

2024 B 14th Sunday of Ordinary Time July 07

Today's readings show how difficult the task of the God's messengers in delivering God's message to the people. Ezekiel, Paul and Jesus all face the stubborn people and were rejected and alienated. Yet, they continued to keep calm and carry-on God's work. To be Jesus' follower is not always an easy path to walk. Rejection is part of the commitment and not always easy to handle. It strikes painfully at our self-esteem. We can only do our best and, like Paul, let Christ do the rest.

We all have our own weaknesses. Some of our weaknesses are physical. Some are mental, some are moral. Some of these weaknesses have to do with our work, some with our family life. Some of us have, like, have short tempers, others of us lack diplomacy. Some of us are proud.

The Buddhist leader Dalai Lama once confessed of his own weakness saying that he sneaks chocolate chip cookies when he's supposed to fast.

Winston Churchill courageously led his country, the United Kingdom, to fight against the tyranny of Adolph Hitler and won the battle. As renowned and successful as he was, however, Churchill had his own struggles.

He suffered a speech impediment—a lisp caused by a dental condition. But this did not stop him from becoming a celebrated public speaker. The 2nd obstacle Churchill had to overcome was his mental health challenge. He called it the “black dog.” He suffered severe bouts of clinical depression all his life. This condition became especially severe during the time of military setbacks. Nevertheless, Churchill wouldn't allow this condition to stop him from carrying out his duties as Prime Minister. He believed the needs of his country came before his personal needs. Despite his speech impediment and depression, Churchill went on to become one of history's greatest inspirational speakers. Paul had his own weaknesses. He called it his “thorn in the flesh.” Some suggested that he suffered from epileptic seizures and others, speech impediment or foul smell from his mouth.

Paul prayed that God would deliver him from his affliction three times. But God's answer to him was, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” I think that's interesting. If you have a significant weakness, you will pray for it, for weeks, months or even years. But that is the difference between Paul and us. Paul prayed about his “thorn in the flesh,” three times, then let it go and trusted it to God. when he heard God saying, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in your weakness.” That was enough for Paul. God was saying to Paul, “Trust me, Paul. I will take care of you. But I can use your weakness in a wonderful way.”

Author Irving Stone spent a lifetime greatness writing about biographies of such men as Michelangelo, Vincent van Gogh, Sigmund Freud and Charles Darwin. He said once, “I write about people who sometimes in their life ... have a vision or dream of something that should be accomplished ... and they go to work.

They are beaten over the head, knocked down, vilified and for years they get nowhere. But every time they are knocked down, they stand up. You cannot destroy these people. But at the end of their lives, they have accomplished some modest part of what they set out to do.

Paul had that kind of attitude, that kind of determination. Besides his “thorn in the flesh,” who can forget the other obstacles he faced in his ministry. He writes, “Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, and dangers from false believers, I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food and sleep, I have been cold and naked” (2nd Corinthians 11 Ch).

Paul’s experience convinces me, most of all, that our weaknesses may become strengths if they remind us of our dependence on God. It would have been easy for Paul to boast of his influence on the early Christian community, but he knew that the glory did not belong to him.

You wonder why God doesn’t remove temptations from your life? If he did you might lean on your strength instead of his grace. A few stumbles might be what you need to convince you: His grace is sufficient for your sin.

You wonder why God doesn’t remove the enemies in your life? Perhaps because he wants you to love like he loves. Anyone can love a friend, but only a few can love an enemy. So, what if you aren’t everyone’s hero? His grace is sufficient for your self-image. You wonder why God doesn’t alter your personality? You, like Paul, are a bit rough around the edges? Say things you later regret or do things you later question? Why doesn’t make you like him? He is. He’s just not finished yet. Until he is, his grace is sufficient to overcome your flaws.

Paul’s influence over the Christian community has been second to Christ himself. No wonder. Look at how strong Paul’s faith was in God. He prayed three times about his “thorn in the flesh,” and let it go.

You wonder why God doesn’t heal you? He has healed you. If you are in Christ, you have a perfect soul and a perfect body. His plan is to give you the soul now and the body when you get home with God. He may choose to heal parts of your body before heaven.

We can learn from Paul’s experience. Paul not only learned to accept his weakness, he, even began to boast about this weakness to show the power of Christ. Paul, by God’s grace, turned his weakness into a strength.

Paul was a man of tremendous intellect. He was also a man of unquestionable persuasive powers. Perhaps it had not been for his thorn in the flesh, he would have leaned upon his own ability rather than the power of God working through him. And you and I would never have heard the name of Paul of Tarsus.

That’s the way life works. Paul’s weakness became his strength. His scar became his star. His hurt became a halo. And the same thing can happen to you—if you don’t give into your weakness, and if your weakness causes us to rely upon God.

God has every right to say no to us. We have every reason to say thanks to him. The parachute (grace) is strong, and the landing will be safe. His grace is sufficient.