

More often than not we struggle along in our own strength to do things for ourselves or for the Lord and most of the time we achieve nothing, because we do not notice that the Lord is resisting our plans and strength so that he can accomplish His own plans and strength in us.

The title is derived from John 3:30: He must become greater; I must become less.

The Lord does not look at our skills and possessions – he wants to use us just as we are. The weaker we are in ourselves, the more he can use us. That is why in a certain sense he must first break us down to make us subservient.

The examples we find in the scriptures to substantiate this statement are manifold and I quote a few to illustrate this.

If we had to lead the Israelites out of Egypt we would assemble a crowd of thousands with many weapons to conquer the Egyptians, but the Lord took ONE man, Moses, who could not even speak fluently, and sent him to Egypt with his STAFF. But first he broke him down over 40 years in the desert to make him serviceable until Moses, who had been strong enough to kill an Egyptian, said:

1. Who am I to go to Pharaoh and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt?
2. O Lord, I have never been eloquent ... I am slow of speech and tongue.
3. O Lord, please send someone else to do it.

The Lord did use Moses's own staff (if one can call it a possession) and made it functional so that it would later be called the Staff of God.

The Lord visited Gideon at the winepress and said (Judges 6:12), "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior." v.15 "But Lord," Gideon asked, "how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." This is the kind of person the Lord needs.

However, Gideon set about in typical human fashion and gathered 32 000 men, but the Lord said to him, "You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands. ...Israel... may... boast against me that her own strength has saved her..." (Judges 7:2).

Jacob was chosen to become Israel, but he still had too many possessions: He had obtained the birthright, Isaac's blessing, through deception, but the Lord took him aside and led him out so that he could cross the Jabbok River with his staff as his sole possession.

Joseph was so full of himself through the Lord's promises and his father's favour that the Lord delivered him into the hands of these same Midianites and let him go to Egypt with nothing (not even his staff). He even allowed him to be thrown in prison to prepare him to become second in command and save his family.

The Lord needed someone to defeat Goliath and sent the boy David with a catapult to do so.

The Lord needed a king for Israel and sent Samuel to Jesse to anoint David as king. Jesse brought all his sons before Samuel, but left the least of them to guard the sheep, because it was clear to him that David could never become king.

The scriptures are clear regarding this subject:

1 Cor 1:25 – For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. v.26 Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. v.27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. v.28 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, v. 29 so that no-one may boast before him.

1 Cor 2:3 – I come to you in weakness and in fear, and with much trembling. v.4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, v.5 so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

1 Cor 15:42 – So it will be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; v.43 it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.

2 Cor 13:4 – He was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you.

The Lord said to Paul in 2 Cor 12:9 – My grace is sufficient for you (you need nothing extra).. for my power is made perfect in weakness.

For me Hanna's prayer puts it in a nutshell in 1 Sam. 2:4 – The bows of the warriors are broken; but those who stumbled are armed with strength. v.5 Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry hunger no more. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away. v.6 The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. v.7 The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. v.8 He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honour. For the foundations of the earth are the LORD'S; upon them he has set the world. v.9 He will guard the feet of his saints, but the wicked will be silenced in darkness. It is not by strength that one prevails.