2 Corinthians 12 (Part 1): 1-10 • Strength in Weakness

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

2 Corinthians chapter 12. We're making our way through Paul's letter, second letter to the Corinthians, and we're in the 12th chapter. You can see we're coming down to the end here. It ends after chapter 13 and we are going to take the first 10 verses of the chapter and, oh what 10 verses they are. You ready? Buckle up.

Paul writes, *"I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. [2] I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. [3] And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— [4] and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. [5] On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses— [6] though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. [7] So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. [8] Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. [9] But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. [10] For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (ESV)* Stop there. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, I know that You have some important things to say to Your children today, and Lord, I am such an unworthy vessel to speak these things. And yet, Lord, I pray in Jesus name that You would use me to minister Your Word and that You would open all of our hearts to hear Your voice.

We look to you this morning and just pray for the ministry of Your grace to flow in this place. Touch every heart, minister hope.

We ask it in Jesus precious name, amen.

Paul's been engaging in this, what he would refer to as, foolish boasting because the Corinthian church had been listening to the boastings of these Jewish legalists. Paul referred to them as false apostles who had made their way into the Corinthian church and were talking themselves up, and talking Paul down. And so Paul is now defending his ministry.

And he said, all right, you want to do a little boasting, fine, we'll do a little boasting, but he made it very clear, this is not as the Lord would have me to speak. And in the last chapter, he boasted about all of the difficulties and hardships and challenges that he had endured as an apostle, ministering for the Lord.

But he goes on now and things begin to change here in chapter 12. As he says in verse 2, he says, *"I know a man* (you'll notice here) *in Christ* (and that just speaks of a believer) *who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven —..."*

Now, as he speaks of this man, who is obviously Paul, who for, he says, 14 years ago endured these revelations of the Lord and was caught up to God, he, you'll notice he begins to speak in the third person. He doesn't say, this happened to me, although it's obvious that this happened to him. Because, as he gets into the latter part of what we're looking at today, he says, because of these surpassingly great revelations, God gave me a thorn in the flesh.

Obviously, he's talking about himself. He's okay talking about himself when he refers to getting a thorn in the flesh, but he's uncomfortable saying, it's me when he refers to these great revelations and these great visions. It's almost like he's speaking of himself as just an onlooker because this whole thing of boasting really left Paul kind of dry anyway.

He didn't want to do it. He didn't want to speak this way, but he's speaking anyway to these people about what the Lord had done in his life because no doubt these false apostles were probably boasting about revelations from God and insights from the Lord, and he wanted them to know that I too have received these things. But he's so uncomfortable talking about it, he has to refer to himself in the third person.

And you'll notice that he says that he knows someone who was transported, and again it's him. Transported into the third heaven. Well, you say, well, what is the third heaven? Well, Paul identifies it in the very next verse. You look in verse 3 with me, he says, *" And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—..."* Paul himself identifies what the third heaven is, it's paradise.

And he repeats in this verse that he's unsure whether he went there in his body or whether he was out of his body, which by the way, I like that statement and I'll explain why in a bit.

But first I want to address this this reference to the third heaven. What is the third heaven? Are we talking about levels of heaven where if you live a better life or a more righteous life, or a more sanctified life, you have a higher level of heaven into which you are granted? No, that, that is not it at all. There are, I'll tell you, the Bible makes it clear that there are different rewards based on how we've lived our lives and how we've used what God has given us for the kingdom and for His glory and that sort of thing. We know that. But levels of heaven, no, this is not teach this idea that the better life you live, the higher level of heaven you attain.

Essentially, the Bible speaks of 3 levels that it calls heaven, but the Bible also refers to the heaven of heavens, because you see, in the Bible, particularly you go back in the Old Testament, you will find that heaven is a word that is also used to describe just the sky in the heavens. You and I, it's where you and I see birds and jet planes flying, it's that atmosphere above the earth, but the Bible calls that, the heavens above the earth. Okay.

And then there's the stellar heaven. That heaven which contains the planetary bodies, the sun, and stars, and moon, and so forth, and so on.

And then the Old Testament refers to, the heaven of heavens, which is the place of God's throne. The place where God and the angels, if you will are. That third heaven of heavens, the unseen realm, paradise, where Jesus promised, you'll remember, the thief on the cross, that he would be that very day with Jesus. This day, Jesus said, you will be with me in paradise. (Luke 23:43)

Paul says that third heaven is paradise. He tells us very clearly that in verses 2 and 3. This is what we refer to as, the present heaven. Now, we call it the present heaven because the Bible says, one day it's going to pass away too. Literally, the very place where God lives, where people go now.

