

Christianity for Weak People
Romans 8:26-27

Intro

One interesting argument for the divine origin of the Bible is this - if we were coming up with a book about religion, we would hardly devise the message located there.

We are interested in personal power, heroic achievement, prosperity, success and so forth. We admire the strong, the flashy, the gifted, the wealthy, the big-shots

Our humanistic religion is based on achievement, self-actualization, making our dreams for personal gratification and appreciation into realities

There is a whole industry of "self-help" books endlessly flooding the market with no lack of eager consumers. A common message unites so many of these books - different authors and titles declaring a message of self-empowerment and self-love.

Sort of ra-ra, reach deep within yourself and find your inner warrior may be a sugar hit that energizes one in the short-term. There's a reason why the same book comes out again and again. Where has it got us? Depression, isolation, suicide are up. Maybe we're believing the wrong message.

One does not have to live long before one encounters suffering, weakness, insufficiency, regret, and need the kinds of things that can't be shaken by digging deep within oneself. And this western, humanistic religion does not have much to say to those kind of people

But the message of the Gospel, the center of the Bible, says something very different than this humanistic religion.

The Bible says that God isn't impressed with the powerful, the strong, the wealthy, and the big-shot. Quite the opposite. He selects his family out of the misfits, the marginalized, the sinful, and the weak.

[26] For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. [27] But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; [28] God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, [29] so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. (1 Corinthians 1:26-29)

Those are my peeps. And God actually opposes proud, big-deal, power players - and gives grace to the humble, strength to the weak, grace for the shameful.

Mark 2:27 - those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

God works at a totally different level than we do and that is such good news for us. Because that so-called victorious Christian life - It don't always feel so victorious!

To be sure there are sturdy joys and happy fruitfulness in our lives as Christian but we are often beset with much weakness and failures and suffering. Far from turning God away from us, our weakness is the platform upon which his glory is displayed in our lives and before a watching world. After all - his power is made perfect in weakness.

Our text, Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, speaks to us about the ministry of the Holy Spirit for weak people. He describes something of how Christianity works for weak people

Title of sermon "Christianity for Weak People" Two Points

1. Our Weakness
2. The Spirit's Help

I. Our Weakness

- A. As we have slowly worked our way through Romans 8, we have seen an emphasis on the activity of the Holy Spirit in our lives as Christians - 22 TIMES!
 1. v. 2 - the law of the Spirit of life has set us free from sin and death in Christ Jesus
 2. v. 4 - we walk according to the Spirit - he leads us
 3. v. 9 - the Spirit dwells in us and give life to our souls
 4. v. 11 - Just as Jesus was raised so to will our mortal bodies one day be raised from the dead by the Spirit
 5. v. 13 - by the Spirit, led and strengthened under his authority, we are cold-blooded sin-killers
 6. v. 16 - the Spirit bears witness to our deepest selves "you are a child of God"

- B. Then in v. 18-25 where we are told that though suffering is an integral reality in this life - our worst suffering is not to be compared with the glory that is coming when Christ returns
 1. All of creation and we ourselves groan in losing for the liberation from our suffering that Christ is bringing
 - a) BUT FIRST FRUITS - Last week - groaning is sanctified in Christ - we suffer just as all people do - sometimes more - we groan for the glory that is coming - our inheritance - adoption and redemption of our bodies
 - b) Hope in the unseen as we experience suffering in the present time
 - (1) Wait with patience - groaning not grumbling - hope fixed in the unseen but coming glory

- C. Just as future glory and grace gives us hope "likewise" v. 26 the Spirit has something to do with us as we walk through this fallen world - the Holy Spirit is present in us and with us in the groanings of this life - not just present - he is here to help - the Spirit helps us in our weakness
 1. What is this weakness Paul speaks of? Consider so that we can understand how extraordinary is this help from the Holy Spirit of God
 - a) As we've seen and already, we're aware - we suffer as all people do though redeemed and indwelt - futility of creation
 - (1) Sickness, disease, and loss
 - (2) Relational discord
 - (3) Temptations to sin that abound
 - (4) Patterns of sin and destructive habits
 - b) This world provides us with daily opportunities to experience weakness - regular opportunities for us to see and experience our insufficiency and lack of ability - our weakness
 - (1) Kids won't listen

- (2) Communication barriers
- (3) Loneliness
- (4) Anxiety
- (5) Awareness that I don't pray, evangelize, read the Bible, give, serve as we know we ought
- (6) And then those moments when everything crashes down around you and you feel - you know - you have nothing left to give
- (7) Even the best and brightest of us - things like lying alone in the hospital bed - tubes coming out of body - breathing is hoarse and shallow - the illusion of success and achievement pulled back - in the end, weak, needy, dependent
 - (a) In those moments of suffering and weakness - YEARS v. 26 "we do not know how to pray as we ought to"
 - i) Paul knows - God knows and tells us that he understands our experience - in suffering when prayer is far away

D. Here's the remarkable truth - God doesn't despise us in our weakness - get it together people! He moves toward us in our weakness. He has done so preeminently in his Son

[14] Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. [15] For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. [16] Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:14-16)

1. The Gospel declares that God's grace is for the fallen and the weak

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. (Romans 5:6)

2. In fact, he came for the sin-sick, the lowly, the weak and having been raised from the dead and ascended to the majesty on high, he has sent the Holy Spirit to be with us and in us to help us in our weakness - in John 14 & 16 I will send you the helper

E. Application

1. Your felt and experienced weakness does not exclude you from God's grace and help - it is the open door for God to make his dwelling in you as your helper

Illustration: Our world is attracted to the beautiful and the powerful - God is attracted to the struggling and the weak. We aren't like that! He's so different. A King that loves the weak! So much so that he comes to dwell in us by the Spirit to be our help.

