

INTRODUCE

Well, good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here.

If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to 1 Samuel chapter 2. 1 Samuel 2. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to 1 Samuel 2.

INTRODUCTION: MILLENNIAL

Today I want us to talk about weakness. Now, I'm a millennial...ok?

- Born in the mid-80s...
- so really bad hair,
- and really awesome music, ok?

So, if you're a millennial basher...let's go! I'll play that game. What generation are you?

- Busters,
- Boomers ,
- Gen-X,
- Gen-Z?
- I'll find something to mock...
- I'm an equal-opportunity-offender, ok?

But one of the generalizations about millennials is that we are entitled, and don't really focus on weakness much. And to a certain point, that is true, ok?

My generation is a product of the self-esteem movement. Right?

- Everyone is special.
- Everyone is unique.
- Everyone is beautiful.
- Everyone gets a trophy.
 - You're a snowflake.
 - You're a rainbow.
 - You're a skittle.

Ok...my momma told me, what many parents of millennials told their children: *"You can do ANYTHING you set your mind to!"*

And I love my mom...but momma lied!

There are things that I cannot do...

- no matter how hard I try...
- no matter how I apply myself...
- I am just NOT strong at everything.

But, don't tell little Tommy that...cause you'll hurt his wittle feewlings...

But listen, it's worse than that!

- Cause not only am I not strong at everything.
- I'm actually weak at things.

We all have these things.

- We all have struggles.
- We all have difficulties.
- We all have hardships.
- We all have failures.

And everything in our world tells us

- to suppress those.
- To ignore those.
- To focus on our strengths.
- And to hide our weaknesses.

But today, I'm calling this sermon: **SLIDE WELCOME YOUR WEAKNESS.**

As Christians, we should WELCOME OUR WEAKNESS.

CONTEXT

You see, we're in week 3 of our 1 Samuel sermon series, specifically looking at a woman named Hannah.

And Hannah had a weakness. You see, she wanted with all her heart to have a child, but she was barren. She couldn't get pregnant. She had a weakness. And this threw her into deep despair, distress, and depression.

But in this struggle, she prayed.

- She poured out her soul before the Lord,
- and the Lord gave her peace,
- and then, **in due time**, he gave her the desire of her heart,
- and she conceived, and had a son,
- and she named him Samuel.

Now, last week we saw her bring 3-year-old Samuel to the House of the Lord to be raised there as a priest.

- Because Hannah had vowed a Nazarite Vow to God,
- and God provided her with a son,
- so, she fulfills her end of the vow
- and brings Samuel to Shiloh,
- and hands him off to the priest
- to be raised there.

TRANSITION

And today, while Hannah is still in Shiloh at the house of the Lord, she prays. This is a prayer of praise, for God's gift of a son.

And as we study this prayer, I really believe that God is going to show us that we are to WELCOME OUR WEAKNESS today.

So, let's jump in.

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1 SAMUEL 2:1-3

[1] And Hannah prayed and said,

"My heart exults in the LORD;

my horn is exalted in the LORD.

My mouth derides my enemies,

because I rejoice in your salvation.

[2] "There is none holy like the LORD:

for there is none besides you;

there is no rock like our God.

[3] Talk no more so very proudly,

let not arrogance come from your mouth;

for the LORD is a God of knowledge,

and by him actions are weighed.

EXPLAIN

Now, Hannah starts with a praise and a warning. She says: "I rejoice in your salvation."

- Now, this isn't referring to salvation like getting saved, ok?
- This is, rather, like a micro-salvation.
 - God gave her a son.
 - God moved in her weakness.
 - And so, she blesses the Lord.

But she also brings a warning in verse 3:

- she warns against pride
- and arrogance
- and boasting.
- Because very often when God blesses us,
- we can be quick to take the credit.

And so, Hannah goes on in her prayer to protect herself from pride by reminding herself of who God is and how God works.

Look at verses 4-8:

1 SAMUEL 2:4-8

[4] The bows of the mighty are broken,
but the feeble bind on strength.

[5] Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,
but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger.

The barren has borne seven,
but she who has many children is forlorn.

[6] The LORD kills and brings to life;
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.

[7] The LORD makes poor and makes rich;
he brings low and he exalts.

