

My Muscle or His Might? by Laura Shaw

Can you remember a time when you were physically dependent on others around you to do your work? Maybe you were recovering from surgery, in the midst of chronic pain or a mental illness of some sort...financial or marital struggles....a death of a loved one. Whatever the case, most of us have had a time when we were needy and dependent upon our families, friends, neighbors or co-workers to help us out. Big or small, those times are difficult to go through when they come.

The Lord gave me a clear picture of His might vs. my own muscle as He placed me in the midst of an analogy not long ago. It occurred to me as I lay in bed for two straight nights and the entire next day with a stomach virus what strength outside of myself looks like. My 8-year-old daughter put my hair up and stroked it out of my face. My 11-year-old son kept everyone quiet and helped his sisters with their schoolwork. My husband, faced with heavy work obligations, laid food out for the kids and his granddad, sorted by meal before he left for meetings. My 6-year-old daughter got herself ready for bed and cleaned up after herself (believe me, this was true sacrifice for her). I had a precious friend insist on taking the kids to and from school. My son's sixth grade teacher gave us grace and extensions on a few of his assignments. And on and on...I've had numerous opportunities the past couple of difficult years to see strength displayed in the midst of weakness, but for some reason, the bells in my brain started ringing a beautiful tune of Truth during this specific struggle.

The scenario I've shared of my little virus can be particularly fitting to understanding our spiritual condition as well, if we allow it to actually sink in. How many times as Christians have we read this verse in 2 Corinthians 12:10b: "*For when I am weak, then I am strong*"? Have we truly come to the realization that, as believers, we are sick and weak when we rely on ourselves? HE is our strength. Read the same verse above in full context of the passage:

"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. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 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. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties.

FOR WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN I AM STRONG."

God knew that we were going to depend on ourselves now and then. After all, He equipped us with all of our gifts and talents...He gave us salvation and the glorious riches of His kingdom. He wants us to use them! Unfortunately, sometimes we use what He supplies us and take the credit, or at the very least, forget to give Him the honor. So He will allow the viruses of life to torment us as we need reminding. **HUGE DISCLAIMER:** I'm not saying this is the ONLY explanation for difficult times coming our way, just one of them. God allows suffering on many levels in ways that we'll never understand this side of heaven. But the rest of the truth applies no matter what the reason is for our trials. Did you see the list above? "*Weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, difficulties*"...that's a pretty broad list, and they will come our way as we walk faithfully in Christ. But His power is made perfect in our weaknesses- not the false kind that we can sometimes manufacture to get attention or to have our way- but the true kind, which He allows so that His strength can be made complete in us and in others. This is not a very popular truth, is it? Let's spend some time reflecting on how the world consults us to get through our struggles...let's take the time to notice the "coping" advice that is given to us on a regular basis. Hopefully, we'll search the Bible to see if those consultations are in line with His. We might just be surprised.

Praise the Lord for family and friends, for the arms and legs of Jesus that are extended from the community of believers when we're in need. But above all, praise HIM for being our sufficiency, our vigor, day in and day out, hour by hour, one second at a time. Let us delight in His ability today with the continual realization that we are completely powerless to live this life with our own muscle.

*"'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty."
Zechariah 4:6b & 2 Timothy 1:12b "I know whom I have believed and am convinced that He is able
to guard what I have entrusted to Him for that day." AMEN!*