

Gods Power Is Manifested in Our Weakness

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes that God's power is revealed in our weakness, urging believers to examine their faith and remain humble before God.

Duration: 1:10:02

Scripture: Matthew 14:13-21, John 4:23-24, 1 Corinthians 1:27, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Ephesians 4:16, 1 Peter 5:5-6

Topics: "Spiritual Humility", "Gods Power"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being weak and humble before God, focusing on the transformation from being strong and self-reliant to becoming a worshipper who seeks God above all else. It highlights the need to surrender everything to God, be filled with the Holy Spirit, and allow God to break and make us weak so His power can be manifested through us. The message encourages self-examination to ensure alignment with God's ways and to prioritize worship and humility over serving and self-reliance.

Transcript

I want to turn to a verse in 2nd Corinthians, in chapter 13. These are words written to believers. In 1st Corinthians, Paul was writing to a church that tolerated sin in their midst, and he had some strong words to write to them to deal with that sin in their midst, even to put a man out of the church, and he used some very strong language.

He said, I've handed over that believer to the devil. It's a very strong language, to hand over a child of God to the devil. You read that in 1 Corinthians 5. Does God permit that? He certainly did.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit. The reason why the sin was dealt with so quickly in that church was because there was apostolic authority that intervened in that situation and didn't deal with that sin softly, like we find in many churches today, that tolerates sin. He dealt with it, even if necessary, hand over a person to the devil, he says, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

See, when you have apostles dealing with sin so strongly, problems get solved very quickly. But today we have a church which is soft on sin, and that's why we have so many problems. But by the time you come to the second letter of Corinthians, which is probably written about a year later, see the problem has been solved.

That man who was handed over to the devil repented and came back to the Lord, as you read in 2 Corinthians 2. So 2 Corinthians is written to a church that has repented and responded to the call of the apostle to turn from sin, to deal with that man. It's not easy to put a man out of a church, but they did it. And then Paul says in 2 Corinthians 2, now bring him back because he's really repented now.

And if you read Paul's letters, there is no letter of Paul where he reveals his inner life, the secret of his inner life, more than in 2 Corinthians. If you want to know the inner life of the apostle Paul which made him the man of God that he was, you get it in 2 Corinthians. So, a person doesn't do that unless he's speaking to a very responsive congregation.

And to this church, he poses a question. In verse 5 of 2 Corinthians chapter 13, he says, test yourselves to see if you are in the faith. I don't know whether many people would preach that to a church.

We just assume that everybody sitting there is in the faith. Because we have such a low level of understanding of what the faith means. Very often, many people's understanding of the faith means the correct doctrine.

And if you have some time in your life, said those magic words, Lord Jesus Christ, come into my heart, you are in the faith. The apostles didn't take that matter so lightly. They felt that they were responsible to present the people to God as a pure offering.

In Romans 15, Paul says, I'm like one of those Old Testament priests. And I have to present you Christians as an offering to God. And you know that those Old Testament priests had a big responsibility when they presented an offering to make sure that it was absolutely spotless.

If somebody brought a lamb, they couldn't just put the lamb and offer it up to God. No, that would be serious. It's a serious sin if they did that.

They had to examine the lamb to see that it was not blind or deaf or not lame. It had to be spotless. If they brought an ox to the altar, they had to examine that ox.

The priest's job was pretty serious. They had to make sure that it wasn't a sick goat or ox or lamb, because such things were not supposed to be offered to God. In fact, one of the crimes that the priests were committing in the days of Malachi, you read in chapter 1 of Malachi, was that they were offering all these sick offerings to God.

And when I think of a lot of Christian churches today, and their leaders who tolerate a lot of things in their churches just to preserve the size of their congregation that it never thins down into a smaller number, they're offering to God people who are impure, not free from sin. They tolerate all kinds of things in their congregation. Instead of taking their responsibility seriously, to offer a pure offering to God.

And even writing to the Corinthians, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11, He says, I'm concerned. I want to present you as a pure virgin to Jesus Christ. God's given me a charge.

See, that's why he tells them, examine yourself. Are you really in the faith? Don't just assume because once upon a time you asked Jesus to come into your heart. You're in the faith.

You could be a backslider. You could have lost your salvation. You may not have understood what the faith is all about.

You may have such a low level of understanding of what Christianity is, that you're satisfied with that. It's like bare minimum marks to pass in an examination. You don't realize that God's standard is 100%, not 40%.

So, that's the standard to which the apostles held those early churches. And it's very rare to find that type of preaching nowadays. To tell believers, are you examining yourself? Are you really in the faith? When Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11, I want to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

You know, the church is supposed to be the bride of Jesus Christ. And it says in the book of Revelation, how part of that so-called church can be a harlot called Babylon. And for many years people used to think Babylon was a Roman Catholic church.

It's not a Roman Catholic church. It's any Christian who's playing the harlot. Anybody, in any denomination, who claims to be the bride of Jesus Christ, but plays the harlot.

And we're not talking about Muslims and Hindus and Buddhists. We're talking about, they don't claim to be the bride of Jesus Christ. It's only Christians who claim to be the bride of Jesus Christ.

But where they have allowed themselves to play the fool with some other man. You know, supposing a man is, supposing a girl is engaged to be married to someone who's gone away on a long journey and says, just be faithful to me, I'm going to come back to marry you. That's the picture of Christ and the bride.

