

OVERVIEW OF BOOK OF 2 Corinthians – POWER IN WEAKNESS IN SPIRITUAL MINISTRY

INTRODUCTION:

To set the stage for the message of 2 Corinthians – a message of **Power in Weakness** – I want to first highlight some examples from the OT that demonstrate that God has consistently demonstrated His power in weakness. He does this so that He will receive all of the glory. He loves to have all of the odds stacked against Him before He engages and steps in to bring the victory.

The Old Testament repeatedly demonstrates that human weakness is the canvas on which God paints His glory. God's power is not limited by human frailty—He often chooses the weak so that His glory, not human ability, is magnified. 4 Key OT examples:

- Why did God choose **Abraham** and the **nation of Israel** to bless? Not because he was so great – He was a pagan idolater in Ur; Egypt was the great nation of the day, not Israel
Deut. 7:7-8 *The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*
God is out to glorify Himself – eliminate all boasting on the part of man
- Why did God open the wombs of the barren (**Sarah, Hannah**, etc.) to bring such abundant blessing? God teaching the principle that **we walk by faith not be sight**
Heb. 11:11-12 *By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised; 12 therefore, also, there was born of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.*
- Why did God bring about military victories thru fearful warriors like **Gideon**? Indeed God reduced his army from 32,000 to 300 before leading them to victory
Judges 7:2 *And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, lest Israel become boastful, saying, 'My own power has delivered me.'"*
- Why did God bless the ultimate underdog **David** to defeat the impressive champion of the Philistine army – the mighty Goliath?
Saul trusted in armor and appearances; David trusted in the living God.
1 Sam. 17:45 *"You come to me with a sword and spear and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied."* David rejected the impressive weaponry of Saul and just took his slingshot and some simple stones to the challenge

David understood that the battle was not about military might but about God's honor. Goliath had mocked the Lord, and David's faith compelled him to act so that "*all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear*" (v. 47).

This was the ultimate display of God's power through the weakness of His faithful servant

Remember the **background** we shared last week regarding the church in Corinth and Paul's multiple letters and visits to try to address the various problems there. We walked thru the progression of **3 visits and 4 letters** and saw that Paul faced significant attacks against his apostolic authority and ministry among them. He was no stranger to difficulties and hardships. Yet he relied on God's power for the sufficiency of his spiritual ministry just as we need to do today. There were some individuals that were presenting themselves as almost **super-apostles** – very impressive outwardly. Charismatic personalities; eloquent orators; impressed with their own giftedness and trying to both discredit Paul and gain a following focused around their own leadership prowess. There is nothing more dangerous in spiritual leadership than men who are impressed with themselves and trying to impress others. God has to give them the Nebuchadnezzar treatment as they boast of their accomplishments. God tears them down and makes them graze on grass until they are willing to give Him all of the glory. God is a jealous God and will not share His glory with man.

2 Corinthians is the most personal and the most passionate of Paul's letters because the circumstances forced him to defend his ministry. He exposes his heart and his motivations and his ministry methods as he seeks reconciliation with these Corinthian believers who should have been fiercely loyal to the one who founded the church and spent so much time teaching them God's truth.

- I want you to be encouraged this morning as you see how God used weakness in the life of Paul to actually empower his ministry. Men tend to be impressed by outward appearances but God looks at the faithfulness in the heart.
- I want to share some of my own heart and experiences with you in terms of how God has used weakness in my own life. – For example, He has blessed me with the gift of teaching and yet since High School I have had a terrible case of **fear of public speaking**. That is not a great combination. But I also love to teach – strange how the Lord works to showcase His power thru weakness. Naturally, I would look like a frozen, terrified statute up here. How can I look so comfortable? Only the grace of God. I also possess the enhanced sweat gene. My kids thank me for this. When Karen and I come home after a long walk, I am drenched and head for the shower. You know the saying: *Never let them see you sweat?* Well I am a miserable failure by that standard. Sort of like the Gary Williams or John Thompson of college basketball. I should come up to the pulpit with my own sweat towel.
- I want each of you to consider your own spiritual giftedness and calling to church ministry to see how God is using weakness to drive you to trust in Him for effectiveness in ministry.