People talk about, when I die and go to heaven. Do you know that if you die before the Lord returns, yeah, you're going to go to the third heaven, you're going to go into the presence of the Lord, you're going to go to paradise, but do you know it's not going to be paradise always? Do you know that's going to actually pass away? And there's going to be a new heaven and a new earth that is going to be one day created. Let me show you a couple of passages that speak of this. Revelation chapter 21, verse 1 says,

Revelation 21:1 (ESV)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, (and it tells us) *for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more.*

John is telling us here in this revelation of the end of all things, that there is coming a time when heaven and earth will literally pass away, and a new heaven and earth will be created in which God and man will dwell together.

Look at what Peter says also. 2 Peter 3:7, it says,

2 Peter 3:7 (NIV84)

By the same word the present heavens and earth, are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment destruction of ungodly men.

By the same word the present heavens and earth, (and that's where we get our idea of the present heaven, he says) *are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment destruction of ungodly men.*

Interesting passages, huh? About the passing away, of not only the earth, but the present heaven. So the logical question here is, how do we know these passages refer to paradise being destroyed, maybe he's just talking about the atmosphere. Maybe he's just talking about the heaven of the sky that that is going to be destroyed since we know that heaven can refer to the sky, and in fact all of space.

Well, we know it because of what something else we see in the Book of Revelation. Let me show you that also from Revelation 21:3. It says,

Revelation 21:3 (ESV)

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."

The point of this passage here in Revelation, is that the destruction of the present earth and the present heaven will bring the creation of a new heaven and a new earth, which will be merged, and God's dwelling will be with man.

Right now, we say God dwells in heaven, men dwell on earth, even though the Lord is with us in a very real and genuine way.

But there's coming a time when there will be a new heaven, and a new earth, and they will be one. Can you imagine that? Heaven and earth? Well, the fact of the matter is you can't.

I mean, and I've got a pretty wild imagination and I struggle with this one because heaven and earth being one, are you kidding me? This is weird. I mean, it even sounds a little strange, doesn't it? But that's what the Bible says. Right? Pretty cool. Okay. Fairly long explanation of what the third heaven is, but that's me. There we go. All right.

Let's read verse 3 and 4 again, because we want to see what else that God's got for us here. He says, *"And I know that this man was caught up into paradise— whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— [4] and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter."*

All right, again, Paul mentions during this revelation, he says, I don't know whether I was physically present while I was in paradise, or whether I was spiritually present, or whether it was just my soul and spirit that was in the presence of the Lord. He says I really don't know, I'm not really sure.

And the reason I said earlier that I like that comment is because it speaks of a greater physicality to the realm of heaven, that I think we often consider. We tend to think of earth as made up of physical things, like stuff we can feel, and smell, and touch, I guess that's feel, isn't it? And hear and you know what I'm saying?

And then we think of heaven, going to heaven as this ethereal nothingness, like… And because of that, I think a lot of people don't necessarily look forward to heaven because we relate on such a physical level to things that we tend to think, I like this. I like getting… Do you guys happen to drive, when you're coming in today? Do you happen to notice, look to the north and see that there's snow on the mountains to the north? Part of me is delighted by that, and part of me is like, I'm not ready for winter but it's beautiful. It's beautiful.

I look at the fall, the autumn, and the colors are magnificent. And we tend to think of, this is really cool. And we share pictures on Facebook and this and that, look how beautiful this tree is. And then we think about, and then one day we're going to go to heaven. I think a lot of people think it's going to be in black and white. It's like, it's going to be like an old classic movie where we just move in slow motion, and we're not really sure if we even recognize anybody.

I just had somebody emailed me just this last week and just said, do you think we're going to recognize each other in heaven? I was like, are you kidding? Of course we're going to recognize each other. Do you think heaven is going to be anything less than earth. It's going to be earth turned way up, better. It's going to be… I mean, the colors, the magnificence, the joy, the appreciation, the delight, everything that earth is. And earth is a lot of those things for us, even though we live in a fallen kingdom, the fallen kingdom of man, there's still this residue of incredible beauty.

I mean, drive through Teton National Park and tell me that the place isn't just absolutely drop dead gorgeous or any number of other places in the world. You think heaven's going to be less than that? You think heaven's going to be, oh, what a letdown, man, we're in heaven. Oh, man, we're just back on earth where things were pretty. This is just heaven. Give me my harp, sit on a cloud for eternity and play the same old song. I mean, can you imagine why people don't look forward to it?

This idea that heaven is everything spiritual, where earth is everything physical, I think what we're seeing here is that's not really what the Bible communicates. I mean here, Paul was completely unaware of whether he was actually in the body or out of the body while in paradise. He was… and what that means is, I may have actually been there physically. I don't know, God knows, but I don't know.