And while he's away, she fools around with some other man. And this, in the case of believers, it's the world. When I fool around with things in the world, I'm a harlot.

It doesn't matter which church we go to. It's a harlot spirit. And that's what the devil's always seeking to do.

To pollute us, make the bride of Christ into a harlot. And that's what Paul is writing to. And he says, if you're doing that, you're not really in the faith.

And part of the reason for this is because over a period of time, I've noticed this in believers, they lose that sense of weakness and dependence on God which they had right at the beginning of the Christian life. When I often tell people in my own church, I say, think of the day when you first came to this church. When you were a nobody.

Nobody knew who you were. You were just an outright sinner and you accepted Christ. And you were so deeply thankful that your sins were forgiven.

And you came to the church and you were so thankful that you had a place in the church in the back row. You could even get in there. But now I say, you've been in the church so many years and you've sort of become a senior person and you begin to think that you're somebody.

Examine yourself for your empathy. You've lost that sense of being nothing before God. It's in this context that he says here, and I want you to read the previous verse now.

In verse 3, since you're seeking, 2 Corinthians 13, verse 3, since you're seeking for a proof of the Christ who speaks in me. Now today, many people try to prove that Christ speaks through them by shouting, yelling and banging the table and all types of activity on the platform. But he says, it's not like that.

It's through weakness. Indeed, Jesus Christ, verse 4, was crucified because of weakness. Yet he lives because of the power of God.

We also are weak in him. He's trying to prove that Christ is speaking through him. How does he prove it? Not by trying to show his great power.

He says, only you see my weakness. But we live because of the power of God directed toward you. And then he says, test yourself whether you have the same faith.

A faith which is manifested in human weakness. Where it is the power of Christ that's manifested and not our own abilities. I find that in all the miracles that Jesus did, he was always trying to get the disciples to learn one lesson.

In all the miracles, basically it was one lesson. Without me, you can do nothing. That is the mark of a person who really has faith.

To me, one of the most beautiful pictures of faith that Jesus ever gave was when he said those words, without me you can do nothing. It was in John 15, verse 5, where he spoke about being the vine, or we can say any tree. Everybody in Israel knew a vine, but we could talk about an apple tree if you like, or any tree that you are familiar with.

And you are the branches. And we know that a branch can produce absolutely nothing if it doesn't abide in the tree. And all the fruit that comes out on a branch is only because of one reason.

It's in the tree. It's absolutely helpless. And even if that branch has had 25 years of experience in producing fruit, it is just as helpless today to produce fruit as it was on the first day it produced fruit.

Now, I don't know whether believers, many of you have been believers for many years, I want to ask you, do you feel as helpless today as you did on the day you were first converted? Or do you feel pretty strong now? That's why Paul says, examine yourself. Do you still have that same faith that you had at the beginning, where you felt you were a nobody? You've become a somebody now. You've got some respect.

And that's why your usefulness to God is limited. The Lord could have done a lot more through you and in you, made you more Christ-like, if you had remained in weakness like you were the first day you were converted. How did we all come to Christ initially? Lord, there's nothing good in me.

I'm a sinner. Head to foot I'm full of sin. And I come that helplessness.

That's how we all came to Christ. If you were really saved, that's how you came. But that sense of helplessness and weakness goes away pretty quickly after we earn a little reputation in the church we sit in.

Or maybe we have done something for the Lord. And maybe we have brought a few people to Christ. And we are not those unknown nobodies like we were the day we were converted.

We've become somebodies. In Galatians, Paul says to the Galatian Christians in chapter 6, If anyone thinks he's a somebody, when he's a nobody, he deceives himself. And I think a lot of Christians are living in a sudden deception.

I tell you, you don't have to worry about other people. Ask yourself. Be absolutely, ruthlessly honest with yourself.

And ask yourself one question. Do you believe today that you are a nobody like you did on the day you were first converted? I doubt it very much. I don't know your life.

But you ask yourself. You've got a reputation now. You're a somebody.

And the power of God is decreased in you. And the result is there are sins which you could have overcome ages ago. But you still don't overcome.

I'm always amazed at how a Christian, for example, can permit anger to remain in his life for so many years. Whether he's angry with a neighbor, or angry with a driver on the road, or angry with his wife, or angry with her husband. They don't seem to take it seriously.

They know internet pornography is sin. But anger is not such a sin. They call it a weakness.

And as long as you call it a weakness, I tell you in a hundred years you won't overcome it. When you call it the sin that the Bible says, you overcome it. Why is it that people don't overcome anger? It's not because... I've heard people say, Oh brother, I'm so weak.

I can't overcome this anger. I say you're not weak. You're strong.

That's why you can't overcome it. Think of a person who's... I use the illustration sometimes of a man who's taken into a hospital because he's sick. A strong person.

The first day he's there, he's yelling at the nurses and upset with people for not doing this for him or not doing that for him. You go a few days later and he's become a little weaker with tubes in his nose and in his veins and all that. And he's not shouting so much now.

And you go a few days still later and he's become thoroughly weak and he doesn't shout at all. When was he getting angry? When he was weak or when he was strong? It's when he was strong that he was angry. A few days later he's silent because he's become weak.

It's because you're strong that you get angry. And as long as you remain strong, I tell you in Jesus' name, you'll never overcome your anger. You may have got rid of internet pornography, but anger is worse than that.

I don't know whether people realize that anger can take a person to hell. Jesus said that. Let me show you that in Matthew chapter 5. Many people have asked me this question.

