

<b>Series:</b> All Things Rise	<b>Reference:</b> 1 Corinthians 1:27	<b>Title:</b> Sown in Weakness	<b>Date:</b> 04.14.2019
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Website Writeup:</b></p> <p><i>God's not put off by weakness, or offended by weak people. Which is good, because if we're honest, we're all, occasionally, if not exclusively, weak. Instead, He chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise &amp; the weak things of the world to shame the strong.</i></p>			

## Color changes in text indicate slide changes

1 Corinthians 1:27

*“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.”*

God's not put off by weakness, or offended by weak people. Which is good, because if we're honest, we're all, occasionally, if not exclusively, weak. It is not self-confident erudition, but self-effacing faith which allows one to enter the way of Christ.

For those of us well aware of our frailty, it's good news. And we see here, Paul was convinced God doesn't just work around our weaknesses, His preferred method is to work through them. What this means is, self-centered pride isn't an option for the Christian. And we know, no one really respects those who don't acknowledge their weakness. The arrogant & powerful may be feared, but they never gain respect, forgoing loving relationships, missing out on the rich blessing of vulnerability & authentic living.

Yet, those who are self-aware & lead out of weakness can be trusted, even embraced. They give & receive love, given they're not in it to win it, but rather for the betterment of everyone, they love their neighbor as themselves. They're not unhealthily dependent on others. Neither are they independent of others. Rather they are interdependent in community given they know they have something to give as well as receive. They reflect the godly agape love we spoke of last week. Worldly power, coercion & anger never engage true relationship, they only foster control & fear, creating relational distance & dissonance.

Do you ask for help? Are you open about your need? Would you ever say, “Pray for me?” Or, do you put on the game face, hide behind false achievements, degrees & accomplishments? Do you fight only for what you desire, or what is best for everyone? The weak are made strong, not through self-aggrandizement, but rather through vulnerability & openness. They rely on God & others. The one who can say, “I'm scared, I need help. I feel inadequate,” is the person with which God can work. Those who hide their fear & shame reacting in anger & pride close themselves off from God's blessing.

## GOD USES WEAKNESS

God is using the Foolish & the Weak to accomplish His purposes, all the while, most of the world strives to be wise & strong. This is, of course, a deep dive into denial. Because if we're honest, who's really wise & strong? Even those who're winning by the world's

standards are broken people. The image we were created in, the Imago Dei, was shattered when sin entered the world. We're all broken, and only Christ can repair that image - we live in constant need of divine intervention in Jesus.

I remember growing up in the 90's, entertainment shifted. Movies & songs no longer glorified the hero of solid character, but rather the shrewd person, intelligent enough to get over on others to gain power & wealth through dishonest, or at best questionable gain. This was coming long before the 90's for sure, but it hit it's zenith then, with what we deemed 'The Me Generation'. It's no longer for the betterment of humankind, now it's all about *ME* & how I bend the rules of morality to my favor. Now our heroes are people of questionable moral character. Angry angry powerful people, born only out of trauma. Marvel Comic characters, seeking revenge instead of truly fighting for what's right & good. As we saw last week, when orthodoxy became optional, it's prohibited in all areas. But the ME Generation has been largely forgotten, you might not even know that term!

Perhaps the weird Christian dichotomy of power found in weakness is actually true. Maybe when we're honest we can admit that truly wise & strong people are those who *can* admit their need. Those who know they need others, and most definitely God himself. Those who can ask for help, readily admitting their wrongs & flaws.

If we explore the pages of Scripture, we notice very quickly, every biblical hero (if the moniker is even applicable) was flawed. Scripture takes no measure to mask their shortcomings; they're totally human in every sense. Moses was an insecure mess! Hidden in a basket, found & adopted by Pharaoh's daughter (Ex 2:5-10). He murdered an Egyptian & flees Egypt. *When God calls him out of the Burning Bush to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, Moses questions God... "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh & bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (Ex 3:11) God's answer, "I will be with you." Later in the conversation Moses asks another question, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me & say, 'The Lord did not appear to you?'" (Ex 4:1).* His fear & insecurity, palpable throughout the interaction.

Then even after God indicates the great things He'll do through Moses, he says, *"Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech & tongue."* (Ex 4:10). Then when God *answers that* He'll give Moses the words, Moses begs, *"Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else."* (Ex 4:13).

At this point God's patience was running thin, God gets angry & says to Moses, *"What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and he will be glad to see you. <sup>15</sup> You shall speak to him & put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak & will teach you what to do. <sup>16</sup> He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth & as if you were God to him. <sup>17</sup> But take this staff in your hand so you can perform the signs with it."* (Ex 4:14-17).

Don't you feel like Moses? Insecure. Limited. Unworthy of your calling. And when God points out that He will work through us, and whatever simple thing we have in hand, like Moses' staff, we still doubt Him.

What about David, who slept with another man's wife & killed her husband - yet he's described as a man after God's own heart since he was repentant & knew the depths of his own depravity. His power came from his understanding it, being self-aware, authentic, turning from sin back to God. His repentance was a sign of openness, of acknowledging his weakness before God & Man.

In Romans 7, Paul goes on at length about how he's prone to fall short. He's painfully clear how weak & frail he is in his human nature. The end verse of that section is what *he*, and all the rest of us can say, *Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!* (Ro 7:25). Paul is forced in weakness to his knees before God. He doesn't hide his frailty, rather he wears it openly so that all can see the glory of Jesus.

Paul, a man who had every credential to lead out of stature & power, claimed all that as useless compared to knowing Christ & his resurrection. *He said, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners - of whom I am the worst. <sup>16</sup> But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him & receive eternal life. (1 Ti 1:15-16).* An authentic weak life on display for the glory of Christ in others.

