

Wellness Sunday

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- [0 : 00] I think, Pastor Cornwell, if you will take your Bible tonight and ask you to turn to 1 Corinthians 11, or I'm sorry, 2 Corinthians chapter 11 tonight. As you're turning there, I was smirking as he was talking about having a good crowd with a guest preacher.
- Just ask my folks, and they would say, actually, I just let Pastor Trent come our way. So it's just, it's the new face, and we preachers have to come to terms with that. I don't know if you've ever had a situation where your son or even your wife, maybe, or grandchild comes to you and says, I heard an amazing truth.
- And they come back from camp or, you know, youth pastor, and you listen, and then you think, I've told you that 20 times. But however God chooses to work, right?
- It's not about us, and we've come to terms with that. So 2 Corinthians chapter 11 tonight, I'm going to read just one verse to you, and then we'll pray. We will unpack the balance of chapter 11 and then some verses in 12 as well.
- But our subject matter tonight is processing incremental stress. If you didn't get to, if you weren't here, didn't watch online, we talked about yesterday evening or morning, processing traumatic levels of stress.
- [1 : 11] And we talked about David as his city was sacked there, Ziklag. And we're going to look at the opposite side of the coin tonight as it relates to stress, incremental stress. 2 Corinthians 11, and look if you will, verse 28.
- Paul gets done listing in verses 23 through 27 just a litany of mind-boggling suffering and trauma that he has been through.
- And then he says this in verse 28, So that would be more external circumstances and external-oriented kind of challenges.
- That which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. That is an amazing verse. Paul, after listing all the other things that he's just said, it's almost like, and now let's talk about the one that is most traumatic, the one that is most stressful, and it's just the incremental, the day-to-day grind of leading in the local church.
- Let's pray and ask the Lord to help us tonight. Lord, thank you for your word. Thank you for its sufficiency. Thank you for its practicality. Lord, thank you for these men and their hunger for your word. Lord, if there's anything we as men struggle with on a regular basis, it's processing not really just the crisis, the rare moments of intense trauma and challenge and overwhelming circumstances, just the day-to-day, Lord.
- [2 : 36] Our anger, our impatience, and the list goes on. We often do not navigate, we do not process in a way that pleases you, incremental stress.
- And I pray that you would help each of us tonight. To leave with handlebars that we can reach out and grab and begin to implement these principles from your word through the life and lips and lens of the Apostle Paul.
- Thank you for your spirit preserving and inspiring these words for us tonight. Bless this study, we pray in Christ's name. Amen. We talked about last night what would be called acute levels of trauma.
- Tonight we want to talk about complex. And the difference in the counseling world would be acute stress or trauma would tend to be connected to a singular moment in time.

I was abused. I was fired. We lost a child. Whatever the specific thing would be. But something that was more in one moment.

[3 : 37] What we're going to talk about tonight is stress that comes from, as we're passing out the handouts there, stress that comes from things that are just the grind of life.

In the counseling world, this would refer to C, post-traumatic stress. It would be complex.

This would be the result of being exposed over a long period of time to emotional trauma with little hope or opportunity for escape. I don't know if you've ever run into someone who's been in trafficking, for example.

That's a whole other level of trauma because it's not just one moment. It's years. It's their whole childhood or whatever the case may be. And then the rest of their life continues to navigate the complexities of that.

This may also include the accumulative, developmental, current, or chronic trauma where trauma may be experienced as a child and then again as an adult. And that's the worst form of this would be where something happened younger and then it was perpetuated or it was resumed when we reached adulthood.

[4 : 44] The other example would be those in the military. I don't know how many veterans we have in the room tonight. We have several in our church that have been diagnosed with PTSD. And there, they didn't see someone die.

They didn't run over a child with a tank. But just the grind, as some have, that I've also worked with and counseled. But it was just the pressure of life and death for month after month and that intensity and even their training of how to respond to that.

And so that's kind of what we're talking about, obviously, in the civilian world, in our day-to-day. How do we navigate those incremental stresses? Now, I want to just say this. We're not going to talk about this today at length.

But especially with men in the room, this is the area of stress that often pushes us into certain sinful releases or processes.

It could be as simple as we veg out in front of the TV when we should be ministering to our wife or kids. This could stray into pornography. The reason I chose to study this tonight with you is I really think that often it is our lack of processing stress properly that causes us to do the lazy thing, to do the convenient thing, to do the private thing that often is really just us coping with, trying to cope with incremental stress in a way that does not please the Lord.

[6 : 07] So Paul here, let's come back to the text now. In 2 Corinthians 8, his credentials as an apostle have been questioned. And so at the end of chapter 11 as well as into chapter 12, he is trying to communicate to those that have questioned him or others who are doubting or wondering about him the foundation of his apostleship.