Brother Zach, why do you speak so much against anger and sexual impurity in the thought life? I think I speak more against those two sins than perhaps any other sin. And I say I'll tell you the reason today. Because if you read the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 6 and 7, I don't know whether you've noticed, there are only two places in that sermon where Jesus spoke about going to hell.

He spoke about a number of things there. Don't judge. And don't be anxious.

But He didn't say if you judge, you'll go to hell. He didn't say if you're anxious, you'll go to hell. He spoke about don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.

But He didn't say if you allow your left hand to know what your right hand is doing, you'll go to hell. No. He said, for example, let your yes be yes.

And don't swear. He didn't say if you do swear, you'll go to hell. He never said it.

There were a lot of things He said. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for there is the kingdom of heaven. He didn't say if you're not poor in spirit, you'll go to hell.

No. A lot of things He said in the Sermon on the Mount, but He never spoke about hell. But when it came to two sins, He said about hell.

I want you to see that. Matthew 5, verse 21. He says the Old Testament standard was don't commit murder.

And if that's all you avoid doing, that's a good Old Testament standard, but it's not the New Testament standard. The New Testament standard is you don't get angry. You know, the equivalent of murder in the Old Testament is anger in the New Testament.

I don't know whether you see that. I mean, if an Israelite murders somebody, it's like a Christian getting angry. It's the same thing.

That's what Jesus said. You've heard that it's said. Don't commit murder.

What is He explaining? He's explaining what He said in verse 20. Your righteousness must be more than the righteousness of those Old Testament people. The Pharisees were the great examples of Old Testament righteousness.

And He says your righteousness, if you're going to be a disciple of mine, must be more than the righteousness of those Old Testament people. They live by a standard saying I won't commit murder. What about you? Your standard must be that I don't get angry.

See that in verse 22. But I say to you, see the Sermon on the Mount is the replacement for the Ten Commandments. Moses went up to the mountain and brought Ten Commandments.

Jesus went up to the mountain and gave the Sermon on the Mount. He replaced the Ten Commandments with the Sermon on the Mount. He said the Ten Commandments said don't commit murder, but I say to you, don't get angry.

And He says, now here's what I meant by three steps to hell. Verse 22. Everyone who's angry with his brother, everyone, doesn't matter who they are, will be guilty before the court.

And if he goes further, then that's just anger in the heart. If you've got anger in your heart, you haven't said a word, you haven't opened your mouth yet, you're already guilty. Now if you go beyond that and open your mouth and say something, say something to him, then you're guilty before the Supreme Court.

That's a higher level. And then you don't stop there, you go further and express your anger even more. You'll be guilty enough to go to hell.

Have you ever heard that? That anger can take you to hell? I want to ask you honestly. What do you fear more? Anger or cancer? Anger or AIDS? Supposing the blood test showed that you had AIDS. Not due to

sexual impurity perhaps, maybe you got a blood transfusion with an infected needle.

Mistake by somebody, but you got AIDS as a result of it. And the blood test shows that you got AIDS. Would it disturb you? I'll tell you.

I know lots of people in India who will not be disturbed by that. You know why? Because they are illiterate. They don't know what AIDS is.

You go to some village where an illiterate woman and tell her she's got cancer. She'll sleep peacefully. She doesn't know what cancer is.

She thinks it's like a cough and a cold or a fever or something. It'll go away next day. Where there's illiteracy, you can tell them they've got the worst possible disease.

It doesn't disturb them. AIDS has never taken anybody to hell. You'll find when you get to heaven, if you get there, that there are people there who had AIDS on earth, who repented of their sin and got to heaven.

AIDS can never send a person to hell. It may kill him and send him to the grave, but it doesn't send him to hell. But anger can.

If you believe the words of Jesus, if you believe that Jesus knew more about heaven and hell than anybody else, and if our theology has come from the teaching of Jesus and not from what we think is right or wrong, then you have to accept Matthew 5, 22, that anger is serious enough to take you to heaven. And we are angry because we are strong. We're not weak.

A weak person does not get angry because the Bible says, my power is manifested in your weakness. And if you have God's power, you will not get angry. Like I said the first day, the Lord told the disciples when he sent a tongue of fire on top of their heads, this is the real power of the Holy Spirit, that I'm going to control your tongue now by the Holy Spirit.

You know the two parts of our body with which we sin the most are our eyes and our tongue. The maximum sin committed by believers is with the eyes and the tongue. And I say, if the power of the Holy Spirit cannot control my eyes and my tongue, it's not the genuine power of the Holy Spirit.

It's some fake, counterfeit emotional experience I got. It hasn't really changed me. And that's why you find believers, pastors, preachers, around the world, you suddenly hear that they fall into sin.

So many of them lose their temper. They don't have any control over their tongue. They speak in unknown tongues, but they don't have any control over their tongue and their mother tongue.

And they are not able to control their eyes. They fall into adultery with people in their congregation. Or even if they don't, they are lusting in different ways with their eyes.

Then you realize that this Holy Spirit is pretty helpless. He doesn't seem to be able to control their eyes. They say the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

But which body? Is it a body which contains your eyes and your tongue? Is that the temple of the Holy Spirit? Is the Holy Spirit able to control it? Or are you living in a delusion? I think a lot of people are. For myself, I would say that I do not have the power of the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit cannot help me to control my eyes and my tongue.

