

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## ***The Power of God in The Weakness of Man, Pt 2***

### ***Selected Passages***

**Keywords:** Gospel, Mystery, Revelation, Plan of God, Weakness, Power of God

**PowerPoint Presentation included:** NONE

**SermonAudio Blurb:**

#### **I. Introduction.**

- A. I want to build off of last week for one more hour. It was clear that it impacted several of you and I think it is something that we need to settle into our hearts.
  - 1. Essentially I want to put feet to what I taught last week. To show how pervasive this is in the bible and in fact foundational in the gospel message.
  - 2. To do that means I need to speak to the sickness that is in the American Church in so many ways.
  
- B. Background:
  - 1. The Roman Empire culture was not one that honored weakness or shame. It was a classic honor-shame culture and the goal was to be seen powerful, sufficient.
    - a. Who did you know? What was your reputation and influence?
    - b. And nothing was more devastating than to be shamed. The cost was enormous. Business would fail. Connections with people of influence and power would be broken.
  - 2. In a very similar way this is true in our country as well. Think of how we assess our worth too often.
    - a. To increase ones worth requires they belong to the right group. Even in "counter-culture" groups this is true though they take great pride in trying to deny it.
    - b. Making more money, getting the promotion, having the latest phone or fashion, moving into a bigger home or nicer neighborhood. Often behind all of this is the sense that your value has gone up.
    - c. Look at Facebook and listen to conversations. Listen to yourself and pay attention when you hear "God has blessed me" for it occurs when pleasant things occur.

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- (1) God has blessed me with such a good job.
  - (2) God has blessed me with a healthy baby.
  - (3) But has God decided to not bless you because of the stillborn or the demotion? Hardships, weakness and such are seldom seen as blessings.
  - (4) Was God blessing Paul through imprisoning him? Was it the grace of God to put Paul into a situation of shame, dishonor and weakness?
3. I want to call this idea triumphalism.
- a. Essentially it goes like this. God has triumphed over the forces of darkness in Jesus Christ. Therefore we are to be triumphal in our lives.
  - b. How does it look? It takes on many faces, some obvious and some more subtle.
    - (1) Joel Osteen's message that you can have your best life now. The whole of the prosperity gospel world is wrapped up in the idea that God's blessings are very tangible in wealth, health, and well-being.
    - (2) Bill Johnson is another example of a different sort of triumphalism. Located in Redding, CA he is part of a greater movement known as the New Apostolic Reformation all of which share similar teachings.
      - (a) Essentially whatever is true for heaven should be true for the Christian on earth.
      - (b) "The will of God is simply this: "On earth as it is in Heaven." Isn't it refreshing? When we pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done," we're praying for the King's dominion and will to be realized right here, right now. That is a life-transforming, paradigm-shattering way to "do" normal Christianity. What is free to operate in Heaven – Joy, peace, wisdom, health, wholeness, and all the other good promises we read about in the Bible – Should be free to operate here on this planet, in your home, your church, your business, and your school. What is not free to operate there – sickness, disease, spiritual

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bondage, and sin – should not be free to operate here, period. We are out to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). It's an awesome way to live!" (<http://bjm.org/2013/01/heaven-invading-earth/> viewed October 9, 2014)

- (3) This then trickles down into the greater Charismatic movement where evidences of God are seen in healings, the miraculous, revelations. In other words, exciting and powerful encounters.
  - (4) Then you have countless churches who spend their entire time trying to be relevant in one way or another. Church is now marketed toward a target audience with promises of happiness, fun and relevance. Websites proclaim "exciting worship."
  - (5) You see it in movements like the Patriarchy and Quiverfull movements. We have honor in the size of our families and how modestly the women are dressed. But in reality it is all about power.
  - (6) Or the biblical counseling movement, which I agree with in so many ways, when some end up making weakness and struggles something to be shamed of rather than coming alongside to exhort, encourage and instruct with patience. So many in the movement hold up highly the idea of having "their act together."
- c. In the end we kill ourselves in trying to keep up with the Jones on child-rearing, house-buying, book-reading, ministry-doing, and all the rest.
- (1) We will destroy our households trying to get good, well-adjusted children.
  - (2) Husbands will kick their wives around trying to get them into submission.
  - (3) We will avoid relationship and marriage so that we can avoid the hard work that is involved.
  - (4) Bottom-line we don't want to be weak. We want it fixed and fixed now. And if it isn't then we begin to question the goodness of God and the fairness of it all.

