

Content with Weakness: Paul's Paradoxical Proposal
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Description: No one likes to admit weakness or to feel powerless. We prefer at least a healthy dose of strength and ease in life. But Paul reveals how God's power is paradoxically perfected in his weakness, to the extent that Paul boasts all the more gladly of his weaknesses! How can this be? This session will explore how we can increasingly grow in contentment amid weakness and suffering as we rest in the sufficient grace of Christ, who himself became weak on our behalf.

- I. Weakness is the way?
- II. Setting the context for 2 Corinthians 12:7–10: Paul and the “super-apostles” (11:1–12:6)
- III. Life is thorny (12:7–8)
 - a. Don't forget the involvement of Satan in your suffering.
 - i. “Sometimes, in our good desire to emphasize the truth of God's sovereignty, we can unwittingly conflate God's sovereignty and Satan's malice.” (Karrie Hahn, *Limping Heavenward*, 59)
 - b. Paul's experience does not mean that suffering in *your* life is necessarily a discipline from God for sin.
 - c. Weakness or suffering of any kind is not an invitation to passivity and resignation but to prayerful pleading.
- IV. Jesus meets us with his grace in our weakness (v. 9a)
 - a. The source of grace is personal.
 - b. What is “sufficient”?
 - c. A state of weakness is where God's power is made most manifest. This is Christ's story as well.
- V. Weakness is the gateway to strength (vv. 9b-10)
 - a. Suffering is the principal way the power of Jesus Christ comes to rest on us.
 - b. What contentment is and isn't:
 - i. Christian contentment is that inward, gracious frame of spirit, “which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition.” (Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, 19)

- ii. Contentment “is not opposed to all lawful seeking for help in different circumstances, nor endeavoring simply to be delivered out of present afflictions by the use of lawful means.” (Burroughs, 22)
- c. The experience of weakness and strength is simultaneous, not sequential.
- d. What Paul describes is not necessarily only an experiential reality, but also an objective one, just as surely as we have died and have been raised with Christ.
- e. Christ’s power perfected in our weakness goes beyond our own personal experience to impact others for good.

VI. Walking forward in weakness