So that tells me that paradise isn't so different in terms of the physicality of the environment, right? I mean when you read the Book of Revelation, it's clear that John was transported into paradise and saw things in heaven, and so forth, and so on. But have you ever noticed that there are aspects of physicality that attend his account to what he sees, and hears, and so forth. And experiences happening there. For example, he describes eating. He's handed a scroll and he eats it, so he describes literally consuming something and he tells you what it tasted like. It tasted a significant way. He said it tasted good but then he also describes the sour stomach he got from it, so he describes things using terms of physicality.

So you say to yourself, no wonder Paul was confused in this whole thing as to whether or not he was actually there physically in heaven. John also talks about falling down at the feet of an angel. You remember that? He says, I fell down at his feet. Well, first of all, it's pretty tough to fall down without a body. And second of all, you can't fall down at somebody's feet if they don't have some physicality related to their being. Do you understand what I'm saying here? There are all these references that we see in heaven. And that delights me, it really does. It delights me.

But Paul wasn't confused about everything. There was one thing he was very sure of, and that is that he had heard things while he was there that he shouldn't even, that no man could mention or utter. And apparently this is somewhat common with people who are given a revelation of heaven because it happened to some others. Let me show you a couple of passages on the screen. It happened to Daniel. Look at this from Daniel chapter 12.

Daniel 12:8-9 (ESV)

I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, "O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?" He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end."

I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, "O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?" (and) *He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end."*

In other words, this is not to be repeated. And it also happened to John in his revelation of Jesus. Check this out from Revelation 10.

Revelation 10:4 (ESV)

And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."

And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."

You see, this is common, where someone receives a revelation from God, but it is not all to be expressed. There are things that need to be held back.

Paul says in verse 5, look at with me again in your Bible, he says, "*On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses— 6 though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that* (look at, and this is very important here that you see this, *so that*) *no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me."*

And I really like what Paul is saying here in these couple of verses because he implies here, first of all, that there's a whole lot more he could have said about this experience of being caught up to paradise if he was able. There's a whole lot more I could share. He's basically saying to us, and as a result, I guess as a consequence of that, he's saying there's a whole lot more I could say in defense of my apostle ship if I wanted to, but he wanted to be careful. Lest he create a sense of awe and misplaced appreciation that extended simply beyond his life and his message.

Here's my point, and I think this is Paul's point. We can always draw a crowd with sensationalism, but how many, how often can we draw a crowd with the message of Jesus Christ? That draws only a special crowd. When you get up and you just start talking about Jesus, hey, can I tell you what Jesus did for you? You're going to, you're going to get people, most of the people are going to go no, but thanks. In fact, they might even leave off the thanks.

But if you get up and you start telling people about some amazing, sensational, something that happened in your life, you guys aren't going to believe this and you start telling about it, and then an angel, and then you're explaining, and people are going to, and they're going to be all excited and so forth. And I think just about in any culture, that's the case, where we just have this propensity to gravitate toward people with a sensational story. In fact, obviously it's true today.

We see, rather than reporting of news today on TV, we see more the sensationalizing of events than we do the actual reporting of news. But you know what? Sensational things have always drawn a crowd. What Paul is saying here, and he could have done that. He could have talked about all the amazing things.

Reminds me of that circus hawker, they come to town before the circus. Come see the man that can swallow a sword or he can breathe flames out of his mouth or something. And then people are like, woo, and so they want to pay and come and see the circus. I suppose Paul could have probably gone out in the city square and said, I was once bit by a venomous snake, and I just shook it off into

the fire. If anybody wants to come hear that story, pretty cool. I suppose there's probably, he could have done that. Come see the man that was taken up to the third heaven and heard inexpressible… Paul never wanted to do that and that's what he's saying in these verses.

He's saying, I never wanted to say these things I never wanted to even begin to express these things because I didn't want you to think more of me than what was warranted. Nor, I didn't want that to eclipse the message, you see, the message of Jesus.

I think some Christians and churches have even gotten caught up in the whoo!, excitement of things that are sensational and Jesus gets lost in the whole thing.

I mean, if these sorts of things happened to somebody today, like they happened to Paul, they'd probably write a book and have a book tour. My Journey to Paradise and Back by Paul of Tarsus, foreword by Peter the Fisherman. Paul didn't want that sort of thing, although I think that doesn't mean he wasn't tempted. I don't think it means it wasn't, he wasn't tempted.

Look what he admits in verse 7. He says, *"…to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations,* (obviously that were given to him) *a thorn was given me in the flesh,* (he even refers to it as) *a messenger of Satan* (and he says why it was given) *to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited."* Alright, stop there for just a moment.

