



Romans 7:19, 22-23 For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ...For in my inner being I delight in God's law;²³ but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

Matthew 19:16-20 Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" ¹⁷ "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments." ¹⁸ "Which ones?" the man inquired. Jesus replied, " 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, ¹⁹ honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.'" ²⁰ "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?"

Luke 10:25-29 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" ²⁷ He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" ²⁸ "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." ²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

b.) Physical strength and control

Genesis 3:19 "...for dust you are and to dust you will return."

James 4:14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

Ecclesiastes 9:12 Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them.

Deuteronomy 8:17-18 You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." ¹⁸ But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth.

c.) Ability to control/influence

Jeremiah 10:23 I know, O LORD, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps.

Psalms 103:15-16 As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; ¹⁶ the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.

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2.) How might you respond to the person who says a Christian's view of humanity is depressing?

Mark 2:17 On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

3.) Why does the reality of our sinfulness and weakness make God's love and grace all the more amazing?

Psalms 8:3-4 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

Psalms 103:13-14 As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; ¹⁴ for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸ He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰ It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. ³¹ Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”

Strength IN Weakness: A Case Study of the Apostle Paul

1.) The Apostle Paul was not shy about his weaknesses. His opponents even attacked him for them. In what sense was Paul weak by worldly standards?

1 Corinthians 2:2-5 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. ⁴ My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

2 Corinthians 10:1-2, 7,10-11 By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you—I, Paul, who am “timid” when face to face with you, but “bold” when away! ² I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world. ...⁷ You are looking only on the surface of things. If anyone is confident that he belongs to Christ, he should consider again that we belong to Christ just as much as he. ...¹⁰ For some say, “His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing.” ¹¹ Such people should realize that what we are in our letters when we are absent, we will be in our actions when we are present.

Galatians 4:12-15, 6:11 I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you. You have done me no wrong. ¹³ As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. ¹⁴ Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. ¹⁵ What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. ...
^{6:11} See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!

1 Corinthians 15:9-10 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

2.) Where did the Apostle Paul find strength?

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ 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 about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 3:4-6 Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. ⁵ Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. ⁶ He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Philippians 4:12-13 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

3.) What other Bible figures, showed that God was their strength in weakness?

4.) What are God’s good goals in our weakness?

Isaiah 41:13-14 “For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you. ¹⁴ Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O little Israel, for I myself will help you,” declares the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

Psalms 9:9-10 The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. ¹⁰ Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.

Psalms 40:4-5 Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods. ⁵ Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you planned for us no one can recount to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare.

5.) Why is it important for us to be transparent about our own weaknesses...

- with ourselves?
- within the family?
- with our fellow-believers?
- with the (unbelieving) world around?

Next Time: “I can play with sin and it won’t affect my faith.”