

LOVE
&
AUTHORITY
2 CORINTHIANS



Sermon Series Notes

"Power Through Weakness" (II Corinthians 11:16-12:10)

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Intro:

- False teachers had come to Corinth from Jerusalem claiming to be apostles and boasting of their accomplishments. They had impressive letters of recommendation, and were gifted orators. Paul uses an interesting technique in an attempt to "jolt" the church into realizing the deception of these false teachers. Since the Corinthians seemed to be impressed by boasting, he will boast too. It is righteous sarcasm. Read the text, beginning in v. 13

I. THE TEXT

11:20 Enslaved them by their legalistic teachings (Gal.4:9-10; Col.3:23), exploited them (Gal.6:12-13), took advantage of them financially, pushy, condemning.

11:24 Deut.25: 2

11:25a This was from the Romans; v.25b Stoned at Lystra, and they drug him outside the city thinking he was dead (Acts 14:19).

11:30-33 Paul now reached back 20 years in the past. He was going to Damascus with the intention of persecuting Christians there, but he got saved on the way. Now, his intention was to see his fellow Jews in Damascus come to faith in Christ (see Acts 9:1-31). This was a huge "let down." He was a real "basket case!" Gal.1 tells us he went immediately into seclusion in the desert of Arabia (Gal.1), and sometime later returned to Jerusalem. The apostles and disciples in Jerusalem were afraid of him, and did not believe he was really born again. He debates with the Grecian Jews in Jerusalem, they try to kill him, so the disciples sent him back home to Tarsus. For years nobody hears from Saul of Tarsus, and then Barnabas invites him to Antioch (Acts 11:25-26). He changes his name from Saul to Paul ("little"). Saul was named after the first king of Israel, an impressive man in the eyes of the people, yet one who allowed pride to rob him of the blessings of God. Saul of Tarsus had much to be proud of as well, but now he is a humble man. He is a "weak" man. He & Barnabas are later commissioned by the church at Antioch, and Paul begins his missionary ministry. He becomes tremendously successful, and because of that success, God does everything He can to keep him humble ("weak"). Read on chapter 12.

12:1-6 What is so incredible about Paul sharing this is that it happened 14 years ago, and he had never told them. He could have wowed them with a story like this.

* Col.2: 18 Do not let anyone who delights in *false humility* and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions.

* Saw the risen Christ (Acts 9:3); Vision of Ananias coming to minister to him (Acts 9:12); Vision when called to minister to the Gentiles (Acts 22:17); Vision when called to Macedonia (Acts 16:9); Vision when difficulties in Corinth (Acts 18:9-10); Vision after arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 23:11); Angel appeared to him in the midst of the storm (Acts 27:23).

* Tremendously successful ministry, incredible visions & revelation, including a glimpse of heaven itself, yet Paul does not glory in any of these things. Why? (see 12:7ff).

12:7 This was not the kind of thorn you get in your finger while gardening. This word describes a stake used to impale/crucify a person. It was more like a sword in his side than a sliver in his hand.

12:8-9 Jesus prayed three times for the Father to remove the "thorn" He was about to have to endure.

* Note: Beyond the sufferings of 11:23ff, and as result of the privilege of "surpassingly great revelations," God gave Paul a thorn in his flesh, a messenger of Satan, and this thorn tormented him constantly.

* Why did God do this?

- a. To keep him from becoming conceited (as he had once been)
- b. To "perfect" His power in and through Paul's life.

* God's power is made *perfect* in weakness

- 2675. katartizo, kat-ar-tid'-zo; from G2596 and a der. of G739; to complete thoroughly, i.e. repair (lit. or fig.) or adjust:--fit, frame, mend, (make) perfect (-ly join together), prepare, restore.

- I Thess.3: 10 (KJV) Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might *perfect* (NIV = "supply") that which is lacking in your faith?

12:10 So now this mature man of God has come to a place in life where he can make this amazing statement!

* Infirmities

- 769. astheneia, as-then'-i-ah; from G772; feebleness (of body or mind); by impl. malady; mor. frailty:--disease, infirmity, sickness, weakness.

- Luke 5: 15 Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their *sicknesses*.

- Luke 8: 2 and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and *diseases*: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out;

- Note: Despite the miracles Paul performed and the many who were healed through his ministry (refer to Acts 19:11), he himself suffered a constant thorn in his flesh, which seems to indicate a physical infirmity. And even if someone does not believe Paul's thorn in the flesh was a physical infirmity, they must acknowledge that he did suffer with physical infirmities.

- Gal.4: 13 As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you.

- I Timothy 5: 23 Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.

- Phil.2: 25 But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. 26 For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. 27 Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.

* Insults

- I Peter 4: 14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

* Hardships

- KJV = "necessities"

- 318. anagke, an-ang-kay'; from G303 and the base of G43; constraint (lit. or fig.); by impl. distress:--distress, must needs, (of) necessity (-sary), needeth, needful.

* Persecutions

* Difficulties

- 4730. stenochoria, sten-okh-o-ree'-ah; from a comp. of G4728 and G5561; narrowness of room, i.e. (fig.) calamity:--anguish, distress.

God humbled Paul in order to get him to a place where he could "save his soul," then he let him know in advance that God's calling upon his life would involve great suffering. Added to this, God sovereignly sent a "messenger of Satan" to torment him, and this was so that he would not become conceited, because pride/conceit would nullify God's ability to work powerfully in and through Paul's life

II. LESSONS FROM THE TEXT

A. What Would It Take For God To Be Able To Work Powerfully In And Through Your Life?

1. Saul of Tarsus

- I Corinthians 1: 26 Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him.

- Saul was one who had plenty to boast about (see Phil.3:5-6; Gal. 1:14); So God humbled Paul to get him saved, then allowed him to be humiliated (A "basket case"), experience depressing defeat/rejection, then gave him tremendous success, and with that success, painful circumstances in order to keep him humble, in order that God's power might continue to rest upon him and work through him

2. Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4)

3. The Prodigal Son

B. What Would It Take For God To Be Able To **Continue** To Work Powerfully In And Through Your Life?

1. Never becoming self-reliant

- II Cor.1: 8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. 9 Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.

2. Not becoming prideful

* Uzziah; King Saul (was Saul of Tarsus riding a donkey or a horse?)

* Rom.12: 3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

* I Cor.4:7 What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

3. Learn to "delight" in weaknesses, etc.

* James 1: 2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

C. What Would It Take For God To **Restore** His Power In & Through Your Life?

* Receive Paul's sarcastic yet inspired rebuke, humble themselves, and repent.

* Responding correctly to the Lord's discipline

- I Cor.11: 30 That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. 31 But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. 32 When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

* Psalm 119: 67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word.

CONCLUSION

* How many were healed in one of our most recent Wednesday services? How many were prayed for but were not healed?

* " sometimes the most radiant face hides great pressures, and often the man being most blessed of God is being most buffeted by the devil." (Redpath, p.452)

* God's first powerful act in a person's life is through the gospel (Rom.1:16). Invitation to receive Jesus Christ

* For some of us, God is working through some pretty painful experiences, maybe even a messenger of Satan...could it be he has allowed these because He wants us to remain humble, completely dependent on Him?

* Finally, some of us may be experiencing painful circumstances because God is seeking to restore His power in our lives that pain is the loving hand of a heavenly Father who has you right now in his woodshed