel our need of *Him* and stay close to *Him* and be saved at last than miss that fellowship through all eternity. I vote with Him. What do you say? I vote with Him.

“And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness...” 2 Corinthians 12:9.

And if that means hobbling along with one lung, it's all right, isn't it, Brother Wilson? It's all right, it's all right. Better to go to heaven with one lung than to miss it

with two, isn't it? Isn't that right? And that isn't all. It's better to be used in God's work with one leg, or no legs at all, one hand, or no hands at all. It's better to be used in God's work with all kinds of handicaps than it is to be strong and healthy and full of vigor and spend our time working for the world. What do you say, friends?

Why, you think of Ellen G. White. Think of that young woman called at 17 to be God's messenger to the remnant and to the world, God's channel through which these wonderful revelations for the last generation were to be given. And who does He pick out? The weakest of the weak.

And you remember that there were some people that were called before her. And they were educated. And they were strong. They had the things she lacked, but she had what they lacked. God chose to use her weakness because He couldn't get full opportunity to use their strength and wisdom.

And do you remember the prayer that young Ellen prayed when finally the Lord kept pressing her on accepting this call?

She said, "Oh Lord, I know that there are others that You've used, and they've been exalted and lost their way. Oh Lord, if this is what You want me to do, will You please keep me from being exalted?"

And God heard her prayer, and He said, "Your prayer is heard and it'll be done. And if you're in danger of being exalted, trials and things will come that'll humble you."

Look at her life, from Portland, Maine, to Saint Helena, California, from 1844 at her call until 1815, her final call, her call to rest. And friends, it's one series of difficulties, problems. Think of the diseases that she went through, that went through her. Think of the experiences she had with tuberculosis, cancer, heart trouble, neuritis, all kinds of afflictions. Think of the problems that she had of the sorrows of bereavement, losing her little baby in her arms, losing her teenage oldest son, Henry, a beautiful singer, at the age of 16. Think of her husband cut down in the prime of life. And there she was left to struggle on through the years.

But friends, my point is God always sustained her. Think of the many problems she had with those that should have appreciated her message and instead circulated lies about her, or what was sometimes even more frustrating, just simply read the messages and put them aside and did nothing about it.

Problems, problems. Think of the financial problems that as a young wife with her husband, they had there in New England and New York. Think of those days when it was a problem to know how to get just enough food to keep them living from day to day, as they were struggling to get the publishing work started and to preach the message.

Abundance of revelations? Yes. Abundance of afflictions? Yes. Ah friends, some people would rather have fewer revelations and fewer trials. And some people are content to have no trials and no revelations. But thank God, the apostle Paul,

called by the Master Himself, got the view, and he was *willing* to accept God's program. He was willing to let God use what he had regardless of what it cost him.

He didn't wait until he got strong. He started letting God use his weakness. And bless the Lord, friends, he got more done than 10 strong men. Why? Because he was willing to let God use him.

What is your problem tonight, my friends? Is it a physical problem? A mental problem? A problem in the family? A spiritual problem? Whatever your problem is, it's your privilege to pray as Paul did, "Lord, please remove this."

And God may do it. He does it sometimes. God answers prayer.

"Sometimes when hearts are weak
He gives the very gift believers seek;
But often faith must learn a deeper rest,
And trust God's silence when He does not speak."
Author Unknown.

Oh, let me tell you, friends. If short division is learning to get answers to your prayers so that you see the answers, long division is learning to pray when the answers aren't apparent and still maintaining your faith. That's right. If kindergarten is praying and things happen just like that, real school is getting down to the practical business of letting God use your weakness to magnify His strength.

"...Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities,
that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I
take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in
persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am
weak, then am I strong" 2 Corinthians 12:9–10.

What a paradox, friends. Let's be willing for God to use us, all there is of us. What do you say?

If you are having a problem, whatever it is, tobacco, or liquor, or any other problem with some physical craving, perhaps it's overeating. Listen, what is your prayer?

Do you pray, "Oh, Lord, deliver me from this craving, and I'll never, I'll never fall again"?

Is that the way you pray? Well, there's nothing wrong with asking God to remove the craving for tobacco, or liquor, or overeating, or anything else.

But we must always pray, "Nevertheless," what?

"Not as I will, but as You will" [a paraphrase of Matthew 26:39].

But listen, there's one thing that we'll *know* is God's will, and that is for you to have victory. No question about that.

You say, "But I can't have victory because the craving is so strong."

Bless your heart, friends, I have proved to you from God's book tonight that His strength is made perfect in what? In weakness. Can you furnish the weakness? Can you? Well, let God furnish the strength. Put Him to the test.

Here's a man, I've seen it many a time, he comes face to face with God's message for today, and he sees that the seventh-day's the Sabbath, and that God's true creation Sabbath is the seal of the living God. And he sees that it's the great issue in this last generation.

But he says, "What can I do? I've got to make a living. I've got to support my family. And the job that I have requires me to work at least part of the time during the 24 hours from Friday sundown till Saturday sundown. What can I do?"

