

Weakness and strength

What it means to be strong or weak should be simple enough to understand. Yet, when we look at the New Testament it can become quite confusing. Statements made by Paul the apostle like, 'When I am weak then I am strong', appear to be contradictory. However, as we give attention and study the subject, the matter will become clear.

We notice as we study the New Testament that we are exhorted to be strong in faith, to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. We are told that out of weakness we can be made strong. Timothy was told to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The meaning of the word 'strong' in the verses listed is 'to be made powerful inwardly'. It means 'to be strong on the inside'. We read of the strong, natural temperament of John the Baptist and his ability to live in the desert until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

Paul tells those who are strong in their convictions and of robust faith, to bear with the failings and frailties of those who are weak. It appears in a preliminary way from reading these verses that the ideal and best way to live as a Christian is to live from strength. A conclusion that some may come to is that those who are weak can still be Christians, but they are seriously disadvantaged.

However, Paul tells us that the weakness of God is stronger than men, and the foolishness of God is wiser than men. He further calls our attention to the fact that God, on percentage, does not call many of the mighty, noble or wise of this world to be His ministers.

References:

2Co 12:10 Rom 4:20
Eph 6:10 Heb 11:34
2Ti 2:1 Luk 1:18
Rom 15:1 1Co 1:25-26

Further Study

2Co 13

Daily Gospel

Luke 17

God has chosen the weak things

We read in the book of Corinthians that God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong. He has chosen the base things of the world and the despised, the things that 'are not', that He might nullify the things 'that are', so that no man should boast before God.

Paul was one of the best examples in the New Testament of one who was strong and wise in human terms, but was made weak so that he could become a successful minister of Christ. Paul had to willingly embrace weakness as the way by which he would minister. Christ ministered in weakness and was finally crucified because of weakness. There is a crisis that each of us will face as we come to understand this principle. There is a crisis of faith when we make the decision to follow in the way of Christ.

Paul explained to the Corinthians that weakness is a fundamental principle that we, as Christians, are to live by. Paul was taught by Christ to be content with weakness. Almost every time he set out in obedience to do what the Lord asked him to do, Satan stepped in and motivated people to oppose him and frustrate many of the things that he did. It was as if he had a thorn in his flesh – constant pain and frustration every time he tried to do a good work for God. It took Paul some time to come to terms with this kind of thinking.

References:

1Co 1:27-29
2Co 12:8-9
Psa 8:2
Isa 29:14, 19

Further Study

Mat 11

Daily Gospel

Luke 18

His power is perfected in weakness

Paul went to prayer about his circumstances, hoping it was just a phase he was passing through. He asked the Lord to remove the satanic obstruction from his pathway so that he could get on with his predestination and do the works that belonged to his name. Three times he went to prayer over his situation. He wouldn't give up. He believed that the blessing of the Lord belonged to him, and that Christ would eventually defeat the devil on his behalf and smooth out the way before him.

The Lord finally answered him and said, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in your weakness'. When we are strong, there is no way that the power of God can be manifest in us. Our strength and capacities get in the way of Christ's strength and capacity. The amazing principle by which God is working in the church in this phase of human history is that His power will be perfected in weakness.

Paul came to understand this principle. Paul had received many great revelations from God. Christ had shown him God's plan for the church age and had called him to be a master builder. Paul's work was to establish the church in the Gentile world, so the Lord allowed Satan to become a thorn in his flesh to stop him from exalting himself. Satan was allowed to send one of the angels that had fallen from heaven with him because of pride, to harass and buffet Paul. Without Satan's 'negative help', Paul would have fallen, as Satan did, from grace. If Paul had gone out on the basis of these revelations to do the will of God in his own strength, he would have been overcome by pride if he had succeeded, because of his own ability.

References:

2Co 12:7, 9 Act 9:15
Rom 15:16 Gal 2:9
Eph 3:8

Further Study

Jos 1

Daily Gospel

Luke 19

Content with weakness

Jesus Christ maintained Paul by His grace and kept him alive, enabling him to minister only by grace. Catching hold of the reality that his salvation and survival depended on accepting this proposition given to him by Christ, Paul said, 'Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses [and necessary humiliation], so that the power of Christ may dwell in me'.

