

# Sermon Notes

2 Corinthians 12:1-10 NRSV | Written by Rev. Dr. Alf Halvorson

This is the second message (post our “Vision to Reality” two-week series) to finish off Paul’s second letter to the church in Corinth. He is still having to defend himself against rival teachers who want the people to reject Paul’s teaching and follow their super-apostle-Gospel-plus-law/circumcision project instead. Paul would rather not engage in this foolish back and forth, but he feels like the Good News of Jesus is in jeopardy if he doesn’t counter these false teachers’ errors. And so he, with great vulnerability and transparency, reveals both the heights he has experienced in Christ (paradise itself) and also the prolonged thorn in the flesh (pain) he prayed would be removed from him but was not removed so that God’s power could be revealed in and through Paul’s weakness.

1. What pains (physical, emotional, relational, and/or spiritual) are you dealing with right now? Are they constant or intermittent? Are they self-inflicted or do they seem to be caused by others, evil, or even God?
2. Read 2 Cor. 12:1-10. This double-faceted passage concludes the fool’s speech section of this letter, combining the loftiest of experiences (a transport into the third heaven) with the lowliest (a persistent, unavoidable “thorn/stake in the flesh”). The two stories belong to and interpret each other as demonstrating the extremes a person may experience in life. From 2 Cor. 12:1-7a, have you ever been transported to another realm in the faith (or the palpable presence of God) during worship or prayer or some other time? Have you and God united in an intimacy that is hard to explain? Have you had an experience of grace or wisdom or insight that was so real and transformative that it is hard to talk about or explain? Why do you think that happened to you? And what purpose, if any, does it play in your life now?
3. Why doesn’t Paul exploit this event in his life to overshadow his rivals and get the Corinthians to love him because of this experience?
4. Read 2 Cor. 12:7b-10. Why does Paul say he was given a “thorn in the flesh”? A stake to keep him from being too elated? Why do you think Paul wants people to appreciate his weaknesses over his strengths or ecstatic experiences? What does it mean that the ecstatic just has to be believed or denied (they can’t be subjected to scrutiny), but that the “tried and true” normal experiences from one person to another are a better indication of that person’s faith, love, and real care?
5. I shared a little of my own experiences, high and low, as well as from Rick Warren and Max Lucado to try to help us see the point Paul was attempting to make here. What is your takeaway from this section of Scripture? And how can you see your weaknesses as opportunities for God’s power to be experienced and revealed? Pray for God’s grace to be shared through your weakness; and God’s power to shine through your brokenness.

## Financial Update

Update publication resumes after Session votes on the new budget.

## Births and Deaths

Leora Naomi Aboorvanathan was born on Jan 23 to Raphael and Ruth Aboorvanathan.

Terri Higgins passed away Jan 24.  
Will Swenson passed away Jan 24.  
More information at [memorials.mdpc.org](http://memorials.mdpc.org).



## Ash Wednesday

Wed, Feb 25 | Noon & 7pm

Both service times include the imposition of ashes and communion. Enter with us into this season of reflection, repentance, and hope.

## CITC Request

Can you help us bless The Beacon’s clients experiencing homelessness? Our Church in the City project on Feb 21 includes assembling and distributing blessing bags. Please consider donating socks, toilet paper, and feminine hygiene products. Bring to drop-off tables at MDPC through Feb 20.

## Join a Local Outreach Committee!

Encounter God through the work of our outreach partners while helping steward MDPC’s radical generosity. Interested? Contact Julie LaRue ([jlaraue@mdpc.org](mailto:jlaraue@mdpc.org)).

## Women’s Retreat

Fri-Sun, Feb 6-8 | Iron Horse Ranch

Let’s get away! Enjoy fellowship and relaxation in a beautiful country setting. There will be downtime, small groups, and a time of teaching. Enjoy the beauty this venue has to offer and leave feeling pampered! Register: [getaway.mdpc.org](http://getaway.mdpc.org)

## Faith in Practice Gathering

Next Sun, Feb 8 | 10:45-11:15am | The Nook

Are you—or someone you know—a medical/dental professional interested in serving on a week-long mission trip? Meet MDPC partner Faith in

Practice to learn about using your gifts to make a life-changing impact among the poor of Guatemala.