I would just be honest with myself. And I would say that's because I am too strong. God's power is not able to manifest itself through me because His power is manifested only in weakness.

As the Living Bible says very beautifully in 2nd Corinthians 12 verse 9 My power shows up best in weak people. So you know God is just trying to make us weak so that we can overcome our anger. God's trying to show us you can try your best you will not overcome anger.

You can try your best and you won't be able to do it. And the second sin He spoke in relation to hell. Going to hell is in verse 27.

He says the Old Testament standard was don't commit adultery. But I'm telling you you can commit adultery with your eyes and you look and lust and you've already committed adultery as far as I'm concerned. Again, when we are strong we can look and lust when we are weak when our eyesight is weak we can't look and lust.

What did He mean by saying if your right eye offends you plug it out. That's what He said in the next verse verse 29 If your right eye makes you to stumble in the area of lust pull it out throw it away. Why? Because it is better for you to go with one eye to heaven than to go with two eyes to hell.

This is the second time He spoke about hell. And you read through the Sermon on the Mount He said the only two times He spoke about hell. And He told believers if you are not careful in the area of anger your tongue and you are not careful in the area of lusting your eyes you are in danger of going to hell.

And I say my calling as a servant of God is to save believers from going to hell. And that's why I speak about these two sins more than almost any other sin. And if you go to our website and listen to all my sermons you will see I preach against these two sins more than any other sin because I hardly hear any preacher speaking against anger.

I mean I watch television preachers for years for many many times in India I don't hear them preaching against anger. They seem to preach against poverty as if poverty is a sin. Jesus was poor.

Was He a sinner? They seem to preach against sickness. There are people in the Bible who are sick. Trophimus have I left in my kingdom sick Paul says.

Was He a sinner? Timothy had stomach infirmities so frequently I'm sure Paul laid hands on him many times and he wasn't healed and Paul tells Timothy well you better take some medicine now. I mean you have these frequent stomach infirmities. 1 Timothy 5 he says.

Was He a sinner? He was the finest of Paul's co-workers. We have a Christendom today that's preaching a gospel where you have to be free from sickness and free from poverty but not free from anger and not free from lust. You can be as healthy as you like in your body and as rich as you like in your bank account but I'll tell you this if you're not free from anger and you're not free from sexual lust we're not going to make it in God's kingdom.

I'll tell you why because at the end of the sermon on the law Jesus said there are two kinds of people who are listening to this message now and throughout these two thousand years those who hear and say well it's not so serious these guys are trying to scare us they are building on sand one day the house will collapse the storm and the flood haven't come it'll come then the wonderful house you think you have will collapse and then there are others who take it seriously those who hear these words of mine and do them

I'll tell you from my own testimony for nearly sixteen years of my Christian life after being born again I never took these sins seriously I was like the rest of so called believers I wasn't an obvious sinner I mean would you call me a sinner if I got angry with my wife I don't think most people would call such a person a sinner but I discovered I was a sinner I was a preacher and I didn't have clean thoughts it was like that I'll tell you honestly nobody knew it I wasn't committing adultery on the outside I never did it in my life but boy was I impure in my thoughts did I have control over my tongue when something went wrong at all no make me a better preacher. I just asked you to make my outward testimony correspond with my inner life. That means you make me transparent.

That means what I speak is what I am. That I never speak what I am not. That's all I asked you to do.

God filled me in the spirit once again. He granted my heart's desire. My life has changed.

And it's been very different in the last more than 30 years. With you, my brothers and sisters, if you're honest, you've already taken the first step to a level of life that you probably have never experienced in your life. And it comes through weakness.

God is always, that is what he's saying. Jesus Christ was crucified in weakness. That's what he read in 2 Corinthians 13.

But he lives by the power of God. Turn there again. And let's so that we let it sink into our hearts.

2 Corinthians 13.4. He was crucified because of weakness. Yet he lives because of the power of God. What does it mean when it says Jesus was crucified because of weakness? That means he chose to be weak.

He could have called 72,000 angels to come and set him free. But he didn't. That's weakness.

Choosing to be weak. I choose not to respond. I remember some years ago when people were telling lies about me in India.

Any true servant of God faces that. Because I was preaching some hard things like this that hurt certain people. And the Lord said, what do you want me to do to these people? When they spoke against Moses, when Miriam spoke against Moses, she got leprosy.

But when the Pharisees called Jesus, invisible prince of devils, you know what they got? Forgiveness. He said, have you spoken against the Son of Man? You're forgiven. When you speak against Moses, you get leprosy.

If you speak against Jesus, you get forgiveness. And the Lord said, who do you want to follow? Moses or Jesus? What do you want these people to get who speak evil about you? I said, Lord, I understand now. I want them to be forgiven.

I don't want them to be punished. No. If you desire punishment for somebody who does evil to you, you're in the old covenant.

You're a follower of Moses. How dare they speak against a servant of God? Did Jesus react like that when they called him the devil? When they spat on his face? No. He said, Father, forgive them.

They don't know what they're doing. He was crucified because of weakness. Like Elisha, when they called, made fun of him because of his bald head.

Go up. Go get raptured, you bald head. He cursed them.

Some bears came out and killed those young people. They called Jesus worse things than that. He gave them forgiveness.

He was crucified because of weakness. A weak person doesn't call down fire from heaven on people. Doesn't call the bears to come and eat up people.