He was saying that, if the power of Christ dwelt in him, he was well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, and with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for his confession was, 'When I am weak, then I am strong'. The world considers that anyone who claims to minister from weakness is illogical and foolish. Paul was made strong by the power of God.

The cross was the demonstration of the weakness of God. Christ progressively became weak and finally died under the pressure of sin, physical abuse and the judgement of God. Look at Christ dying on the cross. He was surrounded by the rulers of the nation and a large number of people, many of whom were sneering at Him saying, 'Save yourself if you are the Son of God'.

Paul had already resolved the issue of remaining weak in human initiative, relying completely on the resources that came from the grace of Christ. The obvious question in all of this is, 'How can one win by losing?' Yet it was through the cross that the wisdom and power of God was demonstrated. As he wrote to the Corinthians, Paul accepted that, not only was the work of the cross accomplished in weakness, but the word of the cross also had to be ministered in human weakness. In this way, the power of God could be effective through the word to demonstrate the wisdom of God.

References:

2Co 12:9-10
1Co 1:21, 25
Luk 23:35, 37, 39
1Co 2:2

Further Study

Gal 6

Daily Gospel

Luke 20

Divisions in Corinth

The Corinthian church was in deep trouble. Many of them had rejected Paul. They were looking for a different model of leadership. They had embraced others as leaders. Corinth's new apostolic leadership were men and women of human capacity and education, fluent speakers claiming connection as apostles to Peter and the Jerusalem church. Their mode, however, belonged to Satan. They were of his synagogue. They were proud men and women; proud of their connections and training, and proud of their own competence and strength as ministers of the church. They were inciting opposition to Paul and his humble approach to ministry. They were undermining his fatherhood among the Corinthians. Distressing though this was, Paul remained unfazed by this difficulty.

Jesus Christ was in Paul, and He was speaking to the Corinthians through Paul. Paul was the messenger of Christ to them. The Christ who was in Paul was not weak in His capacity to address and correct the Corinthian church through Paul. It was the grace of Christ that made Paul's apostleship effective toward the Corinthians. Christ not only worked through Paul, but worked for Paul as he ministered to the Gentiles.

Christ wanted the Corinthians to receive His power in the same way that Paul had. However, they needed to lay aside their belief in their own competence. If they humbled themselves and became real about their true situation, then Christ would be mighty in them also. They would move away from just being religious and living as Christians by their own strength and wisdom. Paul said to the Corinthians at the end of his last letter, 'All this time you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you. Actually, it is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ; and all for your upbuilding, beloved.'

References:

2Co 13:3 Gal 2:8-9
2Co 12:19 2Co 3:1
2Co 5:12 Pro 27:2

Further Study

Mat 6

Daily Gospel

Luke 21

The weakness of Christ

Paul told the Corinthians that Christ was crucified because of weakness. What made Christ weak? Christ began His ministry by being baptised by John. When John baptised Jesus, he identified Him as the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. Jesus became our sin-bearer when He identified Himself with us at His baptism. Christ then proceeded forth in His ministry to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God, which gave men and women the right to become sons of God.

When Christ healed the sick, He took all of the sickness and sin that was upon those whom He healed, upon Himself. Christ performed the miracle works that the Father gave Him to do at His own expense. Christ was bearing the ultimate cause of sickness, which was the sin of the world. The prophecies in Isaiah, as interpreted by Matthew, refer not only to Christ's crucifixion, but to suffering a foretaste of our sickness, weakness and distress each time He performed a miracle. Christ, throughout His earthly ministry, became the bearer of our sins, sickness, weakness and distress. By this means, the weakness of Christ was seen. The Father furthered His weakness in the garden of Gethsemane when He made Him our sin offering. Christ proceeded to Calvary to be crucified in weakness.

For Christ, each miracle that He performed meant a fresh realisation of what bearing the sin of the world included. He achieved all of this, not by His own strength, but by the power of God that was made available to Him from the Father. The cost was His, but the power was from God. The life of Christ was a life of true offering.

