

God's Strength and God's Wisdom



Strength Through Weakness (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you Keys to Successful Living which God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry.

The title of my theme for this week contains a paradox: Strength Through Weakness. And this paradox, in turn, contains the key to infinite, divine resources, both of strength and wisdom, to which we can never attain in any other way.

But first, let me say "Thank you" to those of you who've been writing to me. Before I finish this talk we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. It means a great deal to me to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you. So please take time to write, even if it's only a brief note.

Now, back to our paradoxical theme for this week, "Strength Through Weakness."

So much of the Bible and of the Christian faith is directly contrary to the wisdom and the ways of this world. The world thinks a certain way; it has certain standards; it operates on certain principles. But what God reveals in His Word is directly contrary to all this. God views things from a totally different standpoint. One of the priceless blessings of the Bible is that it enables us to see things from God's point of view.

The prophet Isaiah tells us in vivid language how far God's ways and God's thoughts are from those of man. In Isaiah 55:8–9, he says this, and he's speaking on behalf of God:

> "'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the Lord. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'" (NIV)

So you see, there's a tremendous gap that man cannot bridge between the level of God's ways and God's thoughts, and the level of man's ways and man's thoughts. Man's ways and thoughts are on an earthly plane, God's ways and God's thoughts are on a heavenly plane. However, the good news is

that God has provided a means by which His ways and His thoughts can be brought down to our earthly level and actually imparted to us. It is through His Word. And so in the next two verses, Isaiah 55:10–11, God continues like this:

> "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: [Remember, it's God speaking. It's like the rain and the snow coming down from heaven to earth and making the earth fruitful. Then God continues:] my word will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." (NIV)

So it is in this matter of strength that we are talking about, and also of wisdom. God's standards are totally different from ours. But through God's Word we can come to see these things from God's point of view.

We'll turn now to 1 Corinthians 1:22–25, where Paul sets forth the difference between God's standards of strength and wisdom and the standards of this world. This is what Paul says:

> "For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. [Now listen to this closing verse:] Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (NASB)

Another version renders that last verse like this:

> "For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength." (NIV)

So here we have what in the eyes of the world is foolishness and weakness, but from God's viewpoint it's wisdom and strength. And it's contrasted with those things which the people of this world, both Jews and Gentiles, consider to be the marks of wisdom and strength.

Now, we have to understand that God's foolishness and God's weakness are summed up in just two words that Paul uses there: "Christ crucified." It's the crucifixion of Jesus that is God's foolishness and God's weakness. And yet, it's wiser and stronger than anything that men can set against it. The cross, the crucifixion, is the ultimate emblem of shame, of weakness, of defeat. And yet it's the key to glory, power, wisdom and victory. That's the contrast between God's ways and man's ways.

One thing we need to understand very clearly is that God planned the crucifixion. It was not something that happened and God had to make provision for it. It was not an emergency. It was not a disaster. It was the fulfillment of a divine plan. It was the expression of God's wisdom. It was the expression of God's strength.

For example, speaking about the death of Jesus to the Jewish people on the day of Pentecost, in Acts 2:23, Peter says about Jesus:

> "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross." (NIV)

Note that phrase, "God's set purpose and foreknowledge." God knew that Jesus was going to be crucified. Jesus knew that He was going to be crucified. He warned His disciples many times. He told them in detail what was going to happen. But because they did not understand God's wisdom and God's strength, because they still thought like the people of this world and viewed the cross as weakness and foolishness and defeat, they couldn't accept what Jesus was telling them any more than the people of the world could accept. But we just have to keep remembering the cross is the expression of God's wisdom, of God's strength, and the glorious and perfect outworking of God's purpose.

There's a beautiful phrase in the book of Revelation, chapter 13 and verse 8 which calls Jesus this:

> "...the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world." (NIV)

You see, the death of Jesus was no accident. It wasn't even something that just emerged in history. It was something that was foreknown of God before the world was created. When God created the world and created man, He knew that ultimately to redeem man He would have to give up His Son to die on the cross. In the eyes of the world, foolishness and weakness, but for those whose eyes have been opened through the Spirit and the Word of God, wisdom and

strength.

