

INTRO - I once had a man come to me after a long, difficult divorce. He said, 'Pastor, I'm not sure how to say this, but I've never felt so strong in my faith as I am as I've been going through this divorce.' He did not want the divorce. He hurt at the loss of the marriage. He did everything he could, and the result he wanted did not happen. And yet, it sounds somewhat surprising, but he rejoiced in God's presence and help in spite of his weakness, in spite of his lack of ability to save his marriage.

I. That is the call to Christians in our lesson for today.

A. Paul says it twice.

1. In verse 9 he says, **Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses.**

2. In verse 10 he says, **That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties.**

B. Can you think of weaknesses, difficulties, troubles you have?

1. Do you struggle with your anger, or with doubt?

2. Do you have a relationship which is challenging your Christian faith or behavior?

3. Is there an illness or grief in your life?

C. Now, have you considered these weaknesses or difficulties as possible reasons to rejoice?

II. I know some of my weaknesses, and personally, I know that rather than rejoicing, I often complain, or grumble to myself.

A. A couple of weeks ago, as we were moving into our house I tried to put hinges on our daughter's window seat. Now, there were left over building materials in the garage, there was carpet, and tile, and flooring, and vinyl. There was also some lumber. As I tried to build a support for the hinges I cut up the lumber. Unfortunately, the pieces I cut up did not work the way I wanted. Then my wife informed me that the lumber was really a shelf from our kitchen. O, O, I am not real good at fixing things.

1. I don't remember rejoicing however.

2. I think I may have thought or said something which wasn't very praiseworthy.

B. I also know that I hate to say 'no,' and sometimes do too much.

1. Two years ago I offered to help my Kiwanis club put on a golf tournament to raise money to help in our community. They did not want to do it then, but asked me to do it this year. Unfortunately, this year the tournament happened as we were moving into the church, and into our house, and the Saturday after our daughter's graduation and our son's wedding, and the Saturday before the District Convention. There was also a wedding that day.

2. I probably should have backed out. I should have said no. But I didn't.

3. I had a couple of thoughts that weren't necessarily positive about all that was going on. I didn't necessarily rejoice at the busy-ness.

C. Complaining may not seem so bad.

1. But, complaining, is the opposite of rejoicing, the opposite of praise.

2. The more one focuses on the negative, the less we see God's hand.

3. The less we find reason to rejoice, the less thankful we are, and the weaker our faith becomes.

4. When I don't rejoice, it is not a good witness.

III. Do you know why the man was able to rejoice that His relationship with the Lord was stronger, even after his marriage had failed? Because, after he had tried everything he could do, he had to fall back on the Lord, and his forgiveness, and his love, and his strength. This man saw God work even in his own failure, and so he rejoiced, not so much in His failure but in God's love and strength.

A. God tells us through Paul, **when I am weak, then God is strong.**

1. What is our greatest weakness? It is our sin.
2. But, in our weakness, in His strong love, God sent Jesus.
3. In our weakness, when we didn't deserve love, Jesus died for us.
4. When we are weak, then God is strong.

B. When I fail, and know I have no hope, and turn to the Lord, His strength is better than mine.

1. If my weakness is doubt, or anger. If I say, 'I can't do it, and turn to God.' It is His strength that works.
2. If I am ill, or have a difficult relationship, and no matter what I do it does not work, When I turn in difficulty to God, and things ultimately work out, God shows that our weakness allows our strength to work.

C. Where I struggle with my weakness, I rejoice in God's strength

1. So, I can really rejoice.
2. My joy is real and not just put on
3. God's help, and God's love, and God's strength is reason for real joy.
4. And when I rejoice in God, my joy points to Him, and is a better witness.

CONCLUSION - This year's Bible School was the biggest we've had, ever. One person could not keep track of everything. It wasn't my joy, but, I tried to keep on top of things. As I was dealing with concerns, and needs, A mother told my wife how this had witnessed to her and her family. Now, that was our goal, but in my weakness, I was just trying to stay on top of the little things. God took care of the real work, creating faith.

You see, when I'm weak, then I'm strong. Maybe we should look for God, and his strength in all our weaknesses.