And he uses as the starting point everything that he has suffered, the stresses he has experienced uniquely as an apostle of Jesus Christ. And may I remind us tonight that we as leaders of Christian homes and a church and ministry, stress is not optional.

I think many of us are looking for the easiest way to do family, to do marriage, to do ministry. And I just want to remind you tonight that if you're in God's will, you will have to navigate stress.

You will have to navigate this angst in your soul that comes from navigating and doing ministry in a fallen world. So the question tonight is this, in a world filled with stress-inducing triggers everywhere, how do we as men stand up under these stresses with intentional soul care?

And I know as I teach men tonight, this is not something we talk about in polite conversation. We talk surfacy. We tend to. So let's take a break from that for a few moments tonight and let's talk about our soul.

[7 : 27] Let's talk about how we're managing the inward health and well-being before the Lord. All right, let's talk about two biblical perspectives that you and I need to maintain to have wellness in the midst of incremental stress.

And may I say this before we look at these two perspectives? Have you noticed that as we age, that as we go through something repetitively over and over, that we begin to allow our perspective to be skewed by that as we go through it again?

And again, I know as a man, I don't know if this resonates with you, I can deal with any person about any issue one time. But if we got to deal with it a second time and a third time and a fourth time, so the repetitive kind of stresses are often the most difficult.

It's not the one-time big crisis that really blows up our theology or our walk with the Lord. It's more the grind of the day-to-day. All right, so let's talk about two perspectives that Paul had to maintain to navigate what is mind-boggling sources and levels of stress as we strive to do the same.

Number one, perspective in our weaknesses. Paul begins by talking about that we must, if we're going to navigate incremental stress properly, that we maintain a godly perspective in the midst of our weaknesses.

[8 : 40] Um, my wife and I are moving in opposite directions optically as we age. I am nearsighted and I can see really well right in front of me, probably because I read books as a child in the dark and all the consequences of that.

My wife has reading glasses, so she can see things far away. I can see things close. So we, together, we're a bifocal marriage, okay? Um, but, uh, one of the things that, uh, I read just the other day, someone said, don't stress about your eyesight failing you as you get older.

It is nature's way of protecting you from the shock you would feel as you walk by a mirror, okay? You can't, you just can't see how the gut is growing or the gray is coming or the hair is falling out, as is the case for me.

But, uh, perspective in the midst of our weaknesses. Aren't you thankful that God gives us clarity to see things, not just the good moments, but the down moments and the, the inadequate moments.

We as men, that's one of the worst things someone could say about us. We're inadequate. You didn't, you didn't live up to the moment. You didn't have what it takes in that, uh, that situation that was before you.

[9 : 52] And so in the midst of our weaknesses, listen to me, we have to own this that are only growing for most of us as we move through life. We have to have the right perspective about those weaknesses because what stress does is it reminds us of those weaknesses.

I feel, I feel pretty strong when I'm just standing here, but give, give me a running start. Let me get out about four or five steps at a dead sprint and my weaknesses are revealed, right?

You know where I'm going with that. And so what stress does is it exposes our weaknesses and we have to make sure that we have the right perspective. One author said this, when your soul is running on empty, your emotions will get the best of you.

And so in our weak moments, we have to have perspective that's beyond our emotions. And we men that we may live in denial tonight, we have emotions too. We're actually very emotionally oriented creatures.

We just maybe are able to mask those when we're not in a stressful situation. And so may we prepare for these moments of weakness with this kind of perspective. All right, let's talk about a couple of areas as it relates to this perspective.

[10 : 55] Number one, biblically processed weakness that leaves you overwhelmed. The first word there in the sub point there, biblically processed weakness that leaves you overwhelmed.

And Paul talks about two of them that would be common to us as well. Look back at verse 28. So he says, as we read, besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of the churches.

Number one, Paul reminds us that we often will be overwhelmed in ministry. Talks about in verse 28. He goes on in verse 29, as we'll get to in just a moment. But we see that Paul experienced the feeling of being overwhelmed in the midst of ministry.

Isn't it difficult to comprehend? I don't know about you. I'd rather care for a few churches than be shipwrecked or stoned. Or he goes through the litany, the list of things there. But to Paul, who alone knew both and could compare both, he said, this is more of a source of stress on a day-to-day basis.

He was overwhelmed with the ministry to the church. Wiersbe says this in verse 28, spiritual battles are always more costly than physical ones.

[12 : 05] Isn't that why ministry is so challenging? It's not just on a physical level. It does involve some physical factors. It's on a spiritual level. You do know this morning in our service, there were spiritual battles being waged in hearts and minds and souls.

And even tonight, again, that is resumed. And so the ministry is overwhelming because of the spiritual battles and their toll upon our soul. Verse 29, who is weak?

