



POWER IN WEAKNESS!

The Epistle of 2 Corinthians

Distance Caring!

2 Corinthians 11:16-33

Message #14 of 17 – S890

Sermon given on April 5, 2020



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

Distance Caring!

2 Corinthians 11:16-33

Opening Comments

- For you watching online, welcome – we are glad to have you with us
- Turn to **2 Corinthians 11**
- Today we continue our journey through **2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness!**
- Church is about more than just gathering on a Sunday morning and going through the routine of a worship service
- Church is about people on a spiritual journey
- Whether you have been saved for a minute or 50 years, we are all headed to the same destination – heaven with Jesus forever
- While everyone's journey is uniquely individual, it is not meant to be travelled alone
- God created us to live and flourish in community with other people
- The fact that none of us is perfect messes that up, complicates it, but doesn't change the fact that it is what we need
- And now it is complicated by the coronavirus and its repercussions
- Personally, I believe that the church needs to be a community, maybe more than ever
- In this message I would like to share some thoughts on how we all can do that
- Let's pray and then get into our text
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **Distance Caring!**
- Paul cares about the people in the church in Corinth
- Repeatedly in this letter he says so **2 Corinthians 6:11-12**
O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections.
- And **2 Corinthians 12:15**
And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.
- And others

- Paul cares about the people in the church in Corinth
- But he is hundreds of miles away and can't be there with them
- He knows that others have come into the church and causing trouble
- These men came in boasting of how great they were
- They had letters of recommendation from important people and organizations
- They described all the great places they had preached
- And demanded high fees to prove how valuable their message was
- And then they attacked Paul and his gospel saying, because Paul isn't like us, he can't be trusted or believed
- The problem was their message **2 Corinthians 11:4**
For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!
- There is only one Jesus, Spirit, or gospel
- And because Paul cares, he responds with this letter
- In the last message we looked at Paul getting his readers ready to put up with some boasting on his part
- But not like his detractors
- **2 Corinthians 11:16-18**
- Paul was disgusted by the idea of boasting on the part of a servant of God.
- But because the Corinthians were listening to the boasting of Paul's detractors and diminishing his ministry, he decides he must stoop down to their level.
- He is doing it to save the ministry in Corinth – to protect the people he loves.
- But he is also hoping that they will see the difference between a real servant of Christ and the false ones
- **2 Corinthians 11:19-21**
- I have been known to be a little sarcastic from time to time
- So, I appreciate it when I see Paul using sarcasm – you are so wise!
- The people of the church are being deceived and they are letting it happen
- In fact, they are welcoming it, they enjoy
- Says, if you want boldness, here we go

- **2 Corinthians 11:22**

- The ones Paul typically had issues with were known as Judaizers
- These were Jews who had made a confession of faith in Jesus Christ
- Paul taught that salvation was through faith in Jesus **Ephesians 2:8-9**
For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.
- The Judaizers taught that in addition to Christ you also had to keep the Law, had to become a Jew, to be saved
- Paul emphasized faith – the Judaizers emphasized works of the law
- Turn to **1 Corinthians 11**
- The Judaizers message went something like this
- Jesus was a Jew, a Hebrews, and Israel, of the seed (a descendant of Abraham)
- He was born under the law and lived according to the Law
- We are also all of those things
- If you want to be saved you must be like we are and like Jesus was
- Paul knew they were overlooking something

- **1 Corinthians 11:23-26**

- Jesus was born under the old covenant of the Law, but His death on the cross instituted a new covenant – one of grace
- Turn back to **2 Corinthians 11**
- That theme is dominant in Galatians and in parts of Romans
- Paul is saying, everything these guys are boasting in, I am!
- And that is not all

- **2 Corinthians 11:23a**

- Paul had made this statement in his last letter to them and explained why he did **1 Corinthians 15:9-10**

