

# God's Power Manifested in Weakness

by Erlo Stegen

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*Paul's sermon emphasizes the importance of standing firm in the face of adversity and trusting in God's power and sufficiency, even in the midst of weakness and vulnerability.*

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 12:9

**Topics:** "God's Grace", "Standing Firm in Faith"

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## Description

Erlo Stegen emphasizes the power of God manifested in weakness through the life of Paul, who faced severe opposition from false teachers in Corinth. Despite being attacked and belittled, Paul remained steadfast, revealing that his weaknesses were a source of strength as God's grace sustained him. The sermon warns against the cunning nature of false teachers who distort the truth and encourages believers to stand firm in their faith amidst trials. Stegen highlights that true strength comes from reliance on God's grace, even in the face of persecution and slander. Ultimately, the message calls for self-examination and a commitment to uphold the truth of the Gospel.

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## Transcript

Text: 2Cor 12:1-10

Paul didn't like to boast and didn't want to, but he was forced to, as he explains. Why?

There were those who crept their way into the church at Corinth with wrong teachings and error. They tried with all their power to destroy Paul and contradict what he taught.

It is always ugly when satan enters and puts his ugly foot in the church. So satan entered not through prostitutes and immorality, but through false teachers, those who claim to expound the Word of God.

They claimed that Paul was not a real apostle, for he didn't qualify according to the choice the eleven apostles made when they sought a replacement for Judas Iscariot.

"... it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us ..." - Acts 1:21, 22

So you can see how these teachers of error were able to twist this point, for satan changes himself into an angel of light. They claimed to expound God's Word rightly and fight for the truth, yet they were tools in the

hands of the devil. Satan entered through them as an angel of light.

Paul was at a distance at the time Jesus lived on this earth. So these teachers of error attacked the character and teachings of Paul, saying they were worthless, since he claimed to be an apostle but cannot be according to the definition of an apostle.

That's why Paul was compelled to write the things that he wrote in this chapter and in other places.

Paul acknowledged that he was not like the other apostles, having been with Jesus all the time he was on the earth, but Jesus revealed Himself to him and snatched him up to the third heaven, where he was taught inexpressible things that man cannot utter.

We are not given a definition what the third heaven is, but Paul shows that these false teachers do not even know what the first heaven is.

The things revealed to him were beyond human language, inexpressible, yet he tries to explain it in human language.

Though there's nothing to be gained by boasting, yet he tries to show through boasting how empty the accusations of the false teachers were.

In another place Paul writes that he laboured more than all the other apostles, yet these false teachers tried to belittle Paul and make him of no consequence.

There are many such false teachers today, Christians, who go around and preach but are only speaking silly, foolish things.

We don't even know who these false teachers were and what their end was like, but we know of Paul, his life, what he wrote and what his end was like.

Paul met up with liars and deceivers while he was still alive, but he said that when he would die there would be ravenous wolves that would not spare the flock, but seek to devour and destroy it.

May there be those amongst us who are true and stand on the truth and prove themselves to be such. Where are you? Are you siding or even among the teachers of error or are you of those who stand for the truth?

These false teachers were cunning and used the Word of God in their deception against Paul. They spoke what seemed to be sense but it was nonsense.

Paul does not belittle the other apostles but shows historically what God taught him.

Go and pray that God would reveal this matter to you. Even if you live among false teachers ask that God would keep you and reveal this to you.

Paul also revealed his weakness to them. It is not specified. Was he weak towards women, booze, pride or some other sin? No! Paul is not describing a carnal failure like someone who confesses his sin and goes back to it. Paul was Saul and was transformed and never returned to his old life again.

Paul describes this weakness as a thorn in the flesh, like a sharpened pole driven into his flesh.

He pleaded with the Lord three times that this thorn would be removed from him. The Lord answered, "My grace is sufficient for you".

Let's look at some of the weaknesses and difficulties he had to face.

He had to fight wild animals, but the real beasts were not the four legged animals but two legged people who attacked him and sought to destroy his reputation and teachings.

He would go without food and clothing. He would be hunted down, and persecuted terribly, yet he didn't despair.

He was abused and imprisoned. He was chained and beaten. The prisons of Paul's day were dreadful places, damp and cold cells. They were not like today where the prisoners have rights and inspectors even come to check that all their rights are met.

When people slander and destroy your reputation and tirelessly work against you, isn't that a messenger of satan to strike you?

Paul was whipped many times with whips that's designed to rip and tear the flesh.

He was stoned and left for dead, yet he got up and went to the same town to preach again. Imagine what Paul looked like after being stoned. Yet he endured it all and still continued faithful to the Lord Jesus and preached the Gospel.

Many Christians of today, if they had to experience what Paul went through, would renounce their faith and leave it for the world.

These false teachers worked tirelessly against him, spoke evil of him, accused him of not being a genuine apostle. One just marvels at their evil.

Are you a genuine Christian, that would stand firm no matter what type of wind comes your way?

John Wesley spoke of perfect love and lived it. His wife was filled with jealousy and hatred. She slandered him and wrote the most terrible things about him and sent it to the newspapers, as the newspapers thrive on such rubbish stories. In those days the men wore longer hair like the wigs the judges used to wear. She would grab him by the hair in her rage and drag him through the house, yet his response to her would be perfect love.

It is terrible when those who are without the church slander and destroy your reputation, but even worse when your own family, your flesh and blood do it. Some people go grey overnight because of the trouble and persecutions they experience within their own family.

Paul was a victor over all the temptations and difficulties and persecutions. Everyone should have recognised that he was a true apostle.

Go and ponder on these words and keep them in your heart.

Do not be blown around by every gust of wind and every slander story doing the rounds.

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