

Gospel and the Spirit of Life — 2

Outline

1. Importance of preaching the Gospel daily to ourselves
2. Dealing with the thorn in our flesh by the Spirit of Life
3. Embracing the place of weakness
4. Sowing in the Spirit

1. Importance to preach the Gospel daily to ourselves because:

It reveals God's immense love for humanity (John 3:16)

It assures believers that we have a **new identity** as God's children irrespective of our background (John 1:12-13).

It assures believers that we stand perfectly righteous before God. It is not based on what we do or do not do but on what Jesus has done for us through His life, death and resurrection on our behalf (2 Cor 5:21).

It sucks away our pride and makes us humble before God and man (1 Tim 1:15-16) It gives believers eternal security in God's love (John 10:27-30)

It reveals to believers the importance of daily being in union with Christ. When we yield to Jesus, His power enables us to fight temptations and trials in the world (John 16:33). When we rely on our strength and abilities instead of His, we will fail. We learned this in detail in Figures 4 & 5 in Gospel and Spirit of Life—Part 1.

2. Dealing with the thorn in our flesh by the Spirit of Life

Paul was a mighty apostle, but Jesus gave him a thorn in his flesh to make him dependent on Him. Paul learned an essential principle that we must learn. Jesus told Paul, *"My power is made perfect in weakness."* So, Paul delights in weakness because it forces him to rely on God's strength which makes him strong.

2 Cor 12:7-10 Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times, I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ 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 weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

*2 Cor 4:7-10 We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. ⁸ We are **hard pressed** on every side, but not **crushed**; **perplexed**, but not in despair; ⁹ **persecuted**, but not abandoned; **struck down**, but not destroyed. ¹⁰ We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.*

The weakness Paul delights in is not carnal weakness like immorality or losing one's temper. But his weakness comes from a lack of confidence in his abilities to do God's will and work so that he may depend entirely on God to empower and sustain him. From the scriptures mentioned above (2 Cor 12:10 and 4:8-

9), we can see what Paul has defined as “weakness”:

Prayer: We don’t pray because we rely on our abilities. But we can’t do anything unless we depend on God’s power *that we ask in prayer*. (Ps 18:4-19). **Problems:** *hardships* make us weak and more dependent on God (2 Cor 12:10).

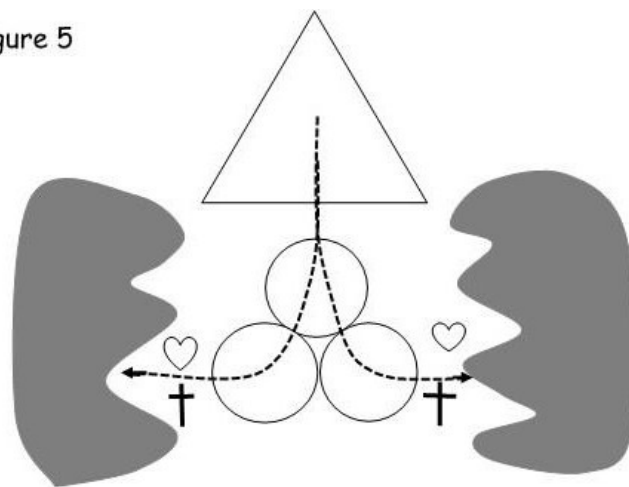
Persecutions (*struck down, hard-pressed on every side*) make us weak. Still, the Church grew in numbers whenever the world persecuted her because she depended more on God in her weakness because of persecution.

Perplexity: 2Cor 4:8. Often, we do not understand everything that God is doing, but we must quietly trust God like a weaned child with its mother (Ps 131)

Patience: Often, God doesn’t answer our prayers for a long time. Yet we keep trusting God patiently like Abraham and wait for Him (Heb 6:12-15).

3. Embracing the place of weakness

Figure 5



Paul’s principle is to be weak in our self-confidence to strengthen our union with Jesus. Satan constantly mocks us in our place of weakness (2 Cor 12:7; Matt 4:3, 6; 27:40). But Jesus triumphed over Satan by the cross (Col 2:15), the weakest place in human history. We, too, will defeat Satan as we embrace the position of weakness in our life.

Refer to Figure 5. A Christian must have two simultaneous responses to external provocation: the cross and love—which corresponds to patient submission to God and responding in the opposite spirit. Remember, Satan cannot drive out Satan (Matt 12:28). Therefore, anger cannot drive out anger. Resentment cannot drive out provocation and persecution. Evil cannot drive out evil. But only good (a value of God’s kingdom) can drive out evil (a value from Satan’s kingdom).

Rom 12:17-21 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

4. Sowing in the Spirit

Galatians 6:7-10 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸ whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. ⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Let us study these verses:

*Gal 6:7 **Do not be deceived***: Whenever the Bible says, “*Do not be deceived*,” it is a warning that we are most likely to be deceived in that place. We deceive ourselves when we keep sowing bad seeds into our lives and think that nothing bad will happen to us because God is good and loving to all His children.

*Gal 6:7 **God cannot be mocked***: There are no exceptions to God’s laws. His laws are universal and equally applicable to believers and unbelievers alike.

*Gal 6:7 **A man reaps what he sows***: This law of God has no exceptions.

Gal 6:8 The law of God is explained in the context of our spiritual life. Every human being (including a believing Christian) will reap destruction if he sows bad seeds into his spiritual life, i.e. seeds of behaviour from the flesh. When a believer sows good seeds into his spiritual life, he will reap eternal life — a life of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit — *Rom 14:17-18*). Such a person will grow in his fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Gal 6:9 Satan makes us **weary** and causes unbelief if we do not see results immediately. Therefore, please **don’t give up** on doing good; it is a test of faith. But when we continue to do good, we will reap **at the proper time** (after a certain period).

Gal 6:10 Therefore, make every effort to stay in faith and persevere in doing good to everyone. But especially do good to believers because planting seeds in good soil will yield a big harvest.

Consider the following verses. Notice that they show the same pattern of sowing and reaping and a time gap between sowing and reaping.

Hos 10:12 Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers his righteousness on you.

Hos 12:6 But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always.

Ps 37:34 Hope in the LORD and keep his way. He will exalt you to inherit the land; when the wicked are destroyed, you will see it.

James 5:7-8 Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You, too, be patient and stand firm because the Lord’s coming is near.

Heb 10:35-36 So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

Sowing methods:

Sow good deeds and wait for Him. Maintain justice, and righteous deeds, be loving and kind even when inconvenient, and give regular tithes (*Hosea 12:6*).

Be regular in prayer and fasting and Bible devotions and wait for Him. Arthur Wallis once researched the lives of well-known and very fruitful godly Christians. He found their secret to fruitfulness and godliness in three activities. They all prayed for at least one hour every day, fasted at least one day a week, and read the Bible at least once a year from cover to cover.

Trust and declare His promises while waiting for Him (*2Pet 1:3-4, 3:8-9, Heb 6:12-15*).

Rejoice in Him, in everything, give thanks and pray continually. It involves constantly practising His presence and depending upon Him (*1Thess 5:16-18*).

Keep the outward forms of goodwill to everyone, pray for the sick etc. Read *2 Kings 3*, especially vv 16-20. God says that when the Israelites dug trenches (outward forms) in the desert, He filled it with water (grace and anointing). He will fill your lives with His grace and anointing as you keep the outward forms.

Pray in tongues daily and long because it is God's only spiritual gift to build you up (*1 Cor 14:4*).

As you sow these good seeds daily in your spiritual life, you will reap eternal life, which is the life of God—a life of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (*Gal 6:7-10*). And you will be strong in the Lord (*Eph 6:10*).