This has always been God's strategy. This is how God makes sure that He gets all the glory so that our boasting is in Him. Look at the great prophets and servants of God and see how they all wrestled with a deep sense of **inadequacy**: Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc.

My favorite ministry image in 2 Corinthians is found in **4:7**

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

Jars of Clay is the ministry name adopted by a Christian alternative rock band from Nashville – As we are broken, *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God* shines out to the watching world

Key Verse: *“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.” (12:9)*

Our natural tendency is to want to fight our weakness. To beg God to remove it. But God wants us to adopt a radically different strategy. The Apostle Paul had to learn this approach and so do we. God wants us to actually boast in our weakness.

Big Idea: GOD VINDICATES THE LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY OF NEW COVENANT MINISTERS BY TRANSFORMING THEIR APPARENT WEAKNESSES INTO A DEMONSTRATION OF HIS GRACE AND POWER

Maybe you are supremely confident in your abilities and don't wrestle with any sense of inadequacy or weakness. I want to warn you that you are standing on dangerous ground. Study the life of Nebuchadnezzar; study the gloating of Mordecai's arch enemy Haman who ended up being hanged on the gallows he had built. Let him who stands in his own power take heed because he is about to fall.

LOOK AT 4 AREAS WHERE GOD TRANSFORMS APPARENT WEAKNESS INTO A DEMONSTRATION OF HIS GRACE AND POWER

I. (1:1-11) INTRODUCTION: THE WEAKNESS OF PHYSICAL SUFFERING FOR THE CAUSE OF CHRIST –

PHYSICAL SUFFERING PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY FOR GOD'S GRACE AND POWER TO BE DISPLAYED IN COMFORT AND DELIVERANCE

(INSIGHT INTO PAUL'S APOSTOLIC CALLING AND PASTORAL HEART)

“indeed we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead” (1:9)

A. (:1-2) Greeting: Apostolic Calling

Whatever Paul attempted by way of ministry – he did in harmony with the will of God; not ambitiously advancing his own agenda

God has something he wants each of you to accomplish in accordance with how He has gifted you

B. (:3-11) Pastoral Heart: The Sufficiency of God's Comfort in Our Own Desperate Trials Equips Us to Comfort Others in Their Trials

1. (:3-7) Universal Principle: The sufficiency of God's comfort in our trials equips us to comfort others in their trials

Comfort carries with it the idea of strengthening; not just some empathy or pity
Parakaleo – call to one side – to give help, encouragement, much more than merely alleviating grief
Holy Spirit is our Paraclete = Comforter, Helper

2. (:8-11) Apostle Paul's Personal Testimony: The severity of our trials makes us desperate for God's deliverance – everything always happens to Paul in the extreme – so we can all relate when our trials are less severe

These sufferings were related in some sense to Paul's fulfillment of his apostolic calling; related to his identification with Jesus Christ – more than just some unrelated physical issue – just the physical drain of caring for the churches would be exhausting enough as a physical trial – but Paul's situation was much more desperate

Maybe you are dealing with some area of Weakness related to Physical Suffering – God wants to turn that into a testimony to His power to Deliver and Comfort – I know I had a rough couple of months earlier this year

Spiritual power for ministry is all about **Dependence upon God**

II. (1:12 – 7:13) THE WEAKNESS OF PERSONAL INADEQUACY -- PERSONAL INADEQUACY PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY FOR THE GLORY OF THE NEW COVENANT MINISTRY TO BE DISPLAYED IN MINISTRY INTEGRITY AND RECONCILED RELATIONSHIPS

(PAUL'S CONFIDENCE IN HIS MINISTRY INTEGRITY AND HIS COMMITMENT TO RECONCILED RELATIONSHIPS)

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves” (4:7)

THIS IS THE MAIN SECTION – GET THE MESSAGE OF THIS SECTION

A. (1:12 – 2:13) Ministry Integrity for the Apostle Paul Means that He Has the Best Interests of the Corinthian Believers at Heart

1. (1:12-14) Integrity in Ministry Leads to the Testimony of a Clear Conscience

a. (:12) Confidence of Integrity – you must possess this

For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.

