

My Weaknesses

R. Stanley, 20 June 2020

“God is my Strength!” This personal confession occurs too often in the Bible. The first recorded one was from the singing lips of Moses: Ex 15:1,2, “I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! ... *The Lord is my Strength* and my Song!” The next one who made this statement was David: 2 Sam 22:33, “*God is my Strength* and Power!” David repeats it in Psalm 18:2; 28:7 and 118:14. The other references in Psalms are 19:14; 22:15,19; 27:1; 43:2; 46:1; 59:17; 62:7; 73:26; 81:1; 140:7; 144:1 and so on. Besides the Book of Psalms, we have this declaration in Isa 49:5; Jer 16:19; Hab 3:19, etc. There’s no such confession in the New Testament though individuals have testified of experiencing God’s strength in their lives, and there are exhortations to be “strong in the Lord” (Eph 6:10).

We are not strange to physical, economical, mental and spiritual weaknesses. Some individuals openly confess their weaknesses whereas many others feel that they would be looked down upon if they say they are weak. In my experience I have observed that those who acknowledge their weaknesses experience the supply of God’s strength in a greater measure than others. We don’t need to broadcast our weaknesses, but an open acknowledgement before God and those who would not stab us at our back is how we can receive necessary strength (Psa 6:2; 29:11a; Jer 31:25). The Apostles were honest enough to even put their weaknesses in writing. They also identified themselves with those who were weak (2 Cor 11:29a). We are all weak, but in different areas. I write this article on my own behalf and on behalf of those struggling with various weaknesses. I invite you to join us the fellow-strugglers. The solution to overcome any weakness ultimately lies in the fact, “God is my Strength!” Do turn to the 200 references picked up from 40 books of the Bible.

1. “My flesh is weak.”

I have a willing spirit but a weak flesh. This is what Jesus Himself told His disciples: “The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is **weak**” (Mt 26:41; Mk 14:38). Yes, I take many decisions to resist and run away from temptations. I’m alright for a few days or weeks only. I fall again. I agree with Apostle Paul who had a similar struggle. His open testimony encourages me to overcome the pull of evil: Rom 7:15,19, “What I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practise; but what I hate, that I do ... The good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practise.” I thank Paul for diagnosing the cause of the disease: “**Sin** that dwells in me” (v20). The sin principle is still resident in me. It is not eradicated from me. When Jesus saved me, I was delivered from the *penalty* of sin (6:23). The *power* of sin is still working against me, and it will be there until I breathe last. If I deny this fact, I’m only deceiving myself (1 Jn 1:8). No eradication from sin principle but emancipation from its power. When I forget this truth, I go on guilt trips losing my joy of salvation.

I am not to take the confession of Paul, quoted above from Romans 7, as an excuse for yielding to temptations. After explaining the ongoing fight between his mind and the members of his body, the Apostle cries out for deliverance (vv23,24). He found the answer to his “wretchedness” in Christ Jesus our Lord (v25). What does this mean? The “Spirit of Christ” in me grants me the ability to say no to sin (8:2,9). This inner ability is called “grace” which must be relied upon so sin may not have dominion over me (6:14; Tit 2:11,12). I must keep

reminding myself of how Jesus overcame the triple temptation of the “lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life,” by quoting on the face of the devil, “It is written!” (Mt 4:1-10; 1 Jn 2:16). I should saturate my mind with “what’s written” so I may overcome sin (Psa 119:9,11). I become strong by letting God’s Word take roots in me (1 Jn 2:14). The Biblical examples such as how Joseph ran away from adultery, and how Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah refused idolatry must be kept in mind (Gen 39:1-12; Dan 3:13-19). I have specific warnings to “flee” from these two sins of adultery and idolatry (2 Tim 2:22; 1 Cor 10:14). I must take seriously the warning of Jesus against the second wilful look following the first accidental look. The look is as sinful as the touch (Mt 5:28). A frequent meditation of the Sermon on the Mount gives me practical guidelines for victorious living (Mt 5,6,7).