References:

2Co 13:4
Mat 8:16-17
Joh 1:12, 29
Isa 53:4, 10

Further Study

Isa 53

Daily Gospel

Luke 22

The Father working in Christ

Let us now consider two elements that were necessary to mobilise the ministry of Christ. There was the proactive element of the power of God ministered through Christ, and the complementary experience of Christ's suffering. The complementary side of Christ's experience was that the cost was paid by Christ; the suffering was His. But the miracles and healings, the proactive element, were by the power of God. Jesus said, 'The Father in Me is doing the work'. God worked in and through Him to bring deliverance to His people. At the same time, the sin, sickness, distress and weakness of the world was transferred to Christ. He became the sin-bearer, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

This complementary side to Christ's ministry was further illustrated by the healing of the woman who was suffering a chronic condition of haemorrhaging blood. This event is recorded in the Gospels of Mark and Luke. This miracle was performed through Christ. He was complementary to it, but was not active in His initiative to accomplish this healing. The woman with the haemorrhage of blood came behind Christ, believing that, if she could touch the fringe of His cloak, she would be healed.

She touched Christ and immediately the flow of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. Immediately, Jesus perceived in Himself that power proceeding from Him had gone forth and healed someone. The power of God entered this woman because she believed that Christ was God's messenger to her. God was strong in her and she was made well. When this occurred, Jesus, turning around in the crowd said, 'Who touched My garments?' The power was the Father's power. The Father in Christ performed this miracle.

References:

Joh 14:10 Joh 1:29
Mar 5:21-43 Luk 8:40-56
Mar 5:29-30, 34

Further Study

Joh 14

Daily Gospel

Luke 23

Joining Christ's weakness

We usually think of weakness as the absence of strength – 'strengthlessness' or 'without strength'. The cross is the manifestation of the weak things of God. On the cross, Christ was made feeble and sick. The cross was the ultimate expression of weakness and death. Christ voluntarily submitted Himself to the Father by giving Himself up to die this kind of death on the cross.

The Father not only worked through Christ, but He also worked with Christ as His messenger to the world. Christ was the Father's Messenger and Priest, presenting Himself as an offering in the service of God. The apostle John had said that, as Christ is 'so also are we in this world'. The way the Father and Son ministered together during Christ's earthly ministry is the same for the church today. As the Father was in the Son and the Father was revealed by the offering of the Son, so Christ is in us and will be revealed through us, as we minister by the offering of ourselves as members of His body.

Paul, as an apostle, was Christ's messenger to the Corinthians. The Corinthians were seeking proof of Christ being in Paul and ministering through him to them. Paul, in his ministry, demonstrated the mode of Christ. He directed the power of God toward the Corinthian church by joining himself to the sufferings of Christ for them. It was in Paul's heart to live together and to die together with the Corinthians. He was willing to fill up what was lacking in the sufferings of Christ for their sake. Christ was crucified because of weakness and, by this means, enabled them to partake of the power of God.

References:

2Co 5:19
2Co 7:3
2Co 13:4
2Co 1:5

1Jn 4:17
Col 1:24
Php 3:10

Further Study

Col 1

Daily Gospel

Luke 24

Joining the sufferings of Christ

Christ was lifted up and placed on the cross as the Lamb of God so that He could take away, in Himself, all the sin of the world. Christ didn't need a thorn in His flesh, as Paul did, to stop Him from being lifted up in pride and sin. Nor was the buffeting of Paul by Satan the source of Paul's perfection. If this were so, then Satan and sin would be ministers of righteousness. No, Paul was joined to the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.

The sufferings of Paul were the sufferings of Christ, and were a demonstration of the weakness of Christ. Paul participated in these sufferings for Corinth by the power of God. In other words, Christ's crucifixion was a demonstration of the weakness of God. Paul's sufferings produced two results. Paul was saved from his own propensity to pride and sin, and also the power of God was made available to the Corinthians.

It was by the power of God, made available to Christ through Eternal Spirit, that Christ was able to endure the cross and despise the shame. In one sense, the cross was made 'easy' for Christ because of the power of God. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross. In the same manner that Paul participated in the sufferings of Christ and the power of God, even so it is for us. We also can say, 'When I am weak, then I am strong'.

Paul had authority from Christ to call the Corinthians to repentance, and to further bring discipline upon them if they were not obedient. He approached the Corinthians, not from a position of strength based on his authority, but he sought to minister the power of God that was made available to Christ when He suffered and overcame sin.

