

God's power through our weakness

The cracked jar

Source: <http://paulocoelhoblog.com/2012/02/19/cracked-jar-2>

An Indian legend tells of a man who carried water to his village every day, in two large jars tied to the ends of a wooden pole, which he balanced on his back.

One of the jars was older than the other, and had some small cracks; every time the man covered the distance to his house, half of the water was lost.

The younger jar was always very proud of its performance, safe in the knowledge that it was up to the mission it had been made for, while the other jar was mortified with shame at only fulfilling half of its allotted task.

It was so ashamed that one day, while the man got ready to fetch water from the well, it decided to speak to him:

– I want to apologize, but because of the many years of service, you are only able to deliver half of my load, and quench half of the thirst which awaits you at your home.

The man smiled, and said:

– When we return, observe carefully the path.

And so it did. And the jar noticed that, on its side, many flowers and plants grew.

– See how nature is more lovely on your side? – commented the man. – I always knew you were cracked, and decided to make use of this fact.

‘I planted flowers and vegetables, and you have always watered them.

‘I have picked many roses to decorate my house with, I have fed my children with lettuce, cabbage and onions.

‘If you were not as you are, how could I have done that?’

“All of us, at some point, grow old and start to acquire other qualities. We can always make the most of each one of these new qualities and obtain a good result.”

The Thorn in the Flesh

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 reads:

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to [a]buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, **“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”** Therefore most gladly I will **rather boast in my infirmities**, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore **I take pleasure in infirmities**, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. **For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

Paul was praying 3 times that God takes away his weakness, but God replied "for My strength is made perfect in weakness". Weakness is an opportunity for God to reveal Himself powerfully in our lives. That is why Paul takes pleasure in his weaknesses. We should not complain about our weaknesses, but trust God, because weaknesses allow God to intervene mightily.

Paul is even boasting with his weaknesses. We need to speak openly about our weaknesses, to stop pretending to be superhumans and to put an end to finding excuses. When we admit we are having difficulties, only then God can help us. Admitting is risky, but it's worth the pain. That way, we downsize the pressure on ourselves. That is the first step to freedom. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Desire of Ages (p. 493.3) reads: *The apostle Paul says, "When I am weak, then am I strong." 2 Corinthians 12:10. When we have a realization of our weakness, we learn to depend upon a power not inherent. Nothing can take so strong a hold on the heart as the abiding sense of our responsibility to God. Nothing reaches so fully down to the deepest motives of conduct as a sense of the pardoning love of Christ. We are to come in touch with God, then we shall be imbued with His Holy Spirit, that enables us to come in touch with our fellow men. Then rejoice that through Christ you have become connected with God, members of the heavenly family. While you look higher than yourself, you will have a continual sense of the weakness of humanity. The less you cherish self, the more distinct and full will be your comprehension of the excellence of your Saviour. The more closely you connect yourself with the source of light and power, the greater light will be shed upon you, and the greater power will be yours to work for God. Rejoice that you are one with God, one with Christ, and with the whole family of heaven.*

Sabbath school from August 23rd 2017 says: *Whatever Paul's illness was, it certainly was serious, and it easily could have provided him with an excuse either to blame God for his problems or simply to give up on preaching the gospel. Paul did neither. Instead of letting his situation get the best of him, Paul used it as an opportunity to rely more fully on God's grace. "Time and again God has used the adversities of life—sickness, persecution, poverty, even natural disasters and inexplicable tragedies—as occasions to display his mercy and grace and as a means to advance the gospel."—Timothy George, Galatians, pp. 323, 324.*

In Galatians 4:13 (You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first), Paul says that he was preaching in Galatia in the first place because of a disease he earned while traveling.