[8] He raises up the poor from the dust;
he lifts the needy from the ash heap
to make them sit with princes
and inherit a seat of honor.

For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's,
and on them he has set the world.

POINT 1: GOD CHOOSES WEAK THINGS

How do we begin to WELCOME OUR WEAKNESS? Well, we realize there is a pattern to how God works.

And the pattern is that **SLIDE** GOD CHOOSES WEAK THINGS.

- We've gotta WELCOME OUR WEAKNESS
- because GOD CHOOSES WEAK THINGS!

You see, Hannah states that her micro-salvation...God giving her a son...is exactly in line with how God works.

- The strong are weak; and the weak are strong.
- God does not seem to work through strength,
 - but through weakness.
- God does not seem to work through wealth,
 - but through want.

This is just how God chooses to work!

- *I was ready to fall and God gave me strength.*
- *I was barren and he made me fruitful.*
- *I was poor and he made me rich.*

And it goes on in the New Testament as well:

- *I was blind and now I see.*
- *I was a hated tax collector and he made me a disciple.*
- *I was a persecutor of Christians and he made me an Apostle.*

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TRANSITION

And that's my favorite example in the New Testament: the Apostle Paul.

So, I want to supplement our text today with an example from the Apostle Paul.

EXPLAIN: SUPER PAUL

And when we think of Paul, we tend to think of him in his strengths. Not a weak guy, but a strong, faithful, man of God! He's like super-Paul!

- You try to kill him...he's the guy who says,
 - "To live is Christ, to die is gain!"
- So, instead you throw him in jail...
 - Well, he converts all the other prisoners AND the guards!

I mean, Paul's the kind of guy who, in the book of Acts, it says that his handkerchief is healing people. You remember that?

- Bro's at a cookout,
- blows his nose,
- and people grab it,
- and they go lay it on Nana,
- and Nana's like, "I'm alive!"

Another place the Bible says that Paul's shadow was healing people!

This doesn't sound like a weak man!

But when you read about what Paul says about Paul, it's very interesting.

And in 2 Corinthians 12 we find Paul giving a confession of weakness...I'll put this up on the screen:

SLIDE 2 CORINTHIANS 12:7

[7] So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

EXPLAIN: PAUL'S THORN

God sends a messenger of Satan to harass Paul.

- Who's got this in their theological perspective?
- God's doling out demons to our boy, Paul!

And did you notice what he said? **A thorn was given me.**

- Paul didn't ask for it.
- Paul didn't cause it.
- Paul was given it.

Hannah was given her barrenness. It wasn't her fault!

And this is for us today, church:

SLIDE WEAKNESS IS OFTEN GIVEN.

- Listen, you've been given some thorns that you didn't cause.
- You've been given some weaknesses, that you didn't ask for.
- **But just because you didn't ask for it,**
- **doesn't mean that God isn't going to use it.**

We've gotta WELCOME OUR WEAKNESS...because they're often GIVEN to us for a purpose!

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COMPARING THORNS

Now, what Paul's thorn was is hotly debated.

- Most people think it is some sort of physical ailment,
- but scholars have made livings
- debating what Paul's thorn could be...
- but hear me: it doesn't matter what it was.

It's actually good we don't know...

- cause if we knew what Paul's thorn was,
- we would stop relating to it,
- because we'd start comparing thorns,
 - *"Well, my thorn is way worse than his."*
 - *"Yeah, she's really got it hard...my struggles seem silly."*

But comparisons never serve us well. Why?

- **Because we compare our weaknesses**
- **to other's strengths.**
- And that's not fair!

We compare

- **what we know about ourselves,**
- **to what we think we know about others.**

And we see them...and we think we know. But you don't know!

ILLUSTRATION: COMPARING

Here, I'll show you:

So, you've got someone in your life who you just think are so spiritual, so faithful...you're like,

- *"Oh my goodness,*
- *they're so spiritual,*
- *like every time they pray they just whisper...*
- *oh, they must know God so well...*
- *you hear that prayer voice, don't you?"*

- *“Oh did you see that guy with his hand raised up in worship.*
- *He doesn’t feel embarrassed like I do.*
- *He’s so bold.*
- *I want faith like that.”*

- *“There’s that couple, oh my goodness,*
- *they’ve got no problems.*
- *They don’t ever argue.*
- *They don’t ever fight.*
- *No drama.*
- *I just know he loves her like Christ loves the church.*
- *I’ve only talked to her twice,*
 - *but she seems to me like a Proverbs 31 woman.*
- *I see Ephesians 5 all over,*
 - *I bet she’s just submitting all over that house,*
 - *all day long...*
 - *I want that.”*

But you’re comparing what you know is weak about yourself to what you perceive is a strength of theirs...but listen, YOU DON’T REALLY KNOW!