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4. As I said last week, Paul is not thinking like Americans when he considers the shame of his imprisonment for the gospel's sake. He is not saying that even though this is a bad situation but God can still work in it. On the contrary, he says that it is God grace that has put him in this state of shame and weakness. It is exactly where God would have him so that the power of God would shine forth in that weakness to shame the powers of darkness who think that weakness and shame are tools for our destruction. God says, no, they are used for the power of God to be seen and experienced.
- C. Today we won't be in Ephesians specifically but rather I want to show how this idea of God's glory and sufficiency is seen through weakness rather than strength.
1. Some of the passages will be obvious while other are perhaps new to you.
  2. What we need to do though is have our bibles open and go to each passage and give it careful thought.

## II. Power in Weakness—A Survey.

- A. Last week I spoke about David and Goliath.
1. In that passage I pointed out how the person of David was purposely downplayed and the power of God magnified. God defeated Goliath **not** through David's abilities and skill but in David's weakness and dependence upon God.
  2. In Judges 6-7 there is another example that is worth noting.
    - a. Gideon is raised up by God to be the judge of Israel. (Judges 6:13-16 note the play on strength and weakness)
    - b. The Midianites were tormenting the people and Gideon gets together a force of 32,000 fighting men (7:2).
      - (1) Exactly what we would do. Shock and awe.
      - (2) God says it is too much and makes a second cut (7:4-6).
    - c. Now with this tiny force they go up against the Midianites. But what stands out in the story is that they still never fight.
    - d. 7:19-22.
- B. Galatians 3:1.
1. Note how he writes this. Jesus being public portrayed as crucified. What is meant by this?

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2. He doesn't speak here of teaching or preaching Jesus but that in some way Jesus was publically portrayed. How would this be done.
  3. A good possibility is found later in Galatians in 4:13-15.
    - a. Paul was a physical mess when he came to them the first time. It is hard to place when this event happened exactly.
    - b. But we know that regardless of the timing that it was not in power that Paul came to them.
    - c. And yet what did he do in the midst of weakness? He preached to them Jesus and the gospel.
    - d. In weakness he portrayed to them in a very real, tangible, and public manner Jesus Christ and Him crucified.
  4. Compare that with today where an evangelist has his advance teams coming into cities. Door hangers and radio spots. Mailers and posters all making much of this man and his skills. He comes on stage not in weakness but a picture of health and confidence and then he begins to work the crowd.
  5. Paul came to Galatia a broken and sick man in need of rest and healing. But in the midst of that weakness he spoke to them the message of Jesus, Our God who became weak in humanity. God who took on our sin in our place.
  6. God who suffered shame and dishonor on the cross. Who experienced death. God who destroyed the power of death and rose in victory.
- C. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5.
1. This is a passage that powerfully describes the manner in which Paul modeled for us all what it looks like to live and conduct ourselves for the cause of Christ in weakness.
  2. Note how he did not come and did come in vs 1 compared to 3-4.
  3. For what purpose? Vs 5 "that".
  4. There is no doubt that one of the primary ways that Paul would preach Christ and Him crucified was with words. That is obvious from vss 1-2.
  5. But it is also true that he then conformed his life and actions to what would be called a "cruciform" life. One that reflected God's way of confronting this age with the truth and glory of the good news found in Jesus Christ.
  6. The Corinthian, just like an American, would have certain corrupt expectations on how Paul should bring this message known as the gospel to

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the people. Lovers of rhetoric it would be through that rhetoric that he should speak. But he refused.

- a. It is worth noting that he is not rejecting rhetoric in itself.
- b. Rather it is the motives and mind set behind much rhetoric that is being rejected. The kind that is designed to promote yourself and impress the crowds. The kind that manipulates and controls the crowd to move them at your will.
- c. Frankly, Paul uses language incredibly well and with great subtlety. But in doing so he points the reader away from himself and toward Jesus Christ.