Paul tells us here in this verse that God allowed some kind of ailment to plague him in some way and it appears to be physical. He doesn't tell us what it is but it appears to be physical because he refers to it as a thorn in the flesh, okay. That's really all he tells us. What it was exactly, we have no idea. Here's what we do know. Paul wanted it gone.

And he says, in fact, in verse 8, look with me in your Bible. *"Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me."* And by the way, this is saying something for the apostle Paul. I think this man was pretty accustomed to suffering. He was pretty accustomed to being in difficult and uncomfortable situations. And I think he pretty much rolled it up into, I'm an apostle and that sort of thing. But this situation was so problematic to him that he asked the Lord not once, but 3 times to take it from him.

And the Lord's response to Paul is what's going to take up the remainder of our time here this morning. Verse 9, *"But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.""* By the way, I'm guessing

that's probably not the response Paul was looking for. I mean, just saying, because after all is said and done, that answer means no. Make no mistake about it. God said no. Lord, please take this thing from me. No.

But I want you to notice that God didn't just say no. He gave Paul a very important message and that message is so important that it continues to be God's answer for believers who suffer today. And that message is, *"My grace is sufficient for you,"*

And right away, we notice some important things about that. Such as God says, "*My grace is sufficient for you."* He doesn't say my grace will be sufficient for you or my grace could be sufficient for you. He says it is sufficient. That means that you and I don't have to ask him for a sufficiency of grace. It is already operational in our lives if we are willing to lay hold of it. We'll talk about how in just a bit.

But at this point, we need to remember what we're talking about when we talk about grace, because when God says to Paul, *"My grace is sufficient for you,"* that might be confusing to some of us. We talked about this back in chapter 8, because many times we think of grace simply as unmerited favor, but in this context, Paul is talking about grace that enables. In other words, he's talking… Do you guys remember back in chapter 8? He talked about, he said, hey guys, I want you just to know about the churches in Macedonia, they were incredible because they gave out of their poverty. They gave an offering to the suffering believers in Judea out of their poverty, and he said it was God's grace.

What we see in that passage, and we talked about it back then, is that God's grace, in this context, is grace that enables, it's grace that empowers us to do, okay, or to be what God has called us to do or to be, all right?

But, here's the important question. Paul says, my grace, or the Lord said to Paul rather, *"My grace is sufficient for you."* If that is universally available to all believers, how do we activate it? How do we activate it? It's like getting one of those cards in the mail that you have to call and activate. It's yours, but before you can use it, it has to be activated. Usually that means calling a number, going through some menu or getting online or doing something.

Well, in the same way, this grace that empowers has to be activated in our lives. And I want you to notice how it happens. Verse 9, you ready? *"But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you,* (here's the activation key) *for my power is made perfect in weakness."* There it is guys so let's close in prayer. No, I'm just kidding.

I mean, we've all read this before. We've all read. My power is made perfect in weakness. But we're left like, huh? What is He exactly saying here? He's saying that the reason that He allowed Paul to suffer all the difficulties, the harassing torment of what that thorn in the flesh was to him, because of the end result.

The end result of the suffering was that Paul remained weak. He remained, he was literally put in a weakened condition because of it, but that was a good thing. Because in his weakness, the grace of God enabled and empowered him in amazing ways to do things that otherwise Paul would not have been able to do. You with me?

It's like God is saying to Paul, listen, buddy, I want you just to remember something. I know I haven't given you what you asked for, but I've given you what you need. In fact, what you need the most. Because the best way for my power and my strength to be operational in your life is for you my son to be kept in a place of weakness. That is the best way to activate this grace that enables.

What's Paul's conclusion in all of this? I'm in the middle of verse 9. Look with me there. Middle of verse 9. Paul says, *"Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses,* (he says) *so that* (why? So that, here's the point, so that) *the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses,* (he says) *insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

By the way, does that last phrase sound weird to you? It should because it is grammatically incorrect but Paul doesn't care. Because he's speaking the truth. He's not speaking correct grammar. You see, correct grammar would be, when I am weak, then He is strong. The lyric we all sang of Jesus loves me when we were children. They are weak, but He is strong.

Actually, Paul says, no, it's actually a little bit different than that. When we get weak, then we are strong, because what Paul is talking about here is that activation process.

How do you activate the power, enabling power of God in your life? By being weak. Now this really goes against the grain of our humanity, because we don't like to be weak, like ever. We like to be strong. We want to show strength to other people. We want to show that we've got it put together. Like Facebook, we want to always show this, and we've gotten very good at this on Facebook. We give people a very filtered picture of our lives. This is my life with filters,

I'm not going to let you see the real thing. You can't… But I'll let you see my life with filters because it's like, Whoo!

