

## Teaching for 5-14-08

### Power Through Weakness

Imagine a community that has experienced complete devastation through a 24-year drought. This remote Brazilian town had served pagan gods for years, with no knowledge of the living God. But in His mercy, God made their plight known to a small Baptist congregation in another community. He put it on the hearts of this congregation to pray for this previously unknown town. Although poor and having little resources of their own, this small church embarked on a journey of obedience to serve this isolated town through prayer and sacrificial gifts.

Soon God responded dramatically to their prayers in a way they never expected. He unleashed a torrential rain that filled the town's dry wells and replenished the water tables. Children who had never seen rain before were now dancing in the streams and splashing water! Crops began to grow, honey bees began producing, and starving animals were replenished. It was true transformation of an entire community through the desperate heart cries of a small group of believers. ([Click here to read entire story.](#))

Though this church of prayer warriors was weak in resources, the people were strong in faith! God's answer to the prayers of His people were far beyond what anyone could have orchestrated in the natural.

### God Is So Much More!

This miraculous story is such a contradiction to the culturally accepted belief that *if we simply put our minds to it and apply ourselves, we can accomplish anything!* Certainly there is some truth to this, as much good has been done through very gifted, talented, and hard-working people.

But there is a subtle danger in this message. The subtlety, especially in the Western Church, is that we do not really need God to help us accomplish our ministry. We can get along fine without Him, but if He wants to help—that's great. We have enough in our own resources to build very fine ministries with or without God's input. God demonstrated in this Brazilian community that He can accomplish far more than we can even imagine!

That's how God's economy works. What is truly accomplished for His purposes comes through our weakness—and not our strengths. As Paul relates in 2 Corinthians 12, this was a hard lesson that the Apostle had to learn. Given some sort of malady or thorn in the flesh, Paul sought the Lord for healing on three occasions. The response was not what the dynamic, self-sufficient Paul expected. The Divine response to his plea for healing was, "No, find your power through your weakness and my strength. My grace is sufficient for you" (vs. 9).

As Paul learned this vital lesson, his response was to delight in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties. "For when I am weak, then I am strong," he declared (vs. 10). The Greek work for weaknesses is *Astheneia*, which according to *Thayer's Greek Definitions* has the idea of *lack of strength and capacity to understand a thing, to do things great and glorious, to*

*restrain corrupt desires, to bear trials and troubles.* That definition certainly embraces most of our human experiences!

The Lord made it clear to Paul that *everything you will accomplish for Me, I will do through your inability and lack of capacity.* Paul states later in 2 Corinthians 13:4: *For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you.*

### **Exchanging Abilities for Power**

That's the beauty of the story of this small, poor Brazilian church. God brought transformation to another community through their *weaknesses*. What a reminder that we do not need to be a part of a large ministry or church for God to use us for His purposes! He is simply looking for those who will lay down their abilities in exchange for God's power.

There is the chorus of an old song that goes: *I'm learning to lean, learning to lean, learning to lean on Jesus. Finding more power than I'd ever dreamed, I'm learning to lean on Jesus.* Perhaps this is a lesson that all of us need to learn or relearn in new and fresh ways. We may say we believe this, but is it really a part of our lifestyles in the way we live and serve our King?

How do we come to that place of learning of God's power working through our weaknesses? Often such lessons come through the difficulties and experiences of life. God allows these life experiences so that He can show us our inability in light of His strength. In God's economy these sometimes painful lessons are blessed messengers of His grace to take us deeper into breakthrough moments of faith. When Paul said that he delighted in weaknesses, he was expressing his willingness to embrace and even prefer the difficulties.

Paul could do this because he came to that place of dying to the desire to be given the credits and accolades. He wanted God to get all the glory. He learned that what really mattered for eternity was what his Lord accomplished through him—not necessarily what he built and attained.

In the Sentinel Group video *The Quickening*, Kenneth Gill states: *God will do incredible things through your life if you do not care who gets the credit.* If we really believed that, we would welcome any method and means that God chooses to accomplish His purposes through us. We would welcome weakness, insults, hardships, persecution, and difficulties if it meant that God would work through us for His glory.

How do I know if I have come to this place of weakness and brokenness? Read your own press. Listen to your own words. Who is exalted, and who gets the credit when you speak or write about what you do? What is your reaction when those hard times or circumstances come to your life? Do you rail against them and rebuke the enemy? Or do you bow before the greatness of your Holy Lord and say, *"Whatever the cost, use me, Lord, because I am learning there is power through weakness."*

*Most gracious Lord Jesus, we bow before You and confess to You how little we have learned of this lesson of strength through weakness. We ask that You would graciously and lovingly teach us to be as Paul, who welcomed whatever it took so that You would accomplish Your purposes*

*for Your glory. Show us in our lives where we have rejected this truth. We give ourselves to You and ask You to help us to learn to lean on You. Amen.*