

Blog



Weakness

Do you feel weak?

“We are all full of weaknesses and errors,” said Voltaire. Generally speaking, our culture would regard strength as a positive and weakness as a negative. “Focus on your strengths, not your weaknesses,” is a popular mantra for personal development.

Yet weakness is a fact of life. It is part of the human condition. Like it or not, we are all weak, and our weakness confronts us often. “No one enjoys feeling weak, whether it is emotionally, spiritually or physically. There is something within the human spirit

that wants to resist the thought of weakness. Many times this is nothing more than our human pride at work.” (Charles Stanley)

In the kingdom of God, which contrasts so starkly with the culture of our age, weakness is regarded as the route to great power. Paul the apostle discovered this in his own experience, and he wrote,

“So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

A great apostle had to come to terms with great weakness. Yet he learned some profound truths while living with weakness.

Weakness and Pride - what weakness teaches us about ourselves

“So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh.”

Weakness and pride. Weakness teaches us something about ourselves. Pride and self reliance are common traits. Yet we are not as good as we think we are. Paul battled pride, as do so many of us. He was in danger of mis-believing in himself, until a thorn got stuck in his flesh and showed him up for the weak man he truly was. Success breeds pride, weakness produces faith. “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (James 4:6) We are what we are by God’s grace rather than by our own abilities and successes. “Before God gives strength, we must be made to

feel our weakness. Slow, painfully slow, are we to learn this lesson and take the place of helplessness before the Mighty One.” (A. W. Pink) Weakness teaches us about our tendency to pride.

Weakness and Providence - what weakness teaches us about the devil

“A messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.”

Weakness and providence. Weakness teaches us something about the devil. Whatever Paul’s thorn was, it came from Satan. But it was used by God to produce a positive result in the life of his servant. Repeatedly, we see in the Bible, and in our daily experience, how infinitely clever God is and how short-sighted the devil is. Every attack from our enemy plays into God’s providential hands. “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28) The devil can never fatally harm us. Providence takes his worst assault and uses it for our betterment. Weakness teaches us that the devil unwittingly serves God’s providence.

Weakness and Power - what weakness teaches us about God

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

Weakness and power. Weakness teaches us something about God. God is all powerful. But we don’t experience that truth until, in our weakness, we let God get his way. The power of the omnipotent God is available to us, to work through us. But as a dam is to a river, so is our pride to the current of God’s power. “Men have no taste for God’s power till they are convinced of their need of it and they immediately forget its value unless they are conditionally reminded by awareness of their own weakness.” (John Calvin) God uses our weakness as a platform for

his power. “It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit.” (Harry S Truman) Weakness teaches us about God and his power.

Paul became strong when he was weakened. “Deny your weakness, and you will never realise God's strength in you.” (Joni Eareckson Tada) We are all weak, and it is in our weakness that God's strength is discovered. “Let the weak say, ‘I am strong!’” (Joel 3:10) Weakness has much to teach us. God's power is made perfect in our weakness.