



POWER IN WEAKNESS | THE AUTHENTIC LEADER (2)

September 14, 2025

2 Corinthians 1:15-24

PURPOSE

To discover and experience Jesus Christ in our midst
To cultivate mutually encouraging relationships
To participate in God's mission to the world

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Discussion Question

- What's one fun fact about you that most people don't know?

WORSHIP

PLEASE OPEN IN PRAYER

RESPONSIVE PRAYER — Psalm 34

I will bless the LORD at all times;
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul makes its boast in the LORD;
Let the humble hear and be glad.
Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt his name together!

SCRIPTURE READING

2 Corinthians 1:15-24

¹⁵Because I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a second experience of grace. ¹⁶I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on my way to Judea. ¹⁷Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to the flesh, ready to say "Yes, yes" and "No, no" at the same time? ¹⁸As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. ¹⁹For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. ²⁰For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. ²¹And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, ²²and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. ²³But I call God to witness against me—it was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth. ²⁴Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith.

BIBLE STUDY

Summary

We are in a new sermon series called Power in Weakness, and over the next few months, we will study Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. The 19th century theologian Charles Hodge said of 2 Corinthians, "More than any other of Paul's epistles, [this letter] bears the impress of the strong feelings under the influence of which it was written." It is also described as the most personal, painful, and passionate of all of the Apostle's letters. Paul is responding to "a painful visit" he had previously at Corinth (2 Cor 2:1), and while this

letter has numerous purposes — such as rehearsing his previous visits and letters (2 Cor 7:8) and fundraising (2 Cor 8-9) — the main occasion for the writing of 2 Corinthians is Paul defending his ministry and apostolic authority.

The immediate issue in our passage is Paul's change of travel plans. In 1 Corinthians 16:5-7, Paul had promised to visit Corinth after passing through Macedonia. But his first visit was so painful that he chose not to return as soon as expected, fearing that another visit would only deepen the conflict. Instead, he sent Titus from Ephesus with a letter, perhaps the "severe letter" mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:3-9. This left some Corinthians questioning Paul's reliability. They accused him of being fickle, of saying "yes" and "no" at the same time, and of serving his own interests "according to the flesh." In this context of broken expectations and strained trust, Paul points them away from himself and toward the unwavering faithfulness of God.

Paul insists that his change of travel plans must not be read as duplicity or self-interest, for his ministry is not "according to the flesh" but instead rooted in the unwavering faithfulness of God (verse 17). With God there is no fickleness (Numbers 23:19); his word is not "yes and no," but always "yes" in Christ. Every divine promise finds its fulfillment in Christ, for he is the guarantor of God's covenant promises (Hebrews 7:22).

The Holy Spirit is given to all believers as a seal (literally, "purchased as a down payment") guaranteeing our full inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14). This sealing means that God unites us to Christ by faith (Westminster Shorter Catechism [WSC] 29-30), applies his redemption with certainty, and assures us that he will finish what he has begun (Philippians 1:6). The Spirit's seal: 1) confirms that we belong to Christ; 2) strengthens us to stand firm, not in our own power but in God's work within us; and 3) gives us a foretaste of salvation now while pointing us to the eternal enjoyment of God that is promised to all those who are called (Romans 8:29-30; WSC 31). The God who establishes, anoints, and seals with the Spirit is the same God who has accomplished his "yes" in Christ so that our "Amen" — our work in him — rests on him and not us, and serves his glory and not ours (verses 20-22). The Christian life and ministry echo God's faithfulness by rooting all words and works in Christ, where there can be no fickleness — only faithfulness confirmed by the Spirit and directed wholly to the glory of God.

1. Looking at the Bible

- From the passage, share with the group some key phrases or ideas that stood out to you.

2. Looking at Jesus

At Central we believe that all of Scripture points to Jesus. In other words, Jesus is the theological center of the Bible. Every passage not only points to Jesus, but the grand narrative of the Bible also finds its fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus.

- Look at verses 21-22. How does the sealing of the Spirit function in the Christian life? In other words, how does the Spirit's seal serve as a deposit guaranteeing our full inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14) and also help us stand firm in Christ?

3. Looking at our Hearts

- Jesus gives a similar instruction in Matthew 5:37: “Let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’ be ‘No’” (see also James 5:12). Why do Jesus, Paul, and James limit our responses? (What are they guarding us from?) When we swear, exaggerate, or lie, what’s going on in our hearts?

4. Looking at our World

- Paul, as their minister, could have “lord[ed] it over” their faith (verse 24). In his previous letter to the Corinthians, Paul explains how he chose not to use any of his apostolic rights to demand provision (1 Corinthians 9:14–18). Jesus uses the same words, saying that the Gentile rulers “lord it over” those under them (Matthew 20:25). What do you think “lord it over” means?
- Do you ever find yourself inclined to misuse your position of power over those God has placed under your care? Or do you allow those in positions of authority to misuse or abuse their power? What should our response be to these questions if employing the biblical model of servant leadership?

PRAYER **Pray for each other:** Share any prayer requests you have.

The theme of this week’s passage is “faithfulness and integrity in ministry.”

- Pray for Central, with the addition of new staff and ministries, that the church would be a faithful witness of God’s grace in the city, and that all the staff and ministries would be centered on the gospel and focused on God’s glory.
- Pray for the pastors throughout this country, that they would be faithful in their ministry, not giving in to distractions or temptations but faithfully serving God’s flock that has been entrusted to them. Pray for the ministers’ families as well, that God would protect and provide for them.
- Pray for churches around the world, that they would be salt and light to their communities. Pray for the persecuted churches, that they would also be faithful even to the end. Pray that they would be filled with God’s supernatural strength and peace, and that God would swiftly deliver them.