So now he begins to unpack why this care of the churches was so overwhelming. Who is weak? And am I not weak? Who is offended? And I burn not. If I must need glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

And so Paul here says, I feel the pain. I feel the struggle of my fellow believers. And it exhausted him, his nervous energy, to empathize and to commiserate with those around him.

Your pastor's in the room tonight. And can I just encourage you as a fellow pastor, there is a unique burden with leading a local church. You do know that, right? Brother Ewing, who's getting ready to go to the field.

[13 : 08] There's a unique challenge of being a missionary. And Brother Tolson and others that I know personally, things that they have navigated and still are navigating. I was reading an article the other day that talked about the ministry and specifically the burden it is to those who lead in it.

The author said this, ask any pastor who really takes his work seriously and he will tell you of the pressures he feels in ministry. People in crisis, people leaving, people coming, people falling through the cracks, people disappointed by the pastor, people disappointing to the pastor.

During this work, the pastor is trying to find time for study, prayer, preparation, and family. He's trying to improve himself, train up new leaders, meet the budget, get to know a few missionaries, champion important programs, manage the staff, take care of administrative details.

The list goes on and on. And then he said this, and most pastors feel the burden for all the other things they could be doing. Does that resonate with any of us in ministry?

So you have everything you are doing and then it's like, am I really doing enough? Just the grind and the incremental stress of the ministry. And so in the midst of being overwhelmed, we need to maintain the perspective that God gives to us.

[14 : 19] In verse 30, he goes on to say, as we just read, he glories, not just in his strengths, but in his weaknesses. Can I debunk a false statement that I hear all the time being said?

Have you ever heard this statement? Well, you know, God will never give you more than you can handle. You do know that there's not a chapter and verse on that, right? In fact, it's false.

And the greatest example of that is our call to ministry. I always feel overwhelmed by God's call in my life. Me. Why me? Why now?

Why these people? Why this situation? And so may we glory in that instead of running from that. That's a perspective that only God can give us. The ministry is to remind us that we are finite.

We don't have it all. We can't do it all. But we can glory in a God who makes up the difference, who makes up the inadequacies that all of us possess this evening.

[15 : 17] All right, look at verse 31. The God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed forevermore, knoweth that I lie not. So he's affirming what he just said. He gives this little story at the end of the chapter.

In Damascus, the governor under Aretas, the king, kept the city of Damascus scenes with a garrison desirous to apprehend me. And through a window and a basket was I let down by the wall and escaped his hands.

And so he mentions this story that we know of that's referenced also in Acts chapter 9. All right, number two, jot this down, overwhelmed in resistance. So we're overwhelmed first in ministry.

Number two, we're often overwhelmed by the pushback, the resistance that we experience. I know for me, sometimes I can't even put into words why I feel so much friction that's against me and fighting me and fighting the ministry and what God's called our church to do or our family to do.

There is a spiritual resistance as we seek to walk out God's will in our lives. In verse 31, he talks about these sufferings and the indignities that he had suffered and then being let down by a basket.

[16 : 29] This was not Paul's highest moment. It wasn't his glorious moment. He left the city from some perspectives in shame. And yet he was willing to embrace that for the glory and honor of Jesus Christ.

I was talking to somebody the other day who was talking about, I don't know if you ever have this, you observe a spiritual leader who has a blatant failure morally, financially, whatever the case may be.

And the temptation is for us who watch that and say, how could you be so foolish to compromise your purity or whatever the case may be? And I think sometimes that's true, but here was the thought that he had, this wiser man than I.

He said, some men do that because they know that's the quickest way out of the ministry where no one will ask them to return to it. Can I tell you, if you don't process stress properly as it relates to the ministry, you'll take yourself out.

Processing stress, the incremental grind of the day-to-day must be dealt with. Listen, our body, a lot of us in counseling use this term, it keeps score. You can't cheat the system.

[17 : 41] You can't cut corners. You've got to deal with stress. And Paul here begins to lay the groundwork for how he did so himself. Even when he was overwhelmed, he kept his focus and his eyes and his perspective upon the Lord.

If you don't want the resistance, you only have two options. Number one, you can be a tickler of the ears to avoid pushback and resistance. You can try that approach. Or you can be Demas and forsake the ministry.

But to stay in the ministry means we've got to handle the stress. We've got to ask God for his help to handle it his way and in his time. And so serving God is about more than self, hence the reason why we need God's help beyond ourselves.

We will glory to God willing to help you and to give you more than you can handle. All right, go to chapter 12 now. Let's get to the heart of our text this evening. Number two. So first of all, number one, we biblically process weakness that leaves us overwhelmed.

Are you overwhelmed tonight? Can I challenge you to biblically process that sensation? Number two. Biblically process. Here it is. Number two. Weakness that leaves you humble.