He doesn't pray that God give leprosy. A weak person says, I've got nothing to say. I'm just dying.

You call me a devil? Okay, fine. I'm just dying. Examine yourselves.

Are you in this faith that Jesus had? Or are you an old covenant Christian where Moses is your example and Elisha is your example? They dare not say anything against you. You're ready to call the bears down upon them. You remember once when the Samaritans would not receive Jesus in Luke chapter 9 and James and John came to the defense of Jesus and Lord, you know, that was the exact spot where Elijah called down fire from heaven on people who had come to capture him.

You read in 2nd Kings chapter 1, fire came down from heaven. These fellas had come to capture the prophet Elijah in Samaria. And there in Samaria, James and John, they were good scholars of scripture.

This is the place where Elijah called down fire. He said, shall we do the same thing, Lord? You're greater than Elijah. Call down fire from heaven because these fellas will not receive you.

Jesus rebuked them. He said, you don't know what manner of spirit you are. You're too strong.

Jesus was weak. He said, the Son of Man didn't come to destroy man's lives. He came to save them.

You have to be weak for the power of God to be manifested through you. Because that is the power of love. It's not the power of judgment.

It's the power of love that shines through a person who is weak. That's the point which Paul is trying to say in 2nd Corinthians 13. Are you in this faith? Examine yourself whether you're in this faith where Jesus was crucified because of weakness and lives by the power of God.

So until we are willing to be weak like that, we will never know the power of God. But he said, pull out one eye because it's dangerous to lust with your eyes. He wasn't telling us to actually pull out our eye because you pull out your right eye.

Do you think that will solve your lust problem? You can still lust with one eye. You know that. The left eye is good enough.

You don't need two eyes to lust. One eye is more than enough to lust. What did he mean? What he meant was, imagine that you're a blind person.

When you are tempted to lust, imagine if you were blind. What would you do then? What would you do if you were a blind person sitting in the computer? Would you go to a pornographic site then? No. But you're not blind, right? Blind person is weak.

You're strong. You've got good eyesight. You don't even need glasses.

You're strong. That's why you go to those dirty sites. That's why you can look at lust.

The solution for victory is to be weak. Paul was in great danger of becoming strong once because he had such fantastic experiences. He was taken up to the third heaven.

He did miracles. He raised the dead. He planted churches.

He wrote scripture. And he was in tremendous danger. I mean, the day Paul was converted on the Damascus road, he was weak.

He knew he was a filthy, rotten sinner. But now, he had become an apostle. The mightiest apostle of his time.

Handkerchiefs that touched his body would cast out demons. And God loved him so much that he said, Paul, you're in danger. I've got to give you a little thorn in the flesh.

I've got to make you weak. He doesn't tell us what that thorn in the flesh was. It was probably a sickness.

But it could be anything. It could be somebody who keeps on harassing you. Could be a sickness.

There are different things that can be thorns in the flesh. The purpose of it all, whether it's a sickness or somebody who keeps on harassing us, is to make us weak. He tells Paul, you're too strong, Paul.

You're in danger of becoming proud. And even if you're my servant, when you become proud, I have to fight against you. Because I resist the proud.

That's part of God's nature. The Bible never says that God resists adulterers or resists murderers. But he resists proud people.

And so, he had to make Paul weak. And even if it meant, what does he call this thorn in the flesh in 2 Corinthians 12, 7? A messenger of Satan. A messenger of Satan.

And we wonder, does God allow a messenger of Satan to buffet one of his mightiest servants? Can't you rebuke it in Jesus' name? Get out. I don't know how many times Paul said it, but the messenger of Satan didn't go. It was still there.

Do you believe that God allows a messenger of Satan to keep on harassing and troubling one of his mightiest servants? Examine yourself. Do you have this faith? Or do you believe that, oh, God won't allow that? Is it because Paul didn't have faith that the messenger of Satan didn't go? Look what he says. I was in danger of exalting myself, verse 7. He recognized that danger, that he could exalt himself because of the amazing revelations and experiences he had.

That God in great love had to humble him. And the only way he could humble the apostle Paul was by giving him a messenger of Satan to buffet him and make him weak. Because he was in danger of being very strong in himself.

And he prayed. He couldn't understand it in the beginning. He said, Lord, how can a messenger of Satan touch me? You defeated Satan on the cross.

How can a messenger of Satan never touch me? I rebuke it. I resist it. I pray, Lord, take it away.

He said, no. Pray the second time. No.

Pray the third time. No. God answered Paul's prayer.

The answer was no. Some people think it's only when God says yes, he answers prayer. I've often said, God has answered every prayer of mine.

People misunderstand me. I'll explain. Prayer is like these traffic signals.

Sometimes it's red, no. Sometimes it's orange, wait. And sometimes it's green, yes.

You know God answers every prayer? Sometimes it's yes. Sometimes it's wait. Sometimes it's no.

But no is also an answer. God answered Paul's prayer. No.

I'm not going to take it away. Because my grace can come upon you only when you're weak. My power is made perfect in your weakness.

And so just like Jesus was crucified in weakness and lived by the power of God, Paul discovered in his life that that is the great secret of the Christian life, is to be weak and to be a nobody. I work with about 70 elders, my coworkers, in about 50 churches that we have planted in India. And I keep telling them, dear brothers, be weak.

Be nobodies. Once upon a time you were a nobody, I tell them. You were not even an elder brother.

