

Biblical Reflection 14: “When I Am Weak, Then I Am Strong”

May 10, 2021

In Myanmar, so many brave people have been risking their lives and giving generously to help and care for one another. I am amazed and inspired by the courage and sacrificial service of these “Action-Takers.” I’m also impressed by the “Positive Thinkers.” No matter how much they may be oppressed, they refuse to be imprisoned in their hearts and minds. Even if their bodies cannot move about freely or safely, positive thinkers hold onto hope, wherever it may be found, and see opportunities everywhere to show Christ’s love to those near and far.

I wish we could all be positive thinkers and action-takers, all the time, but we can’t. After months of suffering so intensely, some people in Myanmar might feel like Job right now. His children were suddenly killed, business wiped out, and health destroyed. All he could do was sit on the ground, in his misery, weeping or calling out to God, trying to make sense out of a tragedy beyond comprehension. In those moments, he was an “Overwhelmed Observer” of all that was happening around him and to him.

If this describes how you’re feeling today, please know that, sometimes, we just can’t rise above our distress, fear, or despair. Sometimes, we cannot be hopeful, no matter how much we may want to be a positive thinker. Sometimes, we are so scared that we simply cannot take any action, even though we would very much like to do so.

The Apostle Paul was one of the strongest, most productive servants of Christ who ever lived. Yet, he also had many weaknesses and limitations. For example, three times he asked God to remove his mysterious “thorn in the flesh,” but God refused. Paul could have been filled with guilt and shame, but instead, he tells us, “The LORD said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.’ So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:9-10, NRSV).

Like many of us, the Apostle Paul wanted to overcome all his weaknesses, to conquer every hardship, and to overpower his opponents. But he couldn’t do it, and neither can we. What a beautiful thing it is to know that the more we accept our weaknesses, the more the Holy Spirit can assure us of the magnitude of God’s love and grace. When we let go of our desperate need to be strong in ourselves, and instead put our trust in Jesus Christ in the midst of our powerlessness and feelings of inadequacy, we discover that God’s grace is indeed sufficient.

Whether you are feeling strong today or feel like an overwhelmed observer, lean on Christ’s power to accept your limitations, to receive God’s forgiveness for your failings, and to

face all that you must face in these troubled times. God's grace is more secure, yields greater inner peace, and produces more joy than anything you could ever acquire by your own effort, no matter how strong or capable you may be. What comes through God's love and Christ's power, no one can ever take from you. Then you will know what Paul meant, when he said, "When I am weak, then I am strong."



You are in my heart, thoughts, and prayers every day.

With Christ's love,

Dr. Tim

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Photo: The strong, rugged cliffs of northern Door County, Wisconsin (USA)