

Zahakiel: Let's begin... Pastor, please offer an opening prayer.

Pastor Chick: Dear Father in heaven. Thank You for another week of abundant Life and thank You for the perfect Rest given to Your saints. May Your Presence bless our souls for this hour of worship, in Spirit and in Truth in Yahshua's holy name, Amen.

Barb: Amen

Lucan: Amen

Adriel7777: Amen

Zahakiel: Amen.

Elyna1: Amen.

Peterson: Amen.

Daphna: Amen

Gloria Bailey: Amen

Zahakiel: Happy Sabbath to everyone. Tonight's study is called "Strength and Weakness."

Tonight I'd like to follow up a bit on a statement made in a previous study, some commentary on Paul's exhortation to "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." (2Cor 13:5) I pointed out that the conclusion to such an examination must be that one is either "in" the faith or "not in" the faith. There are no degrees of salvation, but Christianity is a "true" or "false" condition in the lives of every individual. Having said that, however, we now have some work to do in understanding other passages that appear to make certain distinctions in the experience of those walking the path of sanctification. Consider the following verses:

"But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak [...] And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" (1Cor 8:9, 11)

"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs." (Rom 14:1, 2)

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." (Rom 15:1)

What do these terms mean, as Paul employs them?

While Providence has arranged for these documents to be released to the world, their purpose (like the prophecies of Revelation) is really intended to do what an inspired resource always does... edify (build up) the Church. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians and the Romans, he did so to the Church and its members concerning their experience

and their progress as baptized disciples of Christ. As such, any characteristics that the apostle identifies can only be important to those in the faith already. It is a distinction with a purpose internal to the Covenant between Yah and mankind, but it does not, and cannot, affect those members' testimony to the outside world.

Consider the significance of that.

Whether one can be identified as one of those whom Paul considers "weak" or "strong," this has absolutely no bearing on that individual's ability to succeed, mightily, as a messenger of the Gospel to the world.

Not all have been called by Yah to quickly grasp new concepts, or lead out in discussions, or initiate new projects, and as a result of this some may be tempted to think, "I am a weak member." They may even be able to identify some incident or conversation as evidence for this conclusion, but if they believe that this has any impact on the Spirit's ability to work through them (for evangelism is merely opening the way for the Spirit of Yahweh to work) then there has been a misunderstanding of what Paul means when he speaks of strength and weakness.

Conventions of human language are useful, and necessary to communicate, but they are imperfect. In describing how individuals act in certain contexts, we may speak of someone having "strong" faith. We read, therefore, that "[Abraham] staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." (Rom 4:20) In a time when few believed in Yahweh, Abraham did, and thus he is described as being strong in that faith.

On the other hand, the Christian is seldom if ever advised by the Scriptures to be "strong" in the faith. This may surprise some people to hear. Three times, Yahshua said directly to those who heard Him, "have faith," to the degree that even so much as a mustard seed's weight of it would move a mountain. (Mat 17:20)

When I speak to others about Victory over Sin, I do not permit them the deception that we are teaching a "higher level" of faith than the rest of the Churches. There is "one faith," as the Scripture says, that saves. (Eph 4:5) There is "one faith" that Yahshua held, and that He gave to His followers. Satan and his angels have created counterfeits, corruptions, and contradictions, but they have never produced a "weaker version" of a functioning faith, for like salvation, it is an "in" or "not in" experience. Yahweh does not call or consider any for whom Christ died, and received the gift of His perfect life, to be weak, or deficient in any way.

Again, for emphasis: Yahweh does not call any of His children weak or deficient. He has given them all of Heaven's majesty in His Son, and those that have His Son – and one cannot have "more" or "less" of the Son – have unlimited potency to perform righteousness in this world. If a temptation comes to any who have called on Christ as

their Savior insinuating they are lacking in anything, then let it be identified for what it is, and rejected altogether.

