

“When I am weak”

2Cor 12:1

While my training is not in biology I have learned a lot about biology, in particular, about Darwinian evolution. Key to the theory of evolution is the concept of natural selection. Essentially, the world is set up to select the strongest and the fittest members of a population. And these were allowed to procreate increasing the chances that whatever traits made them stronger and fitter, would be passed on to their descendants and ultimately to the entire population. Only the strong survive. Survival of the fittest. This concept has become foundational in business, and anything where there is competition. Only those businesses who had customers who bought their products, who could out-produce their competitors, would survive. In sports, football, baseball, boxing... it is strong who survive. It is the strong who win.

But what if I were to tell you that, those statements are not true all the time? What if I told you that in certain cases... only the weak survive? Now how can that be? The truth of the matter is that spiritually speaking, we are all weak. We are weak, because none of us are perfect. We are all sinful... sinful and unclean. But that is the beauty of the Christian message, the gospel. This is the beauty of the cross. By our nature we are not part of the “strong”. We are not part of the spiritually “fittest” people worthy of being with God. We are not. But because of Jesus, God accepts us, anyway, just as we are. God never said, Get your act together then come and follow me. In fact, Jesus said the exact opposite. He said,

*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened*

**ALL THOSE WHO ARE ADDICTED TO DRUGS AND ALCOHOL,  
ALL THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN REJECTED BY THEIR FAMILY,  
FRIENDS, AND SOCIETY come to me...**

*come to me and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28-30).*

God accepts us as we are. God accepts us flaws and all, knowing we are not perfect. God accepts us... just as we are.... crazy but true.

But there is another important point I want to make. God accepts us, just as we are... flaws and weakness... but God is not just a trash collector. He does not just collect defective goods, and allow them to just clutter the house. He uses them. He uses them despite their imperfections. He works through them. And because he works through them... they have value, eternal value. This is the paradox of the almighty God. Throughout all of scripture, God uses people who are not “the

perfect people.” They are, in fact, the imperfect ones. Jacob was a liar; Moses was a poor speaker; and was a murderer in his youth; David had an affair and was murderer and abused power. Jonah tried to run away from God’s will; Jeremiah was depressed and suicidal; Peter deserted Jesus. Paul persecuted Christians to death; Thomas doubted. Yet God used them all... despite their weaknesses. Rather than exerting his mighty power to accomplish His will, independent of any human... rather than exerting his mighty power to change people into perfect tools, God used the imperfect, the weak... to accomplish his work... to accomplish his miracles. Why did he do it that way?... Because He can... I suppose. But the point is “He does.” “He uses imperfect people.”

I have a story about how God uses imperfect people called the “cracked pot.” I know it is an old story, but I like it and I think it illustrates the point well. It is well worth repeating. Once upon a time there was a servant who would carry water to His master’s home, from the creek. He used two large pots for his tasks. He suspended each one of them on either end of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a big crack in it while the other pot was perfect. The perfect pot always delivered a full portion of water from the stream to the master’s house. However, the cracked pot, because it leaked, would arrive at the Master’s house only half-full. For two years the servant made the same journey, back and forth to the house. The perfect pot became proud of its accomplishments. The cracked pot, however, was ashamed of its imperfections and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do. Finally, one day by the stream, the cracked pot spoke to his owner about his bitter failure. “I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize that I have only been able to deliver half of my water to your house. There is a crack in my side which causes water to leak out. Because of my flaws, you don’t get full value from your efforts.” Then the water carrier replied, smiling, “Have you noticed the beautiful flowers along the path to the master’s house? “Did you notice there are flowers only on your side of the path, and not on the other pot’s side?” “I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we passed these spots, you watered them. Now for two years I have been able to pick those beautiful flowers to decorate my master’s table. Without you being just the way you are, I would not have this beauty to grace his house.” That is the way God works. God’s ways are higher than our own. God is able to use imperfect people to do great things in life.

In answer to the question “Why does God use imperfect people?” “Because he can.” But it is important for us “cracked pots” to realize that we are in fact “cracked pots.” Why is that? The way God empowers us, the way God brings

success in His Kingdom is not the way the world thinks of success. The world thinks you must focus on your strengths, to be successful. Your strengths will bring you to the top. “Only the strong survive.” “Survival of the fittest.” Well, in God’s Kingdom, it is the exact opposite... Only the weak survive... Only the weak survive.

What do I mean by this? In 2Cor 12:7 Paul explains, the power of being weak. God has granted the apostle Paul great visions and great success in his ministry. And yet, Paul says “To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Paul was an imperfect human being... an imperfect apostle. NO one knows for sure what this thorn was whether a physical ailment such as an eye problem, speech defect, or epilepsy, or maybe just the curse of people constantly opposing him. No one knows. But suffice it to say Paul had his problems... Paul was an imperfect person. Yet God used him in a mighty way. God used Paul in a mighty way, even though he was imperfect. But for God to use him, it was important that Paul be aware of his weakness.

Why did Paul need to be aware of his weakness? Why was Paul’s awareness of his own weakness a prerequisite for him to be used by God? Paul said it himself... The reason God allowed Paul keep his thorn, was so that he would not become conceited about all the great revelations God was showing him. Without his “thorn in his side” Paul might have thought that when God made a Christian out of a sinner, he became special, He became perfect, capable of doing great things, things a normal human couldn’t do. And if he started thinking that, he might have stopped depending on God. He might have started depending only on his own power to bring success. Rather God wanted Paul to learn a very valuable lesson. God wanted Paul to know, he was to depend on God for his strength! That it would be despite Paul’s weaknesses, that God would show His power. God did not relieve Paul’s suffering but gave him the grace to carry on in life.

In the eyes of the world, only strong people can lead. Only those people who are perfect, those who have it all together are the ones who can lead. But when it comes to God that is not the case. God did not say, Paul in your strengths I will make you stronger. God says, it is in the very thing that you are not good at, in the mistakes that you make, in your problems with sin I can give you the power and the grace to be strong. Only the strong survive? No! When it comes to the things of God only the weak survive. Why is it important that the cracked pots know that

they are only weak cracked pots? “Only the weak survive” because only “the weak” are aware of their need for God. “Only cracked pots survive” because only “the cracked” are aware of their need for a savior. “Only the weak survive” because only “the weak” depend on Jesus to succeed in life. This is the same lesson God has for us. We are to depend on God for our strength!

Now having said that, I will also admit that is not easy to do. Believe me, it is easier said than done. For example... Whenever troubles come into our lives... Whenever bad things happen... what are the first words out of our mouths???? “What do I do now?” “What do ‘I’ do now?” When I say these things... who am I focusing on? Myself. God, on the other hand, calls us to pray different words... words which seek out “what will God do?” “What will God do? Regardless of the circumstances that you find yourself in, regardless of the trials you are facing God will provide the strength to carry on.

I want share a poem which illustrates how God provides the strength to carry on called “God Said No”

I asked God to grant me patience. God said, No. Patience is a byproduct of tribulations; it isn't granted, it is learned. I asked God to give me happiness. God said, No. I give you blessings; Happiness is up to you. I asked God to spare me pain. God said, No. Suffering draws you apart from worldly cares and brings you closer to me. I asked God for all things that I might enjoy life. God said, No. I will give you life, so that you may enjoy all things. Amen...

St. Paul says “For when I am weak, then I am strong.” Instead of removing his thorn, God gave Paul the grace to live with it. This same message is for us, today... Instead of removing the thorns of our life, God will give us grace to live with our thorns. May God grant you grace and strength to live with your thorns and to use you mightily in your weaknesses. Amen...