And he may pray and he may get his family to pray and he may get others to pray, "Lord, open the way so I can keep Your commandments."

Is that a good prayer?

Well, it's all right to pray that way, provided we say, "Now, Lord, I'd be so glad if you'd open the way so my employer would let me off, or I could find another job. *But*, Lord, I know that your strength is made perfect in weakness and I'm not going to wait until I see the way clear. I'm going to step out in obedience, and by faith I'm going to say, 'dear Lord, I'm going to obey You whether I know how it'll work out or not.'"

Do you see, friends? And so, with every other problem, every other difficulty, every other trial. Here's a man, his problem is losing his temper. Every now and then, he tells his family off and scolds the children. He talks mean to his wife. He feels sorry about it.

He gets down and prays and says, "Oh, Lord, help me. I wish you'd take that angry temper out of me so that I'd never feel mad again so that I'd always feel like a meek lamb. This is the way I want."

And he means it. Now, listen. God hears his prayer. But the way God answers it may not be to fix him up, up here, so that he never feels anything but like a lamb. Oh, no, friend. Oh, no. Do you remember what I studied with you not too long ago about "Must Christians Struggle," and I showed you from the book of Romans that it is possible for the righteousness of the law to be fulfilled in us even though the flesh is clamoring against the Spirit. But thank God, the Spirit can rule in our lives.

Listen, you people with angry tempers, I know what you're up against. I've carried one around for a long time. But I believe this wonderful promise of God that I don't have to act like I feel. I don't have to talk like I feel like talking. Bless the Lord, no. There is victory in Jesus Christ. Not the victory necessarily of a calm summer evening with everything peaceful.

And I say, “Oh, this is wonderful! I wouldn’t want to hurt anybody.”

No, no. But the victory that comes, friends, in knowing that we don’t have to act like we feel—that we can talk about Jesus, talk of His love. If necessary, close our lips through faith in God and say nothing rather than dishonor our Redeemer. What do you say?

My point is this, whatever your problem, physical, mental, or spiritual, pray anything you want, ask God for any method of deliverance. But remember, like Jesus, say:

“...Nevertheless...” Matthew 26:39.

What?

“...not as I will, but as Thou wilt” Matthew 26:39.

“I wish I didn’t have to drink the cup, but if that’s the way, then I’ll drink it. I wish I could feel strong, but if it’s necessary for me to feel weak lest I be exalted above measure, Lord I’ll carry that thorn in the flesh. I’ll let your strength be made perfect in weakness.”

“And if I can’t be as strong as Samson, if I’m as weak as Ellen Harmon was back there in Portland, Maine, in 1844, I’ll say, ‘Here I am, Lord. Use whatever You can of me, and I’ll let *Your* name get the glory.’”

What do you say? All right. I want to ask you. Is there somebody here tonight—this isn’t just a general call. I want to know if there’s some individual here tonight that knows that God brought you here to hear this message tonight, and by God’s grace you’re going to let His strength be made perfect in your weakness. You’re not going to wait until some difficulty is removed. You’re going to step out to do what you know God wants you to do, no matter how you feel.

If you feel that God has given you this message tonight for *you*, and you’re responding, would you just stand where you are? I want to see if there’s somebody that God’s Spirit speaks to. Thank the Lord, friends, for everyone. Remain standing a moment, will you?

Oh, I’m so thankful for every one of you, friends. What’s the use of having bows and arrows if the arrow never hits the mark? I praise God that His Holy Spirit is witnessing to hearts.

Is there somebody else that’s been having a battle over something? And you see tonight that the answer isn’t always in having the difficulty removed, but rather in humility you see that God wants you to just step out to do what God says no matter how you feel, and you believe God will give you the strength. No matter how you feel, you’re going to go ahead and do it.

Somebody else that says, “Yes, this is for me”?

Oh, praise the Lord, friends, praise the Lord for everyone. I know He loves you. I know He loves you. He's a wonderful Savior, a wonderful Savior.

Would you turn to number 567 [old *Church Hymnal* (1941)]? I wish you'd all stand and sing this with me as a closing song.

Now listen, as we sing, friends. I want to give an invitation. There may be somebody here that stood, or maybe somebody that didn't stand, but you want to make a decision like this tonight. I want to know if there's somebody here tonight that you see that tonight you need to make a decision to accept God's message for the day. You've been hearing about the Sabbath truth, about other truths connected with this last-generation message, and you see that God wants you to step out to accept it.

Maybe you haven't started to keep the Sabbath, but you believe this is God's day, and tonight God's calling you to make a decision. Will you come forward and give me your hand?

Maybe there's somebody else, you've already started to keep the Sabbath, but you see tonight that God would like to have you get ready to unite with this movement either by baptism or in some other way, and you see that you need to unite with this movement. If you'd like to get ready for that, you may not be ready tonight, but if you'd like to *get* ready, we'll arrange studies for you, you come up, give me your hand.

And if there's somebody else that God is calling, perhaps some backslider, and you want to come back tonight, anybody that needs to make a decision to come all the way with Christ and this message tonight, you come and give me your hand as we sing 567.

[Recording ended in progress]

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