

“Say What?”
Weak but Strong
2 Corinthians 12:7-10
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Today we finish our sermon series on “Say What?” This has been a series on paradoxes and statements in the Bible that seem to be opposite or contradictory. In previous weeks I’ve read actual notes from parents to teachers that made us ask, “Say What?” I’ve also shown some streets signs and signs posted that have made us ask, “Say What?” Well Tuesday of this week Yankees Legend and Hall of Famer Yogi Berra died. **(image of Yogi Berra)** He played in the 1960’s, was American League Most Valuable Player three times and has the most World Series Rings of any baseball player....he has 10 World Series Rings. He became known for the way he interestingly butchered the English language. To many of the things he said....we would ask, “Say What?” Here are a few of my favorite Yogi-isms.

1. **“It ain’t over till it’s over.”**
2. **“It’s deja vu all over again.”**
3. **“I usually take a two-hour nap from 1 to 4.”**
4. **“Never answer an anonymous letter.”**
5. **“Baseball is 90 percent mental. The other half is physical.”**
6. **“I never said most of the things I said.”**
- 7 **“You should always go to other people’s funerals, otherwise, they won’t come to yours.”**
8. **“When you come to a fork in the road, take it.”**

Well today we literally come to a fork in the road. We can take the road and be weak, or we can take the road and be strong. But here is the problem and the paradox we can be weak but strong, Say What? Oh we want to be strong, but in life’s circumstances sometimes well....we’re weak. **(image: It’s been a rough week, but I made it....How about you?)** Well...did you make it this week? You’re here....so that’s a good sign.

In the midst of these rough weeks what does it mean for us to be weak but strong. Certainly a paradox. Today is Blue Service where we honor and thank First Responders. Often when we are weak *they* are strong. Once again... “Thank you.” **(image)**

The Law Enforcement Oath says this: "On my honor, I will never betray my badge, my integrity, my character or the public trust. I will always have the courage to hold myself and others accountable for our actions. I will always uphold the Constitution, my community, and the agency I serve."

Oh to have the courage. Oh that all of us might have honor, courage, and sacrifice to be the people that we need to be to be God’s transforming agents in the world.

My dad was with the Volunteer Fire Protection District for over 30 years. Nearly 25 of those years he was Chief. I remember a house fire that left images that cause him to lose sleep. Hear now this traditional “Fireman’s Prayer.”

"Fireman's Prayer"

When I am called to duty, God
whenever flames may rage,
give me the strength to save some life
Whatever be its age.

Help me to embrace a little child
before it's too late,
or some older person
from the horror of that fate.

Enable me to be alert
and hear the weakest shout,
and quickly and efficiently
to put the fire out.

I want to fill my calling
and give the best in me,
to guard my neighbor
and protect his property.

and if according to my fate

I am to lose my life,
Please bless with your protecting hand
my children and my wife.

- Author Unknown.

John 15:13 says, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."

When we get down to it as strong as all of our First Responders are---Law Enforcement, Fire, Medic, EMS, Dispatch, Social Service personnel....in reality all are weak and many times have to pull on inner strength. They do the job, they keep their oath and pledge....the respond first and often full of adrenalin but are calm and professional. Oh how do we in our daily life respond that way....to be weak, but strong?

In our scripture this morning the Apostle Paul writer of 2 Corinthians says that God has allowed him to do some great things. Then he says that he was given a thorn in the flesh. We really do not know what that thorn in the flesh is. Some say it might have been malaria, some say chronic eye problems, some say it might have been migraines, and some his thorn in the flesh was his mother-in-law (who added that to my notes?) ☺

Today we all deal with thorns...not only in the flesh, but also emotional and spiritual thorns. Paul pleads and begs not once, not twice, but three times for this “thorn” to be taken away. And guess what God takes it away! No....actually He doesn't. Look at the first part of **Verse 9** **But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”**

The thorn wasn't taken away, but instead Grace was given so that God's power would be made known. **(image of baby) Sometimes ya just gotta praise Jesus anyways!**

Paul goes on to say...it is in my weakness that the power of God rests upon me. Ah, weak but strong. Say what?

Verse 10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

It is as if he says...weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, calamities....bring it on. Bring it on!!!! Bring it on because when that those things happened I'm weak but I am strong. You see when I'm weak it is then that I really know where my true strength comes from. It is not on my own, but through the power of God.

There was a period in my life where I repeated and sang softly to myself the children's song “Jesus Loves Me.” Jesus loves me! This I know, For the Bible tells me so; Little ones to Him belong; they are weak, but He is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

I am weak...but He is strong. Let me say it this way. We are weak, but He is strong! Woo-hoo! Say it with me: We are weak, but He is strong!

Oh beloved there are desert times when inside we feel dry. There is weakness, trial, pain and sometimes even a battle. There are will be times of weakness. Why even Paul's thorn in the flesh was not removed...but he was told that God's grace was going to be there, and that God's grace was going to be sufficient.

Moses had led the people out of Egypt to the Promise Land. And yet Moses died before going into the Promised Land. Joshua was assigned to take the people into the land. Now Moses had been the leader for many years and now that responsibility is turned over to Joshua. In the book of Joshua chapter 1 verses 1 through 9 it tells of this commissioning and the words of encouragement that God gave Joshua. Here is what God tells Joshua “I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous...” (Joshua 1:5-6) And again God tells Joshua in verse 9 “Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Wherever we go God is with us. Most are probably familiar with the famous Footprints in the Sand poem. There are two sets of footprints....but for a period of time there is only one. The dreamer of the poem asks God why and God says...”when you see one set of footprints it is then that I carried you.”

However I saw a comic that might summarize it even better:



There are times of weakness when God not only carries us, but drags us as well. Oh to know that in times of weakness He is there. To know that He will never leave us. We are to be strong and courageous. Weak, but strong....because I'm being carried....or perhaps being dragged...but either way He will not forsake us.

It is recorded in Zechariah that the Lord says, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts."

Let's look at that verse in a different translation: **Zechariah 4:6 Contemporary English Version (CEV) I am the LORD All-Powerful. So don't depend on your own power or strength, but on my Spirit.**

When I am weak, then I am strong. I am strong because I am not depending on myself; I am not depending on others.....I am strong because my total dependence is on God.

(Sermon spice: These Hard Times)