



Part 16: Finding Power When I'm Weak *2 Cor. 11:16-12:10*

Failure. Pain. Suffering. No one is exempt. So how do you find hope when life is tough and you are weak? In this encouraging passage, the Apostle Paul's honest confessions of weakness reveal the secret to his joy.

Four positive responses to life's troubles:

1. **Reveal** _____
"If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness." 2 Cor. 11:30

"...I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses." 2 Cor. 12:5

"...I delight in weaknesses." 2 Cor. 12:10

"...I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses..." 2 Cor. 12:9

Paul talks about...

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"I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received ... the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers." 2 Cor. 11:23-26

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"I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches." 2 Cor. 11:27-28

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"In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands." 2 Cor. 11:32-33

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"I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third

heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know --God knows... To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me." 2 Cor. 12:2, 7

2. **Release** _____
"Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me." 2 Cor. 12:8

3. **Receive** _____
"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'" 2 Cor. 12:9

"We survive not on explanations but on promise." -Warren Wiersbe

"Learn the principle of 'positive relinquishment'" -Steve Brown

4. **Realize** _____
"Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." 2 Cor. 12:9b-10

Daily Meditations

Here's a chance to spend some time each day this week meditating on today's topic!

This week's memory verse: *"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 about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." 2 Cor. 12:9*

Monday

Read 2 Cor. 11:16-12:10. Look back over your notes from last weekend. What truths from these verses stand out most to you?

What do you see in Paul's example that is most difficult for you to practice?

Spend time in prayer today thinking of your weaknesses and difficulties in life: If you made a list like Paul's, what would yours include? Think of ways God has shown His presence and has grown you spiritually through those times. Thank God for what He has done.

Tuesday

What are the dangers of boasting?

Read 2 Cor. 11:24-33. Why did Paul “boast” about his hardships?

What does it mean to “boast in the Lord”?

How can our boasting be glorifying to God?

What “boasts” can you have ready to strengthen your own faith and the faith of others?

Take some time to boast to the Lord in prayer of His mighty works in your life. Be specific!

Wednesday

Read 2 Cor. 11:28,29 again. What was Paul’s attitude toward Christians who were weak in their faith and led into sin?

How would feeling this way change the way someone ministers to sinners?

How do you feel when a fellow believer sins?

How do you feel when a fellow believer sins *against you* or a *friend*?

What do you learn about Paul’s heart in these verses? Does this surprise you?

Think of friends you have who are Christians falling into sin. Ask God to give you the sympathy of Paul in these verses. Pray for them.

Thursday

Read 2 Cor. 12:1-9. Why are we often afraid to disclose our weaknesses to one another?

Why do you think Paul is so frank about his weaknesses in this passage ?

What are some of the weaknesses or afflictions you find difficult to live with?

What can you learn from Paul’s response to his own “thorn in the flesh”?

Turn your own “thorn in the flesh” over to the Lord today. Be honest, plead with Him... and then be willing to accept whatever answer He gives.

Friday

Read 2 Cor. 12:8-10. How does the Christian perspective on power and weakness differ from that of the world?

What do you think God means when he says to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you...”?

What do you think God means when He says, “...for my strength is made perfect in weakness”?

How have you seen God use weaknesses, failures, or handicaps for His purposes in your life?

Thank God today that He uses the weak things! Ask Him to work through you in all your weaknesses today and this week!

Saturday

Please finish any devotions you may have missed and review the memory verse for the week. Please pray for the services this weekend, that they will glorify and honor God. Thank you!

Some questions this week adapted from *NavPress Lesson Maker* and *Serendipity Study Bible*