2 Corinthians Ch13v1-4

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Preacher: Ralph Depping

[0:00] Thank you.

Good morning, everyone. We're going to be looking at 2 Corinthians chapter 13. So if you'd like to turn your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 13, we'll be reading from there in a moment.
It's page 1167 if you're using the red church Bible. Sorry, it's actually my first time preaching from this new fancy stand, so I'm just getting myself a little orientated.
No, wrong way. Thank you, Jonathan, for leading this morning and for musicians for leading us in song and singing.
As Jonathan shared, we're going to be looking at Christ in particular this morning and the death of Christ on the cross.
[1:27] As we start, I just want you to think about daily life for a moment. And life, daily life can feel like a series of testing situations and trying to figure out how to respond.

If you're the parent of a young or maybe not so young child, it's typically a battle of wills. That's the test, isn't it? Who can be more stubborn about the plate of dinner and whether it's going to get eaten or not?
In your work setup, maybe you're facing the frustration of a boss whose main contribution just seems to be nagging you for estimates and deadlines.
How are you going to respond? How are you going to manage your manager? Even in church, with all of our spiritual brothers and sisters, with all that the Lord has done for us in saving us by his mercy and grace, we can still experience grievance.
We can have complaints. We can have conflict with one another. So how are you going to respond to that latest issue that's come up?
[2:37] You see, in each of these situations, our natural self will want to win out in some way. We want to be strong in ourselves, to stand up, to advocate for our rights, and to use whatever power or influence we have in that situation to make it better.

Now, that's not always the wrong instinct. Think about trying to ensure your little child is finishing their dinner. But here's the thing. Here's the thing that I want us to remember this morning.
That as Christians, we have alternatives that nobody else has. We as Christians have alternative ways and means that nobody else has.
We can choose weakness over power. We can choose weakness over power. We can choose, in a sense, to lose out for the good of others and for God's glory.
Weakness, not strength, is often the right choice. And to help us this morning, I want you to zoom in. And this is not typically what we would do as we're preaching.
[3:52] It would be through a longer passage. But I do want to zoom in on one part of one verse this morning. And from that one verse to understand weakness through the eyes of Jesus.

Weakness through the eyes of Jesus. And the scripture is this. He was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power.
He was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. The Lord, the Lord Jesus, was crucified in weakness. And the spectacle of the cross that we sung about was one of utter, utter weakness.
Yet the weakness of Christ achieved all that is needed for our strengthening and our power. So let's read the scriptures together where we find these words. It's 2 Corinthians chapter 13.
We're going to read verses 1 to 4. And the key verses is verse 4. And the surrounding verses give us a sense of why Paul is looking to Jesus in verse 4.
[4:58] Paul is looking to Jesus in verse 4. And he is writing here what is actually probably his fourth letter to the church in Corinth. We call it 2 Corinthians, but it's probably his fourth letter.

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And in this letter, he's really defending his leadership against critics and encouraging the believers, the church, to see his own weak life as displaying the strength of God among them for their good. So let's read with that in mind. Chapter 13, verse 1. This will be my third visit to you. Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.
I already gave you a warning. When I was with you the second time, I now repeat it while absent. On my return, I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others, since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me.
So Paul is dealing with a situation of sin in the church. And when it comes to sin, Paul isn't messing around. He will come with the power of God, with the strength of God.
[6:10] And the proof that Jesus is working through him is how he will respond to sin. So since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me, he, that is Christ, is not weak in dealing with you, is powerful, but is powerful among you.

And our key verse, verse 4. For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him in our dealing with you.
Now we probably have some intuitive sense what weakness means. Weakness, just to say, it's an inability, isn't it? It's a lack. Weakness implies that something naturally needed is somehow missing. It's not there. We don't have the literal strength to do what apparently needs to be done. And just to say, I think it's important not to confuse weakness with sin directly.
You know, we might hear someone confess or say, I have a weakness for gambling. I just can't say no. Now weakness can leave us prone to sin, but being weak in itself is not sin.
[7:25] Jesus was weak. Do you remember at the end of the 40 days of fasting in the wilderness, Jesus was weak and Satan came to tempt him? Yet Jesus didn't sin.

