

## 2 Corinthians 11:16- 12:10 Boasting in our Weakness!

### Mohamed Ali – the Boxer used to Boast that He was the greatest -

A) Even gave himself the nickname that Shaq has since adopted – of Superman.

B) (Once Ali was riding on an Airplane – First class seat - Seat Belt – **Superman... seat belt** Flight Attendant – **Superman don't need no airplane.**

### Like Ali and Shaq The false teachers in Corinth who were trying to high jack the Church were boasters

A) They liked to boast in their Credentials

B) Their accomplishments, who they were associated with and their the large honorariums they were able to command.

C) Those were all things that those living in that greek culture considered – important and note worthy.

### D) These false teachers had been trying to bait Paul into boasting about himself

1) because on a human level – outward appearance they knew he would not measure up to them.

E) Up to this point Paul has resisted getting into a verbal Sparring match with these men – comparing who was better than who – { **Those who compare themselves among ..... not wise.**

### At this point in the letter Paul is going to sort of sarcastically respond to their accusations

A) He is going to boast but not in a way that they would expect.

B) In the midst of this Paul is going to reveal something about his outlook on life that has profound significance for everyone of us in this Sanctuary today.

16 I say again, let no one think me a fool. If otherwise, at least receive me as a fool, that I also may boast a little. 17 What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. 18 Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast. 19 For you put up with fools gladly, since you yourselves are wise!

### Sanctified Sarcasm – Inspired Irony

This goes back to V. 1 Bear with me in a little folly. Proverbs 26:5 **Answer a fool according to his folly** – A) So that is what Paul is going to do here.

B) Answer these foolish men – he refers to as the most eminent apostles – Ray Stedman “The

Super Apostles”

**C)It is easy to sense both Paul’s sarcasm and his hesitancy to promote himself.**

1)He would rather talk about Jesus,

**In V.19 Paul sarcastically – chides the Church for their “wisdom” in putting up with the abuse of these false teachers – V20**

20 For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face. 21 To our shame I say that we were too weak for that! But in whatever anyone is bold — I speak foolishly — I am bold also.

### **5 Concerns**

1. Brings you into **bondage**: Spiritually- teachings that emphasize rules and regs instead of relationship
2. **Devour you** – Financially – their right to be supported
3. **Take from** – Literally Take you – taken – taken advantage of emotionally
4. **Exalt** themselves instead of exalting the Lord
5. **Strike you physically** – abusive behavior

**They were so impressed with the image of authority and power of the “super apostles,” they subjected themselves to this kind of treatment.**

Still happens today, Jim Jones – David Koresh – Marshall Applewhite – Heaven’s gate.

**To our shame, I say that we were too weak for that!** Paul continues the sarcasm. Paul sarcastically confesses that he is too “weak” to abuse his sheep the way the “super apostles” do.

**Now at this point Paul is going to Boast in his Credentials – but not in the way that they would expect. Like they would he starts with his pedigree.**

22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.

**This is similar to what Paul said in Philippians 3:5 just in reverse order**

**A)Seed of Abraham: Covenant God made with Abraham marked by circumcision**

**B)Israelite – Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin**

**C)Hebrew: Hebrew was a Jewish person who followed Hebrew culture –**

1)Hellenist were Jewish People who followed greek culture.

D)Paul in Phil 3:5 said – I was a Hebrew of the Hebrews - 100% Hebrew national –

### **Paul was saying you want to talk Pedigree – great pedigree**

A)But in Phil 3 after giving his pedigree and adding about how he was trained by the best teachers – he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees

B)Paul said I count all that as Manure for the sake of knowing Christ

1)His Confidence was in Christ not those things!

**23 Are they ministers of Christ? — I speak as a fool** A)Now here is where the comparison ends D. A. Carson suggests that Paul’s detractors might have expected Paul to have said something like:

“I have established more churches; I have preached the gospel in more lands and to more ethnic groups; I have traveled more miles; I have won more converts; I have written more books; I have raised more money; I have dominated more councils; I have walked with God more fervently and seen more visions; I have commanded the greatest crowds and performed the most spectacular miracles.” D. A. Carson

### **B)All true statements !**

1)And that was the kind of list that was common in pagan culture.

2)For example, Augustus Caesar wrote a eulogy in his own honor, listing his accomplishments.

