

Strength in Weakness

2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Message Mate

What happens when we pray for healing and God doesn't answer our prayer? Is his power not at work? 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 helps us to answer these questions. Here are a few points from the passage.

1. **Relationship not Algorithm** - being a Christian means living in relationship with a living person: Jesus Christ, who does not always act as we expect. Sometimes he chooses to heal. In Paul's case he did not heal but provided grace and a profound lesson about power.
2. **Human Strength and God's Power Don't Mix** - combined, they tend to foster pride. Pride and self-reliance go hand in hand. God aims to weed out self-reliance in our lives by placing us in situations that are beyond our ability to cope that we might rely solely on him (see 2 Cor. 1:8-9, 1 Kings 19:1-9).
3. **No Need to Hide** - because weakness is the conduit for God's perfect power, we need not hide it from one another. Confessing weakness is not unspiritual (see Matt. 26:38). A willingness to share weakness and vulnerability is healthy for community.
4. **"Even the devil is God's devil"** (Martin Luther) - God uses even the devil's schemes for his redemptive purposes. Paul's thorn was a "messenger of Satan" and yet God taught Paul a profound lesson through it. (See also Joseph's story in Genesis 37-45)
5. **Right Handed and Left Handed Power** - When we think of God's power, we often think of his Right Handed Power: his direct, miraculous intervention in our lives. However, God also operates through Left Handed Power which is often slow, mysterious, paradoxical, confusing and even looks like defeat in the moment. It is the power to bear with the trials of life, not be released from them. Yet it is no less the power of God than his Right Handed Power.

If you are struggling with weakness in many trials of life then you are a perfect candidate for God's perfect power. He does his best work through the weak, through those who know their need of him.

Questions to consider:

1. When you think of God's power, what first comes to mind?
2. Have there been times when you've prayed for God to heal or act and he hasn't? How have you dealt with the potential disappointment?
3. Consider this quote from Pete Scazzero, *"When we live and build entire churches characterised by weakness and vulnerability, something inexplicable happens. People enjoy a taste of God's beauty and presence in Christ. A glimpse of the truth and goodness of heaven shines. God's gentle power flows. People soften. But the qualities of weakness and vulnerability are rarely encountered in our world, or even more sadly, in our churches."* (Emotionally Healthy Discipleship, p.189). What do you think about the idea of sharing your weaknesses and vulnerability with others in your community?
4. Consider the idea of God's Right Handed power and Left Handed power. Can you think of examples in the scriptures? (e.g Joseph - sold into slavery by his brothers but sent by God at the same time)
5. Are you facing weakness at the moment through any number of life's trials? Are you able to see God's power at work either through his Right Handed or Left Handed Power?
6. Are there areas in your life where you tend towards self-reliance? How might you build weakness into that area to make room for God to move?