

PSYCHOLOGICAL STRENGTH FROM INTERPERSONALISM

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Psychological strength comes from friendship. We often reference psychological strength to inner factors because it contrasts with outer flux; we can experience “inner peace” even during unstable circumstances. But psychological strength is not so much inner peace amidst outer chaos as it is “inter” strength from other persons. Our inner stability came from someone else. Furthermore, psychological strength ties to personhood in our commitment to an ever-present, immutable God and to others in relationship with us through him--fellowship. Strength persists in the face of destruction because of one person’s concern to help others by doing what may relieve them, save them, and give them peace, power, and joy.

The power to cope comes, not so much because it is an inborn talent, a learned skill, or a supernatural deposit; it comes from personal response to influence from good people. That kind of empowerment God does not dispense by stimulus or miracle. There are two sides to the process, but they are not impersonal stimulus and automatic response; they are one person’s encouragement and another person’s hope.

An example of that dynamic occurred in the Garden of Gethsemane when an angel appeared to Jesus to strengthen him (Luke 22:43?; cp. Matthew 4:11). The angel did not perform a miracle on him, do something to him, or protect him from something. Beyond visible presence and communication, what could we suppose the angel did?

Having conscious connection with the one true God creates a personal stack pole for life that overcomes fragmentation and disorientation and consequently gives strength. When we feel at home, we know better how to organize our energies. We have a sense of identity with a personal center who can fulfill all the yearnings of our hearts (1 Corinthians 14:24-25).

An interpersonal referent lies among the many implications of 1 Corinthians 10:31: “*Do everything as to the Lord.*” A sense of wholeness comes because that attitude unifies all life’s aspects under one frame of reference. It gives value and dignity to all activities we perform under his leadership. Even agriculture, forestry, and other impersonal operations fall under the Creation Mandate—to be caretakers for the world. Doing everything as to the Lord puts a positive spin on negative and difficult circumstances (Colossians 3:22-23).

Interpersonalism encourages us to let other people help us. One great value of faith is that faith as trust allows us to tap into the resources of others to find assistance beyond our own capacities. Jesus prayed on the night of his betrayal, and he even requested his disciples to pray with him (Matthew 26:36-46). When we realize the level of our weakness, we are strong because

we do not expect too much from ourselves alone and because we reach out for the help others can provide. We trust God to supply our needs (Philippians 4:19; 1 Timothy 6:6-8; Hebrews 13:5). The Apostle Peter encourages his readers to conceive of their problems as given to Christ (1 Peter 5:6-7).

Love encapsules all positive personal relationships. It produces an outward-directed personality type. Paul does not surprise us then when he says that love bears all things (1 Corinthians 13:7); love is strong. Elsewhere he says that love builds others up (1 Corinthians 8:1). *“Be strong. Do everything in love”* (1 Corinthians 16:13-14). People who practice love get out of themselves and direct themselves outwardly; so in building other people up they strengthen themselves.

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