We don't like to be weak. So Paul, in this sentence abandons what would otherwise be proper grammar and he says, *"when I am weak, then I am strong."* Because he understood that in order to activate the flow of God's power in his life, he had to first embrace, he had to embrace his personal weakness, and then present himself before God as an empty vessel. I'm empty. I've got nothing. I've got nothing.

God's like, phew, glad you finally figured that one out. Now I can use you. Now I can really use your life. Because you've come to that place of personally understanding your weakness. But how did we come to that place of personally understanding our weakness?

We were dealt a hand of pain. Which, by the way, we usually accuse God for. God, I don't want this pain in my life. Why did you give me this pain? Why does God do this in my life anyway? And we're angry about it. I'm angry about the pain. I'm angry about the difficulty. I'm angry about the circumstances that are just hard. And so I spend all my time complaining and I read all kinds of self-help books about how not to be weak and so forth and so on. And I missed the whole point.

I missed the whole point of the suffering, which is to bring me to God on my knees to say to Him, I have nothing. I am an empty vessel. I am poured out and I have nothing. I have nothing to offer you. No power, no strength, no ability. And that's what Paul understood, that God responds to the confession of one of his children who comes to Him in weakness. And He responds by giving the grace, which is the power to do and the power to be, which would otherwise not be available to you.

You guys familiar with a man by the name of William Wilberforce? Historically speaking, he was a pretty cool dude. He was born in the late 1700s, died in the early 1800s. I think he died around 1833, 1835, something like that. William Wilberforce was instrumental as a born again believer in the fight and in fact leading the fight to abolish the slave trade in the United Kingdom in Britain.

But what you may not know about William Wilberforce is that he was a man who struggled with great physical weakness and frailty. He was a very frail man. You can read about the things he did and you can think, whoa! What a guy! What a guy! Brought the nation of Britain to its knees, to the place of

finally abolishing slavery in that country. And you're thinking, Wow! William Wilberforce! Boom!

He was a very weak man. In fact, someone who witnessed him in action said this, and this, and I quote, “I saw what seemed to be a shrimp become a whale.” Isn't that an interesting statement? “I saw a man who seemed to be a shrimp become a whale.” William Wilberforce understood, just like the apostle Paul understood, that in the hands of God, his weakness was a benefit, and he confessed it and gave it to the Lord, and God used him to take down a Goliath.

What's our takeaway from this? Well, how about something like this, that from what you and I see in the scripture and from what we also observe in people we see, we understand bodily pain and difficulty can actually have a special role in those people finding the strength of God in and through their lives.

And so we see this activation key in the word of recognizing our weakness and confessing it before God. And laying it down, but there's one other key that I want you to see here, and this is also very important as it relates to activating the grace of God, and it's found in verse 10, and just because it's so important, I'm just going to put it up on the screen. Okay, look at it here because I've taken the liberty of highlighting some of it for you to emphasize the part I want you to see.

2 Corinthians 12:10 (ESV)

FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST, (there it is) *then,* (then Paul says) *I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

And I want you to see those words that are highlighted in all caps because they are so crucial. Because listen, if you're doing it for any other reason but for the sake of Christ, you're going to end up a big, fat mess, emotional mess. Because you know what, humanly speaking, we don't do these things. We are not content with weakness for our own sake.

I have never once in my life been content with weakness for my sake. I always want strength. But what Paul says here is, *“For the sake of Christ, then I am content”* and that is so important here. He's talking about suffering weakness for the sake of Christ. In other words, for the purpose of Christ. I'll say it another way.

Lord, this weakness in my life. I'm doing this for You. This thing in my life this thing that you've allowed in my life that keeps me weak, this is for You. This is for Your glory, not mine. In fact, in the eyes of people, it makes me look like nothing and that's okay, but I know what begins to happen in my life as a result of this weakness operational in my body. I throw myself before You and I am utterly dependent on You because there's nothing else to depend on. I have no inner strength to depend on. I have no inner fortitude to just say, all right, it's time to buck up and be, there's nothing. And so Lord, this is for You.

That's what Paul is saying here. I have been forced, God, to cast myself upon You completely in utter dependence upon Your power, Your strength, according to the promise of Your Word.

And Paul found himself in that place often. And he wrote this section of 2 Corinthians to tell you and I that when you find yourself there too, God is faithful. He's faithful and He will do what he said He will do. And that is, He will take your weakness as you lay it down. In weakness, and He will bring about His strength through you, amen.