References:

2Ti 1:8

Heb 9:14

Heb 12:2

2Co 12:10

1Co 1:25

Further Study

2Ti 4

Daily Gospel

John 1

Sustained by the power of God

As Christ's minister to the Corinthians in faith, Paul joined himself to the sufferings and weakness that Christ endured for them. The power of God that had been given to Christ was now sustaining Paul and being made available to the Corinthians as they received Paul as the messenger of Christ to them. The Corinthians, in their situation, would then need to join with Paul in the sufferings of Christ. If they did so, they also would experience the reality that Christ was in them with power, enabling them to receive their sonship and, by sanctification, to demonstrate the works that belonged to their name and predestination.

Paul was able to live through this difficult situation by the power of God. He was able to bring the Corinthians to a measuring process so that they could find sanctification. To find sanctification, each individual Christian has to join Christ's offering and present themselves as a living sacrifice to God, so that they can find out what God's will is for their lives. Offering involves the believer in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. The power of Christ is essential for each Christian making offering.

Without power from Christ, the Corinthians would not have been able to face the sufferings that they were to endure. These sufferings were necessary for their perfection and the advancement of their church. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to test themselves to see if they had true faith. If they did, they would recognise that Christ was in them and with them, and that the power of God would sustain them. They were able to pass the test and attain their sanctified name. They became both a firstfruits people and a firstfruits church.

References:

2Co 13:4-5
Rom 12:1-2
1Pe 4:13-14
Eph 6:10

Further Study

1Co 3

Daily Gospel

John 2

Man's attitude to weakness

In the Gentile dominions prior to Christ (e.g. Greece, Rome), humility and weakness were considered shameful. Only humility before the 'gods' was deemed appropriate. These same attitudes have continued into many modern cultures. Power is sought by whatever means. Weakness is despised and avoided. In contrast, Christ came in weakness. This was a *scandal* to the Jews and *foolishness* to the Greeks. Even as believers, we have tended to pursue strength, and have not understood how to minister from weakness as Christ did.

Paul proclaimed what was foreign to the nations. He taught that the weakness of God would destroy the wisdom of the wise and the power of the mighty. The things 'that are' would be brought 'to nothing' by the cross. Indeed, this was the weapon that would eventually break the power of the Roman empire. One emperor (Julian A.D.361-363) quelled martyrdom because it was so effective in spreading the gospel. We are reminded that, if the princes of this world had realised that the weakness of the cross would destroy and nullify their kingdom, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

The early church in that Greco-Roman world quickly reverted to the strength of the flesh. The spirit of Babylon began to be evident in the way the believers exercised power over one another through covetousness and idolatry. The apostles were quick to warn the growing churches. They drew explicit examples from the Old Testament, like the misappropriation of Balaam who was asked to use his prophetic gift to curse Israel for personal gain. If we live by the misappropriation of power for selfish gain, then Babylon is able to rise up and gain ascendancy in the church by trading in the souls of men.

References:

1Co 1:18-28 1Co 2:8
Jas 4:1-2 Gal 5:15
2Pe 2:15 Jud 1:11
Rev 2:14

Further Study

Jud 1

Daily Gospel

John 3

Misappropriation of power

Jesus Himself wrote to the church of Thyatira, reminding them of Jezebel who used the prophets of Baal, and her position as Ahab's wife, to confirm herself as the spiritual head of Israel. This babylonish principle was further exposed by Christ in His call to repentance of a faction within the church of Thyatira, whose ministers were called the 'children' of Jezebel. This group was endeavouring to usurp, by the misuse of spiritual gifts, the *angelos* administration of Christ in Thyatira. This was corruption of the worst kind; namely, where ones with appointed authority turn this to harlotry by misappropriation. Paul said that this fleshly exercise of power over others is witchcraft. This is not the way of Christ, His disciples, or His messengers. The way of Jezebel with her children is completely opposite to the weaponry and weakness of the cross.

