

REVEALING OUR WEAKNESSES

Nadine and I had our booster vaccines last week. After my booster shot, I basically had the same side effects or symptoms afterward that I did with the first two. Like so many people, my arm was sore and hard to lift for the first 24 hours. I was so glad I did not get the booster on a Saturday because it would have been hard for me to raise my arms for the benediction at church on Sunday.

With each vaccine I also noticed that my sciatic nerve began to act up for 24 hours or more afterward. I injured my sciatic nerve when I was in Grade 9 playing hockey. I recovered after six months of treatment and never had a problem with it until about three years ago. Whenever I exercise or workout, it sometimes acts up on me. Usually with a little rest it heals quickly, and I can resume exercise. For the past year I have noticed that it does not bother me in the daytime but rather when I crawl into bed. If I turn on my right side to try not to snore as much and keep Nadine awake, my sciatic begins to hurt immediately. So, I turn back over to sleep on my back or turn onto my left side to relieve the pain. When I wake up in the morning the pain is gone until I crawl back into bed that night.

With each of the three vaccines however, my sciatic nerve would pain me constantly for 24-36 hours. It seemed to attack this weak area in my body. We noticed the vaccines did the same thing with Nadine. She suffers from tinnitus or ringing in the ears. Sometimes the buzzing is loud in her ears, and other times it is not. After each vaccine shot however, she noticed the buzzing noise intensified. I do not know if you had the same experience or observation that we did that the vaccines seemed to target some of the weak areas in our bodies.

Something this pandemic has done over the past twenty-two months is reveal some of our weaknesses. We all have areas of weaknesses whether we recognize them or not. Our emotions and experiences through this pandemic have perhaps targeted some of our weaknesses just like the vaccines did mine. For instance:

- Maybe you struggled with depression prior to the pandemic, but this has become increasingly evident to you as you have tried to cope.
- Maybe you struggled with loneliness prior to all of this and have realized this is what has been hardest for you with all the isolation.
- Maybe you tried to cope prior to covid by having a glass of wine or two after supper to relax but have noticed you have been drinking more and more through this.
- Maybe you had a bit of a temper prior to this and have noticed that you are losing it more and more during this crisis.
- Maybe you thought your faith was strong prior to covid and have found that it is not as strong as you believed.
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These are just some weaknesses that people may have had prior to March 2020, but have become more noticeable to them or others through all of this. I think it is so important that we are fully aware of our weaknesses. As we read through the list above, I think it is very evident that these are behaviours or emotions that we want to get under control for our well-being. We need to remember that Satan is very aware of our weaknesses and will try to exploit them whenever he can. If this pandemic has made us more conscious of what our weaknesses are then we can see this as a positive blessing that has resulted from all of this. Realizing these weaknesses we have may encourage us to address them and get whatever help we may need at this time. Thankfully God can help us on this journey to deal with our weaknesses.

The apostle Paul had a physical weakness that affected his ability at times to do ministry. We are not sure what the condition was that was causing this weakness. Some scholars have wondered if it was malaria, or epilepsy, or a disease of the eyes. Whatever this weakness was with his health, Paul prayed for it to be taken away. On three occasions he prayed for this, and each time the Lord responded:

My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.
(2 Corinthians 12:9)

Even though Paul was not healed of his weakness, he learned to depend on God more and more each day for strength, perseverance, and hope. In fact, Paul could see that by relying on God's strength and grace each day, he was able to turn his weakness into a blessing by having a stronger faith and greater appreciation for what he could still do. It was this understanding that allowed Paul to say next:

So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.

Paul allowed God to help him deal with his weaknesses. Even though he still had his health issue, Paul came away stronger from letting God help him overcome his weaknesses. If this pandemic has made us become more aware of some of our weaknesses, than may we take this insight as a blessing and **allow God to help us overcome them**. Just like Paul, we will discover that God's grace is sufficient no matter what, and that we can face life better relying on His strength and power rather than trusting in our own.

Keep safe and God Bless

Pastor Dean