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## Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

February 21, 2016

Living Positively with Our Handicaps

*“So I’ll gladly spend my time bragging about my weaknesses  
so that Christ’s power can rest on me.”*

2 Corinthians 12:9b (Common English Bible)

Bragging about our weaknesses is uncommon. What is customary – even encouraged – is that we “hide” our weaknesses and present the illusion of a life that is lived in a tranquil manner that is deep and even and unhindered by frailties. One unfortunate result is the deep disillusionment that is experienced when we find our heroes far too human, with frailties and weaknesses like our own. We look for people who seem to have no limitations, no handicaps, no imperfections and we aspire to be like them. In no small manner, people with weaknesses are not considered worthy of our admiration and praise.

Naturally, the danger of finding such a person, a person who is unencumbered by difficulties and imperfections, is to know someone who also possesses considerable conceit. They need no one; they require nothing for their journey through life, not even God. Worse, when understood correctly, their perfection fails to inspire those of us who struggle with handicaps. Another’s perfection can only result in our despair. This is why Paul “brags” about his weaknesses – Paul’s interest is that we praise only God and that we find in his broken, imperfect life reason for encouragement as we struggle with our own handicaps.

Paul did pray multiple times that his handicap might be removed. That is a demonstration of his humanity. It is an honest prayer that we have no doubt prayed ourselves. Yet, our spiritual condition is developed, positively or negatively, from the place of our weaknesses. For many, the first and instinctive reaction toward our limitations is a negative attitude – a rebellion or self-pity. We revolt against our limitations. Such a negative struggle often advances to cursing God. What we fail to see is that disappointment with our imperfection arises from conceit – we expect to be perfect. That is a poor spiritual condition indeed!

Paul’s positive and hopeful response to his weaknesses demonstrates that anyone, regardless of his limitations, can make a spiritual contribution to the world. History is replete with stories of people who rise up and make great contributions in spite of handicaps. These are the stories that inspire each of us to push through whatever difficulties hinder us and advance our lives and the lives of others. Anyone fortunate enough to have the charm and looks of a prince, excellent physical and mental health and is untroubled by limitations, fails to inspire those who struggle daily under limitations. It is not easy to estimate the spiritual stimulus that comes into human life from handicapped people who have found that Christ’s power is sufficient for them.

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