I’m encouraged that Jesus perfectly understands my struggles because He was tempted like me in all areas (Heb 4:15). He came through the temptations of boyhood, youthhood and adulthood. He sympathises with my **weaknesses**. I must run to Him when the temptation is too strong for me to resist. He is now sitting on the Throne of “Grace,” not the Throne of Judgment (v16). He is there to “aid” me, not to “accuse” me (2:18). When God calls me to “walk blamelessly” before Him, He also promises that He is the “Almighty God” (Gen 17:1). Which means, He will give me sufficient **strength** to walk blamelessly before Him! The two outstanding Names of God in the Bible are “*Elohim*” and “*Jehovah*.” “Elohim” refers to God’s power, and “Jehovah” to God’s covenant. “Elohim” occurs 2570 times, and “Jehovah” 6823 times in the Bible. Simply put, “The God of POWER is MY God!” “Elohim” is the first Name for God in the Scripture (Gen 1:1). What a mighty God I have! What a mighty God I serve! Hallelujah!

If I fall, I must not give up but get up (Prov 24:16a). No failure is final for me because I am in the hands of Jesus and the hands of the Father God (Jn 10:28,29). The God of Heaven who is in me is stronger than the god of this world (1 Jn 4:4). Any failure teaches me how to avoid another failure. I would not allow the devil or any man condemn me, because there’s no condemnation for me who is in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1). I am God’s elect and so Satan cannot accuse me (v33). When I repent and turn to God, He justifies me thro’ Christ who shed His blood for me, and is now advocating in Heaven for me (v33,34; Heb 7:25; Rev 12:10,11). Learning from failures, I stay alert with prayer-wrought vigilance (Mt 26:41). No let up or disarmament (Eph 6:11-17). I shall stay strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (v10).

2. “My faith is weak.”

I believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and have experienced personal salvation. I know that God is my Father and I am His child. I know that Jesus is my Shepherd and I am His sheep. I know that the Holy Spirit is my Guide and I follow His directions. But this my basic faith is shaken up when winds of adversity beat me. Certain problems are too much for me to handle. Each problem is more challenging than the previous one. Satan sifts me like wheat as he did with Simon Peter (Lk 22:31). Problems and difficulties strike me one after the other in quick succession as the waves of the sea (Job 1:13-19). I wonder how Job stood firm in his faith when all his earthly blessings were snatched away from him in matter of hours. How could he “worship” the Lord and “bless” His Name in a situation like that? (vv20,21). How could he say, “Though God would slay me, yet will I trust Him?” (13:15). I look to the all-powerful God who sustained Job till the end (42:2). I look to Jesus to pray for me as He did for Peter that “my faith may not fail” (Lk 22:32).

I know that Jesus is the Author of my faith, and He alone can be its Finisher (Heb 12:2). Satan cannot finish what God has begun in me. I am challenged by the men and women of faith of the Old Testament. Like clouds I am surrounded by them who encourage me with handclaps and whistling while I'm running (v1). But too often my faith is shattered and my heart overflows with questions. Faith and unbelief clash within me as twins in the womb! God can, but will He? I simply confess to God, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief" (Mk 9:24). My faith can grow strong only through the Word of God (Rom 10:17). I must meditate on the promises of God again and again. God asks me, "Is anything too hard for Me?" (Gen 18:14; Jer 32:27). I must answer, "Nothing is impossible for You, O God!" (Jer 32:17; Mt 19:26; Lk 1:37). This is what Jesus confessed to His Father at the hour of darkness: "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You" (Mk 14:36a; Lk 22:53b).

It was when surrounded by enemies, David confessed, "The Lord is the **strength** of my life; whom shall I fear? Of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psa 27:1). This Psalm speaks of those against and around him. He continues his cry in the next Psalm also (Psa 28). I confess my weakness like King Hezekiah: "This day is a day of trouble, and rebuke, and blasphemy; for the children are about to be born, but there's no strength to bring them forth" (2 Ki 19:3). I cry unto God like King Jehoshaphat: "O our God, we have no power against this great multitude that's coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You" (2 Chr 20:12). The heroes of faith were those who were made strong "out of **weakness**" (Heb 11:34).

I am taught to search my heart when things go topsy-turvy in my life. It does help me to set matters right before God. I recognize that the crisis is chastisement from the Father God to correct and discipline me (Heb 12:4-6,10,11). But as I go through the trying situation, my hands hang down, my knees become feeble, and my feet become lame (vv12,13). God alone can "**strengthen**" me and restore me to normalcy (v12). But there are still times when my self-examination exercise before Him does not point out anything undesirable in my life (Psa 17:3; 1 Cor 4:4). But my strength gets drained like mid-summer. "I go forward, but God is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; when He works on the left hand, I cannot behold Him; when He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him" (Job 23:8,9). Though I know that "He" knows the way I take, I'm surrounded by darkness (v10a). What shall I do? I have to simply "trust" in God and "rely" upon Him (Isa 50:10). This discipline of darkness is killing. I cry unto God, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am **weak**; my soul also is greatly troubled; but You, O Lord — how long?" (Psa 6:2,3).

