

Be Encouraged

Strength Through Weakness

7/1/2001

Reading: [2 Corinthians 13:4-6](#)

Text: [2 Corinthians 12:1-10](#)

Introduction:

[2 Corinthians 12:1-10](#)

#1 What ARE the Weaknesses? [v. 10](#)

- A. Insults**--when people think of clever ways of making your faith or your life-style or your words look stupid or weird or inconsistent.
 - B. Hardships** circumstances forced upon you, reversals of fortune against your will. You didn't plan it or think it would be this way. But there you are and it's hard.
 - C. Persecutions** wounds or abuses or painful circumstances or acts of prejudice or exploitation from people because of your Christian faith.
 - D. Calamities** (or distresses or difficulties or troubles) -- being pressured or crushed or weighed down; circumstances that tend to overcome you with stress and tension.
- Paul is not talking about Sin, or temptations**
- 1. He is not talking about a weakness for **lust** or **overeating** or **money**.
 - 2. Paul is not talking about **bad choices** that we make.
- E. Weaknesses are circumstances** and situations and experiences and wounds that make us look weak; things we would get rid of if we could.
- 1. If we were "strong" we might return the insult better than it was given!
 - 2. If we were "strong" we might change being forced into discomfort.
 - 3. If we were "strong" we would return persecution so quickly and so decisively that no one would mess with us again.
 - 4. In reality we don't usually have that kind of human strength, and even when we may have it, Christians don't use it the way the world does.
 - a. [Matthew 5:38-42](#) Jesus tells us not to return evil for evil
 - b. [1 Corinthians 4:12-13](#) Paul said "When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we try to conciliate. We have become like the refuse of the world, the off-scouring of all things."

#2 What is the Source of this weakness?

A. Do they come from Satan or from God? Or both?

- 1. Let's look at Paul's "Thorn in the Flesh!" for an example [v. 7](#)
- 2. In [v. 1-4](#), Paul describes amazing revelations of God's glory
- 3. In [v. 7](#), "Lest I should be exalted above measure, a thorn in the flesh"
- 4. This thorn in the flesh is a weakness, [v. 9](#) "perfect in weakness"

B. BOTH!

- 1. [v. 7](#) a messenger of Satan—his aim is destruction and death and misery
- 2. God is also at work: Satan's work is to destroy, but God's work to save!
 - a. The thorn is described as preventing pride: Satan produces pride; God used Satan's hostile intentions for Paul's holiness and humility
 - b. Paul prayed to have it removed, but God said, "No."
- 3. **Just like it was with Job**--God permitted Satan to afflict his righteous servant, and turned the affliction for his good purposes.
- 4. **Just like it was with Peter!** [Luke 22:31-32](#)—And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. "But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."

#3 What is the PURPOSE of this Weakness?

A. Satan's purpose is to buffet you or harass you

- 1. So it is OK to pray for relief. Pain is not a good thing in itself.
- 2. God does not delight in your suffering. Satan does and must be resisted.

B. God's purpose over and in Satan's harassment is our humility.

- 1. Paul was in danger of pride and self-exaltation so God helped him.
- 2. God thinks humility is more important than comfort and painlessness.
- 3. God's purpose is our humility and lowliness and reliance on him
- 4. [2 Corinthians 1:9](#)—Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead;
- 5. [2 Corinthians 4:7](#)—But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

C. God's purpose is to glorify the grace and power of his Son.

- 1. God's design is to make you a showcase for Jesus' power.
- 2. Let God be God here. If he wills to show the perfection of his Son's power in our weakness instead of by our escape from weakness then he knows best, trust him.
- 3. [Hebrews 11:33-38](#) says it right!
 - a. By faith some escaped the edge of the sword, some killed by it.
 - b. By faith some stopped the mouths of lions, and others sawn in two.
 - c. By faith some were mighty in war, and others suffered imprisonment
- 4. The answer to weakness and adversity is not quick relief, but what God is building into our lives: humility and the praise of Christ!