Paul warned the Galatians that they were 'bewitched', in that they were reverting to the covenant of law typified in Hagar and her son Ishmael. This was a comprehensive statement. Paul was referring to the whole tradition of fleshly empowerment, originating in Eve's deception and man's disobedience in grasping the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The disease of sin was rooted in the self-righteousness and offence that showed in Cain's anger and murder. Indeed, the fallen desire to misappropriate the power of the law from the basis of offence increased for seven generations, until Eve brought forth another seed. The same spirit was seen at Babel, and then became the basis of the way in which the nations work, as typified in the twelve sons of Ishmael.

References:

Rev 2:20-23
Gal 5:19
Gal 3:1
Gal 4:21-31

Further Study

Gen 4

Daily Gospel

John 4

A kingdom divided

Babylon works from the basis of our righteousness, seeking friendship with the world. This harlotry has its climax in the manifestation of Babylon in the end of the age, as the mother of all harlots and the den of every foul spirit. The lesson should have been clear to the New Testament churches. Satan's kingdom is divided against itself because of self-righteousness. 'Good' for one is 'evil' for another, and this exercise of godlikeness based in self-righteousness, causes more and more destruction. Such a kingdom is divided and cannot stand.

Paul appealed to the Corinthian church in particular, to understand the weakness of the cross as the power by which principalities would be taken captive and destroyed. He urged them to join the fellowship of offering over against the ways belonging to the synagogue of Satan. The 'bewitching' of the early church was around this issue of power and weakness. There is similar confusion today when the faith of the gospel and the gifts of the Spirit are sought as a way of exercising power.

We need to expose and remove this *magical* approach that can creep into the Christian faith. Christ did not employ this mode. Instead, He came as the sin-bearer, using *weakness* to nullify the misappropriated power of Satan. For us also, true offering draws others into the cross, as Christ did, so that bondages are broken and blessing is multiplied. In animistic societies (believing that spirits are manifested in nature and objects), spiritual power is sought as a means of protection. In these cultures, magic and the way of Christ can appear similar, due to misunderstanding. Further to this, the power of the gospel is often intermingled with the tradition of witchcraft.

References:

Further Study

Daily Gospel

Rev 17:5 Rev 18:2
 2Co 11:3, 13 Eph 6:12
 Col 2:15 2Co 10:5-6

Col 2

John 5

Understanding the use of curses

The use of curses is simply a manipulation of the curse of the *fall* and the curse of the *law*, which God has placed upon mankind because of sin. Once we understand this, we will know how to find and bring deliverance, because Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. Witchcraft takes on a variety of forms across ethnic groupings – sorcery, voodoo, etc. Intermediaries (witches, wizards, tohungas, dukuns, ingits, etc) all deal in *curses*, seeking to use greater power over those with lesser power. When curses are activated within this devilish practice, perhaps by hatred, jealousy or retribution, they cannot be destroyed. Those cursed with sickness or oppression will seek out those with greater power within the hierarchy, to send the curse back, or on to others they despise. Family members may agree to share the distress until the curse is lifted or directed elsewhere. In some cases, spiritual incapacity leads to disability or death.

This power simply works by manipulating the curse of the fall that God laid upon the human race. The breaking of God's law brought about the curse of death. Now men are subject to lifelong bondage because of the fear of death. This is how Satan maintains 'the power of death'. Those practising witchcraft are simply dealing in fear and deception, and their power is a misappropriation of the curse. Curses are activated by offence, envy, anger or hatred. As Proverbs says, a curse is baseless and is only a flitting sparrow unless it is driven by a *cause*. 'Like a sparrow in its flitting, like a swallow in its flying, so a curse without cause does not alight.' Even the power of familiar cultures is driven by the exercise of our own good and evil, where we despise and destroy what we consider to be unrighteous.

References:

Gen 3:14, 17
Heb 2:15
Pro 26:2
Neh 13:2

Further Study

Psa 109

Daily Gospel

John 6

Deliverance from the curse

Demonic powers merely misappropriate the power of the law by manipulating the curse of the law through fear. They misdirect law by fear, to bring destruction to our lives. This manipulation of the curse is the only power possessed by Satan's ministers. Fear is the 'negative faith' by which Satan works. The sting of death is active because of fear. The power of law, when directed as a curse against us, kills us. We are afflicted because of our own bondage to the fear of death. This is what Paul meant when he said, 'The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law'. Only the power of the cross can deliver us.