We know the promises. We are now quite familiar with Peter's statement that Yah has given us all things that pertain to "life and godliness." (2Pet 1:3) And there are numerous others as well.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father." (John 14:12)

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil 4:13)

Are these statements to be claimed only by the "strong?" And if even the weakest Christian is giving the testimony, "I can do ALL things through Christ," then what does that weakness matter? These things, promised to us by the Creator, are all true. These are the things that are reality, and the result of the holy covenant with Yah in Whom we all "live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

So, what does it mean when Paul calls some members "weak?" To understand this, we must look at how members so identified interact with the Church. In most passages where the term is employed, the Apostle is identifying those who are careful, perhaps to excess, with what they are permitted to do. They have been slower than others to cast off superstitions about food offered to idols, and may be prone to misunderstanding what others in the Church are doing or saying.

No suggestion is made that these individuals are behind anyone else in expressing the character of Christ, the fruit of the Spirit, or the principles of Agape-love. Certainly, there is no indication given that they are prone to sin or misunderstanding of the born-again experience as it pertains to righteousness by faith.

In fact, their sensitivity in matters of interaction with others may well open doors that would otherwise remain closed. Like everyone else, these "weak" members are to take the talents that Yah has given to them, and refine them for use in the Gospel work. It may seem that some have five talents while others have only two, but the "increase" is the same when they are properly used, (Mat 25:14-17) and the Master calls those who do this His good and faithful servants.

While coming behind none in evangelism, those members called "weak" also have their divinely ordained role within the Church. Among the brethren, they are there to inspire other members to explain the Word properly, clearly, and simply, to set a perfect example, and to demonstrate that they are patient with those who may require more to grasp things firmly.

Remember that the elders and leaders, the "strong" ones who seem to be "pillars" (Gal 2:9) must be "apt to teach." (1Tim 3:2, 2Tim 2:24) This is a requirement of all those called to a responsible position before Yah.

Within the Church, those identified as strong find opportunities to work with those who are burdened with heavy temptations, misconceptions that need to be cleared away, and perhaps unavoidable deficiencies that require special care. That is their calling, their role... and those who consider themselves strong make themselves the servants of all.

In any case, in perceived strength or weakness, these internal distinctions among roles do not have any impact on the promises made by Yahweh to every living human being, and the thought must never once be entertained that having a specific role makes one less or greater. A house is made up of many stones, but there is no greater glory given to those stones that are nearest the roof compared to those near the foundation. The glory of a house is its reputation, its use, and its overall appearance. A missing stone, or a cracked wall, will dishonour that house no matter where in the structure it appears. We see, therefore, that the testimony of a Body relies equally upon each member of its fellowship... and Yah has made each of His "stones" a mighty and suitable element of His Tabernacle.

In looking at the impact of roles vs. honor, we may consider the Godhead, which is our grand pattern for how we relate to Yah, to the Church, and to each other individually.

The Father and Son are One. (John 10:30)

They share glory. (John 17:24)

The Son is the express, perfect image, of the Father, and no lesser Being. (Heb 1:3, Phil 2:6)

Even so, the Son's role is one of subservience, submission, to the Father, for it is in this way that righteousness is fulfilled. (Mat 26:39, 3:15)

By taking on the role of the suffering servant, not only to Yahweh, but to infinitely lower mankind, (Phil 2:8) Yahshua both makes Himself an acceptable Sacrifice and a suitable Example for those who are called to walk perfectly in His spiritual footsteps.

Similarly, the Scriptures make it clear that we are all One in Christ, of similar characteristics.

As it is written, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Yahshua. " (Gal 3:28)

Paul is not here saying that these distinctions don't exist... they very much do, to the point where men and women, for example, have clearly outlined responsibilities and purposes... but he is saying that the distinctions do not matter to the Gospel, to the state of being "in Christ Yahshua."