[18 : 48] Weakness that leaves you humble. When I was in Bible college, my undergrad I did in Pensacola and then did some seminary work at Maranatha. But when I was in Pensacola, my wife and I were married my senior year.

And one of the jobs I got just to get us by as married students in college was I delivered the Pensacola News Journal. Dead of night. My driving skills were already horrible.

But once I started doing that in the middle of the night, there's no rules. You know, you're throwing papers and dodging dogs and whatever you had to do to get it done as quick as you could. Running red lights. And I won't tell you some of the stuff I did.

But anyway, some I already did. But you were in a hurry. And I remember at the end of the year having to file my taxes because I was technically an independent contractor. And the label that they gave to that profession was this.

Home delivery contractor. Man, that sounded good. That sounded respectable. You know what a rowdy I was? A glorified newspaper boy in my little Ford Escort dumping papers in people's yards.

[19 : 50] Isn't it funny how we try to prop ourselves up in different ways? Can I tell you one of the areas that bothers us the most about stress and why we don't process it as we should is it humbles us.

At least it's trying to. Proud men are not able to process stress God's way. But we have to develop and submit to this process of being humbled to be everything God wants us to be.

And so Paul touches on that. Let's read these verses quickly. Verse 1. It is not expedient for me, doubtless, to glory. I would come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above 14 years ago.

Whether in the body I cannot tell or whether out of the body I cannot tell. God knoweth. Such a one caught up to the third heaven. I knew such a man whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell. God knoweth.

How that he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words which is not lawful for a man to utter. So number one here.

[20 : 50] Jot this down. Humbled in our gifting. So God gives to the man being referenced here. We all probably know this. Paul is speaking humbly of himself.

He's speaking kind of in a way indirectly of himself. And so he talks about what God had gifted him to do. It's interesting that you see him talking about this man was in Christ.

So he's making it about Christ, not about himself. And this gifting that God had blessed him with. This experience that Paul had gone through with the Lord.

But on the heels of that now, look at verse 5. Verse 6. So God forbade him from speaking of this.

Paul submitted to that and was unwilling to share that. He recognized that it was a gift from God. Nothing he had earned or merited. I heard a statement the other day.

[21 : 56] And then I'll bring this to verse 7. A key verse tonight. I know this isn't profound. But it is. The number of people. Have you thought about this? The number of people who are older than you never gets bigger.

The number of people who are older than you. Isn't that a blessing to hear tonight? Will never get bigger. In fact, that number is shrinking, right? Reminding us of the brevity of life. Can I encourage you tonight?

Whatever gifting God has given you, there's a very short shelf life to that gifting and that window. And that ought to humble us. It ought to motivate us to pass it on to the next generation and live out that gifting in a way that is humble.

But I think sometimes we think we're God's gift to this world. And anything that gets in our way is merely an inconvenience. Do you know that stress is a reminder of that? Stressors and inconveniences.

That we only do what we do with God's permission and with God's provision. And so Paul's about to get into this. But he reminds us that all of this gifting was of God. God had given it to him.

[22 : 58] It was temporary at best. And that is also true of us this evening. All right. Now go to verse 7. And here's now the heart of our text. Unless, Paul says, And I think a reference back to what he has just said in the previous six verses.

There was given to me. Now here's the second gift. A thorn in the flesh. The messenger of Satan to buffet me. Lest I should be exalted above measure.

Number two. Jot this down. God also seeks to humble us not only with his gifting. Number two. With limitations. Humbled in limitations.

You ever thought about the things that hinder you? I know some of those in the room tonight would prefer to be on the mission field. And God is in some way redirected. Or hit the pause button on that. Others of us have things we've waited on God for years.

And we're still waiting in those limitations. Maybe we have physical hindrances tonight. We have certain scars and wounds and burdens that slow us down, if you will. Here Paul refers to his thorn in the flesh as a messenger of Satan.

[24 : 07] We'll come back to that in just a minute. But what was the thorn in the flesh? We don't know for sure, right? The best I have read seems to be his eyesight. That he struggled with that.

Remember in Acts chapter 9, he's blinded, right? On the road to Damascus. And so that had to have had an effect upon his eyes. We see later in Galatians 4.15 and chapter 6 and verse 11, he says, These large letters that I've written with.

So it's very likely that Paul, who wrote the lion's share of the New Testament, may not have been able to read what he wrote through those who helped him. Isn't that amazing to think of? And maybe as he would preach and Eutychus that fell asleep in the window and dropped from the window, that it wasn't Paul who read the text that night.

Especially in the dim light of that late night meeting. You know, I envision Paul getting up and owning the stage and open your Bibles or let me share with you what God has revealed. Paul was kept humble through this limitation.