3. "My prayer-life is weak."

God knows my weakness in prayer life more than the closest of my prayer partners. He knows that my weakness in prayer is more worrisome than in the other devotional exercises. It is with this perfect understanding my good Lord has sent the Holy Spirit to indwell me. I do not know what I should pray for as I ought. Besides praying with the help of the Spirit, He Himself makes intercession for me. He literally groans for me when I run out of words to express my feelings before God (Eph 6:18; Jude 20; Rom 8:26). Jesus also intercedes for me before the Father God (Heb 7:25). The Holy Spirit prays for me from here on earth; Christ Jesus prays for me up there in Heaven. This explains how God does "exceedingly abundantly above all that I ask or even think!" (Eph 3:20). Blessed be the Lord God for His goodness! I must consciously seek the Spirit's help if I should become strong in prayer.

Even though I sing, “*Sweet hour of prayer,*” many times it is neither sweet nor an hour. There are too many ups and downs in my prayer habit. One day my prayertime is full of fire, but the next day it’s icily cold. One day up on the mountain, next day down in the ditch. At times it takes weeks and months to rekindle fire on my prayer altar. “Why am I like this, O God? Am I harbouring any sin in my heart? (Psa 66:18; Isa 59:1,2). Have I deliberately disobeyed Your Word? (Prov 28:9). Am I discouraged by unanswered prayers or delayed answers?”

In the early years of my Christian life, I took everything to God in prayer. Now I run to Him for emergencies only. I have no problem in spending long hours in collective prayer programmes, but I’m not able to be on my knees alone with God even for an hour. Jesus was known for His nights of private prayer (Mt 14:23; Lk 6:12; 21:37,38). Another reason for my weakness in prayer life is that my prayers are nothing more than submitting a list of needs. I do not wait enough in God’s presence to hear Him. I am swift to speak but slow to hear (Eccl 5:1,2; Psa 141:2,3). Also my prayers are more for material and physical needs than for the Kingdom concerns (Mt 6:25-33). My prayers are selfish and I’m least bothered about the lost and the least. I shed tears with worldly sorrow rather than with godly sorrow (2 Cor 7:10). I worship God with my lips but my heart is wandering (Mt 15:8). I am not ready to even switch off my mesmerising mobilephone when I enter the courtroom of the King of kings. I decide today to spend more time in prayer than with my phone. “Deliver me, Lord, from all addictions so I may love You with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my strength and with all my mind” (Mt 22:37; 1 Cor 6:12). How many precious hours are stolen by temporal things!

My worship is not rich and spontaneous enough because I do not fill my heart with the Word of God (Col 3:16; Psa 56:10; 138:2). I do not equidistribute my quiet time between Bible meditation and prayer (Neh 9:3). I spend more time in asking God for more blessings than what I have already received (Psa 103:1-5). As a result, I get overoccupied with my needs than focussing on the Supplier. God has become no more than a Santa Claus for me! Let me put an end to this utilitarian relationship with Him but develop an intimate fellowship. Let my prayertime be primarily for being “with Him,” rather than for receiving “from Him.” How many lies I speak to God in prayer! With a divided heart I tell Him, “You are my Delight” (Psa 57:7; 108:1). With my dependence on the arm of flesh I tell Him, “You are my Hope” (Jer 17:5,7). With outright disobedience to His revealed will I tell Him, “You are my Lord” (Lk 6:46). How many lies I sing! “*All to Jesus I surrender!*” ... “*Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold!*” “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer” (Psa 19:14).

4. “My brotherly love is weak.”

How many times I come across God’s commandment, “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Lev 19:18; Mt 19:19; 22:39)! Even though Jesus has said that this Commandment is as important as the first Commandment to wholeheartedly love God, this has not gone into my veins. This explains why I am weak in interpersonal relationships. I am convicted by Apostle John’s challenge: “If you do not love your brother whom you have seen, how can you love God whom you have not seen?” (1 Jn 4:20).

I have conveniently set aside the Royal Law given by my Lord and repeated by the Apostles, “Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets”

(Mt 7:12; 22:40; Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14; Js 2:8). I want people to appreciate me; do I appreciate them? I want people make loving enquiries; do I enquire their welfare? I want people thank me for everything; do I acknowledge their acts of kindness to me? I want people forgive me; do I forgive them? I want people pray for me; do I remember them in my prayers? This list goes on endlessly. I'm also preparing a list of "What I don't want others do to me?" Even before completing this exercise, I'm ashamed at my poor score, not even 40%. Failed!