So weakness isn't sin, but can leave us more prone to temptation. And Jesus, sorry, I need to, I'm going to forget the slides, aren't I?
Jesus lived with weakness through his life. A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. His death on a cross was his ultimate example of that personal weakness.
Through his crucifixion, he came under unbearable attacks. Attacks that physically and psychologically and spiritually assaulted him and weakened Jesus to the point of death.
Those words again, Jesus was crucified in weakness. And I wish for us this morning, brothers and sisters, to dwell here for a moment on this Lord's Day at the cross.
[8:29] To ponder over these words in Scripture, in verse 4, that he was crucified in weakness. Jesus was weakened in his body and his spirit as he took each of those conscious steps to the cross.

Christ was stretched and stressed beyond his limits. In the Garden of Gethsemane, it started from the inside out, almost like a D-Day soldier.
The ones that are there in the boat shaking just minutes before the boat ramp drops and they have to storm the beach. Christ knows what's about to come when that door drops.
He tells his friends, the disciples, that he's overwhelmed and sorrowful to the point of death. And his stressed body begins to react and he lies face down on the ground and he's prostrate in prayer before his Father and sweat as drops of blood begin to form and to pour out of him.
He weakens and he pleads with heaven to take this cup of wrath that is coming from him. And it's at that very moment, at his lowest ebb, that an angel is dispatched from heaven to strengthen our Lord.
[9:45] But it was a strengthening only unto death. For Jesus wasn't destined to die in the garden. He was destined to die on a hill outside city gates.

The angelic strengthening was brought to extend the weakening and to extend the agony of Jesus. And Christ's remaining strength is sucked away now by the onslaught of the evil one.
Satan, from the wilderness, he's back. This is Satan's hour. This is the hour of darkness. He tempted Christ before in the wilderness.
Forty days and nights of fasting had weakened Christ back then. But the attacks and the weakening now in the garden are the crashing sea compared to an afternoon shower of rain.
This time Satan would succeed in killing the Holy One of God. Satan, he inspires the actions of evil men who brutally rain attacks down on our Lord.

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[10:56] After his arrest in the garden, do you remember, he goes before this night court, the Sanhedrin, the high priest, bring this court and they convene to convict Jesus. And at the end of that farce of a court, they turn and it says that they spat in his face.

They struck him down with their fists. They slapped him and they mocked him with, prophesy, who hit you? Who hit you? Prophesy, come on. This dehumanizing, mocking and brutality is repeated and ramped up by a company of Roman soldiers later on under Pilate.
Then follows that slow, painful march outside the city walls to the hill where he is crucified, where the nails and the cross await him.
And scarcely can we imagine a man more weakened in a sense than Christ in his body and his soul on that cross. You see the words, Christ was crucified in weakness.
Now when we're weak, maybe we will look to the law, maybe we'll look to the courts, maybe we'll look to our leaders, those in the community for help. But no strength from the system would come to help weak Jesus.
[12:19] In fact, the opposite. The system itself was a means of further emptying and weakening Jesus. The powers of the state came that night for him.

They were led by Judas, a betrayed friend. They brought in their hands into the garden clubs and spears so that there would be no chance of escape for Jesus. There's going to be no waiting for dawn to come.
They'd set up an illegal night court. The high priest would come with trumped up charges, backed up by false witnesses who contradicted each other.
What a spectacle. Jesus, the prince of heaven, the lawgiver, he would find no comfort in this court of Satan. This was going to be no fair trial.
This was a miscarriage of justice. Better indeed, said the high priest, that this one man should die for the whole nation. He put a bullseye on Jesus' back, even if he was going to be found guilty by the contradictory testimony of those false witnesses.
[13:24] Better that he dies. There'd be no defense allowed. This is no somber court. Imagine passing a death penalty on another human.

He would weigh that very seriously. It would be a slow and somber decision. No. It was a piss of murder from every angle.
You see, brothers and sisters, Christ was crucified in weakness, without any rights or sense of justice. Even when found guiltless later on by the Roman leader Pilate, he still condemned and executed.
Jesus brought outside those gates to die as a common criminal. Christ had no rights. He had no power. Peter, his disciple who witnessed this, he said this, when he suffered at their hands, he made no threats.
Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. We face issues at times, if you haven't, you will, of dispute and injustice.
[14:40] How much confidence do you, believer, have that God, your Father, sees all, knows all, and will judge all? Because it won't always go our way in this life.

