

was something to keep him from being puffed up, but this is not strength. We have got the blessedness of Paul in the third heaven. We have got the man in Christ who can thank and bless God for what we are made in Christ—who can say of all of us, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." But after this we have another thing, the flesh and its inclination to be puffed up. And then we find a third thing, the flesh made exceedingly disagreeable. But this is not strength—on the contrary, it is the emptying of strength. You cannot get God to help the flesh and to help self-will. He will break it down. He will humble you by it, but He will never help it. He breaks the vessel, that we may know that the power is not of man but of God. So that he says here, "When I am weak, then am I strong." When I am weak, I feel that I am weak. I know the truth about myself. Here the apostle was preaching, and his manner of preaching was contemptible, and yet hundreds of people were converted through it. Well, this does not come from what is contemptible; it does not come from Paul but from God. The Lord then, when He had made him feel his weakness, says, "My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness." If Paul had got strength, Christ need not have had so much for him; but if Paul had none, the strength that came from Christ was in him. The man had been brought into conscious