

Rev. 5:6. the Weakness and the Power of Christ

by Horatius Bonar

Christ's apparent weakness is only in appearance, and He is actually mighty in Himself and in all things pertaining to Him.

Scripture: Isaiah 40:29, Romans 8:37, 1 Corinthians 1:24, 2 Corinthians 13:3-4, Ephesians 6:10, Philippians 4:13, Colossians 1:11, 2 Timothy 1:7, 1 Peter 3:18, Revelation 5:6

Topics: "The Power of Christ", "Weakness and Strength"

Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the profound contrasts in Christ's nature as both the slain Lamb and the powerful Lion of Judah. He explores how Christ's apparent weakness in His incarnation, crucifixion, and the Church's struggles does not negate His true power, which is manifested through the resurrection and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. Bonar reassures believers that despite the visible weakness in the world and the Church, Christ remains mighty and active, ensuring the safety and strength of His followers. The sermon encourages the faithful to rely on Christ's power rather than worldly measures of strength, affirming that true strength comes from being united with the risen Lord. Ultimately, Bonar calls for a recognition of the paradox of weakness and power in the life of Christ and His Church.

Transcript

"A Lamb as it has been slain."--Revelation 5:6.

"Put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."--1 Peter 3:18.

"He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power."--2 Corinthians 13:3-4.

Mark the CONTRASTS given us in these three passages.

--the Lamb slain and the Lion of the tribe of Judah;

--death and life;

--the flesh and the spirit;

--crucifixion and resurrection;

--weakness and power.

These words, which read almost as if the one contradicted the other, bring us to the cross of Christ, show His empty tomb, and proclaim a risen Lord, to whom all power is given. The third passage is more detailed and explicit than the first; let us take our outline from it, keeping, however, the others before us. This third passage affirms also our connection both with the weakness and power of Christ--with His death and life. We are one with Him in death and life; we have fellowship with Him both in His weakness and strength. As He lives again by the power of God, so do we. As He was put to death in the flesh, so are we. As He was quickened by the Spirit, so are we.

There are two declarations here made concerning Christ--the one negative, the other positive; the first as to His non-weakness, the second as to His power.

I. His non-weakness. He is not weak in Himself, says the apostle; nor is He weak toward you. He is Judah's Lion, though for a season He does not act as such. Yet there are many things which look like weakness in His person and history, and in His Church's history.

(1) He entered our world an INFANT. Helpless as the most helpless of the sons of men. He was scarce born when He had to flee from danger. His life was feebleness--He was persecuted, and had to hide Himself at times. He was taken prisoner, bound, tried, condemned, by a Roman judge. Was all this not weakness? From infancy He is the Lamb.

(2) He was CRUCIFIED. This is the event which the apostle takes hold of, conceding it as a proof of weakness. He was crucified through weakness. Every part of that awful event betokens weakness--His submitting to an unjust sentence--His allowing Himself to be scourged, bound, buffeted--then nailed to the tree--then crucified. All was weakness--weakness just like that of the thieves at His side. He is the Lamb slain.

(3) His DEPARTURE from earth. True, He rose. But after His resurrection here was no forth putting of power; and He left this earth without avenging Himself on His enemies--as if unable to do anything against them--as if they had prevailed against Him, and succeeded in banishing Him.

(4) The CHURCH'S history since He left. He left, saying, 'All power is given to me.' 'Lo, I am with you always.' But the story of the Church since then has been one of weakness, not of power. A bare existence is all that she has had, amid persecution and mockery; divisions, backslidings, inconsistencies within, hatred and hostility without; no progress in the earth; gaining a little in one place, losing it in another; her members, like the conies, a feeble folk, making their nest in the rock; made up of smoking flax and bruised reeds. 'Harmless as doves,' is the Master's picture of His disciples. Does not this look like weakness in her Head?

(5) The WORLD'S history since He left. Earthly power and glory have increased--empires of idolatry have risen. Paganism, Popery, Mohammedanism divide the world between them. The name of Christ is not a name of power among the nations--it takes no place in commerce, or politics, or war, or art. The world honors not, obeys not, the Son of God. It is in rebellion against Him; and this rebellion has lasted centuries, and is not yet put down. Is this weakness, or is it not?

(6) The progress of ERROR and EVIL since He left. Evil has not diminished; the human heart has not improved; sin has not been dried up; evil men and seducers wax worse and worse; and the last days are

the worst. Errors multiply; infidelity is leavening society, and working its way into the Church of God. The Bible is assailed; the gospel is denied; the cross is ridiculed; the blood is repudiated; the authority of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King--is disowned. Satan, too, still works; death still triumphs; pain and disease are still at large--working woe and havoc in God's creation. Does not this look like weakness? Does it seem as if evil had gotten the upper hand entirely?

Yet, in spite of all these strange phenomena in Christ's own history and that of His Church, the apostle declares, 'He is not weak;' He is not weak in Himself; He is not weak to us. Whatever may be the cause of these anomalies, it is not weakness, and never has been so. The weakness is only in appearance--and even that appearance is but temporary.

II. His POWER. He is mighty--mighty not only toward you, but in you; mighty in the midst of you; mighty in your hearts. Apparent weakness--but real and true power. This is the wonder; and in this wonder there are contained other wonders--wonders of wisdom, love, and long-suffering; wonders which could not have been exhibited in any way but this; this marvelous adjustment of forces, moral and physical; this holding of His own for ages against the augmenting power of creature-evil and creature hostility; this meeting each fresh development of evil by wondrous contrivances of His own--all of them moral and spiritual, not miraculous or forcible; keeping the vast hostile forces of earth and hell in check by invisible influence; saying, yet not audibly, to the tides and billows of the stormy deep, thus far, but no farther; reserving the great physical demonstration of His power until the day when He comes to take vengeance on His enemies.

Yes, says the apostle--He is mighty. Whatever appearances may say; whatever we might be tempted to infer from the power of the world and the weakness of the church; from the prevalence of evil and the scantiness of good; from the depression of His friends, and the elevation of His enemies--He is mighty--mighty in Himself, and in all things pertaining to Him. His word is mighty; His gospel is mighty; His purposes are mighty; the arm with which He wields the world's scepter, and holds Satan's bridle, is mighty. He is mighty over the world, and in the world; mighty over the church and in the church, and in behalf of the church; so mighty, that no weapon forged against her, or against one saint, shall prosper; so mighty, that she is entirely safe--secure in the midst of danger, and wiles, and power. All His strength is ours; it belongs to the Church; it belongs also to each member of His body. We are strong in the Lord.

The weakness of the Lamb slain belongs to the Church; yet also the strength of the Lion of the tribe of Judah. She can do all things through Christ, who strengthens her. She lives by the power of God. The source of her strength is above, and the preservation of her heavenly strength is connected with the preservation of her Nazarite locks. When these, the pledges and marks of her consecration, are shorn, she becomes weak like other men.

Our strength is not in numbers, nor wealth, nor political influence, nor human learning, but in Him who was crucified through weakness. He is both the wisdom and the power of God. The arm of flesh has always been a broken reed for the Church of God. It is in the power of a risen and glorified Christ--in the power of the Holy Spirit--that she is strong. It is only in this power that she can be holy, or work for God, or fight His battles, or war with Satan, or confront the gathering hosts of evil, or contend with error, or win the everlasting victory!

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