

Peace and Strength Through Weakness and Passivity

In human terms, this sounds like a contradiction; but in the spiritual realm, it's a paradox. This is because inner peace and strength from God do not result from our own thoughts and actions. We open up to them by our passivity or receptivity to the action of God.^[1] The Holy Spirit brings them to us through the fruit of the Spirit. They are our assurance of connection with Him.^[2]

This requires dependence on God. In human terms, dependence is viewed as weakness: and we resist it. This is probably why there are few that find their way to God. The path is narrow.^[3] Autonomy from God was the temptation in the Garden. This remains with us until today.^[4] Acknowledging that we are weak without God is an essential starting point for us in order to acquire His strength.^[5]

I often hear that there are different paths to God because of our individual differences. While it is true that we all have different life experiences and personalities, I also believe that God is very specific in the way that He expects humanity to approach Him in order to receive grace. The Bible is the logical place to look for information pertaining to the Biblical God and how He wants us to relate to Him. It tells us to be humble towards God by casting all of our care on Him and to be anxious for nothing as a result.^[6] This is how we empty ourselves in order to prepare the opening for Him to fill, and how we receive Christ's rest that He spoke of when we come to Him.^[7]

Our own intellect and willpower are inadequate for

righteousness before God. Relying on our thoughts and breathing exercises is insufficient for bringing us God's peace and strength. There are many religious practices that do not bring us closer to Him even with their Christian imagery because they lack the humility toward God that He requires. Our own efforts are insufficient because the law of sin, which is our human weakness that prevents us from living a life of righteousness according to God's will.^[8] God's peace and strength are required for this. Without these, we don't have the capacity to do His will. They are acquired by faith and unconditional trust in Jesus Christ. Then, God's law will be written into our hearts through the Holy Spirit within us.^[9]

When the Holy Spirit is within us, our lives are strengthened. We surrender all to God in order to experience His influence in every part of our lives. Holding back from Him only delays this. When we surrender selectively, we are holding back the remainder. We surrender both the good and the bad even when we are not in crisis or suffering. Even in the best of times, we need God's peace and strength because of our tendencies towards worry, anger, and recurring sin that remain with us. We take them everywhere we go even in the most idyllic circumstances. Religious communities and monasteries are not a refuge from the Law of sin: only Christ is; and He is not restricted to certain locations when His Spirit is within us. If we don't take Him along with us everywhere we go, we will take our human weakness with us everywhere. When we walk in the Spirit, we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.^[10]

The world diverts us in many ways from finding God's peace and strength. These diversions always leave us wanting more of what we seek to make us content because they do not provide the ultimate contentment that we seek. We all have within us the drive to repossess what Adam and Eve had in the Garden before the fall, but which can now only be provided by Christ, the last Adam, who was made a life-giving Spirit.^[11]

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[1] Cf. Isaiah 55:7-9

[2] Cf. Romans 8:16; Matthew 7:16-20

[3] Cf. Matthew 7:13-14

[4] Cf. Romans 3:9-18

[5] Cf. 2Corinthians 12:9

[6] Cf. 1Peter 5:5-7; Philippians 4:6-7; James 4:5-10; Proverbs 3:5-6; Matthew 6:25-34; 11:28-30; Psalms 37:7; 55:22; Isaiah 26:3-4; 30:15; 55:7-9; John 6:63; Galatians 5:16-25; Romans 13:14; 6:13; 8:28

[7] Cf. Matthew 11:28-30

[8] Cf. Matthew 26:41; Romans 7:14 thru 8:2

[9] Cf. John 16:13-15; 14:16-18, 26; Mark 13:11; 2Corinthians 3:2-9; Ezekiel 36:26-27; Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 8:10; 7:11-12; 24-27; 10:19-23

[10] Cf. Galatians 5:16-25

[11] Cf. 1Corinthians 15:45