

The Measure of True Strength



Strength Through Weakness (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue to study together our paradoxical theme for this week, "Strength Through Weakness," a theme which contains in it the key to infinite, divine resources, both of strength and of wisdom, to which we can never attain in any other way.

In my talk yesterday I spoke about the measureless gap between God's ways and ours. 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 view 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.

This applies to God's view of strength and man's view of strength. God's standard and man's standard are directly opposite to each other. This naturally leads us to ask, "What is God's standard of strength?" I believe this question is answered in one verse of Romans, Romans 15:1. Paul says:

> "Now we who are strong ought to bear the weakness of those without strength and not just please ourselves." (NASB)

When God first opened my eyes to see how He measured strength, it made a profound and lasting impact on me. I tried to express this in words in a section from my book The Grace of Yielding, which I'd like to share with you just now. With reference to that verse, Romans 15:1, "Now we who are strong ought to bear the weakness of those without strength and not just please ourselves," this is what I wrote in my book:

> "This, I believe, is the scriptural mark of strength. It's not how much you can do, but rather how much you can bear of the weakness of others. It's very satisfying to be strong in your own ability, in your own ministry, in your own experience, to be the man with all the answers, but that really doesn't require much spiritual strength. It does require spiritual strength to bear the weaknesses of others. I believe that spiritual strength is measured

by God and by the Scriptures in proportion to the amount that we are able to support and bear the weaknesses of other people. For me personally, that has never been easy.

This is the exact opposite of the spirit of this age. The spirit of the age is, 'Get what you can for yourself. Let the weak take care of themselves.'

I've been meditating recently on the whole question of abortion, which, to me is a most horrible, hateful evil. But if you discuss this issue with people, they'll justify it on the grounds that many unwanted children are not born into the world—maybe illegitimate children or children that are the result of problem homes or unsuitable mothers—they are never born. We just kill them off before they come out of the womb. I've learned by experience that God classifies that as murder. This I've learned by experience, and I believe it's very clearly unfolded also in Scripture.

But the point I want to make just now is this, once we begin to make what suits us the measure of what is right, we're on a slippery path that goes downward to a horrible mess. Very, very quickly other issues will follow: 'What about the child that is born hopelessly handicapped, that will never be more than a vegetable? Why should we keep that child alive?' Already in the state of California there has been a case before the courts of parents who deliberately did not feed a child that was born hopelessly incapacitated; they just allowed it to die. When we've dealt thus with the handicapped, we'll then proceed to deal the same way with the aged, the mentally sick, and so on. One after another they will be written off in the name of humanity.

I want to point out to you that this is not the Christian answer. It's not the Christian answer not merely because abortion is forbidden by God, but also because the attitude behind it is totally unchristian. As Christians, we do not write the weak off. We don't even relegate them to an institution where we never hear about them or care about them again.

One of the outstanding marks of Christians in the first century was they cared for the weak. They cared for the sick. They didn't write them off. That's what really impressed the ancient world. They couldn't understand what made these Christians concerned about people who had nothing to offer, people who were only liabilities. But I've come to see that if we write off the human liabilities, that's not strength—that's weakness.

It's the people who are liabilities, it's the incapacitated, it's the infirm, it's the weak believers who are the test of our spiritual strength. We have obviously come to a place in the United States, and in other countries too, where we cannot permit ourselves to live by the established standards of the age. If I'm a Christian, my first motive is not to get away with as much as I can legally get away with. My first motive is to please Jesus Christ in all that I do. Once we begin to live by seeking to please Jesus, we will inevitably lead a life that is completely different from that of the unconverted around us. We won't need to peddle a lot of doctrine, for in itself, pleasing Jesus will make us different."

Now that's the end of the quotation from my book The Grace of Yielding. Let me add a little more from my own personal experience. Unlike most of you who are listening to me, I was raised in Europe and I'm old enough to remember the progress of events in Nazi Germany before the outbreak of World War II. Hitler's regime did not begin by the genocide of six million Jews. They began on quite a small scale. Systematically, and very scientifically, they eliminated the "unfit," the "unproductive," those who had no useful contribution to make to the State: the mentally deranged, the emotionally unbalanced, the hopelessly crippled, the incurably sick, the aged and infirm. However, the process did not end there.

It happened in Nazi Germany just as it happened in Israel in the days of the prophet Hosea, and this is what Hosea says of the people of Israel and their conduct in his day. It's Hosea 8:7:

"They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind."