C)But Paul is going to share of his struggles – his set backs his weaknesses and his infirmities.

1)Because this is all building to a central point –

**Paul’s #1 Aim is to boast in Christ.**

23 Are they ministers of Christ? I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure in prisons more frequently, in deaths often

V. 23 Paul lays out his suffering in a general sense –

**V.24 More specific his suffering at the hands of the Jews 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one**

A)Deuteronomy 25:3 said that the Maximum # of stripes one could receive was 40 so it became the rabbinical tradition to give out 39 – just to make sure you didn’t go over 40.

B)Paul received 39 lashes 5 times 195 lashings total.

C)According to the ancient Jewish writing the Misnah – The whip was made of leather – divided into four tails. 1) The recipient would receive 1/3 on front chest – 2/3 on his back and shoulders.

195 Stripes – 65 on the front – 130 on his Back

### Can you imagine what Paul's body must've looked like – Scarred beyond measure

A)no wonder he spoke so passionately in 2 Cor 5 about his new Body – Old one was probably a mess.

V. 25 His suffering at the hands of the Gentiles –25 Three times I was beaten with rods; Birch or Elm rods of wood That was Roman punishment. Baseball bat

Once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;  
**The original Castaway**

26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness **First survivor**

28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? {When they were going through it He felt their pain} Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? {When any of them were made to stumble and he heard about it – Angry with a righteous indignation}

### This statement is astounding – Despite everything that Paul went thru externally the stonings and the beatings, the shipwrecks and the muggings

A)His greatest source of pain came from his internal longings – for the Churches

B)That is not the heart of a spiritual guru or a motivational speaker. This is the heart of a father.

C)Dads, you know something of this. As tough as things can be externally, financially, or physically—

1)they're nothing compared to the concern you have that your kids do well.

### I raise this question to you as I do to myself: What made Paul tick?

A)His love for Jesus – His love for the lost – His love for the Church

B)This all magnified Paul's heart that he came to give not to take. Serve and not be served

So he says

30 If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. 31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. 32 In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; 33 but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.

**Paul concludes this little mini testimony by mentioning an event that occurred at the beginning of his conversion. Acts 9**

**A) Paul mentions this event because it represented a radical paradigm shift in his and approach to life.**

**B) Paul went to Damascus as a proud Pharisee intent on persecuting the Christians there.**

C) He left one of them {A believer in Jesus and a marked man} his life forever destined to be persecuted.

1) Jesus stopped him – Revealed himself – Paul was saved! - Also a marked man - kill him ...basket

**Paul tells us this story to mark that weakness was at the heart of his calling from the very beginning of his apostleship.**

**A) Paul introduces his concluding thoughts with a summary sentence: “If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness” (v. 30).**

**B) This is what he chose to boast in and as we move into ch. 12 he is going to tell us why.**

**V.1 It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord:**

**A) The false teachers who were undercutting Paul’s ministry said, “He’s a lightweight. All he does is teach doctrine. We have visions and revelations.”**

**B) “All right,” said Paul. “If you want to talk about visions and revelations....” **2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago****

**C) Paul is so reluctant to talk about this was Paul that he doesn’t even use his own name.**

1) Talks in the third person however in v.7 he does make it clear that he is talking about himself.

**D) Now From the Book of Acts, we know that **fourteen years prior** to this, Paul had been left for dead after being stoned in the city of Lystra.**

**E) It seems certain that this is the backdrop for the text before us.**

**2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago — whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows — such a one was caught up to the**

### **third heaven.**

A)What is the third heaven? The Bible refers to three heavens:

B)The atmosphere around us is the first. The stars and Galaxies above us constitute the second.

1)And the place where God dwells is the third.

3 And I know such a man — whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows 4 how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

C)It was literally impossible for Paul to describe what he saw and heard in heaven.

D)But I suggest that whatever it was, it was the reason he wanted to immediately go back into the city and start preaching again. *I've had a sneak preview of coming attractions, and I'm ready to go!*

1)Paul might have thought. *Maybe they'll kill me once more!*

### **Think about this it took Paul 14 yrs to even talk about this!**

A)So different from today's mindset – Book deal speaking circuit – Movie material – 10minutes in..

B)Paul says words could not express what I heard

5 Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, **except in my infirmities**. 6 For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me.

