When I am Weak, I am Strong

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**Foundational Scripture:** 2 Cor. 12:7-10

**Intro**:

* These verses written by Paul convey a clarity of suffering and weakness that he himself is experiencing. From the passage, we can conclude that Paul didn’t do anything wrong or commit any grievous sin. The point of his suffering and weakness is to make him turn to God for help and strength. God allowed Paul’s thorn in the flesh to continue in order that Paul might rely on God and trust in His grace. Paul himself came to the conclusion that his weakness wasn’t to be looked at as a negative but rather a positive: ***“When I am weak, then I am strong***.” What is the point of Paul’s story and how can we use it to be better?

1. **God’s strength is perfected in our weakness**
   1. When writing about his experiences, Paul realized that God’s strength would be perfected in his weaknesses. The point of Paul’s weakness and all our weaknesses is to cause us to come to the realization that we cannot succeed on our own.
   2. We all need to understand and remind ourselves that we were created by God and He is the only one who knows how to make our lives better and how to properly strengthen us when we need it the most.
   3. When we grow strong, we may become weak if we don’t keep our trust and faith in God. The bible repeatedly warns us of this (Deut. 6:10-12; 8:10-20; 32:15; Prov. 30:8-9). The story of Gideon and the 300 men illustrates this point (Judg. 7:2-8).
   4. The more we seek to be independent of Him, the more likely we will fail and fall. When we begin to place trust in ourselves (pride), there is no telling how bad things can become in our lives (2 Chron. 26:16-21).
   5. Like Paul, it’s not wrong to have an experience in which we feel special and prideful but we must be careful to not allow such things to inflate us with a false sense of security and independence. When we are weak, it emphasizes our helplessness and our dependence upon the one who made us and sustains us (Acts 17:28; Col. 1:17).
   6. We are forced to reckon ourselves with the reality that we cannot do anything else but have faith in God and thus it begins to reshape our entire mentality about life, about God and about the spiritual relationship we need to have with Him.
   7. Paul realized this and he was thrilled to allow God’s power to be perfected in his life through his weakness. We often make the point that Paul was one of the most faithful disciples in the NT. That is true but a lot of why it is true is because he relied on God’s grace and strength to work in his life.
   8. There are many examples of people who were strong but became weak and turned to God for strength because they realized they couldn’t do it on their own. Some of these include Asa (2 Chron. 14:11), Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 20:12) and Hezekiah (2 Chron. 32:7-8).
   9. Perhaps the NT example that illustrates this point best is the story of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-24). When the prodigal son received his inheritance and left his father’s house, it seemed like he had everything going for him. After some time, the son grew to be desperate, broken and in need of his father and his resources.
   10. In his weakness, he came to his senses that he needed his father and he returned to his father’s house where he was received back. Our weaknesses help us to come to our senses to return to God who can give us the strength and life we need.

**Conclusion:** Paul’ personal experience with suffering wasn’t something he shied away from in his letters. He stresses his imprisonment and persecutions not as a way of attracting attention to himself but as a way to stress that the power is of God and not of man. We may be tempted to think that we can do things on our own, but without God we are nothing and we will not go far. May our weaknesses, our failures and our mistakes cause us to turn to the grace of God so that His strength would be perfected in us.