

## Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Sermon Road Map  
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2 Corinthians 12:7-10  
July 11, 2021

### Flash! A revelation that turns your world right side up.

- *Revelation?* The curious flock. Eyes wide open. *What did you see?*
- Paul's conversion - a stunning divine revelation: flash of light, voice from heaven
- Context: *the extraordinary nature of these revelations*
  - ♦ *<sup>2</sup>carried up to the third heaven <sup>4</sup>...carried up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words that a man cannot possibly speak...*
  - ♦ *Ooo. Tell me more.* But God doesn't. That's not what we need to hear.
  - ♦ Paul shares the revelation we need to hear. A stunning news flash.

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*"My grace is sufficient for you, because my power [reaches its goal] in weakness."* <sup>EHV</sup>

- What weakness? *...given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me*
  - ♦ That doesn't sound fun. It wasn't. Paul thought it was slowing him down.
  - ♦ Not just that one! Also *in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties, for the sake of Christ* - things that God **gives** his children. **Why?**
- ❖ Weakness keeps me grounded in the reality of what I am on my own
  - The MO (mode of operation) of sinners: *think highly of self based on self*
    - ♦ Pride ourselves over our gifts and accomplishments. Even our *good fortune*.
    - ♦ As if we were the lords of our own making. Focus: *me myself and I*, self-centered
    - ♦ The delusions and illusions of *free will, self-made, independence, our freedom*
  - Reality: you are a pile of dust marvelously made and sustained by the Living God.
    - ♦ Every gift, ability, resource, and opportunity came from God. Even the pile of dust.
    - ♦ Claiming mastery of ourselves is folly, a grave lie that robs God of his rightful glory.
    - ♦ Every sin acts as if I were my own god - profound disrespect of the only real God.
    - ♦ Choosing your own god or choosing what you want to believe about God = insolent arrogance, self-worship, a proud fool.
  - The more God blesses a believer the more God needs to help us crush our arrogance
    - ♦ Such arrogance has been the downfall of many a gifted preacher and pastor.
    - ♦ Christians who see themselves as better than unbelievers are arrogant.
      - The history of *Christian conquest* is full of this blasphemous arrogance.
    - ♦ We are not better or wiser **on our own**. Such arrogance destroys faith.
  - In love our Lord personally tailors weaknesses to rescue us from sinful pride.
    - ♦ Paul is clear. *I was given a thorn in my flesh...* It was a personal gift from God.
    - ♦ **Purpose:** to save Paul from falling into arrogance and its unbelief.
    - ♦ Through our weaknesses we get a reality check. ***I am not all that and some.***
      - I totally and completely depend on God for everything good. It comes from him.
      - *In the Living God each one of us lives and moves and has our being.* Acts 17:28
      - When this is straight, God has turned our life **right side up** to live in reality.
    - ♦ This is critical for faith's right relation with God: total trust in him for everything
      - As soon as I trust in myself, I start building on sand. Exclusively rely on the Rock.
      - Troubles are gifts from our loving God to keep our reliance in the right place.
      - To confess with Luther: ***It is true: we are all beggars before God.***

- ❖ Actively delight in the weaknesses God gives you to make you strong.
  - Acceptance of weakness and hardships is not enough!
    - ◆ *This broken world is full troubles.* This is true, but that does not strengthen you.
    - ◆ *God is God. All I can do is accept what he sends my way.* Where's the hope?
    - ◆ Pagan fatalists can say the same thing. *We're born. We suffer. We die. That's our lot.*
  - We know the dedicated and faithful working of our God of eternal love!
    - ◆ He made it clear to us in the sending of Jesus to suffer, die, and rise to give us life!
    - ◆ He is not just waiting in heaven to welcome us home!
    - ◆ He is actively involved in our lives every moment *delivering us from evil.*
      - He didn't just rescue us from hell. He came to rescue us from us - our sinful selves.
      - Good news! Our trials are **never** punishments for our sins. Jesus paid the full price!
      - They're loving disciplines to help us forsake self-willed ways, to trust only in Jesus.
      - *My grace is sufficient for you, because my power [reaches its goal] in weakness.*
      - God rules in our weakness to mature us, so by trusting more fully in Christ we *are being transformed into his own image, from one degree of glory to another.* 2 Cor. 3:18
      - It's a taste of glory - what we were made for: life found only living in and with God.
  - Avoid these weakening twisted misapplications of *trust* and *humility*.
    - ◆ *Since I can't do anything, I'll sit back and cool my heels, trusting God to do it all.*
      - Do you recognize the focus? *I can't do it on my own. I get to do what I want.*
      - Faith that trusts God as my God listens to his word and does what he says. Faith knows that the word both enlightens and empowers us to live in its light and life.
    - ◆ Some, fearful of arrogance, go overboard and wallow in self-loathing.
      - Do you recognize the focus? Self! Focus on **my** faults and weaknesses.
      - Self-loathing **doesn't listen** to God when he says, *I have forgiven you all your sins, faults, and failures. I remember them no more. Why do you obsess on them? Listen. I have made you new. I made you my own dear child at your Baptism. You are one of my holy ones, a royal priest, a citizen in my kingdom of righteousness. Yes, you have no worth in yourself. But in Christ, I have made you priceless. Stop focusing on self. Trust these things!*
      - This is our status in Christ, even as he sends each of us our tailor-made *thorns in the flesh*. If you focus on the pain, you miss the point. Let it prick your memory of this revelation and promise from God. Jesus is rescuing you from arrogant self-reliance, so through total reliance on him he may work his transforming wonders in your life.

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