

The Weak and the Strong

"We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves." (Romans 15:1, ESV)

This principle runs throughout scripture: The strong should make it their business to carry the heavy burdens of the weak. This is true of physical things: Helping another move home, carry boxes, etc. This is even more so true of spiritual and emotional things: Bearing with the young as they mature, bearing with the old in their needs. Sometimes we are weak, sometimes we are strong.

Even Jesus himself, in the flesh, needed the strength of others: "And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour?" (Mar. 14:33-37)

Jesus's soul was sorrowful, even to death, yet his three closest disciples could not comfort him. When it came time to bear the burden of his cross, one man, a stranger, was brought into to share the burden: "And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross." (Mar. 15:21)

A few days ago, I was weak. I didn't get enough sleep the night before. I worked in the morning and at night. I was drained. All I wanted was physical contact with someone, that night, and I felt isolated. Indeed, I get weak too. It's times like that when evil thoughts attempt to enter, temptation tries to snare the person. The person in that condition might even wonder why God won't comfort them at that time. My perspective today is strong, but God allows me to be weak to teach me. I try to encourage others when they are weak, but I get weak too. The strong truly should bear the load of the weak, especially when the strong are weak themselves, they may be stronger than someone they can help. In weakness, we are each tempted to do things we normally wouldn't do, or feel things we normally wouldn't give into feeling. So, we all get like this.

It is part of our growth, our maturity as Christ's disciples, to consciously choose to bear another's burdens. If we neglect this, we neglect the very heart of discipleship. Let us show the world the Spirit inside our Temple by bearing the burden of the weak when we have opportunity.