

# Sorry, Not Sorry

## *Celebrating Surrender*

November 12, 2023

**Today we're learning to increase spiritual strength by welcoming human weakness!** Cuz our lives are all a non-stop string of spiritual struggles and there's not one person on this planet who's *not* fought and *lost* loads of wars due to a lack of *strength*. So if we want more muscle before our next battle, the question is: **What's your strategy for spiritual strength?** More *Bible*? More *prayer*? More... *something*?



*Well you're wrong!* ... *kind of*. Cuz we gotta remember we're seeing things upside down and *backward* [1Cor 1:27,13:12; 1Co 1:27 2Co 5:7, 3:14] and down here, less is more. And **spiritual strength isn't about what we do, as much as what God does**. Like John the Baptist says:



He must increase, but I [must] decrease. - John 3:30 NKJ



Y'see, God grows His kingdom and its strength by conquering human hearts and that means the best thing we can do is just make way for the King. And **once our heart is under His rule it's also under His protection!** And from that moment on, we have personal access to an *unshakable, undefeated, and inexhaustible* God whose *sole* purpose for winning *us* over was to take on *all* the battles *we're* too *weak* to win. Like our battle with *sin*. And with *death*. And yet, all the unlimited power of *God's* provision for *our* life hinges on *one* decision that He *leaves* in *our* hands: **Who gets control of our heart?** That's *our* call. Cuz **God won't win a war we don't want fought**. But, if we *do* choose Him as our Champion – all He asks is that He gets complete control so He can flex His full power without us getting in the way.



But, for us to step *aside* so He can step *up*, first we have to truly *understand* and *believe* that **Spiritual strength isn't a result of our effort, it's a result of our surrender**. Because the biggest obstacle to giving *God* control, has always been letting go of our *own* – which is precisely what He tries to tell His "*obstinate children*" in the OT:

In *repentance* and *rest* is your salvation, in *quietness* and *trust* is your strength, but you would have none of it. [Because like others in the OT, it's hard to truly trust that:] - Isaiah 30:15 NIV

The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still. – Exodus 14:14 NIV

Because as good as that sounds, it couldn't be more *counterintuitive!* It's like trust falling, bungee jumping, or *spending* money to *make* money; even if we understand the *principle*, **it takes practice to overcome our instincts**. And in this upside down and backward world, **we're born believing we have the power to protect and perfect ourselves**. But, spoiler alert, we *don't*. And that instinct to think we do is called pride; and letting it *go* is the hardest thing we *can* do.

Because here's the real *problem* with pride – **it's as subtle as it is stubborn!** So it takes incredible effort just to *identify* it – let alone *let it go!* But every little *piece* of pride, however harmless it may seem, is a *part* of the power that needs to be booted before there's *room* for our new King to do His thing! But pride can't hide when we know what to look for – and **a common sign of subtle pride is the unnecessary apology.**



To illustrate: my youngest daughter has a very *expressive* energy, and like *me*, she's a total *ham!* So from the minute she was born, she's been making a face, telling a joke, or doing a dance. And one day, when she was four or five, we were visiting my sister and my daughter had the whole room in stitches – performing what can only be described as some sort of full body interpretive dance. When suddenly, she stopped, cuz *something* was going wrong. So I ran to her and instinctively put my hands out to catch a surprising amount of vomit. Apparently, all that flailing had shaken loose around a half-gallon of juice. But before I could laugh at the situation, she looked up at me with an expression of equal parts *shock* and shame, and said, **"I'm sorry, daddy."** And my heart broke. Because she didn't do anything *wrong!* So why was she *sorry?!*

And I realized; she *was* just *being* a kid, but *somewhere* inside, some scrap of **hidden pride told her she should've been more in control.** So when she lost that *belief* in an *uncontrolled barf*, she felt sorry for falling short. And as a loving *parent* all I wanted was to take away that shame by making her understand: **Kids shouldn't be sorry for what they can't control!** And furthermore, **kids can't control much!**

In fact, their *whole* job is just turning all control *over* to their *parents.* **It's called obedience – and it's important to parents because it allows them to protect and perfect their kids** with the *superior* strength a *parent* possesses. And God wants all *His* kids to learn the same lesson! Like Jesus said:

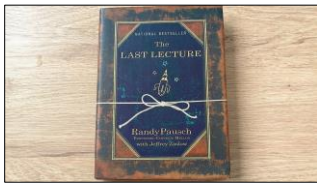
Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in My name welcomes Me.  
- Matthew 18:3-5 NIV

My daughter felt sorry for naturally being the very thing we're all working to become. Cuz she, like all of us, have a hard time believing **we have permission to be imperfect!** Just ask Nancy! Cuz she has a lot of my daughter's *same* energy! In fact, our first real conversation came in line at Grocery Outlet – where we were a person apart in line when *she* had everyone in stitches, introducing everyone to *me* and demanding that everyone in our line and the neighboring one – along with the checkers, needed to come to her church... And she didn't let up until they all said they'd at least *try* to stop by! Now that's being God's kid! But last week during first service, Bruce was up here preaching when suddenly, it looked like something was going wrong with *Nancy.* And out of nowhere, she started having *seizures.* And after a bunch of her His Place family rushed to offer *their* helping hands, she came to, had my daughter's *same* look of shock and shame before she said, **"I'm so sorry."** And it broke my heart again. Because *she* had *nothing* to be *sorry* for!

