

# *That the Strong Man Become Weak and the Weak Man Become Strong*

by

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***But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”  
2 Corinthians 12:9 (ESV)***

It was one of those *Journey Groups* where the discussion was hitting some hearts. The subject was the purpose of trials for God’s men, and how these trials are used to perfect the man. This was a group of seasoned Wal-Mart executives discussing this subject, and a godly senior executive who had had his share of trials was leading them. You see, these guys face some kind of trial everyday, much like all of us do to some degree, whether it is in the marketplace, churches, homes, or other places of life. However, theirs is a lot of high-level responsibility that affects many lives in many nations. They live and work with a lot of pressure. Therefore, because of his credibility of living and sustaining successfully in the same pressures they live with, the senior exec had everyone’s attention when one of those unexpected gold nuggets flowed from his lips. He didn’t realize at the time it would be a quote we would all write down and remember. Here’s what he said:

***“Satan loves to make a strong man weak, but God loves to make a weak man strong.”***

What a great warning on one hand, and an encouragement on the other. As an encouragement, it requires that we look through the lens and strategic process of how God forms a man after His own heart. When I heard Stephen’s words, in a moment I thought of Apostle Paul’s words in the scripture above, and I could see that he had connected his own trials of life with the stretching that made him the godly man he had become. You see, it is in our weakness that God’s power is perfected and not in our own strength. It is with God’s power that we are made strong. Therefore, if we are to become strong in the Lord, we must become weak in our self. This is what he was referencing when he said, *“but God loves to make a weak man strong.”* Have you ever seen it this way? Have you connected that God wants to build you up into a godly man of influence and the trials you’ve faced or are facing or will face have been God’s strategy and process to form you into this man? You do realize that God has a strategy for your life, and it will require your trust in His plan to make you into the man He has in mind? But it helps to know how the process works so that we can know we are on the right path when the fire invades our life. Therefore, let’s talk about it.

Throughout Bible history, we see God’s people given an assignment to overcome great odds and great challenges through the use of only their faith and trust in God. But, this trust gave them new eyes, the eyes of faith. In the Old Testament, God told His people to stand back and watch Him fight for them while He overcame great odds stacked against them. Even so, God allowed the people to see the frightening threat coming at them, for He wanted them to pray, to seek His help, and to realize how vulnerable they would be without Him. This process would teach them both about God and their need for faith in Him. Sometimes God allowed these people to see not only the forces coming against them, but also the hidden forces standing

with them. Consider what Elisha asked for his servant when the young man was frightened by the apparent threat and great odds against them:

*He (Elisha) said, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see." So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. 2 Kings 6:16-17 (ESV)*

When it was all said and done, the young man saw with his eyes what Elisha had trusted was there because of his faith. Indeed there was an invisible, yet powerful force around them and with them. Being delivered from this threat increased the young man's faith, which is God's objective in permitting a trial in our life. It is to build our trust in Him. But, like Elisha, we must begin to see our trials through the eyes of faith to find comfort during the challenges, for many times the threat steals our attention and our joy.

Speaking of a challenge to some men's faith, Jesus challenged His disciples the same way and required of them faith and trust to see His great work. Do you remember the story of a few fish and loaves of bread feeding 5,000 people? Do you remember how Jesus set it up? It was late in the day and the people were hungry. The disciples asked Jesus to send the people away to buy food. But Jesus told the disciples, "*They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.*" (Matthew 14:15-16) Why would Jesus tell the disciples to feed the people when everyone would know it would be an impossible task for them? This is where the mysterious ways God transforms a man's life is applied. I think He gave those men this challenge so that the strong, prideful men in that group of disciples would understand how truly weak and inept they were when it required a miracle that only Christ could pull off. They were shown their weakness and limitations so that they would then become strong in faith. Now that was not an easy thing for them then, nor is it for us today, for we don't like to feel vulnerable and weak. We fight against it. We try to create self-made barriers and walls to safeguard against our vulnerabilities. But rather than protecting us, these safeguards become prison cells that box us into a fearful existence of fear and worry if our plans do not work. When a threat comes, we immediately gather all our resources to make them our defense against the threat and we worry if we have done enough or if we have thoroughly planned for every contingency. My take is that it is a waste of energy and time and life when we do not trust our "promise keeping" God to keep His word about our protection. We would rather trust a plan and resources that we can create ourself than trust Him who has unlimited resources and has promised to use them on our behalf ... and we wonder why we worry. There is a greater strength to be found, if we will look for it.

I am constantly amazed at how a special physical strength can show up in the most unlikely people. There have been times that someone who is normally physically weak and unable to do some things needed, are called to act in times of emergency and something extraordinary happening. For instance, I've read about 120 pound women attacking bears, and larger assailants, and even ripping car doors off their hinges to save their child. They tap into something that is just not normal in their life. In a similar manner, it is the same way with God's man. I believe God wants us to tap into a supernatural enablement in Him and through Him, whether it is mental, physical or spiritual, and in doing this it helps our faith grow. But going there requires that we walk a path full of challenges.

On this path, we will discover that this enablement goes against the normal way we chase and catch whatever we are pursuing. How so? Well, the big thing is what God told Paul. To be made strong in His power

requires that we become weak in our own power. To do this requires that we put our trust into a hidden force that is found in an invisible God rather than in our self. It is to be content with a thorn in the flesh so that we can be made strong in Him, and this is not the normal for most people. But it is the right way if we want to be part of something so big that only God can pull it off. So don't let a little thing like "self" stand in the way of what God wants to do with your life. Put your trust in Him rather than yourself, and you will not be disappointed.