- b. (:13-14) Transparency of Integrity – should be evident to those to whom we are ministering

When you look for spiritual power – don't look for what the world sees as impressive – look for personal integrity; ministry integrity – strength of character
No hidden agenda; no deceitfulness

B. (2:14 – 3:18) New Covenant Ministry Is Victorious, Life-Changing and Glorious

1. (2:14-17) God Guarantees Victory in Proclaiming Christ

- a. (2:14-16a) The **Consequences** (Outcome) of the Gospel Ministry –
Victory in Proclaiming Christ Does Not Depend on Positive Results
But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. ¹⁵ For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; ¹⁶ to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life.

- b. (2:16b-17) The **Confidence** (Sufficiency) of the Gospel Ministry –
Victory in Proclaiming Christ Does Depend on Personal Faithfulness
And who is adequate for these things? ¹⁷ For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.

Question we are trying to answer: *Who is sufficient (adequate) for these things?*
Gets back to the issue of faithfulness and personal integrity
Word of God is powerful – let it do the work; but you must be the channel

2. (3:1-3) The Commendation for Effective Ministry is Changed Lives

- a. Unnecessary Types of Commendation
- b. The Only Valid Commendation for Effective Ministry = Changed Lives

How do you know you are ministering in the power of God which is working through your weakness of personal inadequacy? Lives will be changed; people will be helped and built up in ways that demonstrate the Holy Spirit is at work

Personal Testimony: I receive validation of my spiritual giftedness from those to whom I minister. For example I receive emails from pastors and missionaries all over the world who express thanksgiving for the resource of my website that they are using in their ministries. This is how God encourage us.

- 3. (3:4-18) The Ministry of the Spirit (New Covenant) Far Surpasses the Glory of the Ministry of the Law (Old Covenant)
 - a. (3:4-11) God Makes Us Competent Through the Spirit to Reflect His Glory in New Covenant Ministry

3:4-6 Competent to Minister – [like Jay Adams book – Competent to Counsel] /

last week: Competent to judge fellow believers / Today: Competent to minister the new covenant

“And such confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant”

Get a vision for the glory of the New Covenant ministry – what a privilege

Get a grip on the reality of the Holy Spirit working within us and through us ..

Get in touch with the life of Christ –we have been united with Him in His death and now serve in newness of life because of His resurrection

Should allow us to minister with a spirit of boldness and confidence **vs. 12**

C. (4:1 – 5:10) Ministers of the New Covenant Should Never Lose Heart

1. (4:1-6) The Gospel Ministry (Proclaiming the Glory of Christ) is Too Precious to Give in to Discouragement)

Easy for ministers of the gospel to get discouraged and lose heart. Look at all that Paul was facing:

- attacks against his character
- attacks against the legitimacy of his apostleship
- attacks against the effectiveness of his ministry

a. (4:1-2) Ministry Integrity Protects Against Discouragement

Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, ² but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

b. (4:3-4) Lack of Results Do Not Detract from the Preciousness or the Effectiveness of the Gospel

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

c. (4:5) It is Not About Us – The Focus of Gospel Ministry is the Proclamation of the Glory of Christ

For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.

d. (4:6) God Can Make Things Happen in a Big Way Any Time He Wants – The Precious Stewardship of the Gospel Depends on Sovereign Enlightenment

For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

2. (4:7-18) The Prospect of the Ministry – Future Resurrection and Reward
Enable Us to Endure Present Physical Suffering in the Ministry Without Losing Heart

4:7 *“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves”*

- a. **(4:7-12)** Showcasing Jesus Instead of Ourselves Requires Dying So Others May Live
- b. **(4:13-15)** Spreading Grace to the Glory of God Requires Proclaiming the Power of the Resurrection
- c. **(4:16-18)** Suffering Affliction With Perseverance Requires Focusing on the Eternal Weight of Glory

vs. 16 – *“therefore, we do not lose heart”*

3. (5:1-10) The Longing For the Resurrection Body Motivates us to Focus on Spiritual Ministry Even at the Expense of Physical Suffering – Future Glory Inspires **Courage** and **Commitment** in Living to Please our Lord

- a. **(5:1-5)** Present Suffering Should Intensify the Longing for Future Glory (The Resurrection Body)
- b. **(5:6-10)** Two Results of This Longing for Future Glory
 - 1) (:6-8) Future Glory Inspires Courage**
“Therefore, being always of good courage”
 - a) Because We Recognize the Limitations of This Earthly Life
“and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord”
 - b) Because We Walk by Faith Not by Sight
“for we walk by faith, not by sight”
key to book – perceiving realities beyond what you could perceive with your physical eyes
 - c) Because We Prefer Our Eternal Home
“we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.”
 - 2) (:9-10) Future Glory Inspires Commitment**
 - a) (:9) Single-minded Ambition

“Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.”

b) (:10) Sobering Accountability

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

D. (5:11 – 6:13) Reconciled Relationships and Ministry Integrity Are the Keys to Intimate Partnership in the Gospel

1. (5:11 – 6:2) God’s Work of Reconciliation in Christ Motivates Us to Pursue a Ministry of Reconciliation –

5 Motivations to Pursue Reconciliation:

- a. (5:11-13) Constrained by the Fear of God – Accountability Drives Our Ministry Urgency and Integrity
- b. (5:14-15) Constrained by the Love of Christ – Christ’s Love Makes Us Minister Unselfishly
- c. (5:16-17) Constrained by a Radically New Perspective – We Evaluate Men from a Spiritual Perspective
- d. (5:18-21) Constrained by a Heart for Reconciliation – Our Changed Relationship with God is the Basis for Our Reconciliation with Fellow Christians
- e. (6:1-2) Constrained by Urgency – Profitable Christian Service Depends Upon Immediate Reconciliation

Personal Testimony: Church that needed to pursue reconciliation among its leaders

2. (6:1-13) Transparent Integrity of Ministry Removes All Obstacles to Partnership in the Gospel

- a. (6:1-2) Seize the Opportunity for Partnership in the Gospel
- b. (6:3-10) Commendable Conduct in the Ministry Paves the Way for Partnership in the Gospel
- c. (6:11-13) Affectionate Open Dialogue Expects Reciprocation
Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide.¹² You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections.¹³ Now in a like exchange-- I speak as to children-- open wide to us also.

Finishes section with discussion of need for Separation and Importance of Repentance

E. (6:14 – 7:16) Intimate Partnership in the Gospel Requires Avoiding Contamination and Repenting

1. **(6:14 – 7:1)** Avoid Intimate Partnerships with Unbelievers that Would Hinder You From Growing Closer to Your Heavenly Father and Manifesting Your Christian Distinctiveness

- a. **(6:14-16a)** Separation is a No-Brainer
Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God;
- b. **(6:16b-18)** Cleanliness is Next to Godliness
- c. **(7:1)** Holiness is Not Outdated

Personal Testimony: Work Decision regarding Atlantic Solar Power

2. (7:2-16) Spiritual Leaders Rejoice with Comfort and Confidence Over Genuine Repentance

- a. **(7:2-4)** Introduction: The Anticipation of Genuine Repentance (Leading to Full Reconciliation) Evokes Deep Emotions of Confidence, Comfort and Joy
- b. **(7:5-7)** Divine Comfort Relieves Intense Ministry Pressure
- c. **(7:8-10)** Godly Sorrow Produces Genuine Repentance
- d. **(7:11-12)** Genuine Repentance Can Be Recognized By Others
- e. **(7:13-16)** Conclusion: Genuine Repentance Evokes Deep Emotions of Confidence, Comfort and Joy

Do you feel personally inadequate to minister? You are not alone – study any of the OT prophets – Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah ...

God has made you competent to minister – concentrate on faithfulness, personal integrity and maintaining reconciled relationships – God gets the glory as we are reconciled to Him and as we are reconciled to one another so that we can truly partner in the gospel

III. (8:1 – 9:15) THE WEAKNESS OF POVERTY THRESHOLD – GENEROUS SACRIFICIAL GIVING –

POVERTY OF FELLOW BELIEVERS PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY FOR GOD’S GRACE AND SUFFICIENCY TO BE DISPLAYED IN GENEROUS CHRISTIAN

GIVING (OFFERED FREELY FROM THE HEART AND ADMINISTERED WITH INTEGRITY)

(PAUL'S PLEA FOR PRACTICAL DEMONSTRATION OF FELLOWSHIP IN GOD'S GRACIOUS WORK OF GENEROUS GIVING)

“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.” (9:8)

This is probably the area of Weakness that we know the least about – we live in a culture where everyone tries to be self-sufficient – a humbling thing to accept the love gift from other believers; a humbling thing to put ourselves by virtue of our giving in a vulnerable position where we are weak and must be dependent upon God's provision for our own needs. Early church shared in practical material things much more than we do today here in America; if we would be willing to experience weakness in this area and make our boast in it we would experience more of God's grace and sufficiency.

