

The Christmas Answer for All Your Daunting Impossibilities

When the angel Gabriel announced to the virgin Mary that she would conceive in her womb and give birth to a Son who would be called the Son of the Highest, she was perplexed and amazed, and replied, "How can this be, since I do not know a man" (Luke 1:34b)?

"I do not know a man" was a euphemism for her virginity and the fact that she was not married. Since she had no intimate relationship with a man, what the angel had said was an impossibility, prompting her response, "How can this be?"

In other words, she acknowledged her own inability to make the promise happen. A vision from God will always be bigger than we are and cause us to wonder, "How can this be?"

The answer the angel gave Mary for her impossibility, is also the answer for all our impossibilities. He said, "'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you" (Luke 1:35). It is the Holy Spirit and His empowering presence that will turn our impossibilities into realities.

We Must Have a Twofold Confession

I cannot tell you how many times in over 40 years of ministry I have experienced the Holy Spirit turning an impossible "How can this be?" into a reality. For example, in the early days of my ministry, I made a decision that put me in a serious financial bind. In the natural, there was no way out.

However, as I acknowledged how much I needed Him because of my human weakness, the power of the Holy Spirit came upon me and something miraculous happened. As I acknowledged both my weakness and His faithfulness, a clear directive came to my

mind, one that I would never have considered on my own. I obeyed, and the need was abundantly supplied, with an excess left over.

Yes, it is important that we speak words of faith and acknowledge Christ's redemptive work for us, but that is only one side of the coin. We must also acknowledge our need of Him because of our human frailty.

This is what Jesus was referring to when He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). My paraphrase of this passage reads, "Blessed are those who realize how much they need God, for theirs is the kingdom and power of heaven."

Paul Learned This Lesson

Paul learned this lesson and expressed it very cogently in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 where he tells how God spoke to him a powerful principle that we must all learn. In regards to a very trying situation, God said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9b).

The word "strength" in this passage is from the Greek word *dunamis*, which is translated as "power" in passages such as Acts 1:8. The word "perfect" is from the Greek word *teleos*, which refers to an end, goal or destination. A more accurate translation of this verse would be, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is maximized in your weakness."

In other words, when God looks for a person to carry out a task or assignment, He does not tap the person who is self-confident and whose response would be, "No problem God, I can handle that." No, God chooses the person who has no confidence in their flesh and whom He knows will have to lean hard on Him. He looks for those whose response will be like that of Mary, "How can this be?"

Based on this understanding of God's power being maximized in human weakness, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:9c, "I will rather boast in my infirmities [weaknesses], that the power of Christ may rest upon me." The word "rest" in this verse is translated from the Greek word *epikenose*. It is a cognate form of the same word the angel used in speaking to Mary when he said, "The power of the highest will overshadow you" (Luke 1:35).

Walk in Integrity in 2018

Interestingly, Paul says that he will boast in his weaknesses so that the power of God will overshadow or rest upon him. Paul is not talking about being negative or wallowing in his weakness. He is speaking about walking in integrity. He is talking about being real and transparent. And when he lives in integrity, admitting how much he needs God, the power, or *dunamis*, of God overshadows him and rests upon him.

Do we want the power of God resting upon us in the coming year? Then let's be people of integrity. Christian leaders, do you want God's power overshadowing you in 2018? Then forget about trying to enhance your profile and public image. Instead, be real with the people. Acknowledge how much you need God and watch Him vindicate you with people you have been trying to impress.

We can build and accomplish much in this world in our own human strength, but only that which is brought forth under the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit will last for eternity. I pray that in 2018, the church worldwide will learn the lesson Mary learned, that it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that our impossibilities will be turned into realities and the kingdom of God advanced in the earth. {eo}

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