You were not even a good brother in the church. You were just a rotten sinner. And you came to Christ one day.

You were a nobody. But now you've known the word. God's given you the gift to preach.

And you've risen to be an elder brother. You are in danger in your church of thinking that you're a somebody. You were not in danger the day you were converted.

No. That day you were saved. Because you were a nobody.

You're in danger today, 20 years after being a believer. Because you've become a somebody. And that's how the devil puffs people up and, I mean, you may not lose your testimony because most believers don't have light on this.

But you can see in your own life that you're strong. Proof of it, you haven't overcome anger. Second proof, you still lust in your mind.

What more proof do you want? These are the proofs that you're still strong. That the power of God cannot manifest itself through you because you're strong. Examine yourself whether you're in the faith.

It's not just a question of saying, Lord Jesus, come into my heart. I believe in Jesus. I believe in the Trinity.

I believe that Jesus, the Son of God, died for me, rose again, coming again. That's all theory. The devil believes all that.

Examine yourself whether you're in this faith. Jesus Christ was crucified in weakness, but he lives by the power of God. Jesus never spoke in tongues, but he had the power of God.

Is this the power of God that you have? And Paul says, once you understood this, he says, oh Lord, that solved my problem. Now I will glory you. And I will boast most gladly, 2 Corinthians 12, 9, I will boast about my weakness.

You ask yourself, what do you boast about? I don't mean what we speak about outwardly. We all like to have a reputation for humility, right? Is there anybody here who doesn't want a reputation for humility? Don't you like everybody in the church to think you're a very humble brother, a very humble sister? We all love it when people think you're, you'd be offended if somebody, you heard somebody say behind your back, that's a proud person. You'd get hurt.

But if you heard somebody say behind your back, oh what a humble sister she is, that's made your day, right? We love that reputation for humility. We're just fooling ourselves. If you're really humble, God will give you grace.

And if you've got grace, Romans 6, 14 says, sin will not rule over you. Let me tell you the mark of humility. You won't get angry.

Let me tell you another mark of humility. You won't lust in your mind sexually. If you're still doing those things, don't fool yourself just because a lot of people think you're humble.

You're not, because God is not giving you grace. The only person who can give me a certificate of humility is Almighty God. Because He knows me through and through.

And God gives His grace to every humble person. He doesn't even have to ask for it. It's like water.

You see that water always flows to the lowest place. There's a road which is up and down or there are low spots in the ground. The water always goes there.

You don't have to ask the water to come there. It just flows there automatically. It's the high spots that are dry.

And the spirit of God is like that. He always looks for the, who's going to get the maximum grace in all of us who are here today? Whoever God sees is the humblest. You don't even have to ask for that grace.

It will automatically come like the water of the river of light from heaven flows to the humblest person first. And grace comes to the humblest person and Paul says, once I understood that it's on weak people, verse 9 of 2 Corinthians 12, that the power of Christ rests. I said, now I'm content.

I'm content with verse 10. I'm content with weakness. I'm content where people insult me because that makes me even weaker.

I'm content with distresses. I'm content with persecutions because that weakens me further. And with difficulties.

How many Christians have you met who say, I'm perfectly content with difficulties because those difficulties make me small in my own eyes. Because when I'm weak, then I'm strong. This is one of the paradoxes of the Christian life.

That it's the one who recognizes he's the chief of sinners, who is the holiest man on earth. I believe the apostle Paul was one of the saintliest man that lived in his time. But what did he think of himself? Of all the sinners in the world, I'm the chiefest of all.

How could the holiest man on earth think he's the chiefest of sinners? Now, many of us, when we become holy or holier than what we were before, we're pretty aware of it, right? That I'm a holy person now. Well, that wasn't the impression Paul had about himself. I see a progression in Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 10, he says, I'm the least of the apostles.

And three or four years later, he writes to the Ephesians in Ephesians 3.8, he goes down lower and says, I'm the least of all the saints. And then three, four years later, when he writes 1 Timothy 1.15, he goes down still further and says, I'm the chief of all the sinners. Do you see his progression? The least of the apostles.

Three, four years later, the least of all the saints. And three, four years later, the chief of all the sinners. This is progression in holiness.

How's that? Because the closer we come to God, the more we are aware of our sin. It's when Isaiah saw the glory of God, he said, oh, woe is me. I'm such an unclean man.

It's the man who's far away from God who thinks he's pretty holy. Think of all these self-righteous people in every religion. Y'all think they're pretty holy.

It's the one who's come closest to God, who's aware of unchristlikeness in areas of his life. I find that, you know, I find, as I seek to get closer to God every year, it is my passion in life. I'll tell you honestly, my passion is not to be more useful to God, but to get closer to God.

And I find through the years as I pursued that, that God shows me areas of unchristlikeness in my life, which I didn't even knew existed a few years ago. I'm not talking about ordinary sins like anger and lust and bitterness and jealousy, those things we should finish with. Getting offended and all, we should finish with right at the beginning.

I'm talking about little, little areas of selfishness, self-centeredness, little, little areas where we seek our own. Christ never sought his own. Little, little areas of a subtle love of money perhaps.

Do you discover things like that? You know, I found that self is like a big onion. And you peel off one skin and you think you're finished with it, and there's another skin underneath. And you peel off that and you find another underneath.

But there's no end to it. Spiritual pride, for example. There's no end to it.