For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God *which was with me*

- Paul, formerly known as Saul, tried to annihilate the Church while it was just getting started
- Jesus took Paul, a hyper-religious Jew, who thought persecuting Christians was what God wanted him to do, and transformed him into the greatest minister of Christ the church has ever known

- Paul never forgot how amazing was the grace of God in his salvation that it caused him to work harder than anyone else to make Jesus known
- Then Paul boasts in the things that his detractors referred to as weaknesses and evidence that he wasn't a true apostle of Christ
- **2 Corinthians 11:23b-27**
- Some of these things are documented for us in the book of Acts
- 'five times...forty stripes minus one' = flogging
- Whip with leather thongs – knotted, could be embedded with bits of bone or metal
- Terribly painful, often left the victim scarred for life
- This was from the Jews – his people
- 'beaten with rods' – was a Gentile form of punishment
- Flexible rod to the bare back until magistrate satisfied you had suffered enough
- Paul's suffering was not an isolated event, but a constant reality
- It was the price he willingly paid to serve Christ **Galatians 6:17**
From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.
- For Paul, serving Christ, meant serving even if it led to suffering
- Paul's detractors couldn't say that – wouldn't say that
- To them suffering was a sign of weakness
- Paul saying, serving Christ in the midst of suffering = real strength
- Earlier in the letter he had said that affliction comes and goes
- But one thing persists
- **2 Corinthians 11:28-29**
- Paul cared about the people of Corinth
- He was hundreds of miles away from them
- Communication took months
- News of the 'false brethren' was concerning to Paul, especially when he heard that some were turning to follow these false teachers
- Paul was planning to make the long trip to visit them and deal with these false teachers in person, but until then he hoped this letter would wake some up from the deception the Corinthians had allowed into their church

- Paul closes this chapter with an example of his story
- **2 Corinthians 11:30-33**
- This is the man God used to preach the gospel to the Corinthians
- It was through the human weakness of Paul that God showed his supernatural power to save lost souls
- Paul will continue his ‘foolish boasting’ in the next chapter, which we will pick up in two weeks – next Sunday is Easter
- We live in unusual times – expressing care to others is not as easy as it was 2 months ago
- Now caring needs to be done from a distance
- Eventually this crisis is going to pass, but the need to be a real community of believers who cares for each other is timeless
- Here are three things to consider when **Caring from a Distance!**
- First – **Feel it!** Do we actually care? We should because God does **1 Peter 5:6-7**

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

- For me that means reminding myself that I am supposed to care and asking God to help me to care more like Him
- It means getting out of my own head and thinking about other people
- And not just thinking about them but trying to care about the things they care about
- Second – **Say it!** Do they know you care? They need to know.
- It took weeks for Paul’s message of caring to reach the Corinthians and then weeks for a reply to come back
- We don’t have that problem – we have mobile phones, email, Facebook, Instagram, Skype, Facetime and countless other ways to connect with each other
- Go through your contact list and find someone to connect with
- You don’t have to have a deep spiritual conversation with them
- Just call them, ask them how they are doing, do they need anything, can you pray for them? Don’t wait for someone to call you!
- Third – **Show it!** What can you do?
- This goes beyond reaching out and connecting with them
- This is about showing them the love of God **John 13:34-35**

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

- Jesus is talking about sacrificial love – doing something that shows the love of God
- This is where we need to be creative
- It is a little harder to show love when we are practicing social distancing and sheltering in our homes
- But it is not impossible
- For example – David and Rachelle – have a meal delivered to them
- If you know of a family that is struggling – have groceries delivered
- If you have any creative ideas about how to show Christ’s love during this time, please let me know and I will share it with the body
- We care, and we want you to know that – we also want to be able to show it
- If you haven’t filled out the Digital Connection Card – please do so – on the website and in the description below – it is the main way we are communicating with the church right now
- God cares – We care – and we want you to care for each other
- Reach out and let someone know that you care and maybe God will give you a chance to let them know that He cares about them too!
- **Pray!**