Have you ever thought of the Holy Spirit as a gracious person who steps in to offer, 'May I help? May I bear that burden with you? You're in anguish over your children. You feel forsaken by God. You don't know how to negotiate that important decision. You're lonely. You're tempted. You're sinful. You need to pray. May I help?' The Holy Spirit does not reproach us. He gives generously to all without making them feel foolish or guilty. (Ray Ortlund Jr., *Supernatural Living for Natural People*, p. 107)

2. What if your experiences of weakness are the place that God intends to meet you and reveal his love and power to you?

3. What if we saw that weakness in our lives is a reality not to be avoided of but to be taken advantage of - to see God go to work - to experience his love in new and fresh ways.?
 - a) Feel weak? He is present as your helper.
4. We are weak in and of ourselves but the Spirit of God is present to help each and every Christian - not in some vague, general way - we are told in our text that he helps us by interceding for us - by praying FOR us - press into grand mysteries!

II. The Spirit's Help

- A. We see 2 x in v. 26 and 27 that the Spirit intercede - there is intercession happening - standing in the gap between our weakness and the heart of the Father
 1. He intercedes with groanings too deep for words
 - a) Third groan described - v. 22 creation groans, v. 23 we groan v. 26 the Spirit groans - unspoken - too deep for words - expressions of prayerful longing toward God reflecting and certainly provoking our own personal groaning before God
 - b) In God's ears - these groans present in our weakness and suffering are heard through the Spirit as prayers that God hears and responds too
 - c) In weakness, trial, suffering - we may find it hard to pray as we ought or to pray at all - DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO! but such is the grace of God that our groans, our sighs, our tears directed toward God through the Spirit are deeply cared about by God

O Lord, all my longing is before you; my sighing is not hidden from you. (Psalm 38:9)

- d) Struggling prayer life in your suffering - can you groan? Direct your sighs and longing toward God for that is what the Spirit is doing on your behalf in this moment.

Illustration: Luke 18:38 blind man crying out "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me"- crying out with declaration of need and Jesus stops and moves toward him with healing and love.

- B. The groans of the weak and suffering Christian is music to his ears not a nuisance to be avoided - WE tend to avoid the weak and the groaning - not so with God!
- C. And these groaning prayers in the Spirit are fruitful and effective because v. 27 God searches our hearts - not so that he can identify our weakness and condemn us - so that the voice of the Spirit within us and the ear of the Father work in concert to draw the presence, care, love, and help of God
- D. What the Father hears from the Spirit is always pleasing and fruitful because this praying is according to the will of God - how can it be any other way? Boggles the mind!
 1. The Spirit isn't some sort of spiritual power to be wielded - he is a person to be loved - TRINITARIAN
 2. No matter how fervent or passionate your prayer life - you'll never pray better than the Spirit of God! HE...IS...INTERCEDING...FOR...YOU
 3. We pray fervently and passionately because we have the Spirit and in the midst of our prayers the Spirit is guiding and mending them as they rise to the Father.
- E. Application
 1. God cares more about your prayer life than you do! So much so that he has given us his Spirit to intercede that we might experience His mighty heart directed toward you in your weakness and

groaning

Illustration: Watching a wise father with a crying baby - no words - hear, respond, feed, clothe, embrace - all for the weak and incapable

2. Notice this text isn't telling us to do anything explicitly - it is intended to cause us to marvel with gratefulness in our hearts for this Christianity that works for weak people.

There is one in heaven, the Son of God, who intercedes on our behalf, defending us from all charges that might be brought against us, guaranteeing salvation in the day of judgment. But there is also, Paul asserts in these verses, an intercessor "in the heart," the Spirit of God, who effectively prays to the Father on our behalf throughout the difficulties and uncertainties of our lives here on earth. (Doug Moo, *NICNT: Romans*, pp. 548-549)

3. THROUGHOUT Difficulties and uncertainties - cheer and strengthen - ALL OF THE GODHEAD IS COMMITTED TO YOUR CARE AND HELP
 - (1) WHY DON'T YOU HELP? IN WHAT WAY IS HE NOT HELPING?
 - (a) When the suffering persists - the weakness is deep and abiding
 - i) Know and feel the everlasting care of our mighty and kind God working in you and keeping you through difficulties and challenges until the day when your faith becomes sight - and suffering gives way to everlasting joy.
 - b) You say "I am not good at prayer" - don't need to be GOOD at it - all prayer directed in the Spirit through the Lord Jesus Christ is excellent in the ears of God.
 - (1) Note the Spirit helps people who don't know how to pray as they ought

Maybe for some of us, the greatest thing that could happen is not some new doctrinal insight, valuable as that is, but a new breakthrough in our hearts, new longings for God, new sighs and groans. (Ray Ortlund Jr., *Supernatural Living for Natural People*, p. 112)

- (2) Pray for a new breakthrough

Close

Aren't you glad for the counterintuitive nature of the grace of God? That his responsive care and steadfast love is not contingent on your outstanding performance?

There is only one kind of Christianity - Christianity for weak people - for the deeply needy. For that is the place where God magnifies the glories of his grace and power and that is what he is working in you my brothers and sisters.

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