

“Step 7 - His Strength In Our Weakness” 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Anyone who ministers healing with any frequency at all will soon recognize a pattern to the answers people receive. A few receive instantly, many receive gradually over time, some don't receive a healing but do receive the grace to “turn the page” as it were and enter a new fruitful season even though the healing itself didn't come, and some receive complete freedom from disease and suffering only after stepping into eternal life. And try as we might to explain why these differences occur the truth is it's a mystery, and we'd do everybody a service if we left it that way. In other words, keep praying with all our hearts and humbly leave the results to God.

This pattern is true not only for physical healing but also for the healing of the internal wounds and weaknesses of our mind and emotions. A few receive freedom instantly, many receive gradually, and some receive the grace to live victoriously even though a certain wound or weakness may never entirely go away. In fact, I suspect there are certain areas in each of us where God chooses to give us grace to overcome rather than complete healing. Let's discover why.

Sources of struggle

- 1) Appetites, passions of the flesh
- 2) Spiritual, mental assaults from the devil
- 3) Physical, mental, emotional wounds and weaknesses

Things can happen to us as children or at critical moments in our lives that leave us injured. They can leave behind wounds or weaknesses where we are vulnerable to temptation or harassment. Some are healed wonderfully, but some may remain requiring a constant dependency on God's grace. Here's an example of someone like that:

Paul's wound

- 1) Acts 14:8-20 — Lystra, central Asia Minor, home of Timothy, Lois, Eunice.
 - vs 19, 20 - “...they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city.”
- 2) 2 Corinthians 12:1-10
 - 14 years ago. I admit the traditional dating of Acts 14 and 2 Corinthians is about 5 years off. There are other options: 2 Corinthians 11:24, 25
 - 3rd heaven
 - A thorn in the flesh: migraine headaches, eye trouble (Gal 6:11, 17)
 - A messenger of Satan to torment me (beat me with his fists)
 - Lest I should be lifted up too high (humility, dependency)
 - “The power of Christ might tabernacle over me”

Paul says that 14 years earlier he saw the place believers go after we die. He still doesn't know if he was dead or alive at the time (“in body” or “outside the body”), whether it was a vision or he was actually there. The experience seemed as if he were standing there looking and listening. He calls the place “Paradise” (Lk 23:43) and says he heard things said he does not feel free to repeat, nor is he even capable of doing so if he tried. Then after this took place, lest he should be lifted up too high in his or other's estimation, a satanic attack occurred that left him physically wounded or weak. Three times he earnestly called on God to take it away, undoubtedly in part because he feared it would hinder his ministry, but God kept telling him:

“My grace is enough for you for My power is expressed in its fullness in human weakness.” To which Paul responded, “Then I will most gladly boast in my weaknesses so that the power of Christ might tabernacle over me. If that's the way it is then I am well-pleased with weaknesses, insults, pain, persecution, limitations (handicaps?) on behalf of Christ for whenever I am weak then I am powerful.”

In other words, the wound that was left behind constantly reminds him how weak he is and how much he needs God's help and that desperation actually releases far more of the power of the Holy Spirit into his ministry.



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Wounds and weakness

The resurrection hasn't taken place yet. Our body and natural mind are still unredeemed. Yes, God can heal and restore, but some wounds or weaknesses never entirely go away. Instead God teaches us how to live victoriously in spite of them, or maybe because of them. When people don't understand this they can fall into condemnation assuming that if they only knew the right prayer to pray, or got the right person to pray for them, or cast out a demon, or had enough faith this problem would disappear. But in this case the real answer only comes when we let God teach us new ways to live:

- Spiritual disciplines (worship, prayer, fasting, ministry...)
- Lifestyle (exercise, diet, sleep, sabbath, vacation)
- Relationships (not with some, very important with others)
- Family (time with spouse, children, siblings...)

And here's the result. At the end of my life no one will say, "Here lies a person whose life was spoiled by...." They won't know the battle I fought because my spiritual fruit won't be limited. No one says, "Wow, think what Paul might have done if he didn't have that thorn in the flesh!" (Ro 8:28).

Weakness becomes strength

God delights to pour out His power especially in those areas where we have been wounded or weak. As we live in victory we embody hope for those who suffer in the same sort of ways. We are living proof of what God can do, and we possess in our hearts a special level of faith. We know God can bring victory in that area, and such faith can't be hidden. It shines in our eyes and resonates in the tone of our voice. And there are important lessons we have learned about that area of wounding or weakness that we can pass on to others.

2 Corinthians 1:3-7

God comforts us so we can comfort others. What began as a wound or weakness becomes an empowered area of ministry.

Questions

- 1) Name someone whose example makes you realize that God can do greater things in your life.
- 2) Name an area where you are weak and have to regularly depend on God.