There's another passage in 1 Corinthians, where Paul contrasts the wisdom of this world with the wisdom of God. It's in 1 Corinthians 2:6–10. He says this:

> "We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began."

And He's going to be speaking again about the cross. But you see, it's a secret hidden wisdom that the people of this world—especially the rulers of this world—do not understand. But it was ordained by God before time began and it's for our glory. That's a beautiful thought, isn't it? Then Paul goes on to say in verse 8:

> "None of the rulers of this age understood it, [this secret wisdom] for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: [and Paul is quoting now from the prophet Isaiah] 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him' But God has revealed it to us by His Spirit." (NIV)

So through this secret hidden wisdom of the cross we can see what no human mind could conceive or imagine, what human senses can never discern, what God has prepared for those who love Him. It's revealed only by the Holy Spirit. And it's revealed only through the cross.

So there we have the two kinds of wisdom, the two kinds of strength. The wisdom and the strength of the rulers of this world who put Jesus to death on the cross. The wisdom and the strength of God which was expressed in the cross. This passage always excites me because for many years I was a professional student and then a teacher of philosophy. And philosophy means the love or the pursuit of wisdom. And so, for many years I pursued wisdom but it was only the wisdom of this world and it never really satisfied me. And I realized somewhere there must be something more satisfying. And then when I came to know Jesus and came to study the Bible, I discovered that God had prepared a secret hidden wisdom for His people which is quite unlike that of the world.

I also discovered that there's only one door to this secret hidden wisdom. There's only one way to get in and that door is the cross. It's only as we see the significance of the cross, as we appropriate by faith what was accomplished for us on the cross and as we allow the principle of the cross to be worked out in our own lives, that we begin to appropriate this secret hidden wisdom and this secret hidden strength of God. The wisdom which is foolishness with the world, the strength which is weakness with the world; and yet, God's wisdom is wiser than the world. God's strength is stronger than the world.

Well, in my talks throughout the rest of this week I'll be opening up that door for you and sharing with you the treasures that lie on the other side. However, our time is up for today. Tune in again tomorrow at this time for my next talk on strength through weakness.

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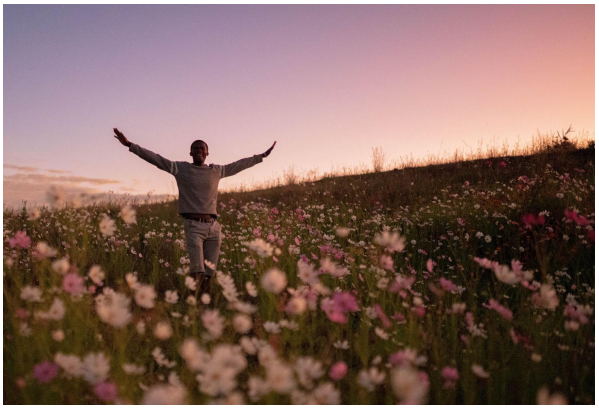
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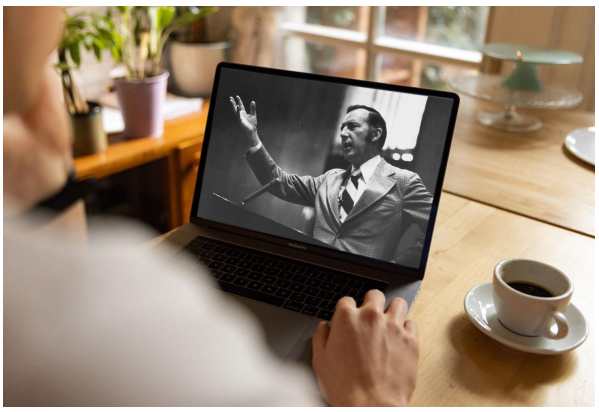
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