Not going to spend much time on this section – we have had a lot of teaching in this area and covered these chapters – refer back to the sermons

A. (8:1-15) Good Intentions in Giving Must Be Consummated According to Your Ability – Or Ideally Beyond Your Ability

1. (8:1-5) It is Commendable to Give Beyond Your Ability –
Example of the Macedonians – Their Strong Desire to Give

(:1-3) The Grace of God is the Key to Giving

Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, ² that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. ³ For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord,

2. (8:6-11a) It is Commendable to Excel in This Gracious Work of Giving –
Call to the Corinthians – Their Duty to Consummate Their Good Intentions

8:9 *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*

3. (8:11b-15) The Rationale for Giving According to One's Ability is the Principle of Equality (Not Shifting the Burden to Yourself) – Factors to Consider in Giving

B. (8:16 – 9:5) Christian Giving Must Be Administered with Financial Integrity and Offered from Prepared Hearts

1. (8:16-24) Christian Giving Must Be Administered with Financial Integrity

2. (9:1-5) Christian Giving Must Be Offered From Prepared Hearts

C. (9:6-15) God Guarantees a Return on Spiritual Investments – the Promises of God
Promote Generous Giving Which Binds Believers Together in Glorifying God

1. (9:6-11a) 5 Promises of God that Promote Generous Giving

- a. (:6) Promise of Proportional Reaping
- b. (:7) Promise of Blessing of Free Will Offerings
- c. (:8-9) Promise of Abundant Grace
- d. (:10) Promise of Supplying Both Abundant Seed and Abundant Harvest
- e. (:11a) Promise of Overall Enrichment

2. (9:11b-14) There are Immediate Returns on Spiritual Investments –
Generous Giving Binds Believers Together in Glorifying God

3. (9:15) Benediction: “*Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.*”

IV. (10:1 – 13:10) THE WEAKNESS OF PAINFUL PERSONAL ATTACKS –

**PAINFUL PERSONAL ATTACKS AGAINST SPIRITUAL LEADERS PROVIDE
OPPORTUNITY FOR LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY TO EASILY BE DISTINGUISHED
FROM COUNTERFEIT AUTHORITY**

(PAUL’S AGGRESSIVE DEFENSE OF HIS LEGITIMATE APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY)

“For this reason I am writing these things while absent, in order that when present I may not use severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me, for building up and not for tearing down.” (13:10)

Sad when the most painful opposition comes from within the church rather than from persecution from without

Charles Ryrie: In spite of Paul’s general satisfaction with the Corinthian church, there were still some there who challenged his apostolic authority and followed certain leaders whom Paul calls “*false apostles*” (11:13). These leaders were apparently Jewish Christians (11:22) who claimed higher authority than Paul’s (10:7) and who lorded over the church.

A. (10:1-18) The Reality of Paul’s Authority –

When Necessary, Spiritual Leaders Must Defend Their Legitimate Authority Against Misrepresentations by False Leaders

1. (10:1-6) His Readiness (and Reluctance) to Exercise His Authority –
Spiritual Leaders Carry a Big Stick --
Reply to Charge of Weakness

What does spiritual power really look like?

- a) (:1) Don’t Confuse meekness for Weakness

“Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ – I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent”

Christ did not go charging around defending Himself against every attack on His person and ministry; yet you would not want to accuse Christ of being weak

b) (:2) Don't make me use the Big Stick

c) (:3-4) Spiritual leaders don't fight fairly – they use weapons that are divinely powerful

- cf. weapons used by Joshua against Jericho
- already looked at weapons used by Gideon
- cf. slingshot used by David against Goliath

d) (:5) Spiritual leaders attack the root of the problem – aggressively and successfully

e) (:6) Spiritual leaders will use the Big Stick when necessary

2. (10:7-11) His Powerful Personal Presence –
Consistent with His Strong Letters –
Spiritual Leaders Should Never be Underestimated –
Reply to Charge of Insincerity

a) (:7a) Outward Appearances Can Be Deceiving
“You are looking at things as they are outwardly.”

