

“Crucified Through Weakness ... “

“for though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you”
(2 Corinthians 13:4).

Our opening verse makes the statement that Christ was “crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God”. This would be surprising if he were “God the Son”, as the trinitarian idolaters would claim. How can an Almighty God possibly experience “weakness”, to the extent that though He be immortal, he died through that weakness?

But leaving that aside, we need to consider what the expression actually means: how was the Lord “crucified through weakness?”

A parallel expression is used by Peter:

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, ***being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit***” (1 Pet 3:18).

We might conclude therefore, that the “weakness” was that which pertained to the flesh, in which he was “put to death”, as contrasted with the Holy Spirit power that raised him up from the dead and transformed his body to become immortal. That this is so is confirmed by other usages of the Greek word for “weakness”. Consider the following two passages:

“ ... that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our ***infirmities***, and bare our sicknesses” (Mat. 8:17, cp Isa. 53:4).

“For we have not such an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our ***infirmities***; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

It is a matter of fundamental importance that although he was the Son of God, the Lord was also the Son of Man. He physically had the same weak flesh and blood nature as we ourselves, in order that he could overcome it: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the *diabolos*” (Heb. 2:14). He could not partake of death, unless he bare the “mortal flesh” (2 Cor. 4:11) common to those whom he came to save.

Again, it is a matter of Divine testimony that he wrestled with the wiles of his own human nature, being tempted “in all points” like as we are. Hence in the great trial of his faith at Gethsemane, he cried with tears, and sweated “as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Lu. 22:44). The Apostle commented on this:

“... who, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him out of death, and was heard in that he feared ...” (Heb. 5:7).

It is interesting to see the response of the Master to his disciples who couldn't remain awake to watch with him: “ ... the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak ...” (Mat. 26:41). Indeed, the weakness of the flesh is seen also in the way in which an angel ministered to him at this hour: “there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him” (Lu. 22:43). Again, we see that the flesh was weak – Messiah needed to be strengthened, which means he was suffering under weakness.

As we stated above, it was necessary for the Lord to bear our weak and frail mortal frame in order that he could bring it to the grave:

He “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:7-8).

But although the flesh was weak, it took great strength of character for the Master to prevail against it. We could not do so, for it is written that: “when we were **yet without strength**, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. 5:6). Christ accomplished what we are “without strength” to do, as he is described as the **“son of man, whom thou whom thou madest strong for thyself”** (Psa. 80:17). Here is the apparent paradox: the Lord was God “manifest in the flesh” of mortal humankind (1 Tim. 3:16), and yet had the strength to overcome the weakness of that flesh.

LIVING BY THE POWER OF GOD

The resurrection is spoken of in terms relevant to our present considerations:

“So also is the resurrection from the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: **it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power ...”** (1 Cor. 15:42-43).

The Lord himself died due to the weakness of mortal flesh, yet was raised by the power of God – as we read earlier: “though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God” (2 Cor. 13:4). Again, the resurrection is the hope for all true believers: “God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by **his own power”** (1 Cor. 6:14). The same power that raised up Jesus, will also raise up his brethren.

It is interesting to consider this expression that he lives “by the power of God”. To those who did not believe in the resurrection, “Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, **nor the power of God”** (Mat. 22:29). Nothing is too hard for the Almighty, so to doubt the resurrection would take place limits and denies the power of God.

Again, the apostle's doctrine which we endeavour to adhere to, is folly in the sight of man – even a weakness:

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are being saved it is **the power of God**” (1 Cor. 1:18).

So it is that

“God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen **the weak things** of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are ...” (1 Cor. 1:27-28).

The power of Divine selection, is that those who are weak and despised by men are those to whom the Gospel message is primarily directed. God chooses the weak to confound the mighty – and it is His Purpose to manifest His Power by doing so.

The theme of the Power of God is used in Paul's epistle to the Romans, chapter 1, thus:

“... Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be **the Son of God with power**, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:3-4).

“... for I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is **the power of God** unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16).

“... for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even **his eternal power** and Godhead ...” (Rom. 1:20)

The power of God is seen in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and will be seen again when his brethren are made to conform to his immortal image. Hence Paul referred to he:

“who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, **according to the working** whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phil. 3:21, also Rom. 8:29).

The same power, the “working” by which all things will be subdued under the feet of Messiah, is that which will be demonstrated in the changing of our weak and mortal bodies, to become like that of our Lord.

This is the point demonstrated in 2 Corinthians 13. The full verse is as follows:

“... For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. **For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God** toward you” (2 Cor. 13:4).

But though we be weak in possessing the frailty of human mortality, we need to be strong in faith, like Abraham of old. Of him it is written that:

“... being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but **was strong in faith**, giving glory to God” (Rom. 4:19-20).

Naturally speaking, Abraham’s body was impotent, and Sarah’s womb was dead. Abraham and Sarah both knew what the weakness of the flesh was – yet they were strong in faith, and so gave glory to their God. Their belief was essentially life out of death – and thus provides an example to follow:

“Being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, **if we believe on him that raised up** Jesus our Lord from the dead ...” (Rom. 4:21-24).

This has been the faith of the saints down through the ages: they “out of weakness were made strong” (Heb. 11:34). Though we be beset with all the infirmities of the flesh, and recognise the weakness thereof, if we truly believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord, we will be made strong with the gift of an immortal nature. Then, “they that wait upon Yahweh shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa. 40:31). And what a glorious prospect that is to look forward to!

Christopher Maddocks