## Senior Adult Lunch and Games Day

Thu, Feb 26 | Lunch at 11am, Games at Noon

Join us in Fellowship Hall for lunch (bring or purchase from MDPC Café) and fun with peers playing bingo, Scrabble, dominoes, board games, cards, mahjong, and more, or bring your favorite game to play! Learn more: [seniors.mdpc.org](http://seniors.mdpc.org)

## Dad Camp

Sat-Sun, Feb 28-Mar 1 | MDPC

An overnight campout with food, fun, and activities! Bring your tent(s), sleeping bags, Bibles, and kids. Learn more and sign up: [men.mdpc.org](http://men.mdpc.org)

## Taste of Alpha


Sun, Mar 8 | 12:30-2:15pm | Fellowship Hall

A chance for you to see what Alpha is about and get a sense of the “why” behind the way we do things. Perfect for anyone who’d would like to learn more before inviting friends to the Alpha course.

## MDPC Young Adults at SXSW

Mar 12-16, 2026 | Austin, TX

Be part of a passionate team of young adults bringing Jesus’ love to South by Southwest Festival, where 300,000+ people gather for music, art, and innovation—and where countless hearts are open to hope. Details: [yaevents.mdpc.org](http://yaevents.mdpc.org)



GETTING CRYSTAL CLARITY

MEN'S LIFE

**Tuesdays, Feb 3-17 | 7-8am**

When life feels blurry, God’s Word brings the lens into focus—clarity isn’t just possible, it’s promised. Men, let’s challenge ourselves to grow deeper in understanding so that things become more crystal clear!

Learn more & register: [ML.mdpc.org](http://ML.mdpc.org)



You’re Invited to

**ALL-CHURCH LUNCH**

Sun, Feb 1 | 11am-1pm  
Fellowship Hall

Join your church family for lunch on the first Sunday of each month!

Pricing and menu: [ACL.mdpc.org](http://ACL.mdpc.org)





**Online Giving** [give.mdpc.org](http://give.mdpc.org)



**All Events** [events.mdpc.org](http://events.mdpc.org)

As you enter worship, we kindly ask that you silence your cell phones.



8:30 BLENDED SERVICE

GATHERING

Call to Worship Marcus Vajdos

Worship Songs *Your Grace Is Enough*  
*Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*

\*Confession & Assurance | Prayers of the People Beth Case

Worship Song *Holy Forever / Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty*

HEARING THE WORD

Message **Beautifully Weak**  
2 Corinthians 12:1-10 (NRSV) Alf Halvorson

RESPONDING

Offertory *Yet Not I but Through Christ in Me*

SENDING

\*Benediction Alf Halvorson

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9:45 CONTEMPORARY SERVICE

GATHERING

\*Call to Worship Matthew Adair

Worship Songs *How Good It Is / A Thousand Hallelujahs*  
*Holy Forever*

\*Confession & Assurance | Prayers of the People Amanda Shockley

\*Worship Song *Oh but God*

HEARING THE WORD

Message **Beautifully Weak**  
2 Corinthians 12:1-10 (NRSV) Alf Halvorson

RESPONDING

Offertory *Yet Not I but Through Christ in Me*

SENDING

\*Benediction Alf Halvorson

Musicians in these services: Asher Pudlo, drums | Uvaldo Callejas, bass | Chris Parrott, guitar  
Tim Hughes, violin | Angel Uribe & Meliza Gómez, worship leaders

\*Please stand, if comfortable.

11:15 TRADITIONAL SERVICE

GATHERING

Prelude *Shall We Gather at the River* arr. Rob Landes

Call to Worship Marcus Vajdos

Choral Introit *O Sing Unto the Lord* Hans Leo Hassler (1564-1612)

\*Hymn of Praise *How Great Thou Art* Vs. 1, 3, 4 | #467 | O STORE GUD

\*Confession and Assurance of Pardon Beth Case

\*Affirmation of Faith from Romans 8

\*Congregational Response *Psalm 96 - O Sing a New Song*  
Vs. 3, 4, 5, 6 | #217 | arr. Hal Hopson (b. 1983)

HEARING THE WORD

Anthem of Preparation *Just a Closer Walk with Thee* arr. Joel Raney (b. 1956)

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RESPONDING

\*Hymn of Response *Lead On, O King Eternal* Vs. 1, 3 | #447 | LANCASHIRE

Prayers of the People | The Lord's Prayer Beth Case

Offertory *How Firm a Foundation* arr. Dan Forrest (b. 1978)

SENDING


\*Doxology *Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow* #592 | OLD 100TH

\*Benediction Alf Halvorson


Postlude *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing* arr. Rob Landes

Musicians in this service: Sanctuary Choir  
Charles Hausmann, Traditional Worship Director | Rob Landes, pianist


Our pastors are here to help. We'd love to hear from you!




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**Remember Our Frontline Mission Partners**

MDPC partners in local and global ministry truly covet your prayers! Find out this week's prayer recipients by picking up the prayer booklet available around campus or visit [partners.mdpc.org](https://partners.mdpc.org).