Do you see the meaning of that? We begin with something small that we feel we can control, and though it's evil, it's not too evil. But out of that wind comes a whirlwind, something tremendous that we cannot control, that's just terrible in its consequences.

So it was in Nazi Germany. What began as the scientific elimination of the unfit and unproductive, ended with the mass murder of six million Jews—some of the most gifted, creative and productive of Germany's citizens—to say nothing of probably an equal number of committed Christians, who perished because they would not bow the knee to the idol of the Fuhrer and the State.

Many of the same trends that appeared in Nazi Germany in the 1930s are today being manifested in our contemporary culture, frequently cloaked by carefully chosen scientific terminology. I wonder how many people realize that the end could be similar to that of Hitler's Germany; that in the long run, those who sow the wind must inevitably reap the whirlwind.

Is there any way to arrest this process before we are overtaken by the whirlwind? Is there anything that we as Christians can do? Yes, I believe there is.

In Matthew 5:13, Jesus tells us that we are to be "the salt of the earth." What does that mean, "the salt of the earth"? Let me briefly point out three functions of salt that apply to us as Christians. First of all, salt purifies and cleanses. It's an antiseptic. Second, salt is a preservative. In the days before refrigeration, salting meat was the way sailors preserved it for long sea voyages. The salt held back the corruption that was at work in the meat. So, salt is a preservative. It arrests the process of corruption. Thirdly, salt renders food tasty and acceptable when it would otherwise be tasteless and unacceptable.

Now I believe that all three functions of salt apply to us as Christians in our society today. We are responsible to do for our society what salt does in the natural order. First of all, we're responsible to purify and cleanse our society by our very presence, by our influence, by our prayers. We are to be a purifying influence that does not go along with the forces of evil, but stands against them, resists them.

Secondly, we are to preserve our society and hold back the forces of corruption. Corruption is manifestly at work in every area of our life: social, political, moral, educational. But we are to be an influence that restrains those forces of corruption that does not allow them free course.

Thirdly, we are to be what salt is to food. We're to make the place where we are tasty, acceptable, appealing to God. We're to render our society acceptable to God by our presence. We're to hold back God's judgment and commend those amongst whom we live to His mercy by our very presence.

Remember what God told Abraham about Sodom, that if He could find ten righteous persons in that big city, He would spare the whole city for the sake of those ten persons. That's what it is to be salt. It's to be just little grains scattered around our society but making all the difference to the way that God deals with our society.

One main way we can do this today is to demonstrate to the world that there's a kind of strength the world knows nothing about; a strength that is not brutal, not cruel, not aggressive; a strength that does not oppress others, but lifts them up; a strength that does not exploit and enslave, but cares and liberates; a strength that does not destroy, but heals.

Tomorrow I'll be explaining to you how we can receive this strength. However, our time is up for today. Tune in again tomorrow at this time for my talk on strength through weakness.

Radio Program

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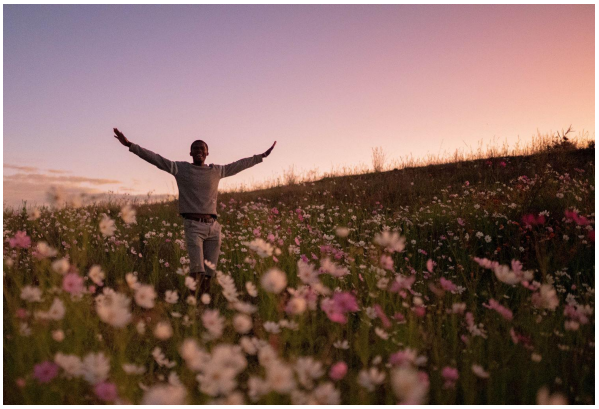

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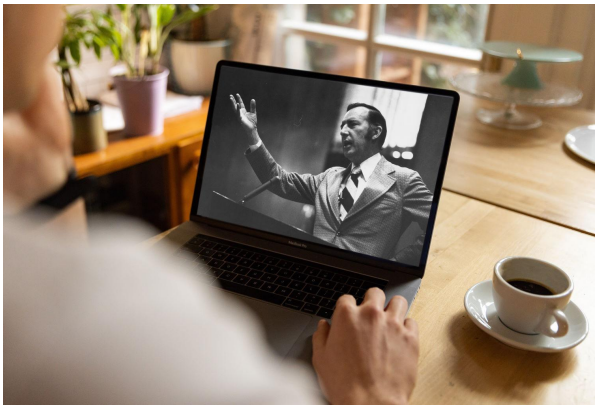

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