7. Go back to 1 Corinthians 1:11ff.

- a. First a note about Chloe's people. Clearly telling Paul about what was going on was not considered gossip.
- b. Vss 12-13 show the problem and gives us a glimpse into how the culture there work, aligning yourself with a certain teacher/preacher rather than finding your identity in Jesus Christ alone.
- c. With a stinging rebuke in vss 14-17 he then moves to his bigger point—the method he used and the reason he used it. You cannot miss that, you must not miss it.
  - (1) Our problem is not that we did not package the gospel in a clever enough package. Nor is it that we failed to contextualize it properly.
  - (2) Is it not possible that it is because we are seeking to be clever and wise in their eyes that we end up making it void?
  - (3) Or we foolishly think we are not wise enough to share the gospel with another because we do not believe that it is in weakness that God's power is made known?
- d. Notice then how Paul shows his reasoning in vss 18-24 (take them verse by verse showing his logic)

D. 2 Corinthians 4:5-18.

1. Note as we go through this text the postures of weakness and also how a full-orbed grasp of what is to come in the resurrection propels Paul forward into weakness.
2. Take them through the flow and logic.

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3. If we are to be faithful in this age. An age where the fallen powers and rulers and authorities press their agenda of power upon us all we must take on a cruciform life. **This is nothing less than a self-sacrificial style of living that is both sustained and releases the power of God.**
  4. The writer of Hebrews shows us this same idea in a slightly different way, "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set **before** Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2)
- E. 1 Corinthians 12:1-10.
- F. Philippians 4:9-13.
1. He calls upon them to use him as their model. Notice the tri-formed terminology, "learned, received and seen."
  2. Notice in vs 11 what it looks like to live a life that is wise. It is a contentment in whatever lot the Lord places you in.
  3. There shall be days of rest and plenty and there shall be days of hardship and weakness. It matters not to the wise man or woman.
  4. For regardless the wise person rests in the sufficiency that is the knowledge that God is accomplishing his will through me

### III. Conclusion.

- A. Most of you shall never be a teacher or preacher. But this does not alleviate you from embracing biblical weakness as the way of life as a believer.
- B. It is a life of self-giving, of dying to ourselves and like Christ commanded us, taking up our cross and following Him.
1. This is something we like to talk about but it is not something we like to really do. Or, we distort it into an American form of cross-bearing.
  2. We forget that our "cross" is not some burden that we have like sickness or a bad job or unhappy marriage. Rather it is shame. The shame that comes in a message that does not make sense.
  3. A message that says that we are to die to ourselves. That we are not to be the center of our lives. That we are not the captains of our destiny.
  4. That we need a substitute who bears our sins away. We need a perfect sacrifice for we are not. We need an eternal mediator that we might know God. We need one who conquers the grave for the grave is where we are headed.

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5. We need Jesus.
- C. And as we believe in Jesus we take up that shameful cross day after day and follow Him.
1. We live and walk and talk in such a way that invites examination and intrusion.
  2. A life that is filled with hospitality and a love for those who are marginalized and weak in this world.
  3. It is not a fake humility either. It is not the kind of humility that you portray when hurt or confronted that looks good on the outside while on the inside there is bitterness and anger.
  4. It is a love and humility that is uniquely reflective of God our Father as seen in Jesus. Who while on the Cross cried out "Father, forgive them for they don't know what they are doing!" Which is why we are commanded to forgive one another **just as** Christ has forgiven us.
  5. A cruciform/transformed life is not bitter because of weakness, but boasts in it and prayerfully seeks the pleasure of the Father to cause His power to be present in our weakness rather than to save us from it.
- D. Paul is going to spend three chapters to describe in some many different ways a cruciform life looks like. And as you read ahead something should jump out to you.
1. It is incredibly mundane.
  2. It is not some climatic, intense event or two where you are forced to choose life or Jesus.
  3. It is the weakness of just being faithful where God has you. A faithful husband or wife. A faithful father or mother. A faithful son or daughter.
  4. It is using your tongue to build up rather than tear down.
  5. It is using your hands to labor so that you can give to others rather than acquire more and more.
  6. It is pursuing serving others as your calling for life.
  7. So boring. So weak. So cross-centered.

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## **Community Group Questions**

- **Start out by simply asking each person what stood out to them and why?**
- **What is specifically a point of struggle or encouragement from this sermon? How can the group pray for you in light of what was learned?**