So it's very likely that there was not just the physical impact of his eyes, but also emotionally and just psychologically this thorn in the flesh.

[25 : 15] Now the word thorn is actually the word stake. And the word that's used here was often used where they would actually impale a prisoner. It would stick a man on this kind of a stake.

It wasn't a small speck. Paul used that word on purpose. It cut him to the very core of who he was, this burden and its implications in his life.

And so Paul here we see being humbled through this limitation. Now it's interesting that Paul refers to it as a messenger of Satan. Satan, this is key tonight, had a reason for this.

He had a motivation for this. But may I remind you tonight, also God has a reason for our limitations. And what starts maybe in the origins of the darker side, as we would say, as with Job, the motivations of what brings stress into our life, especially on a day-to-day basis, can be redeemed and has a sovereign purpose if we will simply maintain a biblical perspective.

And so this humbling effect was God's intention. God, who is greater than Satan, used this thorn to further his work by humbling and keeping Paul humble.

[26 : 26] Here would be a thought tonight. I think as it relates to incremental stress, the things that bother you, the things that limit you, could be regular, frequent resources from God to check your pride, to check my pride, and to keep me humble as I do ministry and service for him.

And so may we view it through the lens that God is humbling us through limitations. Just a thought tonight as well as it relates to this stress idea. Much of the incremental stress in our lives is not the thorn itself, but our unwillingness to humbly submit to what God's trying to do through it.

So could it be some of the stress in your life is not the actual burden or challenge or limitation, it's how you view it. And you're fretting and you're fuming and you're wishing and you're wanting.

And then when God reveals that it is his will for that to persist, we are unwilling to be a part of it. And so may we have the spirit we see in Paul. Question tonight, would you admit where ongoing stress is largely your pride being rubbed the wrong way without surrendering to the humbling collision of your God-assigned gifts plus your God-assigned limitations?

Every man that's ever served the Lord has always done so with some gifting from God he doesn't deserve. In a context that's not as free and easy as he would like. Isn't that true? And they kept their head down, they kept their eyes on the word, and they kept their focus on the Lord, and they just pushed through those things.

[28 : 00] May we be willing to be that for the glory and honor of Jesus Christ. All right, now let's spend the balance of our time in how Paul processes his prayer and God's answer to that prayer beginning in verse number 8.

So Paul, as we would have done, and often we do, it says this, For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, or three times that it might depart from me, and he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness.

Number two. So perspective first in our weaknesses. Number two, perspective in our doubts. Perspective in our doubts. Have you ever noticed that when you send out a text to somebody, that your ability to edit, to catch errors in that text go up exponentially after you click send?

Have you noticed that? In fact, several times in our church, I have sent a text to a man in our church that includes the word babe, which is how I refer to my wife. And it's like, now I'm like paralyzed.

I can't send a text to anybody because I'm always double checking. Who's it to? And what did I say? You know what I'm saying? Where you start, you're doubtful, you're questioning, you're wondering if you're in the right frame of mind.

[29 : 20] So we see Paul here having to wrestle with prayers that aren't answered, or at least aren't answered the way he would have liked. And so doubt begins likely to creep in, and God has to soothe him and steady him and redirect him through his answers.

One of the casualties of stress is that our confidence often is eroded. When everything's clicking and everything's going right, we tend to have greater confidence.

But when things become stressful and inconvenient, often that confidence is eroded. So how do we deal with that as men who need, in the right sense, to be confident in the Lord?

Number one, jot this down, biblically processed doubt that leaves you needy. Biblically processed doubt that leaves you needy. And Paul here is wrestling with this.

He doesn't like this. He doesn't want this. He asks God repeatedly to remove it. And to answer those doubts and questions, he realizes and recognizes his need. All right, number one.

[30 : 20] Number one, we need to be needy for the sufficiency, for sufficiency. What is sufficient? What can meet all of our needs? Paul's about to discover that in the text tonight.

In verse nine, you notice, as we read the beginning of the verse, rather than removing the problem, what does God give him? Grace. Instead of removing the problem, God gives him grace.

The grace that is sufficient or adequate in the sense of providing contentment. That's the idea of the word there. It allows Paul to be content and to rest in the sufficiency of the grace of God.

Is that not the way God often answers our prayers? He doesn't take away what we ask him to take away. Instead, he gives us the grace to deal with it. One day, one hour, one moment at a time.

The incremental stress. What's God's answer? It's not, let's zap it away or let's eliminate it. Let me give you my grace. And I'll say this tonight in one packet a bit more.

[31 : 19] It's hard for me to say this, but I ought to be able to say, if I get more of God's grace because of the incremental stresses that I wish would go away, I want them.

