

Come Follow Me
Elo Viz production
Week 38
2 Corinthians 1-7

If you recall in 1st Corinthians there was a sinful man that they were admonished by Paul to dis-fellowship. It has been some time and it seems that Paul now has a different perspective. It's interesting how our opinions change as we progress in the Gospel. We would like to say that everything we do is directed by the Spirit. However, the Spirit of God can only teach us if we are teachable and may only be able to guide us as far as our knowledge will allow. Thus we are instructed to seek Christ always, continually walking towards the light that will bring knowledge and grace.

This seems to be part of Paul's journey. Because, now in the 2nd Corinthians chapter 2 we find that Paul is telling them to forgive this man that they dis-fellowshipped and let him back into the loving friendship of the saints.

2nd Corinthians is quite a bit different from the rest of Paul's writings in that it is a lot more intimate. Some say that it is Paul's personal journal. He is vulnerable and humble. In Chapter 3 he says:

“3 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. (2 Cor 3:3-6)

I believe this is an ever growing topic for us to address as we change as a society. And this topic is made even more clear as we get into chapter 12 of this same book.

“5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

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

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, My **grace** is sufficient for thee: for my **strength** is made perfect in **weakness**. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may **rest** upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in **infirmities**, in reproaches, in necessities, in **persecutions**, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am **weak**, then am I **strong**.”
(2 Cor 12:5-10)

That seems to be the exact opposite of what the world teaches. Yet, therein lies the key of usefulness to God. “When I am weak, then I am strong.” With this principle etched in our hearts we can then be useful to God in His service. Without it we receive only an occasional spiritual experience here or there. This phrase is exactly why some of us will never amount to anything for God, because we rebel against this principle.

Could any of us really do as Paul did and glory in our infirmities? He asked God to remove them from him. Three times he asked to have it removed, and God responded with “No, I have given it to you for a purpose.” And so Paul embraces it and even glories in it, he takes pleasure in it. Why? Because it kept him humble, grounded and aware of the true source of his strength. It is a realization that the weaker I get the stronger I become in the Lord. The ultimate truth that dependance is the objective thus making weakness the advantage.

This principle was true back then and it is even more true today as we live in a society that props up individualism.

In a book titled “Therapy Culture” written by Frank Furedi in 2003 there was a study conducted that consisted of searching over 300 popular United Kingdom newspapers in 1980. They searched 300 newspapers looking for a reference to self esteem. In 1980 they couldn't find a single one. In 1986 they found three citations. By 1990 there were one hundred and three. A decade later in the year 2000 there were a staggering 3328 references to self esteem. Can you imagine what that number would be today? In the conclusion of his book Furedi says: Low self esteem is one of the most overused diagnoses for the problem of the human condition.

In the New York Times article published in 2011 Davis Brooks addresses this ever growing problem in our society, speaking of the College graduates of that year Brooks says:

“their lives have been perversely structured. This year's graduates are members of the most supervised generation in American history. Through their childhoods and teenage years, they have been monitored, tutored, coached and honed to an unprecedented degree.

Yet upon graduation they will enter a world that is unprecedentedly wide open and unstructured. Most of them will not quickly get married, buy a home and have kids, as previous generations did. Instead, they will confront amazingly diverse job markets, social landscapes and lifestyle niches. Most will spend a decade wandering from job to job and clique to clique, searching for a role.

No one would design a system of extreme supervision to prepare people for a decade of extreme openness. But this is exactly what has emerged in modern America. College students are raised in an environment that demands one set of navigational skills, and they are then cast out into a different environment requiring a different set of skills, which they have to figure out on their own.

Worst of all, they are sent off into this world with the whole baby-boomer theology ringing in their ears. If you sample some of the commencement addresses being broadcast on C-Span these days, you see that many graduates are told to: Follow *your* passion, chart *your* own course, march to the beat of *your* own drummer, follow *your* dreams and find *yourself*. This is the litany of expressive individualism, which is still the dominant note in American culture.

Today's graduates are also told to find their passion and then pursue their dreams. The implication is that they should find themselves first and then go off and live their quest. But, of course, very few people at age 22 or 24 can take an inward journey and come out having discovered a developed self.

Most people don't form a self and then lead a life. They are called by a problem, and the self is constructed gradually by their calling.

And Brooks concludes with this:

"Today's grads enter a cultural climate that preaches the self as the center of a life... Fulfillment is a byproduct of how people engage their tasks, and can't be pursued directly. Most of us are egotistical and most are self-concerned most of the time, but it's nonetheless true that life comes to a point only in those moments when the self dissolves into some task. The purpose in life is not to find yourself. It's to lose yourself."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/31/opinion/31brooks.html>

So it is not just the scriptures that tell us of the eternal principle that losing one's self is truly the only way to find it. We know that Jesus taught this during his earth ministry and yet we still give our children examples of a self centered life and teaching them that if they want something they need to go take it. We are teaching them to be independent of anything and anyone. When in the grand scope of things dependance on God is really the only path that will lead any of us to the gates of heaven to stand meekly before the all powerful Creator and to be welcomed into His loving arms having fulfilled our true mission for this mortal journey.

In Oct 2001 President Holland told this story:

"President Spencer W. Kimball once spoke of a man who prided himself on his vast acreage and remarkable holdings—groves and vineyards, herds and fields, ponds and homes and possessions of every kind. He prided himself on these, but to the end of his life was unwilling to tithe on them or even acknowledge that they were gifts from God. President Kimball then spoke at the man's funeral, noting that this land baron

was laid to rest in an oblong piece of soil measuring “the length of a tall man, the width of a heavy one.”⁸ In answer to the age-old question, “How much did he leave?” be reassured the answer will always be, “All of it.” So we would do well to lay up treasures in heaven, where not taxes but doctrines give meaning to words like *estate*, *inheritance*, *testament*, and *will*.⁹”

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2001/10/like-a-watered-garden?lang=eng>

The imagery of all of our possessions being left behind as we pass through the veil of this mortal life can be helpful in understanding how little control we actually have. No amount of riches or power or social media likes will give you any advantage in the world to come. The only advantage any of us could ever hope for is a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and the ability to recognize and obey His voice when He speaks. And the only way we will be able to achieve either of those things is by losing ourselves in the service of our fellowmen. Forgetting yourself and recognizing our weakness so that God may make us strong in Him.

For most I believe that listen to these podcasts I would assume that you are already striving to or working towards this goal. So what is my point? It is to strengthen your resolve or to supercharge the rate in which we achieve these blessings. And that is fulfilled as we become more humble and obedient to His will. See the amount of heavenly communication you receive is directly related to the level of our humility, or more clearly put. It is directly related to our weaknesses and the gratitude we express for our infirmities. Not in covering them up and appearing to be perfect to the world that requires that for any acceptance. but an open, unashamed, humble exposure of who we are as God creation and being willing to give our whole lives in service to Him and relying solely on His strength as we do His work.

Once we can grasp that principle and strive to live it, then and only then will the Heavenly communications flow and there will be nothing that will be able to stop it.

I pray that it may be so in your beautiful lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.