

# Our Weakness... God's Strength

We are weak in many ways.

1. One of the weaknesses we tend to underestimate the seriousness of: temptation and sin - Matthew 26:41 (also Mark 14:38); Romans 6:19.

But God helps us; he provides the strength we need.

1. Jesus understands our weaknesses; he experienced them himself, so he knows how to help us!
  - a. He even died for us, because we were too weak (helpless) to deliver ourselves from sin - Romans 5:6.
  - b. [Note that the Law couldn't help us, because it was too weak - Romans 8:3.]
2. The Holy Spirit helps us, as we pray - Romans 8:26.
  - a. Don't forget Romans 8:28, the guarantee that God will use all things to accomplish good, in the lives of those who love him. This applies *in spite of* our weaknesses, and *because of* his strength.
3. When we go through trials, God will strengthen us.
  - a. God does not guarantee that we will *escape from* trials, but that he will strengthen us *through* them - 1 Corinthians 10:13.
4. God can use our weakness to display his glory.
  - a. His "weakness" is greater than our greatest strength - 1 Corinthians 1:25.
  - b. He can use weak things (for example, us!) to shame the strong - 1 Corinthians 1:27.
  - c. [Again, don't forget Romans 8:28!]

So how should we respond?

1. We should be willing to acknowledge our weaknesses - to accept the fact that they exist, and then to live by God's strength - 2 Corinthians 12:8-10.
2. By doing this, God's strength, power and life can be seen in our lives.
  - a. It is like light shining out of darkness - 2 Corinthians 4:6. Also Ephesians 5:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:5.
  - b. It is like a treasure in a clay jar - attention goes to the treasure, not to the container - 2 Corinthians 4:7.
3. We should be willing to accept others who are "weak in faith."
  - a. An example - Romans 14:1-2 (illustrating the principle).
  - b. Don't do anything that will cause such a person to fall into sin - Romans 14:21.
  - c. Bear with their weaknesses; don't be preoccupied with your "right" to please yourself - Romans 15:1.

4. We should be willing to associate with weakness, for the sake of others - and we should do it voluntarily, as an expression of love, not by force or coercion.
  - a. Help those who are weak - Acts 20:35.
  - b. Associate with those who are "lowly" - Romans 12:16.
  - c. When we do this, we are simply living-out the truth that we are not superior to them. We are admitting the fact that our strength comes from God, and not from our own selves.

## Three cautions:

1. Accepting our weakness does *not* mean that we use weakness as an excuse for sin!
  - a. Romans 6:19. (Also v. 23 - Those who choose to remain slaves to sin *earn* death.)
2. When we think there is a need to brag, we should focus people's attention on the truth about ourselves: We are weak. Then God's strength will be seen for what it truly is.
  - a. Example - 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.
3. There is a type of weakness we should avoid (example).
  - a. Abraham was *not* "weak in faith" - Romans 4:19.
  - b. This phrase "weak in faith" is similar to what is found in Romans 14:1-2 (mentioned in a previous section), but it has a somewhat different focus. The context makes all the difference!

## A weak person who's example we should follow: Paul.

1. See 1 Corinthians 2:3; 4:10 (contrasted to the Corinthians, who considered themselves to be quite strong); 2 Corinthians 11:29 (he shared the weakness of others); 11:30; 12:5.
2. It's not Paul's *weakness* that we should imitate, but his willingness to be honest about it, and his willingness to trust God (who could then display the greatness of his own power - 2 Corinthians 12:9).
3. Note that there are certain types of weakness he did *not* have - because he trusted God, the same way we can, if we are willing.

## Something else you can do:

1. Evaluate yourself - your attitudes and actions.
  - a. Do you believe the various *facts* stated in these verses? If so, what impact do they have on the way you live and interact with other people? If they don't have any impact on the way you live and interact with other people, what are you going to do about it?
  - b. How have you responded to the *commands* found in the various verses (each understood within its own context)? If you have not been obeying the commands, what are you going to do about it?
2. You may also want to look for verses which make reference to the *opposite* concepts - such as *arrogance*, *self-sufficiency*, *strength* (when in reference to someone who thinks he doesn't need to rely on God), etc. See what the Scriptures say about such attitudes.