

God Can Use You in Spite of Your Weakness



David Wilkerson April 1, 1979

God has determined to accomplish His goals here on earth through men with weaknesses.

Isaiah, the great prayer warrior, was a man of like passions — meaning, just like the rest of us — weak and wounded. David, the man after God's own heart, was a murdering adulterer who had no moral right to any of God's blessings. Peter denied the very Lord God of Heaven — cursing the One who loved him most. Abraham, the father of nations, lived a lie — using his wife as a pawn to save his own skin. Jacob was a conniver. Paul was impatient and harsh with converts and associates who could not live up to his ascetic lifestyle. Adam and Eve turned a perfect marriage arrangement into a nightmare. Solomon, the wisest man on earth, did some of the most stupid things ever recorded in history. Samuel murdered King Agag in a rage of anger in an overzealous show of righteousness. Joseph taunted his lost brothers in almost boyish glee — until the games almost backfired on him. Jonah wanted to see an entire city burn to justify his prophecies against it — he despised the mercy of God toward a repentant people. Lot offered his two virgin daughters to a mob of sex-crazed Sodomites.

The list goes on and on — men who loved God, men who were greatly used by God — almost driven to the ground by their weaknesses. Yet, God was always there saying, "I called you; I will be with you! I will take away the evil of your heart! I will accomplish my will, regardless!"

God's Treasure Is in Earthen Vessels

One of the most encouraging Scriptures in the Bible is 2 Corinthians 4:7: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Then Paul goes on to describe those earthen vessels — dying men, troubled on every side, perplexed, persecuted, cast down. And even though never forsaken or in despair, those men used by God are constantly groaning under the burden of their bodies, waiting anxiously to be clothed with new ones.

God mocks man's power. He laughs at our egotistical efforts at being good. He never uses the high and mighty — but, instead, uses the weak things of this world to confound the wise.

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; And the base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not... That no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Corinthians 1:26–31).

Wow! Does that ever describe me! Weak thing — foolish thing — despised thing — abase thing — not very noble — not very smart — not very mighty. What insanity to think God could use such a creature! Yet that is His perfect plan — the greatest mystery on earth. God calls us in our weakness, even when He knows we'll do it wrong. He puts His priceless treasure in these earthen vessels of ours because He delights in doing the impossible with nothing.

God delights in using failures — men and women who think of themselves as unable to do hardly anything right. A woman wrote to me recently saying, "I'm the world's #1 failure. My marriage is failing. I seem to do everything wrong in raising my children. I'm not very good at anything. I'm not even able to understand the Bible very well."

Most of it is over my head. I feel like I'm not worth anything to anybody. I've not been a very good wife, mother or Christian. I've got to be the world's worst failure."

She is just the kind of person the Lord is looking for — people who know that if anything good happens through them, it has to be God. All the hotshot Christians who go about bowling people over with their great abilities never impress God. God looked down on a scheming, base, weakling of a man called Jacob and said, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob...I will help thee...behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth....thou shalt rejoice in the Lord..." (Isaiah 41:14–16).

Men often use God to achieve fortune, fame, honor and respect. Talent, personality and cleverness are all used to advance God's kingdom. But God is not impressed. His strength is perfected in those of weakness.
When I Say Weakness, I Do Not Mean Sensuality

God does not use people weak in righteousness. A man's weakness can lead him into adultery, gambling, drinking and all kinds of indulgences. God is not referring to that kind of weakness. When He calls the base, He is not referring to the wicked.

The weakness God speaks about is our human inability to obey His commandments in our own strength. God calls us to a life of holiness and separation. He tells us we can be free from the bondage of sin. His Word promises freedom from sin's power, as well as forgiveness. God's Word comes to us with some impossible challenges — "Resist the devil. Walk in the Spirit. Come out from among them. Do not commit adultery. Love your enemies. Enter into rest. Leave behind all your fears. Put down your lustful desires. Let no sin have dominion over you. As He was in this world — so be ye. Overcome self, pride and envy. Sin not!"

Do you know how to answer that call? Think honestly about how little you can do on your own to fulfill these challenges — then you realize how very weak you are. Your heart begins to cry, "Lord, how can we do such great, holy things? Whereby are these things possible?" There is no way at all you can stand up to these commandments and challenges in your own strength and knowledge. The call to holiness is frightening and disturbing. You know what God asks of you, but you don't seem to know how to fulfill it.

Some think they can do it on their own! So they go into a convulsive concentration of all their inner resources. They grit their teeth and muster up all their human powers. They set out with great energy and resolve — calling upon all they have and taking matters in their own hands. They proceed to "obey or die trying!" It works for a little while, until God crosses them up. He steps in and foils all men's schemes and self-determined efforts of the flesh. Then failure strikes, just at the moment all seemed to be going so well. These do-it-yourself Christians end up frustrated, defenseless and weak.

That is when our Lord takes over! He comes then with such a comforting message; "Lay down your weapons. Quit trying to be so self-sufficient and strong. I am your weapon — your only weapon. I am your strength. Let Me do what you can never do. You are not supposed to do it on your own. I must do it so you will glorify only Me. I will give you My righteousness — My holiness — My rest — My strength. You can't save yourself; you can't help yourself; you can't please Me in any way — other than by receiving the blessings of the Cross by faith. Let Me be in charge of your growth in holiness."