He heard the Lord say to him in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* And Paul continues...*Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. <sup>10</sup> That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

When we know we're weak, we tend to rely on Jesus, and the power of his love & truth are made manifest in us. It's living in light of the words which grace so much of our Christian speech, words like *submission, trust, faith & obedience.*

#### JESUS CAME IN WEAKNESS

The story of Jesus is filled with weakness. Our savior, the God of all Creation, born a baby. God wasn't contractually obligated to come as a baby. He could have shown up any way He pleased. A conquering general with a legion of angels. A handsome political figure wielding sharp, intelligent, cutting words. A wealthy merchant pulling the strings of City Hall from behind the curtain of finance. But that's not in Him. Not the way of God. But maybe He couldn't have shown up in such ways, given it's not commiserate with His character.

Scripture teaches God is Love, which dictates his entrance. A baby lain upon his mothers breast, shrouded in weakness, reliant on teenage parents & cloaked in shame. Mary & Joseph forced to give birth in a stable & give only the most meager of sacrifices when they consecrated their newborn son. The questionable circumstances surrounding her

pregnancy, which probably no one believed, was shameful, and would've even been punishable by death!

Jesus, juxtaposed with people & a world which valued only power, not weakness in the least. Born under the rule of Caesar Augustus, the same ruler who had coined the term 'Good News' or 'Gospel' for his own government. Regarded as deity with rites of worship established for him. His rule thought to be the 'Good News' or 'Gospel', the final solution to worldly peace & order, believed to be an everlasting empire. But, through the weakness of a baby, God undid the rule of Caesar Augustus. The word 'Gospel' usurped to mean the eternal rule of Christ, robbing Caesar of glory & giving it to Jesus! Augustus hardly mentioned, only once to set the date of Christ's entrance into the world.

Jesus was also born under the local rule of Herod, that despicable despot who killed two brothers-in-law, his own wife & two of his very own sons. The man who ordered the massacre of all first born male Jewish children in fear of this coming 'Jewish King'. He rounded up innocent citizens five days before his death, ordering them to be executed the day he died to insure proper mourning on the day of his demise. A juxtaposition of the Kingdom of the World wielding its power by the sword, in contrast to the Kingdom of God wielding its power through weakness.

In his infant days, Jesus spent his time as a refugee in Egypt, living life under Roman oppression. Divinity, unafraid to enter a world of violence & hatred as a weak needy child. In the end, Rome thinks it had put an end to any threat by crucifying Jesus in the most shameful way, naked, hanging on a cross, in front of his own mother & followers. But Christ's weakness would only overcome the world!

And it was not just His childhood which modeled this amazing weakness, it was His whole ministry. *In Matthew 11:19 we see him as a friend of sinners - <sup>19</sup> The Son of Man came eating & drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton & a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors & sinners.'* He didn't pursue relationship with the religious elite & powerful, He approached the Weak, Needy & Despised. All throughout His ministry He was supported financially by a bunch of women! Some of which were of questionable character! (Luke 8:1-3). These facts would raise eyebrows in the power-play of a patriarchal world.

And when He went to beat the bushes for followers He didn't go to the local seminary, university, the military elite, or politically savvy. He went to fisherman, zealots, the regular Joe, saying, "Come, I will make you fishers of men."

Then, to top it all off, our great Messiah died! Messiahs aren't supposed to die. They're supposed to conquer Rome & be indestructible. Or if they do die, it should be with some sort of great masculine backdrop, on the battlefield, or in some equally worthy fashion. Dying on the cross like a criminal was the ultimate humility. None of that would've given him the power-boost we'd think he needed to begin a world-changing movement. But His weakness did change the world, and still is.

This is how God works, through weakness. God chooses...*the foolish things of the world to shame the wise...the weak things of the world to shame the strong.*

### WELCOME THE BROKEN

This means three challenging & comforting things: **Firstly**, we can be included in the work of God, because we are also quite weak. Chin up all of you who feel less than. All who got chosen last for the baseball team. You who don't make as much as the Jone's. You traumatized. You hurt. You introvert. You who don't quite have the right words. You young. You old. You woman. You minority. You caucasian. All you sheep are useful in the hands of the Shepherd. And it's to His Glory through His Mission to which he calls us. As he asked Moses, "What's in your hand?" Use what you've got & He'll work through you. He'll give you the words. He'll use your weakness, your authenticity. He will turn your shame into glory!

And **secondly**, it's in the weak & vulnerable portions of our lives God will do His deepest, most profound work. He will use your painful stories. Your less than moments. Your most vulnerable self.

And **thirdly**, it means we learn to welcome the broken & weak in order to stay in the flow of God's redemptive work. A church which has lost sight of welcoming the broken in spirit, is a church which isn't walking lockstep with the Spirit of God - we don't just want to know the lyrics of the Gospel, but forgot the melody.

We follow our Savior & Him alone, whom Isaiah prophesied about: *He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. <sup>3</sup>A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice* (Is 42:2-3). In weakness, He comes to the Weak. In brokenness, He comes to the broken. He isn't loud, brash & arrogant. He's quiet, meek, gentle, healing & life-giving. We come as we are in weakness, but leave transformed as children of God!

These things are comforting & challenging because they both welcome us as we are & force us to awaken to who we really are in Jesus. Denial isn't welcome in the ongoing work of God. It's comforting to know, God will not reject us because of our lack of merit & it's challenging to know, we have to own that. As Dallas Willard says, God's not against effort, He's only against earning - we can't earn our place, but we can live it out.

Like Paul, *"I [also] pray that you being rooted & established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide & long & high & deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.* (Eph 3:17-19).

Rooted & established in Christ's love, being known to the very core of your being, trusting Him with even your frailty & weakness. Let me end by saying, <sup>20</sup> *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church & in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever & ever! Amen.* (Eph 3:20-21).