I love only those who love me. I like only those who please me. How do I say, I'm a follower of Jesus who even gave His life for us the "enemies?" (Rom 5:10). My friendship lasts with people only as long as I'm benefitted by their company. Does not the Bible say, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity?" (Prov 17:17). My love is cheap because it's a "because-of" love, and not an "in-spite-of" love. Oh, how I long to acquire the spirit of friendship and brotherly love of Abraham (Gen 14:14; 13:11), Joseph (Gen 45:5; 50:21), Moses (Ex 32:11-13; Dt 9:18,25-29), Jonathan (1 Sam 20:32), Barzillai (2 Sam 19:32), Ahikam (Jer 26:24), Ebed-melech (Jer 38:7-13), Paul (Phile 12,20), Barnabas (Acts 9:27), Aristarchus (Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2; Phile 24; Col 4:10), Luke (2 Tim 4:11) and Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25,26)! I look too small before these men. How will friends stick to me if I don't remain friendly? (Prov 18:24). I am poor in maintaining confidentiality (Prov 11:13). How would people come close to me?

Another reason why I'm weak in brotherly love is that I'm a habitual faultfinder. I ignore the beam in my eye but amplify the speck in my brother's eye. I'm a hypocrite (Mt 7:5). I'm hard on others but soft on myself (Rom 2:1-4). I'm deceived by self-righteousness, and everyone else looks like an awful sinner (Lk 18:9). I've forgotten the challenge in Proverbs 20:9, "Who can say, 'I have made my heart clean, and I am pure from my sin?'" I am stupid to say so whereas none of God's men said it: Job (Job 42:5,6), David (2 Sam 12:13; Psa 51:1-7), Psalmist (Psa 119:176), Ezra (Ezra 9:6), Nehemiah (Neh 9:33,34), Isaiah (Isa 6:5,6), Daniel (Dan 9:8), Peter (Lk 5:8), John (1 Jn 1:8), James (Js 3:2) and Paul (Rom 7:18; 1 Tim 1:15). "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (Lk 18:13). Forgetting God's patience with me, I write off people too fast. Three big surprises await me in Heaven: (1) The most expected will be missing there, (2) The least expected will be sitting there, (3) I will be there! (Mt 8:11,12; Lk 13:29,30). My better-than-thou attitude is the main culprit.

I'm weak in **charity**. Whereas the forerunner of Christ prescribed 50% to be given to the poor, I as a follower of Christ don't even give 10% to uplift the poor (Lk 3:11). When I teach the story of Zacchaeus, I carefully avoid his voluntariness to part with 50% of his wealth to bless the poor (19:8). The Macedonian Christians gave so cheerfully in spite of their poverty, whereas my giving even out of plenty is calculated (2 Cor 8:1-3). I religiously promise prayers for the foodless and the clotheless without providing for their necessities. Dead faith! (Js 2:16,17). I am tall on words but short in deeds (1 Jn 3:17,18). I keep praying for "daily bread" when I have savings for two or three generations, but I'm irritated over the second request for help by a poor man who does not know where his next meal would come from. I'm surprised that God's fury is not poured on me yet! (Job 31:16-23).

Suppose I belong to the economically weaker section of the society. No doubt this is a disadvantage in a world dominated by materialism. The world may look down upon me, but I repeat the song of Mary, "God has regarded the lowly state of His slave" (Lk 1:48). No prophet was rich. No apostle was rich. Jesus my Master was not rich. Referring to their

foodlessness, clothelessness and homelessness, the apostles unashamedly confessed, “We are **weak**” (1 Cor 4:10,11). “God has chosen the **weak** things of the world” (1:27). It is likely that the poor would outnumber the rich in Heaven, because “it is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God,” unless God performs a miracle in his life (Mk 10:23-27). Let me patiently go through my disadvantageous position. It was with reference to economic poverty, Apostle Paul confessed, “I can do all things thro’ Christ who **strengthens** me” (Phil 4:12,13). God knows how to turn my disadvantages into advantages to serve Him acceptably. In the humble home where my brother and I grew up in our native town, Nazareth, the roof was leaky, the windows had no shutters, the flooring had to be periodically cow-dung-washed, no electricity, and so on. No slippers. No excursions. I managed with two sets of dresses during the 2-year postgraduate course in IIT, Madras. My pillow pressed the folded shirts and trousers. Today I celebrate the advantage of disadvantages!

