



*Weakness Is
Called
Into Account*

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Spiritual Weakness

2 Corinthians 12:10

Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

When we are strong in abilities or resources, we are tempted to do God's work on our own, and that can lead to pride. When we are weak, allowing God to fill us with *his* power, then we are stronger than we could ever be on our own.

God does not intend for us to be weak, passive, or ineffective—life provides enough hindrances and setbacks without us creating them. When those obstacles come, we must depend on God. Only his power will make us effective for him and will help us do work that has lasting value.

The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Matthew 26:41

"Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Jesus used Peter's drowsiness to warn him about the kinds of temptation he would soon face. The way to overcome temptation is to keep alert and pray. Keeping alert means being aware of the possibilities of temptation, sensitive to the subtleties, and spiritually equipped to fight it.

Because temptation strikes where we are most vulnerable, we can't resist it alone. Prayer is essential because God's strength can shore up our defenses and defeat Satan's power.

Abraham was weak in the flesh.

Romans 4:19

Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb;

Abraham never doubted that God would fulfill his promise. Abraham's life was marked by mistakes, sins, and failures as well as by wisdom and goodness, but he consistently trusted God. His faith was strengthened by the obstacles he faced, and his life was an example of faith in action. If he had looked only at his own resources for subduing Canaan and founding a nation, he would have given up in despair. But Abraham looked to God, obeyed him, and waited for God to fulfill his word.

God has chosen the foolish things of the earth to shame the wise.

1 Corinthians 1:27-29

but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God.

Is Christianity against rational thinking? Christians clearly do believe in using their minds to weigh the evidence and make wise choices.

Paul is declaring that no amount of human knowledge can replace or bypass Christ's work on the cross. If it could, Christ would be accessible only to the intellectually gifted and well educated and not to ordinary people or to children.

Paul does not use persuasive words, but the spirit and power.

1 Corinthians 2:2-5

For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power....

A brilliant scholar, Paul could have overwhelmed his listeners with intellectual arguments. Instead, he shared the simple message of Jesus Christ by allowing the Holy Spirit to guide his words. In sharing the Good News with others, we should follow Paul's example and keep our message simple and basic. The Holy Spirit will give power to our words and use them to bring glory to Jesus.

Paul's confidence was not in his keen intellect or speaking ability but in his knowledge that the Holy Spirit was helping and guiding him. Paul is not denying the importance of study and preparation for preaching; he had a thorough education in the Scriptures.

Effective preaching results from studious preparation and reliance on the work of the Holy Spirit. Don't use Paul's statement as an excuse for not studying or preparing.

God gives strength to the weary.

Isaiah 40:29-31

He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, and they will walk and not become weary.

Even the strongest people get tired at times, but God's power and strength never diminish. He is never too tired or too busy to help and listen. His strength is our source of strength. When you feel all of life crushing you and you cannot go another step, remember that you can call upon God to renew your strength.

Trusting in the Lord is the patient expectation that God will fulfill his promises in his Word and strengthen us to rise above life's difficulties

God awakens me to listen to discipline.

Isaiah 50:4

The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of disciples that I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word He awakens me morning by morning, He awakens my ear to listen as a disciple.

God promised to fight for Israel, but Israel sold itself into sin. Israel had caused its own problems. The people of Israel forgot God and trusted in other countries to help them. God had not rejected Israel, but Israel had rejected God.

If we walk by our own light and reject God's, we become self-sufficient, and the result of self-sufficiency is torment. When we place confidence in our own intelligence, appearance, or accomplishments instead of in God, we risk torment later when these strengths fade.

God will refresh everyone who languishes.

Jeremiah 31:25

"For I satisfy the weary ones and refresh everyone who languishes."



To those who lack might, he increases.

Isaiah 40:29

He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power.

God will bring back the scattered.

Ezekiel 34:16

"I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick; but the fat and the strong I will destroy I will feed them with judgment.

