

Monday, May 11, 2020
Devotional Thoughts from Pastor Jim Murr...

**"I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound.
In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger,
abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me."
(Philippians 4: 12-13)**

Every time I read Paul's statement that he has "learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need," it makes me think of the tricks of magicians. Magicians are not really practicing "magic." They are practicing illusion. There have been TV shows that show you how some of these tricks are accomplished. Once you see how they are done, you find yourself saying, "Duh! How could I not have figured that out?" We know there's a trick involved in the illusion, but we are still entertained by it because we don't know how it's done. And even though part of us wants to know how it's done, we don't really want to know all the "secrets," because we want to keep our amazement.

When the Apostle Paul says that he has "learned the secret" of making it through any circumstance, it seems like he is saying that there was a time when he did not know the secret of enduring every situation in life. At first he was in the audience watching the show and being amazed. Then he was invited backstage after the show to be shown how the trick was done. I imagine Paul then saying, "Duh! How could I not have figured that out?" It's as though God brought Paul backstage and said: "Ok. Here's how you learn to face life no matter what is going on – good or bad. Instead of you trying to deal with life's ups and downs on your own, instead of you trying to be strong enough to make it through uncertainty, or job loss, or grief, or a pandemic, learn to live vicariously through the strength of Jesus. That's it! That's how the "trick" is done."

So, it sounds like Paul never forgot this "secret." He said, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." In other words, "I'm not going to try to lift that weight myself. It may look like I'm lifting it, but Jesus is really the One lifting it." It's only a "secret" until we let God tell us how it's done. He's not keeping it from us. He wants us to know the "secret."

So, what is it that you have been trying to experience or endure or get through? Don't forget how the trick is done. Remember, it's Jesus who is actually lifting the weight through you. You don't need to muster the strength on your own. You don't need to read 10 "Self-Help" books or learn how to pump yourself up. The secret is that it's Jesus who does the heavy lifting. It seems so simple once you know how it's done.

I think it was David Copperfield who made an AIRPLANE disappear, or something like that. That's pretty amazing. But I bet if he showed us how the trick is done, we would be like, "You mean that's all he did!?"

When you and I walk through life's challenges, even the really scary things, and we manage to keep our peace and joy while we do it, someone will be watching from the audience and saying, "Wow! I wonder how she/he does that?" That's when you can take her/him backstage and tell them how the trick is done: "I let Jesus do the heavy lifting!"

God's peace!
Pastor Jim