It is exactly the same thing with regard to weakness and strength. The Father and Son, despite having different roles are One, perfectly united in Spirit and purpose. In the Church there are some called to lead, and some called to other roles that may be perceived as "weak," and each has specific responsibilities... but all are One, perfectly united in Spirit and purpose. All bear the testimony of Yahshua, "I do always those things that please my Father," (John 8:29) and according to the Book of Revelation, this means that Moses' desire has been fulfilled. He once said, "Would Elohim that all Yahweh's people were prophets, and that Yahweh would put His Spirit upon them!" (Num 11:29)

In these last days, with the Spirit being poured out on all flesh, (Joel 2:28) it is indeed the case that all with the testimony of Yahshua bear on them the spirit of prophecy. (Rev 19:10)

A Christian is one who follows Christ. That is a simple enough concept, but it is worthy of deep contemplation. What does it mean to "follow" Christ? To some it is little more than a declaration that one is a "follower," and their lives change little beyond some surface activities thereafter.

But Yahshua, the Son of Yahweh, is in the Heavenly Sanctuary. (Heb 8:1, 2) It would be reasonable to suggest that those who follow Christ know what that means, where He is, and where they are going. The Son of Yah has walked the path of self-sacrifice, and overflowing Agape-love for all. To follow Him means that we are walking in His footsteps, standing where He is before the Most Holy, and bearing a message of love to the sick and dying.

Nobody who is truly "weak" can do any such thing. To follow Christ, one must have accepted the Three Angels' Message, which gathers the believers out of the world. This means that the "weakest" of saints, having done so, knows that the hour of Yah's judgment has come, and commits to worshipping Him in spirit, and in truth, with righteousness by faith. (Rev 14:7) The "weakest" of the saints, having followed the Three Angels, knows that "Babylon has fallen," (Rev 14:8) and that we are called to purity of doctrine, faith, and practice. Even the "weakest" among the Brethren know what the Mark of the Beast is, (Rev 14:9) that they may avoid it, and unite with those who share their spirit in sounding a last warning to the world before the close of human history. In doing so, all Christians, from those in "strong" roles to those otherwise intended, are called to sound warnings and appeals of mercy to the world, thus serving as messengers, ambassadors, and indeed, prophets.

This does not mean that all will have dramatic, sweeping visions. This does not mean that all will hear the voice of Yah speaking into their ears directly, or that they will awaken from sleep with a burning need to write a testimony or plan a project. But it does mean that when we speak, it is with divine wisdom. When we say such and such a thing will come to pass, conditional prophecy aside, it will.

We give testimonies of unbroken righteousness, and victory over every obstacle, knowing with a prophet's certainty that Yah is guiding our path. When we declare, "I have a crown waiting for me in Heaven," our words are spirit and truth, and will convince the sincere souls seeking comfort that Yah has a place for them in His Kingdom.

In strength and in weakness, as human beings consider these things, our Father is the All-Mighty, the All-Strong, and it His will that we perform upon the earth. Let this be our testimony. Let Yah be our strength. Let the People of the Most High finish the work that has been set before us.

Are there any questions or comments about the study tonight?

Adriel7777: Amen!

Elyna1: Amen!

Adriel7777: C

Peter: Amen

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Naraiel: C.

Adriel7777: The following verse came to mind to me regarding the relation of weak to strong in this study:

Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. We are strong in Him. End

Elyna1: Amen

Zahakiel: Go ahead, Giselle.

Naraiel: An example of your study could be the following situation: Then the twelve (Apostles) called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables...Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." Acts 6:2-3

In here various roles are shown, and thanks to the weaker roles, and other gifts that believers had, others were able to respond to their call. End C.

Zahakiel: That's an interesting example. Stephen, who was one of these deacons so chosen... was the first martyr for Christ, and gave a very powerful testimony before those who rejected Yahshua, and had a role in preparing Saul - Paul, for service.

You have another comment?

Naraiel: However, those believers with minor roles also were full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. End

Zahakiel: Right. Are there any others?

Lucan: Q

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Lucan: I seem to be seeing two different things being discussed...

One is "weaker" in terms of roles and functions, and one is "weaker" in terms of perceiving new light, being prone to influence over firmness, etc. When Yahshua returns, are there still "weak members" in the latter sense? <End.>

Naraiel: Q.

Pastor Chick: A

Zahakiel: I'll let Pastor answer first, and then Giselle's question.