Isaiah referred to the prophecies that God commanded him to write down as the "book of the LORD." Whoever lived to see the time of Edom's destruction would have only to look up these prophecies to find agreement between what happened and what was predicted. Prophecy predicts and history reveals what has been in God's mind for all time.

Let the weak say I am strong.

Joel 3:10

Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; Let the weak say, "I am a mighty man."

Joel described multitudes waiting in the "valley of decision" (the valley of judgment of verses 2 and 12).

Billions of people have lived on earth, and every one of them—dead, living, and yet to be born—will face judgment.

Look around you. See your friends—those with whom you work and live. Have they received God's forgiveness?

Have they been warned about sin's consequences? If we understand the severity of God's final judgment, we will want to take God's offer of hope to those we know.

From weakness, they became mighty in war.

Hebrews 11:34

Quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, and became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

Having a steadfast faith in God does not guarantee a happy, carefree life. On the contrary, our faith almost guarantees us some form of abuse from the world. While we are on earth, we may never see the purpose of our suffering. But we know that God will keep his promises to us.

The strong should bear the weaknesses of those without strength.

Romans 15:1

Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves.

The knowledge of the Scriptures affects our attitude toward the present and the future. The more we know about what God has done in years past, the greater the confidence we have about what he will do in the days ahead. We need to diligently read our Bibles so we may have confidence that God's will is best for us.

Accept those who are weak in faith.

Romans 14:1

Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.

We are all weak in some areas and strong in others. Our faith is strong in an area if we can survive contact with worldly people without falling into their patterns. It is weak in an area if we must avoid certain activities, people, or places in order to protect our spiritual life.

It is important to take self-inventory in order to find out our strengths and weaknesses. Whenever in doubt, we should ask, Can I do that without sinning? Can I influence others for good, rather than being influenced by them?

In areas of strength, we should not fear being defiled by the world; rather we should go and serve God. In areas of weakness, we need to be cautious. If we have a strong faith but shelter it, we are not doing Christ's work in the world. If we have a weak faith but expose it, we are being extremely foolish.

This verse assumes there will be differences of opinion in the church about what is right or wrong. Paul says we are not to quarrel about issues that are matters of opinion. Differences should not be feared or avoided but accepted and handled with love.

Don't expect everyone, even in the best possible church, to agree on every subject. Through sharing ideas we can come to a fuller understanding of what the Bible teaches. Accept, listen to, and respect others. Differences of opinion need not cause division. They can be a source of learning and richness in our relationships.

What is weak faith? Paul is speaking about immature faith that has not yet developed the muscle it needs to stand against external pressures. For example, if a person who once worshiped idols became a Christian, he might understand perfectly well that Christ saved him through faith and that idols have no real power. Still, because of his past associations, he might be badly shaken if he unknowingly ate meat that had been used in idol worship.

If a person who once worshiped God on the required Jewish holy days became a Christian, he might well know that Christ saved him through faith, not through his keeping of the law. Still, when the festival days came, he might feel empty and unfaithful if he didn't dedicate those days to God. Paul responds to both weak brothers in love.

We are weak, but God is strong.

1 Corinthians 4:10

We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor.

The Corinthians had split into various cliques, each following its favorite preacher (Paul, Apollos, Peter, etc.). Each clique really believed it was the only one to have the whole truth and thus felt spiritually proud.

But Paul told the groups not to boast about being tied to a particular preacher, because each preacher was simply a humble servant who had suffered for the same message of salvation in Jesus Christ. No preacher of God has more status than another.

Paul could relate with all kinds of people.

1 Corinthians 9:22

To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.



Strengthen the hands of the weak.

Hebrews 12:12

Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble,

We must not live with only our own survival in mind. Others will follow our example, and we have a responsibility to them if we are living for Christ, as we claim to be.

Do not turn to the right or the left that you may have success.

Joshua 1:6-7

"Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. "Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go.

Many people think that prosperity and success come from having power, influential personal contacts, and a relentless desire to get ahead. But the strategy for gaining prosperity that God taught Joshua goes against such criteria. He said that to succeed Joshua must (1) be strong and courageous because the task ahead would not be easy, (2) obey God's law, and (3) constantly read and study the Book of Instruction—God's Word. To be successful, follow God's words to Joshua. You may not succeed by the world's standards, but you will be a success in God's eyes—and his opinion is most important.