Treasure in earthen vessels

2nd Corinthians 4.6,7 reads: "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves". What is the treasure, and what gives us value? God's light shining in us and through us. When commenting on these verses, Ellen White writes in Desire of Ages (p. 297.2): *"This is why the preaching of the gospel was committed to erring men rather than to the angels. It is manifest that the power which works through the weakness of humanity is the power of God; and thus we are encouraged to believe that the power which can help others as weak as ourselves can help us. And those who are themselves "compassed with infirmity" should be able to "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." Hebrews 5:2. Having been in peril themselves, they are acquainted with the dangers and difficulties of the way, and for this reason are called to reach out for others in like peril. There are souls perplexed with doubt, burdened with infirmities, weak in*

faith, and unable to grasp the Unseen; but a friend whom they can see, coming to them in Christ's stead, can be a connecting link to fasten their trembling faith upon Christ."

Bible is full of examples when God uses imperfect humans to do His mission. In fact, if He would use perfect humans, nothing would be done, because such do not exist. 1 Corinthians 1:27 reads: But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty.

Paul was very highly educated, but he did not use his wisdom in preaching. He considered himself weak, and preached only Jesus Christ in "demonstration of the Spirit and power". 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 reads: And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. 3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Similarly, people admired Peter and John. Acts 4:13 says Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

Flawed humanity

Jesus loved to mingle with people with obvious failings, but which were humble, ready to admit their faults, and aware of their desperate need for help.

Matthew 5:3 reads: Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Poor in spirit are those who understand their weakness and dependency on Jesus.

When Jesus went for lunch to Matthew's place (Matthew 9.9-13), Pharisees were complaining why Jesus visits despised tax collectors. Jesus said Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick... For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.

That is why Paul do not hesitate to call himself a sinner. 1st Timothy 1.15 reads This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

The only way to accept the grace of God is to admit our weaknesses. When God calls Moses, Moses is thinking, I killed an Egyptian and my Pursuite record is not clean. When Moses looks into his life, he sees failures, missed opportunities, and time wasted. He sees a broken jar. Moses hesitates saying that he has no speech or leadership skills, but God uses Moses as he is. Christine Caine said "God doesn't call the qualified. He qualifies the called." And God asks Moses: what do you have in your hand? God uses us as we are, and molds us, blessing small things and talents that we have. When Moses tries in his power, he fails. But when Moses allows God to take the control, his people is liberated from bondage of slavery.

My experience

Victory in Jesus

2 Corinthians 13:4 reads For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you.

Ellet Waggoner in Glad Tidings

(<http://www.centrowhite.org.br/files/ebooks/apl/all/EJWaggoner/The%20Glad%20Tidings.pdf>) writes the following: What now does Jesus do for us?--He takes the weakness, and gives us in return His strength. "We have not an High Priest which can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Heb.4:15. "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Matt.8:17. He becomes all that we are, in order that we may become all that He is. He was "born under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." He hath delivered us from the curse, being made a curse for us, that the blessing might come to us. Although He knew no sin, He was made to be sin for us, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." 2Cor.5:21.

Hebrews 11.34 describes men of faith as those who quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

How is this possible?

1. **Prayer.** Testimonies for the Church 2:202, 203 (1869). {CH 86.2} reads: "Jesus sought earnestly for strength from His Father. This the divine Son of God considered of more value even for Himself, than to sit at the most luxurious table. He has given us evidence that **prayer** is essential in order to receive strength to contend with the powers of darkness, and to do the work allotted us. Our own strength is weakness, but that which God gives is mighty, and will make everyone who obtains it more than conqueror."
2. **Repentance.** Testimonies for the Church 3:239 reads: "God is very pitiful, for he understands our weakness and our temptations; and when we come to him with broken hearts and contrite spirits, he accepts our repentance, and promises that, as we take hold of his strength to make peace with him, we shall make peace with him. O what gratitude, what joy, should we feel that God is merciful!"
3. **Service to others.** Testimonies for the Church 8:34. {ChS 101.8} reads: "The Lord sees and understands, and He will use you, despite your weakness, if you offer your talent as a consecrated gift to His service; for in active, disinterested service the weak become strong and enjoy His precious commendation. The joy of the Lord is an element of strength. If you are faithful, the peace that passeth all understanding will be your reward in this life, and in the future life you will enter into the joy of your Lord."

I would like to conclude with Phillipians 4:13: I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.