Appearances are deceiving. You can't judge a book by its cover. Truth, Inward character, Motivation, etc. are not immediately evident. Church was beginning to go for very worldly measures of success – for looks. They were evaluating spiritual leaders on external criteria.

b) (:7b) No Place for Christian Elitism
“If anyone is confident in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again within himself, that just as he is Christ's, so also are we.”

c) (:8-9) Goal is Edification Not Lording it Over
“For even if I should boast somewhat further about our authority, which The Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I shall not be put to shame, for I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters.”

d) (:10-11) Legitimate Spiritual Authority is the Real Thing –
whether by letter or in person

1) (:10) Accusation:

“For they say, ‘His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive, and his speech contemptible.’”

2) (:11) Response

“Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when absent, such persons we are also in deed when present.”

3. (10:12-18) His Legitimate Sphere of Authority –
Reply to Charge of Pride

a. (:12) Futility of Self Commendation

b. (:13-16) Sphere of Authority Corresponds to Sphere of Ministry

c. (:17) Focus of Boasting

“But he who boasts, let him boast in the Lord.”

d. (:18) Validity of God Commendation

“For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.”

B. (11:1-15) Marks of Apostleship #1: Humility in Ministry --

Humility in Ministry (Demonstrated Here by Preaching the Truth Without Charge) Differentiates the True From the False Apostle

1. (11:1-4) Reality Check –

Discernment Should Anchor Believers in Their Devotion to Christ

2. (11:5-12) Counterfeit Test –

Humility in Ministry (Demonstrated Here by Preaching the Truth Without Charge) Cannot be Counterfeited

3. (11:13-15) Deceitful Disguise –

False Apostles Make Every Effort to Look Like the Real Thing

C. (11:16 – 12:13) Marks of Apostleship #2: Weakness Fortified by Grace --

Severe Pressures in the Ministry Make Weakness the Platform for Exalting Christ’s Grace and Power

1. (11:16-21a) Introduction: Boasting in the Lord’s Grace and Power Can Look Like Weakness and Foolishness to Others

2. (11:21b-33) Perseverance Through Severe Pressures in the Ministry Cannot be Explained Apart From the Grace and Power of Christ

3. (12:11-13) The Marks of Genuine Apostleship Should Have Made Such Boasting Unnecessary

D. (12:14 – 13:10) Spiritual Leaders Exercise Their God-Given Authority for the Purpose of Loving Edification (Including Discipline When Necessary)

1. (12:14-18) Spiritual Leaders Exercise Their God-Given Authority from Pure Motives – Motive of Love vs. Exploitation

2. (12:19-21) Spiritual Leaders Exercise Their God-Given Authority for Pastoral Purposes – Purpose of Edification and Correction vs. Promoting Self

3. (13:1-10) Spiritual Leaders Exercise Their God-Given Authority Through Severe Discipline When Necessary

(13:11-14) FINAL CHARGE / GREETING / BENEDICTION

SUMMARY:

How can I embrace Weakness and Boast in it to Showcase God's Power and Grace?

1) Physical Suffering for the cause of Christ – Rejoice! / Be Comforted!

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”

We know Him as our Deliverer and our Comforter

2) Personal Inadequacy – be made complete

We know Him as our Sufficiency; He makes up whatever we lack

Makes us sufficient to be ministers of the New Covenant

3) Poverty Threshold – Generous Sacrificial Giving – be like-minded

Share with your brothers and sisters in Christ as they have need

4) Painful Attacks – live in peace

Or those in spiritual authority will be forced to exercise severe judgment

Precious Promise: *“and the God of love and peace shall be with you.”*

Benediction:

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.” (13:14)

1 Peter 4:10-11 *“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen”*

Al Mohler: Glory of God = the intrinsic reality and the outward manifestation of God's power and character

WHY STUDY THIS BOOK:

- To examine our motives in ministry and make sure we are practicing integrity
- To encourage us to persevere in ministry regardless of the difficulties or sense of inadequacy
- To give us a vision for pursuing reconciliation of relationships as an ambassador of Jesus Christ
- To help us distinguish between legitimate and false spiritual authority
- To highlight the tremendous glory of New Covenant ministry
- To give us a sober respect for the potential of discipline as exercised by God's appointed authorities