But we think we're humble. We think we're better than others. God gives us light if we get closer to him, and that's how it was with Paul.

So, the weaker we are, you know, like that branch in the tree saying, I've been producing fruit for 50 years, the branch says, but you cut me off from the tree today, I'm finished today. That's the end of fruit. If you can recognize that, that you recognized it the day you were converted, you knew you had nothing except Christ.

But it's possible through the years, my brothers and sisters, and I want to say this in love, because I believe this is the thing that hinders many of us from spiritual growth. It's possible that you begin to think that you've got something in yourself now because you've been a Christian for so many years and you've produced fruit in your life. You know so much of the truth.

You're fooling yourself. Anybody thinks he's a somebody, but he's a nobody. And you know, this is the reason also why people can't have fellowship with each other.

It's one of the saddest things that I've seen in prison though. People say they are filled with the Holy Spirit, but they can't get along with each other. There are some churches that don't talk about fullness of the Spirit.

They can't get along with each other. And there are other churches we say we are filled with the Holy Spirit. And there also you'll find they can't get along with each other.

You know why? Because they are strong. Strong people can't get along with other strong people. It's weak people who can get along with each other.

God has to make us weak. Not only for us to get victory in our life, but to build fellowship. Very easy for weak people to build fellowship.

But if one is strong, there's no fellowship. And that's why the name of Christ is so dishonored. Because even though individually they are pretty strong, they can't have fellowship with one another.

You know in Ephesians there's a word used. I want you to see this verse in Ephesians chapter 4. It speaks in verse 16. Referring to the body of Christ.

The whole body being fitted and held together. It's a beautiful picture of unity. The whole body being fitted and held together.

And we can say functioning together by that which every joint supplies according to the proper working of each individual part causes the growth of the body for the building of itself by love. I want you, when you get home, take that verse and just meditate on it for a few minutes. Ephesians 4.16. You know what a joint is? An elbow is a joint.

You don't hear a sound. Because the joint is functioning properly. If I had arthritis, you'd hear a lot of sounds in a simple movement like that.

Here is a strong brother, forearm. Here is another strong brother, the upper arm. You know the trouble with many believers? These two strong brothers can't get along with each other.

The joint is not functioning. And even if it does function, there's a lot of noise. There's a lot of arthritis in the body of Christ, unfortunately.

There's noise when two people get together. It should be soundless. That shows the joint is functioning perfectly.

Perfect fellowship. You know what that means? When the muscle here is pulling, the muscle on the other side is yielding. And when the muscle on the other side is pulling, this muscle is yielding.

And it's automatic. You know why? Because both are responsive to the head, the brain. Why is it two spirit-filled brothers can't get along with each other? Why is there so much conflict between spirit-filled brothers? Okay, you say those other denominations, they don't believe in the fullness of the spirit.

That's a problem. They don't speak in tongues. That's a problem.

Let's take the people who do speak in tongues and who are filled with the spirit. Why do they have problems? Because the Lord says, My power is made perfect in weakness. Jesus Christ was crucified in weakness.

Examine yourself whether you are in disbelief. God is to make us weak in ourselves. Recognize that we are nobodies.

All your Bible knowledge, it has not made you a somebody. All your usefulness, you are doing this, you are doing that for God. It doesn't mean anything.

If you can't have fellowship with others, if you can't build fellowship with others, if you can't build a local expression of the body of Christ functioning smoothly, it's because you are strong. The Lord wants local expressions of the body of Christ. Every church, every local church, whether there are 10 people or 100 people, must be an expression of a body functioning without noise, working with each other.

Not strong brothers who can't get along with each other. Imagine if all my joints were strong. Think of the number of joints in a little hand for example.

Here's one at the wrist and here are three in one little finger. There are three joints. Another three here, three here.

Imagine if all these joints stopped functioning. I would be like this the whole day. I wouldn't be able to move, bend my knees.

I wouldn't be able to bend my elbows. I wouldn't be able to hold anything because the joints are not functioning. But all the other, I've got strong fingers, strong forearm.

The only thing is I can't get along with the other part of the body. This is a picture of the body of Christ. God's work is hindered because these strong spiritual brothers can't get along with each other.

They're not weak. They haven't understood the true faith. You remember how God made Jacob into Israel? There was a time when God came to Jacob and said, Today I've changed your name to Israel.

You'll have power with God and power with man. You'll be a prince now. Prince of God, Israel.

You know when that happened? Not when he was 20, not when he was 40. When he was so clever, even when he was in his mother's womb, he grabbed his brother's leg. He was strong before he came out of his mother's womb.

I don't know if there's ever a child born like that that grabbed his brother's leg as he was coming out. The second twin. That's why they call him Jacob, Grabber.

You know that's the meaning of Jacob, Grabber. They call him Grabber because they saw him coming out like this. He was almost saying, Hey, how did you get out first? I wanted to come out first.

And later on, he grabbed his brother's birthright with a lot of shrewdness. And he went to his uncle's house and tried to grab one girl and got two. Got the wrong one first.

Because he met his match in his father-in-law. God has amazing ways of allowing you to meet your match sometimes in your father-in-law. And Jacob met his match in his father-in-law.

He tried to dupe his father-in-law and father-in-law duped him. He tried to grab, grab, grab. Later on, he grabbed his father-in-law's property.

You know, a lot of sheep. And he became a very rich man. Grabbing the birthright.

Grabbing somebody's daughter. Grabbing property. Grabber.

