

2 Corinthians 12:7-9 (NIV)

7 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. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 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 about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

Yesterday, we looked at how a success-driven society such as ours can sometimes make us doubt the effectiveness of God’s Word. If you can’t calculate the success numerically, how do you know it’s there? Today, the apostle Paul gives us another insight that again conflicts with our society.

Nature, science, business and many other areas will tell us that it is good to be strong, and bad to be weak. The strong will survive, the weak will die. And in many cases, that does prove to be true. The strongest animals will survive what nature throws at them better than the weak, sickly animals. The stronger cells will survive in the body, while the weaker ones will die. You could even apply that motto, survival of the fittest to just about anything that mankind does in this life. Only the strongest will survive.

However, it’s that kind of thinking that goes completely against what God’s plan is for mankind. Mankind cannot save himself. No matter how strong he thinks he is, no matter how smart, no matter how fit, mankind cannot save himself. But it’s hard for man to realize this. When everything else in life points to strength and doing for yourself, it’s hard to embrace weakness. But that’s exactly what Paul is advocating in these words from 2 Corinthians.

Paul was a man who had much earthly reason to boast for his successes in the ministry. He was the greatest missionary of the time. He had suffered more for the sake of Jesus than anyone else. Things had been revealed to him that no one else knew. Yet, Paul did not boast in these things. God had kept Paul humble.

Paul had a thorn in the flesh. He had a physical ailment that hampered his life. This was God’s reminder to Paul that he was weak. He was nothing. But it is when we are weak that we can truly see our need for help, our need for a Savior. That’s why Paul boasted in his weakness. When Paul realized how desperately he needed help, he found it in the grace of God. God’s grace was enough for Paul. Paul needed nothing else but the grace that God gives to all believers. Jesus has done everything for us. He has given us his righteousness; he has given his life for us. He’s sent the Holy Spirit to give us the faith to believe in him. When we are weak, when we see how lost we are, then God’s saving grace becomes all that more powerful. Amazing Grace is more than a catchy song, it’s the reality of our weakness and God’s strength.

Dear Christian, don’t get caught up in the survival of the fittest mentality and start looking to your own strength. Boast only in your weaknesses, for when we do that we are really boasting in the strength of God’s Grace.