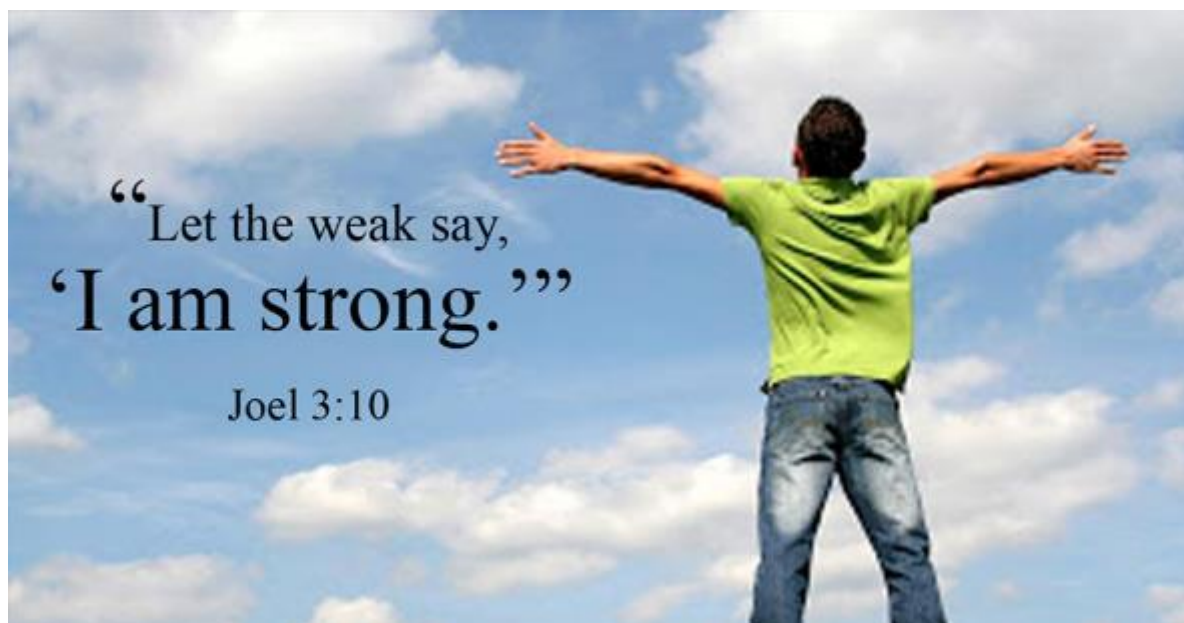


LET THE WEAK SAY... "I AM STRONG"

By John Gagliardi



Do you ever feel weak? Do you ever feel that, in the words of the Bard, *"the world is too much with me"*? Then rejoice! Because God says – through faith - you are about to get an infusion of power and strength the like of which you have never known before!

But what does this seeming paradox mean? How can we be strong when we are weak? Isn't that a contradiction in terms?

Not in God! With God, all things are possible – and in God's lexicon, it is only when we begin to realize our human limitations, when we fail in our own strength and abilities, that we ignite the awesome power of God's potential.

Paul, a man who changed the world in his time, learned this lesson the hard way – God had sent him a "thorn in the flesh" to keep him from becoming proud and relying on his own human intellect and strength. He begged the Lord three times to remove the "thorn", but His reply was: *"My grace is enough for you. When you are weak, My power is made perfect in you"* (2 Corinthians 12: 7-9).

So, to this Godly paradox, Paul responds: *"I am very happy to brag about my weaknesses. Then Christ's power can live in me. For this reason, I am happy when I have weaknesses, insults, hard times, sufferings, and all kind of troubles for Christ. Because when I am weak, then I am truly strong"* (2 Corinthians 12: 9 and 10).

It is a constant theme through the New Testament, that for God's power to start to really work in us, we have to give up trying to do things our way, in our own strength. It seems God is often waiting for us to give up on something we have been trying and trying to make happen – waiting for us to say, "I give up! I can't do it! God, You take over!"

That moment of extremity is God's opportunity – He steps in and takes over, and what we thought was totally impossible suddenly not only becomes possible, but easy and effortless. That is the difference of trying to do something in our own strength, and stepping back and letting God take over.

