



Sermon Series: *The Story of My Life*
Christ First Church
Pastor Wayne Chasteen
5-21-23

Sermon 1: THE WHOLE TRUTH
AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

INTRO: Turn your Bibles, or turn them on, to 2 Corinthians chapter 12. Today, we start a brand new sermon series titled, THE STORY OF MY LIFE. Over the next few weeks, I will be joined here on stage by several in our church. Together, we will tell their stories of heartbreak and hardships, and ultimately, God's redemption and restoration. As we tell these stories, we will make every effort to give God glory for the things He has done. I believe this is going to be an especially touching series. I hope you'll be here every week.

In this first sermon, I want to touch on the importance of sharing your story. Everyone who is born again has a story. Just that little phrase, born again, should give you a hint to the powerful nature of what you have to tell.

Stories are important. Stories are powerful. It's why we follow, and are loyal to, particular authors. It is why we stand in line and pay ridiculous prices to buy tickets to watch movies with our favorite actors in them. We love stories. Even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night, telling itself stories.

Stories have the power to change things. One man said it like this "If you want to learn about a culture listen to it's stories. If you want to change a culture, change the stories."

Jesus certainly knew the power of a good story. He is the greatest story teller of all time. During His earthly ministry, he was constantly telling stories to make a point or drive home a truth.

We should learn from His example, and whenever we get the chance tell our story to those we meet. The problem is, we tend to underestimate our own stories. We think other people's stories are powerful, but ours can't compete with those. But Revelation 12:11 says, that we "overcame Satan by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of our testimony." That's pretty powerful if you ask me.

Let's read together from 2 Corinthians 12. The title of my sermon today is, THE WHOLE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 *"(Through the years) I have received some wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming puffed up. 8 Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. 9 Each time he said, 'My grace is sufficient for you. My power works best in weakness.' So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. 10 That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

I love Paul. He always told the whole truth! It was part of his charm. Some people liked it, others didn't, but he sure made people sit up and take notice. Here in this passage he

shared the secret to his success, his strength was found, and bound, in his weakness. NOTICE...

I) PAUL'S REALITY: v 7 *"(Through the years) I have received some wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming puffed up."*

Paul's experiences with God were extraordinary, to say the least. From the very start, being struck down by a blinding light on the road to Damascus, and hearing the booming voice of Jesus out of the heavens. Can you imagine? Then the Book of Acts records six different visions, or revelations, that Paul was privy to; he also received the gospel he preached by revelation. He had certainly known the favor of God, the blessings of God. But he was also gifted a peculiar gift of a thorn (Gr. Skolops, which means a large sharp splinter or stake) from God.

The wording is very important here. C H Spurgeon "Paul reckoned his great trial to be a gift. It is well-put. He does not say, 'There was inflicted on me a thorn in the flesh,' but 'There was given to me.' This is holy reckoning. Child of God, among all the goods of your house, you have not one single article that is a better token of divine love to you than your daily cross."

When retelling our stories, we sometimes want to leave out details we think are distasteful. But when God is writing the narrative of our lives, such as inspiring Paul to write this letter, He never leaves out the those things, the hardships and handicaps. He puts them in because God tells THE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH.

Psalm 107:2 *"Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble."* It's the fact that we've been saved from something horrific (our sin) that gives God the glory He deserves. It was PAUL'S REALITY, the ups and downs, revelations and thorns, the good and bad, that made his story so appealing. It was King Agrippa who said to Paul after hearing Paul's story of conversion and his declaration of Jesus, in Acts 26, *"...You almost persuade me to become a Christian."*

What about your story? Think back to what you were, who you were, before you met Jesus. And now take a good look at where God has brought you to. Doesn't your story deserve to be told? IT DOES INDEED! Now notice...

II) PAUL'S REASONING: vv 8-9 *"Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. 9 Each time he said, 'My grace is sufficient for you. My power works best in weakness.' So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me."*

Paul had learned to trust God, even when God wasn't doing what he asked Him to.

ILLUS: One night during a bad thunderstorm, a mother was tucking her young son into bed. She was about to turn the light off when he asked in a trembling voice, "Mommy, will you stay with me all night?" The mother gave him a warm, reassuring hug and said tenderly, "I can't, Dear. I have to sleep in Daddy's room." After a brief pause, the boy replied, "The big sissy!"

Let's look beyond the humor of that story for a moment and think about the child's reaction. His fearful plea was understandable. Yet his mother wanted him to learn to trust her even when she wasn't by his side. She loved him, but he misunderstood, for he couldn't see beyond his own fears. Paul had learned to trust God even when God said No.

I) PAUL'S REALITY: v 7

II) PAUL'S REASONING: vv 8-9 Now notice lastly...

III) PAUL'S REVELATION: v 10 *"That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

Paul had discovered the secret! For when I am weak, (totally dependant upon God, Have no fight left in me, only aware of God's great desire to fight for me), then I am strong.

ILLUS: A little boy was in his back yard trying to clear a trail so he could ride his bike. There was one rock left that was too large for the boy to move. He tried with all his might for several minutes. His dad watched from an upstairs window as the determined boy pushed and pulled and tugged and finally kicked to no avail. Seeing that the little fellow was coming inside, dad hurried downstairs. How's it going son? Dad asked. The little boy began to tell his dad everything he was doing, but that there was one rock he couldn't move. What all have you tried, dad asked. I've tried everything! Surely you haven't tried everything? The little boy went through the list of all he had done. Then with one last sigh he said, see, I've tried everything. Dad put his hand on his son's head and said, there's still one thing you haven't tried. What? The boy replied, YOU HAVEN'T ASKED ME FOR HELP.

CONCLUSION: Paul figured out how to be successful. He had to depend on God. And that always makes a good story!