Pastor Chick: Every generation is accountable for greater light than those prior generations. We are accountable for more light than the original apostles. We are not only in the anti-typical Day of Atonement, but in the final phase of the investigative judgment -- the judgment of the living. So, the path of the just is brighter and narrower. We have taken off our shoes and socks... you will see bleeding feet... the 144,000 go wherever the Lamb goes, in His strength... those who cannot walk the path fall to the abyss below. End

Zahakiel: Right. With regard to the first part of Bro. Luke's question... it is often the case that the role Yah appoints to an individual is based on their spiritual talents, and this isn't always separate from their ability to grasp new light quickly, so there's a connection between the two concepts, although perhaps not a direct one in every case. And I would say that when probation closes, and all are sealed, all will reflect the character of Christ perfectly... but there will still be some variation in how the mind of Christ is expressed... some will teach others, even in Heaven. Go ahead, Giselle.

Naraiel: How do we reconcile what Pastor has said with the six thousand years of sin which effects human beings and that are manifested or called unavoidable deficiencies? I personally do not like that term, for people have used that as an excuse for willful sin. What is included in the term, unavoidable deficiencies? For in the Power of Yah, that wouldn't and shouldn't be an obstacle for victory. ☺ End

Zahakiel: Hm... I am not sure what you're really asking, because it sounds like you answered it yourself. People in the world can use the term as an excuse for sin... but it is just that, an excuse.

Naraiel: my question is the second one.

Zahakiel: Right... that too.

Pastor Chick: A

Zahakiel: Because it is not something that is an obstacle for victory. It does not involve an individual's ability to obey all that they understand of the Law.

Go ahead, Pastor.

Pastor Chick: If you are born without arms; that is an unavoidable deficiency...

Elyna1: C

Pastor Chick: but the one who is handicapped, rises above the affliction to glorify Yah in their defective body. Some UD's may be more subtle and difficult to identify... but they rise to the challenge and glorify Yah in their life's testimony. End

Adriel7777: C

Naraiel: C.

Zahakiel: Go ahead, Guerline.

Elyna1: I perceive that in that passage Paul is mentioning weakness, it is in a good sense not as a deficiency, because as he says in that passage Sis Jody referred above "... when I am weak, then I am strong" "When I am tempted and resist it, then I am strong, when I am reviled and revile not, then I am strong, etc. In Christ, I am more than a conqueror. I understand by the second application that some are cautious and careful and not doing as others do but as Pastor pointed out, even the weak in that sense have to rise up and grow in the glory of Yahshua and conquer unavoidable deficiencies. But the confusion I see here is that we are using weakness comparatively with roles and positions. That is a bit ambiguous to me at first... I will need to go over the study and comments and see. End

Zahakiel: As you go over it again, do keep in mind that those are two somewhat different contexts... when Paul refers to "weak members," this is a description of the state of their faith. He never applies that to himself. The ones called weak there are avoiding doing things that might be allowable, for example, for fear of offending or being offended. This isn't described as a good thing, but he encouraged the other brothers not to use their liberty (their strength) to cause them to stumble.

In the passage about Paul being weak so Yah can be strong, it's not in the sense of being weak in the faith, but being unable to accomplish things in his own strength that Yah can do through him. Go ahead, Jody.

Adriel7777: I think like there are physical & mental handicaps, some UD's can be mental in the way children are improperly raised, etc. but through Christ all can rise above and overcome to glorify Yah. End.

Zahakiel: That reminds me of or baptismal vow... based on an EGW quote, that in Christ we overcome all "cultivated and inherited" traits of character that are contrary to Yah's will. That would include the way people are raised, in addition to defects related to how one is born. Go ahead, Giselle.

Elyna1: C

Naraiel: I understand the weaker becomes strong in YAH, especially if they believe He is the Almighty. However, I was referring to unavoidable deficiencies in the mental area, not physical. Mental unavoidable deficiencies can be understood differently by different people and members, that's why I wanted to know if there is a list or a more clear example of what that entails. Some people may think they have a mental unavoidable deficiency, but what they could have is also a nutritional deficiency in something that affects them. End

Zahakiel: I think that's a complicated question, to come up with a "list." As Pastor said in his answer, some of these unavoidable deficiencies can be hard to identify.