As the old saying goes: "Let go, and let God". Paul discovered where the real strength was: *"I work and struggle, using Christ's great strength that works so powerfully in me"* (Colossians 1: 27). In Philippians 4: 13, he goes on: *"I can do anything through Christ, because He gives me strength."*

How do we take hold of the stupendous, all-pulverizing strength that God has in store for us? Simply by giving up battling and striving in our own strength, and being prepared to humble ourselves and allow Jesus to really be our Lord in the fullest sense of the word, as well as being our Saviour. We have to trust Him fully, and obey what He tells us to do through the Holy Spirit. We have to get quiet in His presence, and listen for that "still, small voice".

God is always ready to speak to us – His word says: *"You will hear a voice behind you saying, this is the right way – you should go this way"* (Isaiah 30: 21). If we can't hear that Voice, then there are only three possibilities:

- We just don't care enough, and simply are choosing not to take the trouble to listen;
- We are too busy and making too much noise ourselves to hear; or
- We are surrounded by so much noise and outside distraction, that the voice of God is simply drowned out.

If we want to be able to hear God's voice, and then to trust what He tells us and obey, then there is simply no option - we must cultivate the habit of regularly – ideally, daily - coming apart and getting quiet before God, reading His Word, and letting that divine Presence sweetly saturate our soul.

If that means getting up an hour or two early each morning, then so be it – an hour's sleep is a cheap price to pay for the overcoming victory that comes from walking hourly and daily in God's mighty strength. You may feel a bit weak at 4 am or 5 am – but remember what Paul said: *"When I am weak, then I am **truly** strong."*

The Bible tells us in several places that God will fight for us – to just stand still, and see Him take over and fight our battles for us. Not that this means we should become passive "passengers" – just the opposite. God expects us to be "co-laborers with Christ", and to do our work with enthusiasm, *"as if you were serving the Lord, not as if you were serving only men and women"* (Ephesians 6: 7). We are to actively pray and believe, with total faith and an absolute conviction that God will do what He promises.

We can then, indeed, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. In Exodus 14: 13 and 14, Moses tells the Israelites: *"Don't be afraid! Stand still and you will see the Lord save you today. You will never see these Egyptians again after today. You only need to remain calm; the Lord will fight for you."*

Again, in 2 Chronicles 20: 15-17, God Himself through the prophet Jahaziel says: *"Don't be afraid or discouraged because of this large army. The battle is not your battle; it is God's battle ... You won't need to*

fight in this battle. Just stand strong in your place, and you will see the Lord save you." Notice here God says, "**stand strong**" – this is a standing in strong and prevailing faith, not a passive, "que sera sera" fatalism.

You can't stand strong in the promises of God unless and until you trust Him totally. And you can't trust Him totally unless you have faith. The bible tells us that faith comes from hearing – reading and meditating upon - the Word of God (Romans 10: 17).

Yes, God will fight our battles – He will infuse His strength into our weakness, transforming us from weakness and defeat to become "more than conquerors" (Romans 8: 37). But it is a two-way street – we have to keep our side of the contract.

"...The Lord is faithful and will give you strength, and will protect you from the Evil One" (2 Thessalonians 3: 3) ... "You will produce fruit in every good work, and grow in the knowledge of God. God will strengthen you with His own great power" (Colossians 1: 10 and 11). "Let the weak say, I am strong" (Joel 3: 10).

Our part of the deal is to come to Him in childlike faith, putting aside all our agendas, complex philosophies and disputations, and simply to believe that He will do what He says. *"God, who has called you to share everything with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful"* (1 Corinthians 1: 9).

God promises us that if we are born of the Spirit of God, we will overcome the world. *"Everyone who is a child of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world – our faith. So the one who wins against the world, is the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God"* (1 John 5: 4 and 5). *"We thank God! He gives us the victory through out Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Corinthians 15: 57).

Can we believe this good news? Is it too good to be true? We need to put on the "shield of faith" so we can stand strong against the world and the devil – faith is a crucial part of the whole Armour of God (Ephesians 6: 14-17), as it *"stops all the burning arrows of the Evil One"*. The arrows of doubt and unbelief, confusion and frustration, anger and resentment – all the "arrows" that take us away from the victory that God offers us through our faith in Jesus and the overwhelming triumph He won for us on the cross of Calvary.

Hold up the shield of faith by immersing yourself consistently in the Word of God. Faith and the Word of God are inextricably linked – the "faith shield" will quiet the voice of the enemy and the world, and allow us to hear that "still small voice", the voice that speaks into our lives words of encouragement, strength and overpowering victory. Words we need to hear every single day of our lives, as we go forth to "do battle" in the marketplaces of the world.