

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 9) – July 7, 2024

“But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

–2 Corinthians 12:9–

Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong; they are weak, but he is strong. When I was a youngster and we sang this in Sunday School, I remember singing that last line, “They are weak, but he is strong.” I pictured Jesus as some sort of muscle-bound superhero—so strong, he could kick Satan all the way back into the Garden of Eden! As I’ve grown and matured in years, I’ve heard that line in a new light. Sure, Jesus is strong enough to wipe out anyone; he is God! But his strength is more than just physical strength like we picture in our minds as children.

Saint Paul has been dealing with a “thorn in his flesh” (see 2 Cor. 12:7). Paul has some sort of ailment; he doesn’t go into detail, but it certainly causes him pain and suffering. He has begged God to relieve him of his anguish, but God hasn’t done so. It’s in his suffering that Paul realizes how much he depends on God. And isn’t that true for us?

We go through life with its ups and downs. Some trials are just little bumps in the road we have to navigate. Others seem like mountains that we’re trying our best to climb and survive. It’s in those moments we are reminded of our limitations. Like Paul, we feel insufficient. But it’s also in those moments we are reminded of God’s strength and grace.

We are weak, but he is strong. Jesus told Paul that his grace is sufficient for Paul. God’s grace is enough for us. When Jesus hung on the cross, he said, “It is finished” (John 19:30). Jesus completed what he needed to do for us. His grace is sufficient for you, for Paul, for me.

And as Paul says, that gives us reason to celebrate and boast of our weaknesses. Why? “So that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” Most of the time, we don’t like to boast of our weaknesses and shortcomings. But for the life of a Christian, it’s in our weaknesses that we experience God’s grace and strength. We depend upon him for all we need: food, clothing, shelter, good health. Jesus promises that God will always take care of us. If God takes care of the birds and clothes the lilies, he will certainly take care of us (See Matt. 6:25–34).

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