

Paul's Second
Letter to the
Corinthians

FELLOWSHIP SUNDAY SCHOOL COMMUNITY

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.

-2 Corinthians 12:10

Class Time

- Prayer Requests
- Scripture Reading – 2 Corinthians 11:16-12:10
- Discussion Questions
- Outline & Lesson

2 Corinthians 11:16–12:10 (ESV)

16 I repeat, let no one think me foolish. But even if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. 17 What I am saying with this boastful confidence, I say not as the Lord would but as a fool. 18 Since many boast according to the flesh, I too will boast. 19 For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves! 20 For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face. 21 To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that!

But whatever anyone else dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. 22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. 23 Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. 24 Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.

2 Corinthians

25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; 26 on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; 27 in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant? 30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. 31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. 32 At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to seize me, 33 but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his hands.

2 Corinthians

12:1 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.

2 Corinthians

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.

Discussion Questions

#1

In verse 11:20 Paul gives a disturbing description of the behavior of false teachers in Corinth. How does he describe them? How does he use sarcasm in verses 11:19 and 11:21 to call the Corinthians' attention to their tolerance of this unacceptable situation?

2 Corinthians

¹⁹ For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves!

²⁰ For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face.

²¹ To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that!

Discussion Questions

#1 b

Discussion Questions #2

In verses 11:23 – 28 Paul “boasts” that he is a better servant of Christ than the false teachers. What events and situation does he list as proof? In verse 11:30, how does he characterize his “boasting”?

2 Corinthians

Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one.

far greater labors
far more imprisonments
countless beatings
often near death
39 lashes x 5
beaten with rods x 3
stoned
shipwrecked x 3
adrift at sea
frequent journeys
danger from rivers
danger from robbers
danger from Jews

danger from Gentiles
danger in the city
danger in the wilderness
danger at sea
danger from false
brothers
toil and hardship
sleepless nights
hunger and thirst
without food
cold and exposure
anxiety for the churches

7

I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

Discussion Questions

#2b

Throughout 1st and 2nd Corinthians Paul compares weakness with God's strength or power. See these references:

1 Corinthians 1:25; 1 Corinthians 1:27; 1 Corinthians 2:3; 1 Corinthians 2:5; 1 Corinthians 15:43; 2 Corinthians 12:9; 2 Corinthians 13:3; 2 Corinthians 13:4; 2 Corinthians 13:9

What is the principle given in 12:9 for this phenomenon?

Discussion Questions

#3

2 Corinthians

- 1 Cor. 1:25 the weakness of God ... is stronger than men
- 1 Cor. 1:27 God chose what is weak ... to shame the strong
- 1 Cor. 2:3, 5 in weakness and in fear ... but in the power of God
- 1 Cor. 15:43 sown in weakness ... raised in power
- 2 Cor. 12:9 I will boast of weaknesses ...
- so that the power of Christ may rest upon me
- 2 Cor. 13:3 not weak in dealing with you ... but powerful among you
- 2 Cor. 13:4 he was crucified in weakness ... but lives by the power of God
- 2 Cor. 13:4 we also are weak in him ...
- but live with him by the power of God
- 2 Cor. 13:9 we are glad when weak ... and you are strong

What is the principle given in 12:9 for this phenomenon?

Discussion Questions

#3c

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.

I. The Corinthians Bear with Fools vv11:16-21a

- A. Paul's boastful confidence vv16-19
- B. The false teachers' bullying vv20-20
- C. Paul's shame v21a

II. Paul Speaks as a fool vv 11:21b-11:33

- A. His Jewish heritage vv21b-22
- B. His service to Christ vv 23-29
- C. His boasting in weakness vv30-33

III. God Gives a Thorn vv12:1-10

- A. Revelations and Visions vv1-6
 - 1. Things that cannot be told vv1-4
 - 2. Refrain from boasting vv 5-6
- B. Corrective for conceit vv7
- C. The power of Christ vv8-10

Strength in Weakness

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.