Instinct and self will boil our blood to sometimes murderous or violent action. But Christ remains silent in the face of injustice, entrusting himself to the one who judges justly.
You see, we can confidently follow Christ, the path of weakness, with regards to our own rights.
One final observation on the death of Christ.
His body beaten, his rights trampled on. Surely Christ could, he could look to his friends, his community, to his God in this situation to vindicate him, to be with him.
But it was not to be, was it? Disciples are, they're too tired to pray with him. Christ says to them, the soul is willing, but the body is weak. Just pray with me.
[15:49] But in his hour of need, they chose to sleep, over support him. Judas betrays him with a kiss. Peter disowns him three times. The disciples flee the scene.

The Garden of Gethsemane and the court of the high priest are crucibles of fire and violence against Christ, with demonic and human forces working their evil together.
And Christ is all but alone through that long, dark night. And then he goes before the crowds in Jerusalem and the leaders and the crowds, they shout, we have no king but Caesar.
Crucify him. Crucify him. He is alone, save at his crucifixion for some few brave and caring women that tended to him right to the end.

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And surely God, his Father, will vindicate and empower him in his hour of need. No intervention comes to stop his march to death.
[16:47] The sky does turn pitch black. The temple curtain is torn in two and the ground shakes and God is angry. And that's visible. But there's no voice of comfort from heaven for the sun at this time.

Have you dwelt here, dear believer? Have you spent some time reading the Gospels? And dwelling on the weakness of Christ at the cross? And what do you see or what did you hear even this morning?
A beaten and pitiful man? Yes. A victim of injustice? Yes. A lonely figure that was cast on the pile? Yes to it all.
Yet at each of those moments of weakness, they were each chosen by Christ. Christ could have turned the rocks and the stones and the ground into bread to feed and strengthen his body.
He could have healed himself after each of those blows struck him. Think back to the garden that night and the high priest servant Malchus, he's named for us, he was there in the garden and his ear was cut off by a sword in the melee.
[17:58] And Christ reaches out and instantly heals a severed ear. The irony is this, Amy Carmichael says, that the last thing that the Lord Jesus did before his hands were bound was to heal.

You see, Christ, he could have restored his own soul with the comfort of a thousand angels. The heavenly host that sang to the shepherds in the fields on the night he was born could have been summoned again to light up that dark night and Jesus could have, he could have come down off that cross.
But Christ actively chose the path of a weakening body and soul. Take this cup for me, he prays, but not my will but yours be done, Father.
Think about it. What if Christ had chosen the path of power in each of these moments? He had every right to. He could have saved himself and ushered in his kingdom right there on the spot that very night.
But the power of healing for himself of angels of might all for his own needs would not have saved us. In an instant, he would have, instant, he just would have exposed all of that sin and all of that injustice and all of that evil would have been laid bare for the whole earth to see and it would have been judged rightly on the spot and everyone on the earth, you and me included, would have been condemned before a holy God because of our sin.
[19:30] We would have had no savior, we would have had no salvation, no substitute, no Christ on the cross on our behalf if Christ had chosen power in each of those moments.

remember, Christ crucified in weakness. It's for our strengthening and ultimately God's glory. chapter 13 and verse 4 Jesus was crucified in weakness yet lives by God's power and Christ, he moves through weakness into power and the path is the cross before the crown.
you see, what Christ referred to in the Gospel of Luke, he talks about the hour of darkness has come in the garden, the hour of Satan, but he also calls it his hour.
You see, the apparent weakness was always revealing actual power. The apparent weakness of Christ was always revealing his actual power. This was Satan's hour but ultimately it was Christ's hour.
[20:48] Satan came with his ocean of suffering to overwhelm Christ but you know what? Christ is the master of all the seas. For a time Christ chose weakness.

He chose the very nature of a servant for you and for me. He did not grasp that power that was rightly his for his own advantage but as the scriptures say he became like nothing a humble servant who became obedient to death even death on a cross but God exalted him to give him the name that is above all names so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that he is Christ the Lord to the glory of God the Father.
Verse 4 Jesus was crucified in weakness yet lives in power. I just have some few applications this morning from that one verse we've dwelt on the weakness of Christ but so much flows from that truth.
we see in the death of Christ his setting aside of power for the sake of saving souls and we see in Christ's resurrection a power that comes after this weakness and so we have Jesus the God man and he unlike us but he retains that perfect equilibrium between the two between weakness and