By demonstrating the weakness of God, Paul's aim was to reveal the power of the cross as the weapon that can cast down strongholds and destroy the misappropriating work of the devil. The fear of death is overcome by weakness, through faith in the blood of Christ. We can now bring our cares, caused by the curse of the law, as well as the burdens of others, into the cross. The world is crucified to us, and us to the world. The cross cuts off the body of sin and carries it out into judgement. Thus we are redeemed from the curse of the law.

The power of law, operating by the fear of death, is brought to naught by Christ's death and resurrection. The cross is the instrument by which God brings this power to nothing. The law no longer stands over against us, for it is nailed to His cross and taken out of the way. This is how the cross nullifies the curse. The cross disarms the principalities and powers that manipulate the law against us.

References:

Deu 21:23 1Co 15:56
Gal 6:14 Gal 3:13-14
Col 2:14-15

Further Study

Heb 9

Daily Gospel

John 7

Destroying the curse

The church is able to destroy demonic power that is activated by law and the fear of death. Presently, the world under the 'elemental spirits' is subject to vanity, and to time and chance. Satan and demonic powers are able to manipulate the randomness and conflict of laws to bring a curse. This would remain a closed system 'under the sun', except that God has broken in to reveal resurrection life. The randomness of time and chance could destroy the world, except that God has reserved it for judgement in *His* time, by His sovereign hand. Accordingly, for the sons of God with an eternal predestination, God uses the cross to reorder the chaos, and work all things together for good.

Christ nullified the curse of the law by accepting the discipline of His Father. He commuted the judgement of suffering to the disciplines of sonship, producing obedience. In weakness, He absorbed the curse and came back from the dead through offering. The whole action of the cross is now a complete answer. We can inherit our name and do our works within our sphere, and the curse cannot touch us.

However, if we proceed to function by law instead of the cross, we empower the curse and can even find ourselves manipulating the curse against us. This was the way of the false workers of Satan, as Paul was warning the Corinthians. This is not to be our mode. The life that we now live by the faith of the Son of God is *resurrection* life. Resurrection life is a power that is *outside* the experience of the temporal world. Like Paul, we are determined to join the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, being conformed to His death, because by this means we lay hold of out-resurrection as a daily attainment.

References:

Gal 4:3 Ecc 9:11
Rom 8:21, 28 1Co 11:32
2Co 11:13 Php 3:10
1Co 15:56

Further Study

1Sa 2

Daily Gospel

John 8

Christ the burden-bearer

When Jesus absorbed the curse of the law, He was not working ‘magic’ as if to exercise power over others. Nor was He simply transferring curses to Himself to prove He had greater power. Fellowshiping in Christ’s sufferings is not sharing the ‘curses’ of others, as if we all share a common curse under the sun with no escape. This is not how we bear one another’s burdens and fulfil the law of Christ. We are called to embrace the fellowship of offering in which the cross of Christ is actually manifested to *break* the curse and minister grace. This is the way that we take hold of burdens and become burden-bearers in relation to the curse of sin and law. Then the cross is able to break the curse of the law.

When we fellowship with Christ in the cross, we join His *weakness*. Thus, we live and minister by the power of God. Within this fellowship, the cross has capacity to destroy the curse. The satanic manipulation that uses the fear of death to activate the curse of law is destroyed. Where we offer ourselves to the fellowship of the cross, the wisdom and power of the cross, by genuine burden-bearing, become the mechanism for deliverance.

In the fellowship of the cross, the weakness of God enables us to *absorb* every threat. Then, by resurrection life, we overcome the threat of death and thereby destroy the ground of Satan’s power. Paul said that we are ‘weak in Him’, but live by ‘the power of God toward you’. The power of God, coming forth from weakness, is ‘toward you’. It is directed to those whose burdens we are able to bear.