Parents look at other people’s kids and are like,

- *“Pshhh...I bet those kids are never demon possessed!*
- *Go to bed on time.*
- *Yes sir.*
- *Yes mam.*
- *They’re perfect!”*

You see people at their jobs,

- *“man, I bet they don’t ever think about quitting.”*
- *They’re killing it!”*

You see people in the fitness world,

- *“God, how did they get a 6-pack?”*
- *You gave me a tire around my waist.”*

TRANSITION

You see, it’s so helpful that we don’t know what Paul’s thorn is!

- It’s because we don’t know what it is,
- that it creates a relatability for us all.

So, God gave Paul a weakness.

But did you see why God gave it? End of verse 7: **To keep Paul from being conceited.**

- Paul said that God gave him a lesser struggle
- to prevent him from falling into a greater sin:
- the sin of pride,
- which is exactly what Hannah warns us about in her prayer.

Listen to me: **SLIDE WEAKNESS PROTECTS US.**

ILLUSTRATION: ROSE

Now, I brought a rose up here with me today. And I did that because I think there are beautiful things that God is doing in you. Some of that Millennial stuff is true.

- You are special.
- You are unique.
- God is at work transforming you.
- Developing you.
- Making you truly beautiful.
- Just like this rose.

But if you ever look at a rose, it has these big thorns on the stem.

And I wondered, *why does this beautiful thing have these big, nasty thorns on there?*

Well, I Googled it, and apparently, the thorns prevent predators from destroying the rose.

- You see, if a predator comes to destroy the rose,
- they're going to encounter the thorn,
- and the next time they come to the rose
- they're gonna go, *"Wait a minute. That hurt last time."*

Church, we WELCOME OUR WEAKNESS because God gives them to us!

- But very often, the reason God gives us thorns,
- is because they prevent the predator of pride
- from destroying the work he is doing in our life.

We WELCOME OUR WEAKNESS because WEAKNESS PROTECTS US.

Look at verse 8:

SLIDE 2 CORINTHIANS 12:8

[8] Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.

Paul is pleading with God in prayer to remove the thorn!

- The guy who could heal on demand...
- begging God to take away this weakness!
- Don't you see the parallel with Hannah?
- I imagine Paul is pouring his soul out to God.

And God doesn't ignore him. He says in verse 9:

SLIDE 2 CORINTHIANS 12:9a

[9] But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

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GOD SAYS NO

- God doesn't ignore Paul.
- He straight up denies his request.

Hannah received a YES for a son...but God says NO to Paul!

- Is that shocking?
- It shouldn't be.

How many of you know that one of the most merciful things God has done in your life is answering NO to many of your prayers.

Come on now, you know this to be true:

- cause you prayed and you prayed for that new job,
 - and God was like, "*Nah bro...*"
 - And because you didn't get that job...
 - all of a sudden, you got that other opportunity.

- And you prayed so desperately!
 - *“God, I need a promotion. God, I need a promotion.”*
 - But had you got that promotion,
 - you never would have discovered that passion,
 - that new direction.
- Some of you, you prayed,
 - *“God, let this person be the one.*
 - *The one for me to marry.*
 - *The one for me to settle down with.”*
 - But God said,
 - *“You can’t find what you’re looking for there.”*
 - And he saved you from a dumpster fire!

Just because God didn’t answer your prayer the way you want, it doesn’t mean he’s not meeting your needs.

Paul goes on:

SLIDE 2 CORINTHIANS 12:9b

Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses,

Now, if we were with Paul, we’d say,

- *“No, Paul. You don’t boast in your weaknesses.*
- *You hide your weaknesses.*
- *You focus on your strengths.*
- *You build your self-esteem.*
- *You’re a winner!”*

- You're good enough
- You're smart enough,
- and gosh-darn-it it, people like you!