I want them. Can I tell you tonight, men, that the things that bother you and stress you and just wear you out are the very places and situations that the grace of God can go richer and deeper and fuller than you could ever dream is possible.

And I want grace that can just help me have a good day. I want grace that's deep enough and rich enough and wide enough to see me through the difficult days. That's the grace of God.

And so to know the depths of it, God knows that often it is the burdens and the petty things and the stressful things that help us to more fully appreciate it. And so God says basically, instead of yes to Paul's prayer, he says grace.

He answers his prayer with sufficient grace. Much of the tension in our lives this evening, gentlemen, is the result of chafing under the drip drip of prayers for deliverance that are unanswered.

[32 : 25] We just resent that. We resent that. We resent that. Instead of submitting to a God who offers sustenance and strength and power and grace to see us through that.

And here's where that ends. We start doubting the goodness and the greatness of God. Either God isn't able to take this away or God's so mean and capricious and evil that he doesn't want to take it away.

And so may we look to God for grace that is sufficient in the midst of our need. I don't know about you, the greatest rhythm in my life that I often miss in the moment is I have a need and God meets it with his grace.

I have a need and he meets it with his grace. There's nothing that can maintain that healthy rhythm more than I'm needy and he's sufficient. I'm needy and he's sufficient.

I'm desperate and he's full of grace. And so may we as men avail ourselves of that and point others to it as he gives us opportunity. All right, notice the end of verse nine. So he says, my grace, Paul, instead of me answering your prayer, is sufficient.

[33 : 31] Notice it's also perfect. It's adequate. It's everything we need. Notice now Paul's response in verse nine. Most gladly, therefore, you think maybe there was a pause in the middle of verse nine there in real time?

I would guess if Paul was the same DNA as us, there was, but he reaches now this conclusion. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Number two, we are needy not only for sufficiency, but for glory. Did you notice that? I will rather glory in my infirmities. I don't know if any of you have this in the room.

If you have big trucks, you know, we have a truck lot near our church. Literally, there's not a pickup truck in that parking lot that's under a hundred grand. They got the lift kits, huge rims that you could probably camp out in for the night, you know, just massive.

And now and then, I'll pull up next to one with my little super sport Toyota RAV4, and they'll rev their engine, you know, and leave a little rubber beside me as I'm still trying to get going, you know, when the light turns green.

[34 : 41] Why do men do that? Why do they rev the engine? Why do they burn rubber? It's a display of power, right? We glory in displays of power. If you remember back, this is my era, Yugos.

Do you remember those? Little imports. My dad always would say, they're called Yugos because it's Yugo and I have to stay. You know, there's not enough room for both of us. You ever seen a guy rev the engine of a Yugo or something similar for the young bucks out there?

We glory only in that which is powerful. We don't rev the engine of a weak thing. God's kingdom and God's economy flips things on its head. We glory in weaknesses.

We glory in even the burdens and challenges of life because in the midst of that, God shows up and gives to us His grace and His glory. And so as the Lord explains His wisdom and what He's about to do in Paul's life, Paul in effect says he wouldn't want it any other way.

Okay, I've heard what you've said. I submit to that. I revel in that. I glory in that. He celebrated what God had chosen to do in his life. Instead of complaining and grumbling about the thorn, he would rather boast in his infirmities.

[35 : 51] Why? Because as he did so, the power of Christ rested on him. Here's a thought tonight. It's not enough to just go through the grind of the challenges.

We have to glory in them before the power comes. So one of the challenges we have, well, I'm putting one foot in front of the other, trying to have a decent attitude and we tell everybody how miserable we are and how much we wish our life would change.

when we're in the midst of infirmities and stresses and burdens and we glory in the Lord in those, that's when his power shows up. I want to encourage you men tonight, maybe you're navigating stress on your own because you're not glorying in what God has chosen for you and you haven't tasted and experienced the power that is yours if you simply will choose to worship him.

Not when life gets perfect, but you'll worship him in the dust and the din and the stresses of life. In that place, you will still praise him. We could talk about Job, couldn't we, for hours.

Though he slay me, yet why serve him? His praise, his refusal to curse God and die as his own dear wife advised him to do. He chose even in the midst of the need to glory and to revel in his God.

[37 : 06] Alright, verse 10. Paul goes on, therefore I take pleasures. Here now come these incremental stressors that he resumes as he referenced back at the end of chapter 11.

I take pleasure, take pleasure in infirmities and reproaches and necessities and persecutions and distresses. There's that word we talked about last night or yesterday morning as well.

In distresses for Christ's sake for when I am weak then am I strong. And so he glories in these experiences something impossible to do from a human perspective but very logical to do when we consider that it is for Christ's sake and all that is ours through Jesus Christ.

