



continuous conversion

Who am I in Christ?

by Sara Tusek

The picture below is of my husband Jarda in the Cathedral of St. Barbara in Kutna Hora, Czech Republic. One aspect of the question “who am I in Christ?” can be seen in this photo: the majestic size and artistic beauty of just one chapel in this mighty cathedral completely dwarf the human figure. We are small indeed compared to the mighty God Who created and rules the universe.

kind of maudlin false humility. It’s in keeping with our understanding of ourselves as having taken on Christ’s nature in baptism that we approach life with confidence and zest. St. Paul notes, “If Christ is for us, who can be against us?” Christians needn’t whine and cringe at the challenges of life.

But we do need to keep a proper perspective on the source of our security. “It is not I, but Christ who lives in me” is St. Paul’s comment on the subject of human ability to endure and overcome obstacles.

Jarda in the cathedral of St. Barbara in Kutna Hora



Weak and strong

St. Paul also notes that we are strongest where we are weakest. This paradox used to baffle me; I thought Paul was being a bit obscure, using a figure of speech to get his point across.

Then one day I read this verse and saw that it says exactly what it means. Where-

Small and weak

When my children were small, we sang a song at Vacation Bible School: “I am weak, but You are strong, Jesus, keep me from all wrong.” This simple tune tells the plain truth; my weakness is never more evident than when I compare myself to Christ.

This is not to say that Christians need to adopt a morbid lack of self-confidence or affect some

ever we feel competent in life (or “strong”) we tend to act without consulting God. It’s not so much that we’re cocky or smug; it’s that we don’t see any need to bother God when we think we can handle a particular situation alone.

And acting alone is not a good idea for a Christian. We may not cause a catastrophe, but we may end up with less than what God has in mind for us or the people around us.

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When we know we're weak, it's much easier to throw ourselves at God's feet and beg for His guidance. The results will most likely be good when we ask God for help. As He told St. Paul, "My strength is made perfect in your weakness." When we manage to perform well in spite of our obvious limitations, God gets the glory.

Who would follow this God?

When I was an undergraduate I took a European History course. The professor was making a point about how outlandish Christianity as a religion must have seemed to the Romans, Goths, Visigoths, Vandals, and so on of early Europe. These were people who were warriors, who prided themselves on their toughness and courage. Their gods loved war; combatants gained favor and glory by killing and plundering. Weakness was humiliating and potentially fatal.

To illustrate his point, my professor stood and put his arms out sideways. "What kind of God is this? He can't hold a weapon. He's on a cross. Who would follow this God?"

I was shocked at his blunt words, but had to admit the question was relevant. As 21st-century first-world citizens, we are so accustomed to admiring the Christian values of compassion, restraint and mercy that we forget how odd it is to voluntarily give up your ability to hurt people. In harsher circumstances than most of us face, giving up personal power and the ability to frighten away attackers by gaining a reputation for kindness and forgiveness would be an unthinkable luxury.

We take for granted that most people we interact with share our Christian values. Even if they don't always act decently, they can be shamed (or brought to court) to enforce those values. How must it be to live in a culture where mercy is rare and compassion for your enemy is a form of stupidity? Who, in those circumstances, would choose the *weakness* of being a Christian?

Who am I in Christ?

This question of weakness is just one aspect of our identity in Christ—we can exchange our weakness for His strength. We can also exchange our ignorance for His wisdom, our fear for His courage, our sin for His purity and our death for His life. All of these exchanges are made supernaturally when we accept Christ. Yet they must be manifested by being lived out every day, as we act deliberately and prayerfully rather than hastily and without God's guidance.

The initial act of becoming a Christian requires little true effort on our part—the Holy Spirit prepares the heart, so the mind can follow and the will can submit itself to Christ.

But the act of receiving Christ is just the beginning. Our sanctification, or being made sacred (set apart for God), is an on-going process which can only be made complete as we live each day. It would be wonderful if we could say "yes" to Christ once and be perfectly sinless ever after, but that's not how it goes. Walking with Christ daily is the only way to achieve "continuous conversion," to become who we are in Christ.