But Paul's boasting in his weakness! Here's why, end of verse 9:

SLIDE 2 CORINTHIANS 12:9c

so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Church, there's a huge difference between saying

- *"I've got this!"*
- and *"I surrender!"*

Our strengths can lead us to say,

- *"I got this!*
- *I can handle it!*
- *I'll clean myself up."*

But our weaknesses assure us...that we don't got this!

Verse 10:

SLIDE 2 CORINTHIANS 12:10

[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.

We WELCOME OUR WEAKNESS because when we do

SLIDE OUR WEAKNESS BECOMES OUR STRENGTH

This isn't actually an anti-strength sermon! I'm pro-strength!

- It's just that we only find God's strength in ourselves
- when we WELCOME OUR WEAKNESS!

God's not looking for strong!

- God's looking for weak.
- God's looking for foolish.
- God's looking for honest.
- God's looking for available.
- God's looking for humble.
- God's looking for surrender!

God gravitates toward your weakness.

- He's attracted to your struggle.
- It's where he does his very best work.
- It's in your weakness that he gets the glory that he deserves.

This is why we must WELCOME OUR WEAKNESS.

- God doesn't need your strength.
 - He needs your surrender.
- It's never been about your ability...
 - it's always been about your availability.

When we surrender: OUR WEAKNESS BECOMES OUR STRENGTH.

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Now, let's get back to Hannah, and close this up.

1 Samuel 2 verse 9:

1 SAMUEL 2:9-10

[9] “He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,
but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness,
for not by might shall a man prevail.

[10] The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces;
against them he will thunder in heaven.

The LORD will judge the ends of the earth;
he will give strength to his king
and exalt the horn of his anointed.”

EXPLAIN

In Hannah’s close to her prayer, she reveals the final result of the pattern of weakness:

- God will be strong and deliver his people,
- God will be strong and shatter his opponents,
- God will be strong and judge the ends of the earth.

And Hannah expects God to accomplish this through his king...his anointed one.

- And who is this king she mentions?
- Who is God’s anointed one?

There is no king in Israel at this time.

- So, who is Hannah talking about?

Well, most commentators agree that there is a dual fulfillment to this.

- Inspired by the Holy Spirit, she is foreseeing
 - the great king of Israel, King David.

But that's not it. There is a dual fulfillment. The last word translated as *his anointed* there is in the Hebrew where we get the word *Messiah*.

- Jesus is the culmination.
- He is born in a manger,
- born as a poor man.
- He becomes a weak and powerless man.
- He is beaten.
- He is betrayed.
- He is excluded.
- He is tortured.
- And he is put to death.

He is the anointed king...who goes to a cross...not a throne.

Paul beautifully states this in

SLIDE PHILIPPIANS 2:5-8

[5] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Church, we can WELCOME OUR WEAKNESS because

SLIDE GOD BECAME VOLUNTARILY WEAK.

- GOD CHOOSES WEAK THINGS
- HE GIVES US WEAKNESS
- HE PROTECTS US WITH WEAKNESS
- And HE STRENGTHENS US WITH WEAKNESS
- Because HE BECAME WEAK

And you can be sure he loves you

- because he was crushed for you.
- He was emptied
- and humbled
- and obedient.

HE BECAME WEAK for us!

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CONCLUSION

So, I want to ask you a question:

- What do you perceive as your greatest weakness?
- What do you perceive as your greatest pain?
- What is that one thing you wish you could change?
 - For some of you it's sin from the past.
 - Maybe a divorce.
 - Or an addiction.
 - Maybe it's a fear.
 - Or maybe it's,
 - *"I'm not strong enough,*
 - *or smart enough,*
 - *or rich enough."*

Whatever it is. Just think about it. What is it?

Now, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Imagine how God might use that in your life...
- for his glory...
- and for the purposes he has for you.

You just have to WELCOME YOUR WEAKNESS!

Let's pray. **LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS**

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

RESOURCES USED:

- Crouch, Andy. Strong and Weak.
- Davis, Dale Ralph. 1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart.
- Keller, Tim. *Hannah's Prayer*.
- Ortlund, Dane. Gentle and Lowly.
- Rath, Tom. Strengthsfinder.
- Tsumura, David Toshio. The First Book of Samuel.