Here's the world's philosophy on things that don't go away. So if we're dealing with a stress and we realize I'm stuck with this, this situation, this relationship, this challenge, this burden physically, the world's philosophy would be then if it can't be cured it must be endured or just cope with it.

Paul here gives us another way forward. Paul radiantly testifies in contrast what cannot be cured can be enjoyed. Isn't that true?

[38 : 16] What can't be cured can be enjoyed. And so the fellowship of Christ's suffering and these weaknesses and difficulties that he lists here, he says, listen, if it can't be cured then I choose to enjoy it.

With the grace of God at my disposal, I choose to have the right spirit and attitude. And so we as well must choose to glory in what God leaves in our lives.

Question tonight, men, what do you do when God tells you no or leaves you in a place of perpetual need? What do you do with that? What do I do with that? One of the greatest reductions of stress in your life will be when you finally resolve to worship God in the place of need.

It'll take at least the teeth out. It'll take some of the extra pressures of stress from your life when you choose to worship God in the place of need. I was reading the other day of a lady named Emma.

I can't pronounce her last name but she was the wife of a Polish nobleman years ago. And her life was a series of frustrations and disappointments and burdens and challenges.

[39 : 27] Yet her biographer was noted as giving her the following tribute to her faith. Quote, she made magnificent bouquets out of the refusals of God.

Magnificent bouquets out of the refusals of God. What in your life has God refused to do that you're letting God use that? You're letting God get glory from that.

Instead of whining and complaining and griping about it, may we be willing to view it as Paul does. All right, lastly, go if you will to verse 11. I am become a fool in glorying.

You have compelled me for I ought to have been commended of you for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest of apostles though I be nothing. Number two, and lastly, biblically processed doubt that leaves you questioned.

Question. So Paul here at the beginning of our text and now again resumes it, all of this has been brought on what he has shared because he's been questioned by those who should be following him.

[40 : 25] He's dealing with these stresses of caring for the churches and the questions that they have about him. Number one, notice they question his authority.

He's questioned in his authority. Have you ever been questioned as a man? How dare you? What right have you? And so Paul here is answering these questions of his authority and we must be willing to do the same with the spirit that he possesses.

It's almost as if in verse 11, Paul says, I wish I didn't share what I just shared. I made it about me and yet because you weren't willing to follow me and trust me and submit to what God has called me to do and be.

He shares how God has affirmed him. Verse 12, truly the signs of an apostle, so he goes on, were wrought among you in all patience and signs and wonders and mighty deeds and so he reminds them of the things he had done in Corinth that God had done to affirm his leadership.

A thought tonight as it relates to this, you ever have your authority question? I think that's a perpetual experience, isn't it as a man? We won't go into detail about who questions our authority because we might get ourselves in trouble, at least I will, since I asked the question tonight.

[41 : 38] But can I tell you that leaders that are unhealthy, listen to me, tend to leak influence. So one of the reasons why those who are following us are not following us as they should and they're questioning and undermining and undercutting our authority is because they can sense in us there are doubts there.

There's hesitation, there's unhealth there and so us being healthy emotionally and spiritually and physically positions us instead of leaking influence to exert influence and so we see Paul here being very assertive as a leader in the faith.

Leaders with emotional health see their weaknesses as a means to greater validation by God's grace in their lives. We don't have to be perfect men to be in a position of authority. We have to let God's grace make up for those inefficiencies and those inadequacies and so maybe we let that happen as we see Paul doing in the text.

Alright, lastly go to verse 15. He says this in conclusion to this church that he has written out two lengthy letters that had to have at times exacerbated him and frustrated him.

And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, Corinthians. Though the more abundantly I love you the less I am loved. Secondly, we see his love being questioned.

[43 : 00] He's questioned in his authority. Number two, he's questioned in his love. I joked about the you go thing tonight. It's funny to me generational things that the younger guys in the room tonight especially our elementary boys and maybe even some of our young men can't relate to but Pastor Trent and I were talking about do you remember those of us of our generation?

We who are the geriatric millennials. Did you catch that yesterday if you were here? We're like this little micro generation. Do you remember the reading program at Pizza Hut?

Do you remember that? Where if you read so many books you would get a personal pan pizza. I mean that was like literally the pinnacle of human experience as an elementary student.

I remember reading, burning through books and then I think we got a badge or a sticker or something. You just walk in just like you own the place. Give me one of those. You know, the usual as you walk in and then you get that.

Remember those red cups like translucent plastic so-called glass cups and you put that under the fountain and you thought you were big stuff. The other day someone said this.

[44 : 05] They were talking about having passion and they had a picture of one of those a personal pan pizza. It said, my New Year's resolution is to pursue Jesus the way I pursued one of these bad boys as a second grader.

