

TITLE AND NUMBER: 192. Strength out of weakness



REFERENCE AND KEY VERSE(S): 2 Corinthians 12: 9-10

But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 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.

LOOKING FURTHER: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Psalm 51:17; Romans 8:35-39

What does this Bible passage tell us?

Paul had a physical weakness which he had asked God three times to remove. This passage is God's answer. He explains that His grace is sufficient for Paul and while God does not inflict suffering, His power is made perfect in Paul's weakness. Paul responds that he will therefore happily boast about his weaknesses so that God's power may rest on him. In fact, he delights in all sorts of weaknesses because then he becomes strong.

It is often said that it is only when we reach rock bottom that we can start to come up again. Those who lose everything, whether possessions or well-being, often realise that they have no choice but to depend on God and that is when their lives turn around and they start to make progress.

Coming to prison is never a good thing. But, I have been told by some people in prison that they do not regret that this has happened to them because they have had time to think and to sort out their lives. Many have come to faith or returned to faith and now have hope for the future.

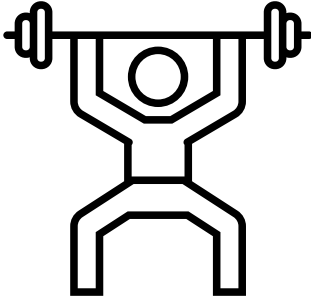
How much better it is if we can see God through our weaknesses before we actually reach rock bottom, learn to trust Him and rely on His love for us and His guidance for our lives. For when we are weak, God can help us to find strength in our weaknesses.

In his poem 'Ascension', Malcolme Guite says of Jesus, *'The heart that broke for all the broken-hearted is whole and heaven-centred now, and sings, sings in the strength that rises out of weakness....'*

Reflections:

- Do you feel that you are weak in body, mind or spirit and cannot lift yourself from this position? Take encouragement from Paul's situation. Remember that we are still reading his letters 2,000 years after he wrote them and we are being helped to know God through them.
- Are you trying to make the most of your time in prison? If not, think how you could turn your life around and use this time for good while you are serving your sentence, preparing yourself at the same time for life when you leave prison.
- Read again this extract from Malcolme Guite's poem and find comfort from the strength that arises out of weakness.

Write or draw something you read in this Bible Study that stood out to you.



Do you have any questions about this week's Bible Study?



How does this week's message apply to your life?



What can we learn about God from this week's passage?



What would you like to ask God this week?



Has God responded to your prayers this week in the way you had hoped for? It's okay to talk to God about this.