Grabber. And one day, in Genesis 32, you read that God met with him when he was alone and said, Tell me what's your name? Many years earlier, his father had asked him, what's your name? He said, I'm Esau. Give me the birthright.

But now he was honest. The Lord asked, what's your name? The Lord, my name is Grabber. Okay.

From today, you will not be called Grabber. But he had to break his hip joint so that he couldn't walk anymore. He was a young man, according to the length of life people lived in those days.

Those days, people lived up to 170 and things like that. So a 60-year-old man like Jake was like what we'd look at a 25-year-old man today. Can you imagine a 25-year-old man walking with a cane? It's pretty humiliating, right? That's what happened to Jake.

His hip was dislocated. And he had to walk with a cane. He was broken.

And that day, when the Lord said, let me go, Gus and Jacob said, no, I won't let you go. Lord, I spent my life grabbing a lot of earthly things. But today, I grab hold of you.

I won't let you go. I wish you blessings. And the Lord broke his thigh and said, okay, I'll bless you.

But I've got to break you first. You're too strong, Jacob. Once I break you, you'll be a bar.

You'll be Israel. And he became. And that's what the Lord is waiting for.

What have you spent your life grabbing, my brother, sister? Have you been running after money? Have you been running after ministry? Trying to do things for the Lord? The Lord is waiting for you to be broken. When you say, Lord, I only want to be a worshipper. I said that to God many years ago.

I said, Lord, I don't want to be a preacher. I don't want to have a ministry. I want to live my days as a worshipper of God.

And if there is any ministry, it will be just an overflow of my worship. But I want to live my days as a worshipper. Because that's what I'm going to do in heaven.

I'm not going to be preaching in heaven. I want to begin on earth doing what I'm going to do for all eternity in heaven. My favorite songs, which I sing to the Lord when I'm alone, are songs of worship.

My God, how wonderful thou art. Thy majesty, how bright. How beautiful thy mercy seat in depths of burning light.

Father of Jesus, love's reward. What rapture will it be? Prostrate before thy throne to light. Just gaze and gaze on me.

Do you know what it is to worship? Or are you busy serving? We worship when we are weak. The apostle John, at the age of 95, when he saw Jesus, he just fell down and worshipped. That's what we are to be.

Jacob worshipped. He said, Lord, I lay hold of you. I have no one in heaven but you, and I desire nothing on earth besides you.

When you come to that place where you don't want anything on this earth. You don't want a reputation in the church. You don't want a ministry.

You just want God. You only want Jesus. One thing I have desired of the Lord, that I might have him.

And your hands are emptied of all the things you've spent your life pursuing. Your profession, your ministry. And you say, Lord, I only want you.

And the Lord has broken you and taken away from you everything else you've desired. That day, you'd have understood why God saved you. He didn't save you because he wanted a servant.

He's got millions of servants in heaven. He saved you because he wanted a worshipper. I remember years ago reading that word that the Lord spoke to the woman of Samaria.

Those who worship God must worship them in spirit and truth. For the Father seeks for such worshippers. That hit my heart.

I said, Lord, my dad, father, you're looking around the earth seeking for worshippers? So many people are running around trying to serve you? I want to be a worshipper. I want to satisfy your heart. And I tell you, my whole ministry changed after that.

When I became a worshipper first. Man's opinion didn't matter to me after that. It was only God.

I want to invite all of you to hear the voice of Jesus saying, Come up higher. From the low level you're living in. Be weak.

Let God make you weak. The circumstances, when it says, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. You know, that's in 1 Peter 5, verse 5, 6. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God.

Now, what is the mighty hand of God? I'll tell you. Those circumstances that God has brought into your life to make you weak. It may be a difficult husband.

It may be a difficult wife. It may be difficult children. It may be difficult neighbor.

It may be difficult people around you. It's the mighty hand of God trying to make you weak. God put Moses with his father-in-law for 40 years to humble him and break him and make him weak.

And he became the greatest servant of God at this time. Once he was broken. That's illustrated in the story of the five loaves and two fish.

I see a progression there. How God can use. He takes what a little boy has.

Five loaves and two fish. And the first thing he does. First of all, the boy has to give everything.

If you want God to really accomplish his purpose in you. You've got only five loaves and two fish. Give it all.

Don't give three loaves or one fish. Give it all. That's the first lesson.

Total surrender. But that's not enough. Once you've surrendered everything.

All five loaves and two fish. It says Jesus took it and blessed it. That's the second thing you need.

You need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. That's the blessing of God. Once you've surrendered everything.

God fills you with the Holy Spirit. Still nothing happens. The multitude is not fed.

Then it says he broke it. That's the third stage. Where after he's filled you with the Holy Spirit.

He breaks you. Makes you weak. And then five thousand are fed.

That's God's way. Have you understood this? Examine yourself. See whether you're in this way.

That's great. Heavenly Father. Your ways are not our ways.

So few, even among your children, have understood your ways. Because we're so strong in ourselves. We're rich in knowledge and understanding.

What we think in ministry we're doing. Help us to see that we are nobody's. Help us to lean upon you.

And see the mighty power of heaven. Be manifested through us. And how you can accomplish in us, through us in one day.

What we will not be able to accomplish in a hundred years. Lord, so that all the glory will be yours. Amen.

Video: https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/Aa_LpRQNYb8.mp4

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/gods-power-is-manifested-in-our-weakness/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net