Pastor Chick: A

Zahakiel: And in the case that nutrition is affecting one's mental state... if they don't know any better, such as how their diet may be affecting them, it is still "unavoidable" until they are educated about that, so in terms of its effect there's not really a difference. Go ahead, Pastor.

Naraiel: (So, some unavoidable deficiency could be facilitated by lack of care, or ignorance and that would not really be unavoidable.)

Pastor Chick: I have not thought of a case where a person with an UD could say, "I have an UD" unless it's an obvious physical impairment... so, those having UD will likely not know they have one until they are told. End.

Zahakiel: Right... Giselle said something about ignorance just now. There are two kinds... Willful ignorance is based on wanting to avoid conviction, and it is avoidable by those with a commitment to righteousness. Genuine ignorance can be seen as "unavoidable" in a sense, until they resist learning better, and then it is willful.

Naraiel: C.

Zahakiel: Those in Christ will not be willfully ignorant, so unless their deficiency is an obvious, physical one, it will be genuinely unknown to them until someone points it out, and then they will put the offending thing away and be sanctified. Go ahead, Guerline.

Elyna1: Thinking about UD's, In Yahshua, we have conquered all. Even physical deficiencies are compensated by the body.... So Spiritually in Yah, there are compensations for He said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness". So even in our perceived UD. Yah is our sufficiency! End

Zahakiel: That is true, yes... Yah does not give us burdens we cannot bear, and even those with deficiencies, handicaps, etc.; if they need to do something, Yah provides a way. Go ahead, Jody.

Adriel7777: Amen. Would you consider the guy who has high functioning autism I think it is from FB a UD? End

Lucan: A

Zahakiel: Go ahead. (with the answer)

Lucan: I do not think I could judge someone over Facebook that easily, and I'm not sure what the value would be. I see many who would wave such around as an excuse. I noticed that "prone to misunderstanding other church members" was in the message as an example... I was reminded of the communication game in Guys; I'm not sure how many here saw that exercise. But, it was a helpful tool to reveal things; if one individual often was alone in getting something wrong, or no one could follow their instructions the same, a communication issue was revealed. The answer to that was not, "Oh well, unavoidable deficiency," or "Oh, if you don't understand me it's my (autism/add/bipolar/etc., etc.)" If we find we are commonly in misunderstandings with Church members, we have a Church to follow that up with, to investigate with... And, any unavoidable deficiencies would certainly be revealed there...

Adriel7777: C

Lucan: But, if one sits off alone and attempts to figure out their deficiencies, avoidable or otherwise, Satan will see to it that they are not overcome. And, if they profess them without ever attempting to work through the solution, the spirit is plain enough.
<End.>

Zahakiel: Go ahead, Giselle.

Naraiel: What Pastor says makes sense, they will not know until they are told so, and when they know, it will become their responsibility to do what they can to improve it or remedy the situation if they can, by exercising living faith instead of presumption.
Thank you Pastor for your answers :)

Zahakiel: Go ahead, Jody.

Adriel7777: Amen, perhaps if there is an opportunity at this upcoming feast to partake of that communication game for those of us who not ever shared in it. End

Lucan: C

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Lucan: In the meantime, I think that our Facebook page is a very good mirror for any wondering how accurately our communications are being sent and received. <End.>

Zahakiel: Are there any others with thoughts to share? If not, I will ask Bro. Luke to offer a closing prayer.

Lucan: Dear heavenly Father. We thank you for cleansing us from all cultivated and inherited traits of sin. We thank you for setting us in heavenly places with your Son, setting us as joint heirs of your kingdom. We rejoice to know that the weakest of saints is greater than the mightiest angels by your indwelling Spirit. And we ask for your Spirit to continue with us, as we perfectly overcome all spirits that would oppose the perfection of your people. In Yahshua's name we pray, amen.

Pastor Chick: Amen.

Naraiel: Amen!

Barb: Amen

Zahakiel: Amen.

Daphna: Amen

Adriel7777: Amen

Ruthline: Amen

Gloria Bailey: Amen.

Elyna1: Amen

Peter: Amen