That's my goal in life is to pursue Jesus like that. Where's our love? I know for me when I get stressed, when I'm in the midst of a stressful season, the spirit I see of Paul here, it wanes.

Especially when I'm giving out love that's not reciprocated. Love that's not responded to in like kind and so we see that Paul here keeps his heart right before the Lord and all that that did for him and those that he impacted.

Paul was not loving Christians when they were perfect. He wasn't loving Christians in a perfect environment. He wasn't in a vacuum. It was all out persecution. He was on the run. He's shortly to die for the cause of Christ and yet he says, you know what?

I love you guys and I love you whether you love me back or understand my love for you. And so we as men in the midst of these stressful seasons, we must love those that God has put in our lives.

[45 : 14] Incremental stress can only be sweetly shouldered when we remember that our motivation is the love that we have for God and the love that we have for our neighbor. If you're only trying to get through this stressful season for yourself, you're not going to have what God wants you to have during this season.

Are you trying to shoulder the stress and maybe even absorb some of the stress for the sake of those that you love? Those you're called to lead. Men, manage the stress with the motivation of love.

Do it for God. Do it for your family. Do it for your church. Do it for our communities. May love be the motivation of our stress management. Somebody said this as it relates to marriage.

A man who takes a woman to the altar is going there to die to himself. We've all, most of us in the room, have started families or longed to start a family and many times our leadership begins with that spirit.

But as the years go by and the stresses begin to pile up, we forget that. We falter from that. We're not faithful in that. And so when we're questioned by others, instead of viewing those as attacks and threats, may we instead respond with looking to God for validation and responding with love to those who challenge us.

[46 : 32] I want to show you the last picture. Guys, if you can pull that slide up there, I'm fascinated with history. I don't know if you can see, yeah, you can see the picture there. My brother's in London, so anytime I see Travis, who, yes, I'm his brother and I sound like him and you can't, you know, get over that.

But anyway, I'm going to have a complex when I leave here. I'm going to introduce myself as Travis's brother at the next spot I'm at. But this is a picture in the war room, which is still in London underground.

I was watching a program that was talking about all these places under the city streets in London. Fascinating PBS program. And one of them is the war room just under Downing Street where Winston Churchill would have served in World War II is the war room that he was in.

And this is a picture of one of the arms of his chair that Churchill would have sat in literally when human civilization is in the balance.

I mean, just put yourself in that situation. I mean, it's all on the line. And at this point when this chair probably would have been used the most was before the U.S. got involved in the war. And I mean, literally, they were facing annihilation from the Nazis and the bombings.

[47 : 48] I read a book just recently on the bombings of London. But this is a chair from that bunker. And it's a chair in the cabinet room that he would have sat in right in the middle of that war room.

And on the arms, and I picked only one of them, one of them had kind of just, it was just sweat residue had eaten through the varnish. And then there was kind of just from his knuckles rubbing, it was worn down.

But this one is the left side is where his ring would have in those stressful moments just slowly worn a groove into that wood. Can you visualize that?

Just that incremental stress every day. Any of you have a chair or a place that you process in some way that incremental stress in your life?

Can I encourage you? God wants you to sit in his presence in those moments. He wants to be beside you in those seasons. He doesn't give you the stress and say, no, I'm not going to take it out and then just leave us hanging.

[48 : 52] He's there with us. He's a part of it. He has a purpose in it. And may I say tonight, gentlemen, what we do over and over with the repetitive inconveniences and stresses of life largely determine our ultimate success or failure because life's made up of incremental moments.

Some are good and some are bad and some are somewhere between, but it's how we manage the day-to-day stresses that determine the health or the unhealth, the legacy of our influence, if you will.

Now, I end with this as we come back to the Apostle Paul. Paul is shortly to experience what? Having his head separated from his body, right?

He was beheaded for the cause of Christ. Paul, long before he submitted to that ultimate end for him in his serving Christ before he stood before the Lord in eternity, he was preparing for that traumatic moment that had to be a bit stressful, right?

Let's be, he was human. By dealing with the incremental stress day by day. We had a man in our church that passed away recently in a plane crash and I remember I actually went up to fly with him like a month and a half before he was in a crash and passed away a small plane that I was in him with and we were talking about in that conversation over Wayne County in the air of how every day we're preparing for eternity.

[50 : 19] And can I tell you tonight, you'll only know how you're going to handle those ultimate stressful moments by how you choose to manage the ones you're dealing with right now. That's right. And the ones you're going to deal with tomorrow that are still there that are here today.

The ones that are here Tuesday that were there tomorrow. And so how we manage the incremental levels of stress largely determine how we will stand or falter when the crisis moment comes.

Here's the question. I appreciate your kind attention tonight. Will you allow God to give you biblical perspective on stress-induced weakness and stress-induced doubts?

Let's pray together.