



10/12/26

One statement from the message on Sunday continued to captivate me... "Don't let Satan steal my worship." That's his goal. Steal our worship. But he's a liar and the father of lies. The absolute truth is, God has every reason we can think of and more to deserve our undying worship. I pray that today's passage will help strengthen us to take our stand with the Lord. He is ALWAYS worthy of our worship, no matter what we're going through. Amen!!!

*Blessings,
Jonna*

2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Since we're on the topic, The War is On, I'm seeing this passage a little differently than I normally do. I usually think about it in terms of my inner struggles and weaknesses, but not through the lens of strategic warfare. So... in this lifelong battle where the devil is trying to take me down by whatever means necessary, how does he do it? And what does God supply to help me overcome?

One thing I know for sure... Satan will try to twist any good the Lord does in my life. And he'll try to extort any struggle I face in life. His goal is either to distract me or discourage me. But greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world. God has an answer for me. O Lord, please help me to realize that every single day is a battle. Some battles are easier than others. Some days are quiet days, but while I'm on this earth that is not my home, fiery trials and battles will be the norm. If I'm never facing battles, I'm probably being successfully distracted. Praise You, Lord, for Your protection.

Vs. 1-6 ~ God's gift to Paul... "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. 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. 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—and he heard things that cannot be told, which man

may not utter. On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses— 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."

What is Paul talking about? First, he was defending himself. The Corinthian church was getting caught up in listening to people who were arrogant, boasting about stuff that didn't really matter in the Lord's eyes. Paul was telling them that he had reason to boast, too. But he wouldn't do it. He would only boast about his weaknesses. That's totally opposite of what the world... and the devil... teach. The devil is arrogant and he wants us to be arrogant so that he can take us down. "Pride goes before a fall." He should know.

God had given Paul a very specific gift... a vision that was so incredible he wasn't even allowed to share it with anyone. He "heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter." But he said he wouldn't boast about that. He would only boast about his weaknesses. I'll see why next. I'll also see that Paul LEARNED to boast only of his weaknesses... through suffering. It doesn't just come naturally.

Vs. 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."

Okay. The devil knew that Paul had that vision. He saw it as an opportunity. First, he would try to distract him by saying things like, "Paul, you must be so awesome. Only you could receive a vision like that." It's the strategic war plan of manipulation. Distract and make ineffective.

But God knew what could happen to Paul. It says twice in this verse, "to keep me from being conceited." Arrogance is never good. It is celebrated in the world, but not in heaven. Arrogance drives me away from the Lord because it falsely makes me think I don't need Him. God gave Paul this vision probably because it would be a huge thing for him to hold onto when he was facing all the horrible opposition he constantly faced in his ministry. The vision, along with the gospel, would remind him of why he was in this war... and that it was worth it.

So... the arrogance thing wasn't gonna work. Instead, God allowed "a thorn in Paul's flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass him." We don't know what the thorn was. People like to speculate, but it's just not written. I think that's good, because we sometimes like to categorize things and then dismiss them if we don't have the exact same experience. But God is not a cookie cutter God and He didn't make cookie cutter people. What harasses me may look different than what harasses someone else.

I wonder if the conversation between God and the devil was similar to the one they had concerning Job thousands of years earlier. "God, You're protecting Paul too much. Of course He's following You. You gave him that vision. But would he follow You if You let me harass him?" "Okay, you can harass him, but you can only take it as far as I allow."

So immediately Satan started harassing Paul. Is God cruel? As painful as it is for me to think this way... because I really like to be comfortable and have things go easily, I need to see that God was actually protecting Paul. Arrogance would have rendered him ineffective, and he would have really regretted it. The fact that Paul recognized that God was keeping him from being conceited means that Paul knew it was a temptation.

When God allows Satan to harass, it's because He's protecting me from something worse, something more damaging. I need to remember... this is a war. I need the Lord to help me take my stand against the schemes of the devil. I need to trust that the Lord IS on my side. He's fighting FOR me, not against me.

Vs. 8-10 ~ "Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me."

I do appreciate that Paul asked for the Lord to remove the thorn. The Lord never turns us away for asking. Paul trusted the Lord. He entrusted himself to the Lord. He was willing to say, "This is my desire, yet not my will, but Yours be done." He asked the Lord to remove the thorn 3 times. I find that pretty incredible. I think I ask the Lord to make things easier on me about 9 million times before I get it through my head that He's on a different plan. I need to align my will with His, not expect Him to align His will with mine. After all, who really knows what's best for me? Me, with my finite little mind that never has the whole picture? Or the Lord, with His infinite mind that knows all things and has all power and cares for me more than I could ever begin to comprehend? Sadly, there are lots of times where I answer that... "Me. Let's go with me." O Lord, please help me to trust You even when I don't understand!!!

So... Paul asked 3 times (to my 9 million). What did God answer?

"But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.'"

I think that means He said NO! His grace is sufficient? What does that mean? His grace, the generosity of His love lavished on me is what satisfies me... it's what makes me content... not the removal of the thorn. This is a VERY hard truth to grasp. Why wouldn't God's grace be the very thing that removes the thorn?

I need to be in a place of weakness, which I always am compared to the Lord. But when I'm arrogant I can't see it! So God allows me to see my weakness SO THAT I'll be open to His strength being perfected or accomplished in my weakness. Recognizing my weakness drives me TO the Lord. Arrogantly thinking I'm strong enough on my own drives me AWAY from the Lord.

Paul understood that. So... what was his response? Did he get mad? Did he demand that God change His mind? Did he wallow in self pity (as I would do and have done many times)? No... he said...

"Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Paul decided to boast in his weaknesses. "Yep. I'm a mess. I need Jesus. I'm a jar of clay in the hands of the Potter." As he said just a few chapters earlier in 2 Corinthians 4:7, "But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us."

By Paul being willing to boast in his weaknesses and not fight for his own way, he opened himself up to letting Christ's power REST on Him. That means that when I push the Lord away and try to do things in my own strength, I am necessarily pushing away His power that strengthens me. His power doesn't just come and go. It RESTS on me. It covers me. It is a tabernacle over me.

You know who's not afraid of me but is afraid of God? The devil. When I let the power of Christ rest on me by submitting to His authority and receiving His grace to strengthen me, I render the devil's strategy ineffective. O Lord, please help me to stop thinking of my weakness as a bad thing!!! What I see here is that You are far more concerned about the damage that comes from being arrogant than You are about my weakness. You oppose the proud, but give grace to the humble.. the poor in spirit... the weak.

"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."

How will I possibly be content with weakness? Because God's grace makes me content. Actually, the Greek word for "content" means "to be well pleased, to take delight, to approve." Paul is ACTUALLY saying, "Because of Jesus, I DELIGHT in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities." What? How is that possible??? It's because of his focus. His focus was not on the issue, but on God's grace. His focus was not on the pain, but on the power of God resting on him... on the generosity of God's love that is greater than any thorn or circumstance.

This passage has been a prayer of mine for years. I'm not there yet. I'm learning. Maybe by the time the Lord takes me home. I'm learning to pray, "Father, please sustain me with Your grace" rather than, "Please take this away." That's a hard prayer for me to pray... and I still do ask for things to be taken away. I don't think the Lord faults me for that. Praise His name. That's His grace, too. The biggest thing is that I need to trust Him with however He answers my prayer. No matter what, God's motives are always pure and right and good and pleasing and filled with love, wisdom, and power. This is a war... and my God is ALWAYS on my side. O Lord, please help me not to cross over into enemy territory. Help me not to wander into enemy territory. Help me to stay close to You. Help me to remember that Your grace will satisfy me far more than any circumstance will.