### **Do you hear the tension? Do you feel the struggle? "He didn't want to talk about some revelation or vision or heavenly experience"**

A)He never wanted to draw attention to himself !

B) I think that is always a red flag when I am listening to someone who is constantly drawing attention to themselves

C)That is what these false teachers in Corinth were so good at doing.

1)Paul wanted nothing to do with that mentality.

**Paul wanted to draw attention to Jesus.**

### **What Paul says next is rather humbling:**

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

A) Paul is saying: So I wouldn't get exalted above measure by others or in my own mind get a big head –

B)God allowed me to be afflicted – in order to keep my humble.

## What was Paul's Thorn in the flesh?

A) We are not sure what Paul's thorn in the flesh was. Commentators have suggested it was an **eye disease, malaria, an irritating person** who followed him around, or **physical repercussions** of the stoning he endured.

**B) We don't know for sure what it was. But this we do know:**

1) The word translated "thorn" is the word for "tent stake"—the eighteen-inch-long spikes necessary to anchor Bedouin tents in the fierce desert winds.

C) Thus, Paul's thorn more closely resembled a sword in his side rather than it did a splinter under his skin. Constant and continual source of radical discomfort

8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "**My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.**" Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

## 2 KEY points here: #1 Suffering can produce a greater intimacy with the Lord.

A) Like Paul, we ask for help from the Lord.

B) As far as our Father is concerned, however, the primary purpose of prayer is not that He might give help to us, but that He might give *Himself* to us.

C) The Father says, "You want Me to take away the pain, to solve the problem, to get you out of the situation—but that's not what you need."

D) **You need Me.** And the very problem you're seeking to get away from, the very situation you desire to get out of is the very one that is causing you to **talk to Me, spend time with Me, and depend on Me.**

E) You'll be stronger when you're weak because you'll have no other choice than to draw strength from Me. 1) You'll do better when you're weak because you'll have to rely on Me."

## So Paul's suffering resulted in a greater intimacy with God – greater revelation as he sought the Lord

A) Paul discovered in a greater way – the Sufficiency of God's grace!

B) God's power made perfect in Paul's weakness.

1) That is what happens!

## #2 Boasting in our infirmities – opens the door for God's grace and power to be manifested.

Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, **that** the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

**Paul Came to understand: That His weakness & his infirmity was a platform for the Rez Power of Christ to be Revealed.**

**A) Rather than deliver him – Jesus by his grace saw Paul thru those situations in ways that he could not Humanly explain.**

**B) So Paul chose to boast in his affirmities – knowing – New opportunity for God to shine.**

**C) See you can boast in your weakness – or you can get mad at God.**

**1) For not doing what you thought he should do – not responding like you thought he should respond.**

**But when we come to the Lord and say: Ok – you are God – You are just – faithful – Loving**

**A\_ God I don't understand what is going on – but I know from Biblical history**

**B) My own history – What you do is right – SO I will trust you.**

**C) I am going to boast in you – boast that you are working all things together for good ....**

**1) Draw near to you – trust you**

**D) Opens the door to See God's Rez power in my Weakness**

**Easy for you to say Pastor Rob you don't know what I am going through { You are right I don't**

**A) Easy to point to Paul – he was a super saint – not possible for me – Yes it is**

**B) Introduce DVD: Aaron & I Sat down w/ some normal saints – like you and me –**

**1) Bros & Sisters from our body – going thru heavy things – chosen to boast in their weakness**

**After the video:**

**The thing that I find interesting about each one of those people who shared is they are still in the midst of their trial**

**A) They haven't seen deliverance – But they have experienced a greater intimacy**

**B) They have experienced God's sustaining Grace**

**1) They have all had their bad days – But by and Large they are boasting in their weakness**

**C) They are boasting in their God!**

**Close with this thought – The Greatest display of Power in weakness is seen at the Cross**

**A) Jesus appeared weak – allowed himself to be stripped, beaten, humiliated, made a curse**



B)But the power of God was unleashed that day  
MIGHTY TO SAVE { Open your heart { Alone

**End today – Shorter worship on the front side**

**A)So we could have some time to Boast in our weakness**

**B)Maybe Mad at God – Repent – come to him**

**1)Prayer**

**C)Quit trying to fix it on your own – Accept it**

**D)Boast in his faithfulness –**

**D)Open the door for his Power to be unleashed in us today!**