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power and the use and the correct use in every situation of weakness and power and this weakness and power combination that's what's filling the life of Paul and is central and we haven't gone through it but that whole argument through this chapter 13 and actually if you read the book of Corinthians weakness and power is really the theme of the whole book in many ways the uncertainty that is hanging over Paul's next visit to the church in Corinth is this is he coming in weakness and humility to build them up and encourage them and to serve them or is he going to come with the power of the Lord to correct their serious sin and both are God honoring approaches by the way it's not trying to push one off against the other and Paul here in chapter 13 is laying out the options look at verse 3 they're demanding that they see
Paul come in strength but he says since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me here it is he is not weak in dealing with you but is powerful among you Christ is not weak in dealing with them but is powerful among them when it comes to sin in the church and then verse 4 Paul says for to be sure he was crucified in weakness yet he lives by God's power and the second half of the verse Paul sees his own state as being weak in Christ yet Paul too can come with God's power likewise we are weak in him that is they're weak in Jesus yet by God's power we will live with him in our dealing with you so the question remains when Paul comes will he have to deal with them harshly or not jump down with me to verse 10 this is why I write these things when I am absent that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority the authority the authority the Lord gave me for building you up not for tearing you down
[24:47] Paul wants to come and to build them up not to tear them down but sin needs to be dealt with it simply cannot be ignored and his hope is to draw from the weakness of Christ not power in his dealings with them so just go back one more verse verse 9 this is his heart we are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong and his prayer and our prayer is that you may be fully restored you see Paul would prefer that people the church would deal with their sin with the power of Christ and he would prefer to be weak and for them to be strong and that's his heart and his disposition in dealing with them and Paul's confidence in weakness in favoring weakness in these situations and throughout this whole letter it was a lesson that he learned the hard way didn't come easy to

Paul just look back briefly with me to chapter 12 and verse 7 to 10 because of the surpassing great revelations chapter 7 and verse chapter 12 and verse 7 because of these surpassing great revelations therefore in order to keep me from becoming conceited I was given a thorn in my flesh a messenger of Satan to torment me three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me but he said to me my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weakness so that Christ's power may rest on me that is why for Christ's sake I delight in weaknesses in insults in hardships in persecutions and difficulties for when I am weak then
I am strong this is the this is the heart of Christ coming through Paul isn't it the words we read there and yet we know that for the single thorn that was needling Paul's flesh Christ endured a crown full of those thorns for the messenger of Satan that Paul had to face Christ he took on Satan himself the insults and the hardships that Paul faced well they they rain down in a torrent on Christ from all sides Paul had learned from Christ from the cross that weakness makes for perfect power from God our weakness as is Christ's as we've seen in Christ our weakness is the means for others strengthening and for God's glory finally
Christ Christ to you acting in weakness and power and you to others Jesus can act in each circumstance in your life from either weakness or power he holds that perfect equilibrium between the two and he knows how to act in your life to come to you in weakness or power what do I mean well his spirit the Holy Spirit he can come and he can he can bind your tender conscience he can wrap it up and he can apply a balm to your soul or the same spirit can cut through your heart and your soul like a double edged sword to jolt you from your sin Christ can come to you through his spirit and weakness and power but know this his heart and his disposition towards you is tender it's merciful care he is weak so that you are strong he comes to you in weakness so that you can be strengthened so that you can be bound up instead of torn down
Isaiah the prophet says of our Lord a bruised reed he will not break a smoldering wick he will not snuff out so the question then for you is this which which are you going to choose in your life in your relationships with your children with your work colleagues your relationship with this church family can you do good to those people and glorify God by choosing weakness you see both weakness

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and power are available from Christ to his children and to his church our default choice and our default position should match that of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ whom we say that we love we forgo our power so that we may be weak in ourselves and strong in Christ Paul wrote earlier in this letter chapter 4 we have this treasure speaking of
[30:15] Jesus we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not from us your first thought in the situation that is boiling you from the inside out should be this Christ was crucified in weakness for me start always from there let Christ be your guide and strength let's pray our heavenly father we we are at the foot of the cross again where we should be each day and we see our savior crucified in weakness for us and we thank you father for your love in sending christ for free you father love the whole world that you sent christ to save us and we thank you

Christ for sending your spirit to minister to bind, to heal to help and to comfort us and when needed to point out sin and convict us help us Father to take Christ into our hearts and live this week in a way that honors Jesus magnifies Jesus shows strength from Jesus to God be the glory forever and ever Amen Thank you Ralph just in response to that we're going to sing
Jesus Christ I think upon your sacrifice just as we think about what the Lord did for us in weakness let's stand to sing Jesus Christ I think upon your sacrifice and the chorus goes thank you for the cross and isn't that where our focus should be on the cross for that's what we have in Christ because he went to the cross for our sins for every nature we are happy to be on more

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