

Strength in Knowing You're Not the Only One

“On Peter’s arrival Cornelius met him, and falling at his feet, worshiped him. But Peter made him get up saying, ‘Stand up. I too am a man.’” Acts 10: 25,26 from Acts 10

When it comes to dealing with our problems and concerns, there is strength to be had in knowing that we’re not the only one in our situation. Most people know this, but for some reason ignore it and soldier on as though they are the “onliest one” in the world carrying such a burden.

In the scripture above, Cornelius is a Roman centurion, the commander of one-hundred soldiers, who hangs around the local synagogue. Like a number of soldiers in Palestine, he thinks of Rome’s gods as jokes. He’s been on a quest to learn more about Israel’s God. Of course, there were Jewish erected boundaries between gentiles (non-Jews) and Jews when it comes to God – things Cornelius cannot do, places he cannot go, etc. – but he’s well thought of, devoted to Israel’s God, and considered righteous by the Jews who know him.

He has a vision in which he is told to send for Simon Peter. He does and upon Peter’s arrival falls at his feet in worship, which means what? Cornelius thinks that because of Simon Peter’s association with the risen Jesus, the man has godlike qualities and abilities.

Peter disabuses him of any such notion, *“Stand up. I too am a man.”* To which he could have added, “Just like you. With the same sorts of problems, concerns, and limitations.”

A big theological issue is then settled in Acts 10. Namely, the inclusion of the gentiles in Jesus’ church. That, of course, is no longer a burning issue in any congregation I know of. But “I too am a man or woman or human being” remains a most relevant saying. Why? One reason it may seem to us that we’re the onliest one in our situation is our thinking that others have some quality bordering on a superpower that we don’t have. They don’t have our problems, concerns, or limitations. They’re above it all. To which Simon Peter says, “I too am just like you.”

Application. Lots of people have difficulty adjusting to retirement. “What’s wrong with me? I’ve been looking forward to this for years!” So maybe the person whom God sends to chat with us says, “I too am retired. Here’s how I handled it.”

Lots of people struggle to deal with the loss of a spouse or family member. It’s hard. “What’s wrong with me? Why can’t I move on?” So maybe God sends someone who says, “I too had a spouse. Let me tell you how I got through it.”

Lots of people have health problems and health insurance worries. We’re frail. Maybe Simon Peter turns it over to Paul who says, “I too have a thorn in my side, a pre-existing condition.”

Lots of people don’t know if their finances are going to last as long as they will. But which one of Jesus’ twelve disciples could God have sent who wouldn’t have said, “I too am broke”?

Lots of people feel that God is the source of encouragement for their situation, but they don’t have a hotline to God like others have. Not so. No one has a prayer better than one that is heartfelt. Others may be more eloquent, but eloquence doesn’t come close to heartfelt. To set us straight, God’s messenger says, “I too am in need of God’s help. Pray with me.” - DJ