5. “My body is weak.”

I struggle with so many sicknesses and weaknesses in this mortal body. But my God is a Healer. His name is Jehovah Rapha (Ex 15:26c). He is a God of miracles (v11). Nothing is impossible for Him. His Word the Bible abounds with miracles of healing through His power. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb 13:8). He carried not only my sins but also my sicknesses on the Cross (Isa 53:4,5; Mt 8:16,17). His blood cleanses me, and His wounds heal me. He forgives all my iniquities, and heals all my diseases (Psa 103:3). I bless His holy Name!

In spite of all the healing promises I have in the Bible, and for reasons I cannot understand, I have several health issues. They are like thorns pricking me. When I beseech God in prayer, He removes some of these thorns, but not all. I keep wondering why. He tells me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My **strength** is made perfect in **weakness**” (2 Cor 12:8,9). He enables me to handle my infirmities through His power that rests upon me (v9c). He grants me daily grace anew each morning to discharge the duties of the day (Lam 3:22,23). I thank Him for the medical facilities which play a supportive role in maintaining good health (Mt 9:12). However, my tongue-control is not enough yet (Prov 23:1-3).

I am encouraged by the stories of saints in Church history and Bible history as to how they did not allow physical ailments paralyse them. I remember Fanny Crosby (1823-1915) who lost her vision within a few weeks after her birth, who has given over 8000 hymns to the Christian world, including, “*Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine!*” I think of Apostle Paul who had a “weak body” but wrote “powerful and weighty letters” (2 Cor 10:10). In spite of his physical weaknesses, he undertook so many missionary journeys and planted vibrant Churches (1 Cor 2:3,4). One of his missionary voyages landed him in an island called Malta, where there was a plague, may be cholera, prevalent. God kept him safe and used him to minister healing to the natives (Acts 28:1,7-9). Every other servant of God today suffers from some ailment or the other. But they are moving on to serve this generation under the will of God until they are called Home (Acts 13:36). They are “made strong out of **weakness**” (Heb 11:34). God grants strength to their family members also to overcome their physical weaknesses and serve Him, as He strengthened Sarah (v11). He gives extra strength to womenfolk, considered as “weaker” vessels (1 Pet 3:7; 1 Cor 12:22).

I am 74 now (2020) with heart problem, back problem, throat problem and what not! God grants me daily strength for an 8-hour schedule of His work. I get up at four and sleep off at nine. No retirement! He keeps empowering me to witness for Him and His Word (Acts 1:8). As long as I am alive, I will keep distributing to others the heavenly treasure God has put into this easily breakable “mud pot” (2 Cor 4:7). Though I have only “a little strength,” I keep serving God faithfully through whichever door He opens for me (Rev 3:8). I thank Him for the pen He has given me. Fear of Corona is there, but no “fear of death,” because Jesus has delivered me from it, and He would lead me as my Shepherd until I arrive at the “House of the Lord” (Heb 2:14,15; Psa 23:4,6). My daily prayer: “O God, You have taught me from my youth; and to this day I declare Your wondrous works. Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come ... Do not forsake me when my strength fails” (Psa 71:17,18,9).

Here’s a text which boosts me up: 2 Cor 13:4, “Though Jesus was crucified in **weakness**, yet He lives by the power of God. We also are **weak** in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God.” I thank God for His Holy Spirit who keeps quickening my mortal body moment by moment lest I die too soon (Rom 8:11). I’m looking forward to the day when “there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain” (Rev 21:4).

Conclusion

There are still so many areas in life where I’m weak and not strong enough. God has made provision for all these deficiencies. I run to Him who “gives power to the weak” and “increases strength” (Isa 40:29). My natural strength, if any, fails me when the going gets tough (v30). But when I wait on Him, my strength is renewed so I may fly with eagle-strength and run with horse-power (v31). No doubt I am powerless like a “worm,” but God makes me a bulldozer (41:14,15). There arise too many problems in life which are too much for me to bear. I remember what Paul once testified: “We are burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead” (2 Cor 1:8,9). Nothing weakens me like sorrow. But the joy of the Lord becomes my strength (Neh 8:10c). I hear God telling me, **“Let the weak say, ‘I am strong!’ ”**

R. Stanley, 13 Church Colony, Vellore 632 006, Tamilnadu, India

Tel: 00 91 98437 07600, 98430 11943

<StanleyOnBible@hotmail.com> <Evangeline@StanleyOnBible.com>

www.StanleyOnBible.com