

STRONG IN WEAKNESS – 2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-10

INTRODUCTION

1. Being self-sufficient is a character trait that many people value.
2. In fact, for some, the thought of relying on others is often considered a sign of weakness.
3. Let's consider another paradox in the Bible that reminds us that it is only when we are weak, that we can become truly strong (**2 Cor. 12:10**).

DISCUSSION

I. SEEING THE WEAKNESS IN OUR STRENGTH

- A. How did Paul come to value his weakness?
- B. He had learned by the help of God to see the weakness in relying on his own strength.
- C. Before coming to Christ, he had been an important man among the Jews and had been given authority to wage a war of persecution on Christians.
- D. In his time of serving the Lord, there were many things that had happened to him that were extraordinary.
 - i. He had seen and heard the risen Lord (**Acts 9:1-9**).
 - ii. He had been appointed an apostle by the Lord.
 - iii. He had experienced visions and had received revelations (**2 Cor. 12:1-6**).
- E. It would have been easy for Paul to become conceited because of his success and his experiences.
- F. As we go through life and gain experience and wisdom, it is easy for us to become confident that we are in control of our lives and that we can handle whatever life throws our way.
- G. In America, we believe strongly in the power of the individual to achieve.
- H. We are confident that through our own effort and determination anyone can "pull themselves up by their bootstraps."
- I. Once we achieve some success, it is easy to become conceited and, like King Uzziah and so many others, we forget all about the Lord (**2 Chron. 26:15-16; Deut. 8:11-17; Prov. 16:18**).
- J. We are often blinded to this kind of pride, believing we are sufficient in ourselves to accomplish our own purposes as well as God's purposes (**Jas. 4:13-17**).
- K. Thankfully for Paul, God helped him to see the weakness in relying on his own strength by allowing him to suffer various hardships and trials (**2 Cor. 12:7-9**).
 - i. Paul was very aware of the danger of becoming conceited and boasting in the power and experiences God had blessed him with.
 - ii. Like the Lord in Gethsemane, Paul pleaded with God three times to remove his suffering, but God said no (**Mark 14:35-41**).
- L. When we find ourselves relying too much on ourselves, may God humble us and remind us that when we rely on our own strength, we are weak (**Jas. 4:10**).

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II. FINDING STRENGTH IN OUR WEAKNESS

- A.** Somehow, Paul was able not only to be content with his own weakness and suffering, but also to find value and even strength in it **(2 Cor. 12:9-10)**.
- B.** How was God able to transform weakness into strength for Paul and how can He do the same for you and me?
- C.** In trial and tragedy, God often can reach us and help us to see that we really are weak and that despite all of our ability, we still need Him.
- D.** He is the Almighty who is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent – not us.
- E.** When we stop relying solely on ourselves and start relying on Him, then we can find true strength in Him and with Him.
- F.** As the Lord told Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you” **(2 Cor. 12:9)**.
- G.** Paul had learned that in his preaching, teaching, and in all his spiritual needs, God would provide **(2 Cor. 3:5-6; 1 Cor. 2:1-5)**.
 - i.** This means that when we go out and try to share the gospel with the lost, we don’t need to worry so much about our ability, approach, etc. **(2 Cor. 10:10)**.
 - ii.** Because the power and strength are God’s and not ours **(2 Cor. 4:7; Rom. 1:16)**.
- H.** Paul had learned that despite his physical limitations and infirmities, God would provide and equip him to accomplish His will.
 - i.** Paul’s thorn appeared to be painful and permanent.
 - ii.** But despite this suffering, Paul was able to evangelize the lost, edify the saved and endure much suffering **(2 Cor. 11:23-28)**.
 - iii.** If we trust in God like Paul and face trial, illness or infirmities with faith, then God can turn our weakness into strength and do much good **(Heb. 11:34)**.
- I.** Even when it came to material needs, Paul had learned that God’s grace would equip the Christian to accomplish His will **(2 Cor. 9:8)**.
 - i.** Paul sometimes enjoyed full support, sometimes made tents to make ends meet, and sometimes went without.
 - ii.** But regardless of his circumstances he learned to be content and to trust in the Lord to help him do what he had the ability to do **(Phil. 4:11-13)**.
 - iii.** When we have the ability and the opportunity to give and share, we need to trust in God to equip us to do what He desires **(2 Cor. 8:1-5; 9:6-11)**.
- J.** When we find ourselves suffering afflictions and trials, let us not allow Satan to deceive us into using them as an excuse to not serve God, but to allow them to draw us closer to God and rely on His strength.

CONCLUSION

- 1.** Are you always struggling to find strength in yourself or other people?
- 2.** May God help us to realize that we cannot do everything without Him **(Ps. 20:7; 118:8)**.
- 3.** May we learn to stop looking to ourselves and start looking to Him.
- 4.** May God help us to embrace this truth: that it is in our weakness that He can manifest His power in us and make us strong so we can truly bring Him glory **(2 Cor. 12:9; 13:4)**.