

## “When I am Weak, Then I am Strong.”

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### Introduction: When Are You the Most Strong Spiritually?

- A. For many of us, we may say that it is when the circumstances of our life are going well (e.g., good health, no conflicts, stresses, or hardships).
- B. Commonly, we interpret our trials in negative ways.
  - 1. “I can’t serve God like I should, it hinders my faithfulness.”
  - 2. A sign that God is not with us or even that He disapproves of us.
- C. In contrast, what seems almost paradoxical is that the moments of life when we are weak, is when we can in fact be strong! (**2 Cor. 12:10**).
- D. A hard, but important lesson every Christian must learn is to be strong spiritually *even during* the difficult times of life.

### I. We Often Pray for God to Remove “the Thorn.”

- A. Commonly, we “map out” the easy road for God to give to us, asking Him to remove what we perceive to be obstacles that are in our way (**2 Cor. 12:7-8**).
  - 1. Examples: Persecutors; Distresses; financial hardship; work pressures, parental challenges; Difficulties; sickness or injury; a great temptation.
  - 2. People mistakenly believe God’s power is manifested primarily by the removal of trials or tribulations: “*It’s a miracle!*”
- B. We are quick to give God “the solution” to our problems, but *He often has another way to help us* (**Isa. 55:8-9**).

### II. “My Grace is Sufficient for you” (2 Cor. 12:9).

- A. We believe in God’s grace to save us (**Eph. 1:7; 2:5; 2 Tim. 1:9**), but do we believe in His grace to help us overcome our trials and suffering?
  - 1. “*The God of all grace*” (**1 Pet. 5:10**) is a gracious God! (**Ps. 116:5**).
  - 2. His grace supplies all of our physical and spiritual needs (**2 Cor. 8:1; 9:8; Rom. 3:24; 12:6; Acts 20:32; Heb. 4:16**).
  - 3. Do we truly believe that His grace is sufficient to take care of us *even during* our trials of suffering, temptations, and tribulations?
- B. The Lord wants us to learn to depend on His grace and power.
  - 1. Why does God allow the trials of suffering, the temptations, the persecutions, the hardship, and “the thorns”!?!?
  - 2. He allows us to become weak, even humbled by our trials so we may learn to rely on His power and not our own (**2 Cor. 12:9a; 1:8-10; 3:5**).
  - 3. When the going gets tough, *do we lean on His grace?* (e.g., pray, seek His counsel, put our faith and trust in Him) (**Ps. 18:1-6**).
  - 4. The Lord does not want us to merely endure the trials, but *rise above* them by relying on His power and grace (**Phil. 4:10-13**).
    - a. There is no reason why we cannot continue to serve God faithfully in life, *no matter what* our circumstances may be.

- C. Our trials serve as *opportunities* for the power of Christ to help us!
  - 1. We are not merely to accept our trials, but we must learn to *rejoice* in them knowing these are opportunities for the Lord's power to shine through us! (**2 Cor. 12:9b**).
  - 2. By putting our trust in the Lord and His grace, we will remain strong spiritually, *no matter what the weakness may be* (**2 Cor. 12:10**).

### III. How Weakness Leads to Spiritual Strength.

- A. When we are weak, we come to understand and appreciate God's power.
  - 1. If God just simply removed the trial, would we truly understand?
  - 2. By learning to depend on God, we see God more clearly (**Job 42:1-6; 2 Cor. 6:1-10**).
- B. We rely on God's strength to face our persecutors.
  - 1. Persecutors do their best to crush us and make us "weak."
  - 2. Yet in the Lord we can be strong! (**1 Pet. 4:12-16; 3:15**).
- C. We must become weak in order to grow spiritually and gain spiritual strength.
  - 1. God helps us by giving us the grace we need so the trial may  *bless us and not curse us* (**Rom. 8:28**)
  - 2. Remember, Paul's thorn in the flesh was, in part, for the purpose keeping his pride in check and keep him humble (**2 Cor. 12:7**).
  - 3. The Lord is *always* more concerned about our faithfulness to Him, about our spiritual growth and development, than he is our physical comforts and pleasures! (e.g., **Mat. 5:29-30**).
  - 4. From God's perspective, it is of *greater* value for us to mature in Christ than it is for us to have perfect health, no persecution, no trials or tribulations whatsoever! (**James 1:2-4**).
    - a. We must prove that we can be faithful even during the trials of life (**1 Pet. 1:6-9**), yet such can only be sustained with God's help.
  - 5. *What good is a trouble free life if you are not right with God?*
- D. Christ is seen in us when we suffer for His sake.
  - 1. Remember, the reason why Paul was content with his weaknesses is that it was all for "*Christ's sake*" (**2 Cor. 12:10**).
  - 2. Jesus' persecutors thought He was weak upon that cross, when in fact He was strong in Almighty God! (**1 Pet. 2:21-23**).
  - 3. When we rely on the power or strength of Christ, we represent Jesus Christ to the world! (**2 Cor. 4:6-11; cf. Gal. 2:20**).
  - 4. This is what sets us apart from the rest of the world, that by His example and strength, we can rise above our trials and gain the victory!

**Conclusion: No "Weakness" or Trial of Suffering Can Keep Us from Faithfully Serving the Lord. By the Power of Christ, We Can Do Much More Than We Think!**