

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 7TH, 2024 // 2 CORINTHIANS

WEAKNESS (2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-10)

BOASTING

Paul recognizes that the church likes boasting and seems to listen to proud preachers, so he will boast, too. But not the boasting they are looking for. Paul has already established that he will only boast about Christ's provision and power as he experiences success and suffering.

VISIONS AND REVELATIONS

Paul moves on to address another accusation against his credibility. The false teachers had equated spiritual maturity with special experience. Paul hadn't bragged about his pedigree, authority, or supernatural experience because Christ is the center of the gospel, not Paul.

CAUGHT UP

Paul humbly begins writing in the third person. He has a distaste for personal boasting but shares because the circumstances require it. He points out that he did not initiate the experience. God interrupted his life to do something unique. It happened to him; he didn't happen to it.

THE THIRD HEAVEN

Paul doesn't intend to begin a discussion about the location of heaven; he wants to clarify that it was paradise, the dwelling place of God.

- **Far too many people are caught up in the description and location of heaven. The presence of God is what makes heaven a heavenly paradise.**

GOD KNOWS

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul had the humility to say, "I don't really know how this works."

- **Following Jesus is not about knowing everything. We don't have to fill in the gaps God doesn't fill. Truth, grace, and faith will always be better than guessing or exaggerating.**

INEXPRESSIBLE WORDS

Paul saw and heard things that were only for him. He may have been instructed to keep the details to himself.

- **God can reveal Himself to any one, any time, any way. He has revealed Himself to everyone through His word. We should be cautious when "revelation" comes outside of His word.**

BOAST

Paul returns to the idea of boasting and says that he won't do it, even though he has a fantastic story. He isn't writing to entertain or get votes. His motive is to see God work in their lives.

- **If we work and serve to create something that glorifies us, we will validate a cultural stereotype of the modern "Christian" church.**

THORN IN THE FLESH

Paul had a pride problem, and God had a way to deal with it: a thorn. We don't know the details, but we know it was painful. Physical? Mental? We don't know. The point is that every time it pained him, he was reminded of his need to need God.

- **The person God uses greatly, He will humble greatly. Are we ready to say, "God, use me?"**

SUFFICIENT GRACE

Paul prayed for the pain to go away. It didn't. God used the pain to reveal His grace to Paul.

- **God's unmerited favor is enough, and His power is perfected in us when we are weak, not when we are strong. In grace, God will allow pain to protect us from ourselves and remind us of our need to need Him.**

PLEASURE IN WEAKNESS

Paul had walked with Christ long enough to know when he experienced suffering, trials, and even thorns, he was closer to Christ than any other time.

- **Sometimes, the pain is there to push us to a greater intimacy with God. Are we ready to see our weaknesses as an opportunity to get closer to God?**

MISUNDERSTOOD (2 CORINTHIANS 12:11-13)

FORCED

Paul had to say things that he didn't want to have to say. He had hoped they would all repent after his last letter. He didn't want it to get this far. But he wouldn't stop.

- **Even though we have the right motives and share the truth in love, not everyone will respond how we want them to. Is that when we quit?**

COMMENDED

Paul is frustrated that they followed the false teachers when he was the one who shared the true gospel and invested in their growth. Paul was hurt, and it wasn't comfortable for him to remind them of who he was to them. It hurt because it seemed like they had forgotten his love for them.

SIGNS

Paul doesn't brag about his apostleship; he affirms it with the truth they have seen and heard. They still didn't understand that all he had shared and invested was for their good. It was slow, but Paul didn't stop.

- **Being a disciple maker often means you want more for people than they want for themselves. Teach and trust God to grow them. Don't stop.**

WILLING (2 CORINTHIANS 12:14-21)

READY

Paul is ready to return and reminds them it won't cost them anything. He knows what he's walking into and is willing to face whatever may happen for the sake of their spiritual health.

- **Discipleship isn't free. We may have to face hostile situations and people. Why? Because we want something for them, not from them.**

SPENT

Paul knows it will be exhausting. He's already invested his life to see the church planted in Corinth. Now, he will give himself to see them return to Christ and grow because he loves them, even if they don't show him love in return.

- **We love people because God loves them. Are we too busy to love people? Are we too busy to invest?**

OFFENDED

Paul was accused of taking, deceiving, and sending others to do the same. He reminds them that he and Titus took nothing and only gave as they walked in the Spirit to share the gospel.

- **Will we continue even when we are misunderstood and our motives are called evil? How will we respond?**

BUILDING YOU UP

Paul affirms that his motive is to build them up in Christ. Paul wasn't trying to be everything to them; he wanted them to see Christ as their all-in-all.

- **God cares about disciples more than we do. Christ saves them; we point them to Jesus. Are we ready to do what it takes to see others grow?**

BROKEN

Paul is afraid they won't be what he wants. They may still be focused on sin, and he will be broken in front of them instead of rejoicing with them.

- **We need to grow. We want to see others grow. How are we doing? Are we broken over our sins? Are we broken over other's sins?**

WEAK

- Sometimes, we are too strong to be broken.
- **That kind of strong is weak.**
- **When we are ready to admit that we can't keep it all together ourselves, we confess our weaknesses and make room for real strength.**

PERSPECTIVE

- Not everything is as it seems.
- **Pain may always hurt, but it isn't always bad.**
- **Knowing that all things work together for our good and His glory, we can find His strength in our weakness. We can even rejoice in our weakness as we grow closer to Him. It's about seeing.**

GOALS

- Goals are plans for the future.
- **Our goals will reveal our desires and how committed we are.**
- **As Christ followers, our lives should point ourselves and others to Christ. Has it become too hard, painful? Maybe it's time to draw closer to Christ, lean into Him, and remember that His grace is sufficient.**