If You Have Too Much Going for You — God Can't Work

Gideon is an example of a called man who had too much going for him. He was called to deliver God's children from slavery. What does he do? He blasts the trumpets and calls together a mighty army. Thousands of valiant fighting men rallied under his banner. But God said to Gideon, "Your army is too great — too many men — too much strength. Send them back! If you win the victory with all this show of strength, you and your people might think you won on your own abilities. You've got too much going for you — and I don't want you to steal the glory. Strip down your army!"

One by one, those men leave Gideon's army. He must have stood by thinking, "How ridiculous! Win by weakening ourselves? God calls me to do battle, then asks me to disarm! Insanity! This is the craziest thing God has yet asked me to do. There goes my plan to become a legend in my own time."

Those fighters must have left the battlefield shuddering with astonishment. Who ever heard of winning a battle by laying aside weapons and manpower!

From a human standpoint, it is crazy. Great victories by tiny remnants. Walls tumble without a shot fired. Armies put to flight by a motley orchestra of trumpet players. By the power of faith alone, weak men confound the world.
The Way to Holiness Is Humility

No matter how powerful and honorable a man may be, God cannot use him until he falls in the dust and gives up all his idols. Human pride must be smashed. All our boasting must be silenced. All our thoughts and plans must be abandoned. All human achievement must be recognized for what it is — filthy rags and a stench in God's nostrils.

Man must become powerless — defenseless — and hopeless in himself. He must come with fear and trembling to the Cross and cry out, "Be thou Lord of my life."

There Is Also a "Weakness of the Flesh"

There are Christians who fail the Lord. They love Him very much — they worry about grieving Him. But, in spite of their love and good intentions, they fall into sin. Even ministers commit adultery. Multitudes of Christians fight inner battles with lust. Their passions overrun them, and they become victims to overwhelming desires. There are modern Bathshebas and Delilahs — as well as men of God who are enticed and deceived by them.

Some of these weak children of the Lord are guilty of the sin of Peter — they have denied the Lord who called them. Others are weighed down by the guilt and condemnation of secret sins. Only God knows the battles that are fought by men and women who are among the most esteemed in the church. Those with the most acute battles often spend much of their time crying out against the sins of others — mostly to divert attention from their own struggle with the flesh.

Does God quit on any child of His who is waging a war against some white-hot passion? Does God lift His Spirit before the victory is won? Does the Lord stand nearby watching, as if to say, "You know what I expect of you. You know My laws and My commandments. When you get it right — when you wiggle free from your lust — then I'll set in motion your river of blessings. Until then, you are on your own." Never! Never! Instead, our Lord comes to us in our weakest moment — with sin stains blotched all over our garments — and He whispers, "My strength is for you — in this, your hour of weakness. Don't give up. Don't panic. Don't turn away — don't shut me out. Is there godly sorrow in you? Do you despise what you did? Do you want victory? Keep moving with Me — toward Me. My arms are still stretched out like a mother hen spreading her wings. Come, I'll protect you from the enemy."

People are giving up because they feel so weak before the power of the enemy. They say to themselves, "Why doesn't God come down and take this ugly thing out of me? I've begged Him; I've prayed; I've cried. Doesn't the Lord know how much I want to please Him? Why do I have to go on being tested for so long? Do I have to go on month after month, giving in to this thing? Where is my freedom from sin's power? Why don't the promises work for me?"

But we seem to forget that God often leads us the long way around — we are seldom permitted to march straight into the promised land. There are lessons on faith to be learned. The wilderness temptations give God a way to show His power to deliver. Only Christians who have come through hurt, through fires of temptation, through the agony of defeat — only they can really help others who hurt.

I saw Israel Narvaez, Mau Mau gang leader, kneel and receive Christ as Lord. It was not just an emotional surface experience — He really meant it. But Israel went back to the gang and ended up in prison, an accessory to murder. Did God quit on him? Not for one moment! Today, Israel is a minister of the Gospel, having accepted the love and forgiveness of a longsuffering Savior.

Have you failed? Is there a sin that so easily besets you? Do you feel like a weakened coward — unable to get the victory over secret sin? But with that weakness in you, is there also a consuming hunger for God? Do you yearn for Him — love Him — reach to Him? That hunger and thirst is the key to your victory. That makes you different from all others who have been guilty of failing God. That sets you apart. You must keep that hunger alive. Keep thirsting after righteousness. Never justify your weakness — never give in to it — never accept it as a part of your life.

There Is Only One Thing That Works!

Faith is your victory. Abraham had weaknesses — he lied — he almost turned his wife into an adulteress. But Abraham "Believed God, and it was counted unto him as righteousness." God refused to hold his sin against him — because he believed!

Sure, you have failed. Maybe yesterday — or today! Grievously! shamefully! But do you believe Jesus has the power to ultimately free you from sin's power? Do you believe the Cross of Jesus means sin's bondage is broken? do you accept the fact that He has promised to deliver you from the snare (trap) of Satan?

Let me tell you exactly where I believe the victory is! Let your faith rise! Let your heart accept all the promises of victory in Jesus! Then let your faith tell your heart, "I may not be what I want to be yet — but God is at work in me, and He has the power to loose sin's hold on me. I'm going to keep my momentum toward the Lord until I'm free at last. It may be little by little, but the day will come when faith will conquer! I will not always be a slave! I am not the devil's puppet! I am a weak child of God, wanting the strength of Jesus. I am not going to be another victim of the devil. I am going to come forth as pure gold — tried in the fire! God is for me! I commit it all to Him who is able to keep me from falling and present me faultless before the throne of God — with exceeding great joy."

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