References:

2Co 13:4 1Co 1:18-21
Rom 6:8-11 2Co 4:7-12
2Co 10:3-4

Further Study

Gal 6

Daily Gospel

John 9

Directing the power of God

The apostle Paul spoke of the mode of weakness in both his letters to the Corinthians. He transferred the contrary conditions of the believers to Apollos and himself, just as Christ did when He became the sin-bearer. Believers need not fear curses, even if they are pronounced, because the fellowship of the cross is the place where the weakness and power of God actually operate. The cross is the entire mode of salvation. The cross is a complete answer. When we join the fellowship of the cross, we are participating with Christ in the very activity that is *directing* the power of God through weakness. Those in this fellowship are able to absorb whatever is transferred to them. In fact, this way of weakness is God's answer to the healing and deliverance of others.

This is precisely how Christ directed the power of God toward us. We, likewise, direct His power to others, right at the point where the curse laid upon *them*, is transferred to us. We are without fear, because every suffering is joined to His. His sufferings for the sake of others are being shared to us within the fellowship of the cross. We are not afraid of the curse. We are not seeking a greater power. We are not exercising ourselves in power-gifts and hyper-faith in the way that is sometimes seen in popular religion. Neither are we employing strict, ascetic living, as if this is the way to purchase spiritual authority. Taking a lesson from Simon the sorcerer, we are not trading our way from one form of spiritual power to another. We are committed to the weakness of God as the way by which the power of God is directed to others. This is a total statement of how we minister the power of God through weakness.

References:

1Cor 4:6
2Co 13:4
Php 3:10

Act 8:18-24
Act 3:16

Further Study

2Ti 2

Daily Gospel

John 10

All contradiction in the cross

We need to apply the subject of weakness, and understand how the offering of Calvary is to become active, right here and now. When contradiction occurs in ourselves or others, we first of all 'consider Him who endured such contradiction' against Himself. Through faith in His blood, we determine to draw all contradiction into the cross. This is activated by prayer and supplication, and not by human empathy.

All contradiction was included in His one offering, once for all. We must be careful not to move outside of this as if we are making another offering or His offering was not adequate. We are joining ourselves, others, and the contradiction, to the ministry of Christ's offering. One who is a minister of Christ is joining the ministry of Christ's offering. We are confident that this is the context of weakness where life and grace will be multiplied.

In this we are weakened. As Paul said, 'We also are weak in Him'. We recall that, although Christ began His ministry in power, He was progressively weakened. He accepted the unbelief, grief, sickness and reproach that were laid upon Him - even the apparent failure of His mission that was imputed to Him. As we are 'weak in Him', we are drawing the contradictions into the weakness of the cross. Our faith is active in considering that the full extent of His cup of sorrow is now being measured to us, both to the individual who is suffering as well as to those who are making supplication. In this way, when one member suffers, we all suffer.

References:

Heb 6:16 Heb 12:3
2Co 13:4 1Co 12:26
Jud 1:11 Mat 11:19

Further Study

Heb 9

Daily Gospel

John 11

Our ministry in weakness

We are aware that Christ did not rise up to conquer the curse. Instead He took it upon Himself. In becoming sin, He absorbed both the sin that caused the weakness, and the judgement of God against the sin. As He drew all contradiction into the cross, His jealous love was determined to exclude dislocation, and restore everyone who would join the power of His resurrection. This is exactly how Christian faith operates, as Paul said. We are eager to join the fellowship of His suffering, being progressively conformed to His death, if by any means, we can come back from the death of sin, with Him, by resurrection life. This is how the law is nailed to the cross. This is how we destroy sin. This is how we disarm principalities. This is how God destroys the destroyer.

We are prepared for our ministry in weakness to involve contradiction and even ugly situations. We are enduring the same contradiction as Christ. The reproaches that fell upon Him, are now falling upon us. This is how a situation is brought into Calvary, right before our eyes. In the midst of the contradiction, the cross is at work, and the redemption of the cross is occurring, here and now. Through faith, in the midst of these difficult situations, offering is at work. The curse is being manifested, but as we continue in prayer and supplication, the cross begins to be active, in weakness then in power. If we do draw needs into the cross, and the remedy is not accepted, the judgement of fiery indignation begins to proceed, either constraining things to deliverance, or bearing them out into the fire of eternal judgement.

References:

Php 3:10-11 Psa 69:9
1Pe 2:18-20 Luk 6:32
Mat 5:10-12

Further Study

1Co 4

Daily Gospel

John 12