God will clothe you.

Matthew 6:28-33

"And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith....

Because of the ill effects of worry, Jesus tells us not to worry about those needs that God promises to supply.

Worry may

- (1) Damage your health,
- (2) Disrupt your productivity,
- (3) Negatively affect the way you treat others, and
- (4) Reduce your ability to trust in God.

Act like men, be strong.

1 Corinthians 16:13

Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, and be strong.

As the Corinthians awaited Paul's next visit, they were directed to:

(1) *Be on guard*. They were to be constantly watchful or alert for spiritual enemies that might slip in and threaten to destroy them whether it be divisions, pride, sin, disorder, or erroneous theology;

(2) *Stand firm* in what they believed—that is, the gospel that they had been taught in the beginning, the gospel that had brought them salvation;

(3) *Be courageous* so that they could stand against false teachers, deal with sin in the congregation, and straighten out other problems;

(4) *Be strong*, with the strength given by the Holy Spirit; and

(5) *do everything with love* because without love, they would be no more than prideful noisemakers. Today, as we wait for the return of Christ, we should follow the same instructions.

Stand strong, giving glory to God.

Romans 4:20

Yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,



The strong wind became calm.

Matthew 8:26

He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.

Although the disciples had witnessed many miracles, they panicked in this storm. As experienced sailors, they knew its danger; what they did not know was that Christ could control the forces of nature. We often encounter storms in our life, where we feel God can't or won't work. When we truly understand who God is, however, we will realize that he controls both the storms of nature and the storms of the troubled heart.

Jesus' power that calmed this storm can also help us deal with the problems we face. Jesus is willing to help if we only ask him. We should never discount his power even in terrible trials.

Jesus reached out his hand and saved Peter.

Matthew 14:30-31

But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Although we start out with good intentions, sometimes our faith falters. This doesn't necessarily mean we have failed. When Peter's faith faltered, he reached out to Christ, the only one who could help. He was afraid, but he still looked to Christ. When you are apprehensive about the troubles around you and doubt Christ's presence or ability to help, remember that he is always with you and is the *only* one who can really help.

Kindle afresh the Gift of God within you.

2 Timothy 1:6-8

For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,

At the time of his ordination, Timothy had received special gifts of the Spirit to enable him to serve the church (see [1 Timothy 4:14](#)). In telling Timothy to "fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you," Paul was encouraging him to persevere.

Timothy did not need new revelations or new gifts; he needed the courage and self-discipline to hang on to the truth and to use the gifts he had already received (see [1:13, 14](#)). If Timothy would step out boldly in faith and proclaim the Good News once again, the Holy Spirit would go with him and give him power.

Ask in faith without doubting.

James 1:6

But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.

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Paul was encouraging him to persevere. Timothy did not need new revelations or new gifts; he needed the courage and self-discipline to hang on to the truth and to use the gifts he had already received (see 1:13, 14). If Timothy would step out boldly in faith and proclaim the Good News once again, the Holy Spirit would go with him and give him power. When you use the gifts God has given you, you will find that God will give you the power you need to accomplish whatever task he gives you.

Clearly Timothy's spiritual gift had been given to him when Paul and the elders had laid their hands on him and set him apart for ministry (see 1 Timothy 4:14). God gives all Christians gifts to use to build up the body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:4-31), and he gives special gifts to some through church leaders, who serve as God's instruments.

Timothy was experiencing great opposition to his message and to himself as a leader. His youth, his association with Paul, and his leadership had come under fire from believers and nonbelievers alike. Paul urged him to be bold. When we allow people to intimidate us, we neutralize our effectiveness for God.

The power of the Holy Spirit can help us overcome our fear of what some might say or do to us so that we can continue to do God's work.

An invitation is given to open your heart's door to Jesus

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart, please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print