And Jesus said “whoever welcomes one such child in My name welcomes Me.” Which makes it’s *our* job in *this* building to make sure every one of God’s kids *knows*, **nobody here is in control!** Cuz **everyone here is in need!** And when *that* reality throws a wrench in *our* gears – it’s our job to remind each other that **God’s kids are still just kids!** And our Father is the only one in control!

So, for the rest of the morning, I wanna make one thing clear – **every single person here at His Place better be here because we’re weak!** If you think you got the physical, emotional, intellectual or spiritual strength to win a war with sin and death – maybe Scientology is more your speed. This is the place for kids who heard the reassuring words of a Father who seems to know more about us than we do – and apparently, **weakness is one of our defining traits!** Cuz,

There is *no one* righteous, not even *one*; there is *no one* who *understands*; there is *no one* who seeks God... for *all* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God [and since God already knows that – it’s must be something important for us to learn now!] - Romans 3:10-11, 23 NIV



Professor Randy Pausch wrote a book called, “The Last Lecture” where he shared all the most important life lessons he ever learned. And in it, he tells the story of picking up he niece and nephew to take a drive in his brand new convertible. And when the kids run out, mom and dad start warning them up and down about making a mess in uncle Randy’s brand knew car – so Randy cracks open a soda and while the kids are getting warned, he slowly starts pouring it out onto the cloth backseat – just to make sure the *kids* knew that *he* knew: **kids are naturally messy!** And he *invited* them fully expecting a mess to be made. So, later in the weekend, when his nephew got the flu and threw up all over the back seat, Randy was glad to see there was no need for an apology, cuz uncle Randy helped them see **their mess was a part of who they were** – and he cared way more about the relationship than the mess.

Well **God knows what to expect from His kids, it’s us who need to see it now.** So when God tells us to act like His kids, He’s not just giving us permission to be imperfect, **He’s demanding we embrace our imperfection.** Because we gotta admit we’re weak to see the need for His strength. **He can’t be our Dad if we won’t be His kids!**

So **we gotta surrender. We gotta decrease. We gotta let go of thinking us kids have any control.** And until we do, God’s gonna keep trying to teach us that we’re *weak* and in *need* of His strength:

The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased [to bring us low], grace increased all the more, [and filled us up with His strength] – Romans 5:20 NIV

[Cuz] Pride brings a person low, but [then] the lowly in spirit gain honor. – Proverbs 29:23 NIV

For it is by grace you have been saved, through *faith*—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. [with any pride] – Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV

Because if we want to be *protected* and *perfected* by *perfect power*, **every ounce of our pride has to be emptied out by embracing imperfection.** Cuz as the *Lord* reminds *Paul*:

"My power is made perfect in weakness." [And we need to learn to see things like *Paul*, when *he responds by saying*] Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. - 2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV



Look, nobody said it was going to be *easy*. We live in an upside down and backward world designed to remind how hard things are when we think we're in control. But *apologizing* for our weakness means we still think something is wrong with us, when in reality, **weakness just means we're children!** And God wants us to see *His* strength as *our* strength; the way an obedient *child* lives worry-free with an omnipotent *Father!*



The Spirit you received does not make you *slaves*, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by Him we cry, "Abba, Father." - Romans 8:15 NIV



God didn't pour out a soda to teach us who we are, He poured out His Spirit. And through *Him*, we're given the familiar feeling of family to help us *overcome* our instinct to think *decreases* mean *defeat*. Because when your *dad* is *invincible*, **surrendering control is not admitting defeat; it's declaring victory!** I mean, we brag about our *earthly* dads being able to *beat* up other dads because as *children*, we know *dad's* strength is the biggest weapon *we* have on *our* side. And we wouldn't ever *apologize* for being *weak*, because our weakness is the whole reason *dad* *wants* to take on every *enemy* that picks on us kids!



Furthermore, there **is no fear or shame in a parent's love of their child**. So if we're feeling *scared* by life or *sorry* for *who we are*, it just means **we're not accepting our identity as God's kid**. Cuz when God's your Dad, you don't hesitate to call on Him to win your wars! You're excited to surrender that control because it means saying goodbye to being sorry! It means saying our mess is not in our hands and **when we lose our control we lose our liability!** We're free!

But don't mishear me, **I'm not saying we can't be sorry for the messy mistakes we choose to make;** it's just those *unintentional* messes that come from being a kid that need *no* apology. But regardless of how things got messy, the answer is *always* the same; *surrender*. Make way for *King Dad*, cuz:

To all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God [Cuz He calls *us* His kids when we call *Him* our Dad! ] - John 1:11-12 NIV

Listen, **God knows exactly who we are** and what He signed up for by inviting us into His family. **It's us who need to see we're kids of the King**. And that starts with our surrender! Surrendering our subtle belief that we're in control by forfeiting every fight without ever apologizing for our weakness. Because kids of the King are still kids, but every losing battle is an opportunity for us to step aside so our Dad can step up – and the more He does, the more we learn exactly *why*:

For when I am weak, then I am strong. - 2 Corinthians 12:10 NIV