

READ 2 Corinthians 3:1-6

There is a story of an Atlantic passenger laying in his bunk in a storm, suffering from seasickness. A cry of "Man overboard" was heard. The passenger thought, "God help the poor fellow - there is nothing I can do." Then he thought at least he could put his lantern in the port-hole, which he did. The man was rescued, and recounting the story next day he said, "I was going down in the darkness for the last time when someone put a light in a port-hole. It shone on my hand, and a sailor in a lifeboat grabbed it and pulled me in."

So often in life we feel weak, helpless and inadequate. But that is not an excuse to do nothing. Rather, we should do what little we can, humbly trusting that God may be able to use our feeble efforts in ways we cannot imagine to achieve his purposes.

Life has a way of confronting us with our own inadequacy. Physical problems leave us weak and unable to cope; relational troubles bring confusion and stress; battling with bad habits leaves us feeling defeated; financial and work demands can damage our self-worth.

In fact, however, it may be that our inadequacies turn out to be blessings in disguise. It may be that it is right at that moment when we feel at our most helpless that we are most ready to turn to God and to depend on him. Awareness of our own inadequacy can teach us humility and provide the opportunity to see what God can do.

Many people reading the New Testament are struck with the vigour and confidence of the apostle Paul, whose adventures we read about in the book of Acts and whose letters fill much of the rest of the New Testament. Such is his apparent confidence and self-assurance that some have found him a little disconcerting.

In fact, Paul spoke openly about his own inadequacies: *"When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God ... I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words ..."* (1 Corinthians 2:1-4).

So where did the forcefulness come from, in one so deeply aware of his own inadequacies? It came from his confidence in what God could do: *"Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God ..."* (2 Corinthians 3:4-5).

In a world where we are often encouraged to stand tall and show no sign of weakness, here is a helpful corrective: humbly admit your own inadequacy, and put your trust in a God who is able to do great things even through you.

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, we all feel a little helpless. How can any of us make a difference? But each of us can do something. And it might make a big difference in at least one life. Reach out to someone - either in person or by email or text or phone call - whether it be to share a gospel truth, to offer a kind word of encouragement, or to offer practical help like shopping or a lift.