

GOD PUTS HIS GREATEST GIFTS IN VERY ORDINARY CONTAINERS

Lessons from the life of Paul

- Paul the apostle was an intellectual and spiritual giant; but ..
- emotionally and physically he was very vulnerable

The Great Contrast: Paul vs the Leaders of this World

- Paul wrote to the Greeks in Corinth in 1 Cor 2: 3 ..
- I came to you in weakness and fear and with much trembling
- The contrast: the leaders of this world come to us with great confidence, composure and always looking fully in control
- Look at Paul's audience: in front of him was sitting the great Greek academic scholars / great Greek orators / great Greek philosophers – he said to them – I come to you in weakness and fear and with much trembling

God puts His greatest gifts in very ordinary containers

- 2 Cor 4: But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not from us

This is good for all of us. Why?

- Because we all have weaknesses and limitations in several areas
- Some of us have physical weaknesses; others show financial, relational or even intellectual weaknesses
- Others have emotional weaknesses – they get de-motivated easily / depressed / or they worry or become anxious / or they lose their temper / or battle with hurts from the past or with scars from childhood

What are we supposed to do with our weaknesses? Lessons from the life of Paul:

- **1) we must be grateful for our weaknesses**
- Listen to what Paul says in 2 Cor 12: 9: 'I have cheerfully made up my mind to be proud of my weaknesses – because they mean a deeper experience of the power of Christ' (Philip's Translation)
- **2) we must admit our weaknesses. Why?**
- *It is emotionally healthy* – it takes a lot of energy to pretend as if you got it all together
- *People find it difficult to relate to perfection* – I don't want people on the church staff who haven't been hurt – how can you relate to people if you don't know pain – because most people are in pain!
- *when we always share our strengths, it creates competition; when we share our weaknesses, it creates community / fellowship.* Our natural reaction is always to hide our weaknesses and to share our strengths
- *when we admit our weaknesses, it guarantees God's help.* If you try to save a relationship / rebellious child / financial situation / or if you try to overcome a particular sin in your life,

admit to God that you cannot do it out of your own strength – and you will see how God plug you in to a deeper experience of His power. You see, God resists the proud but He gives grace to the humble

- another reason why we must admit our weaknesses, is *because we are the church* / we don't act or live like the world. The church is a body - not a business / an organism – not an organisation / a community – not a corporation
- *lastly, it prevents arrogance* when we admit our weaknesses / if other people know about your area of weakness, it will have a humbling effect on you
- **3) we must list our weaknesses.**
- Ask yourself: what are my weaknesses? Then hire people or gather people around you to compensate for your weaknesses / get on your team people that are smarter than you in certain areas – they will help you to function better and they will help you to look good / Ronald Reagan

Paul modelled 5 areas of weaknesses. He shared

- His failures / Rom 7: 15: I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate to do, I do.
- His feelings and his fears / 1 Cor 2: 3: I came to you in fear and with much trembling
- His faults / during the early years of his ministry – I Paul, the apostle / look what happened as he matured – I, Paul the least of the apostles / then near the end of his years in ministry – I, Paul, the greatest sinner of all
- His frustrations

Denial leads to isolation

- *If we don't admit our weaknesses, it will isolate us* / I have seen it so many times – if you have an unteachable spirit, you will sooner or later isolate yourself from the rest of the body and it will be very difficult for you to flow in your spiritual gift – worship, preaching or teaching the word or prophecy / and this is by God's doing – not man's / because God resists the proud but He gives grace to the humble
- Magnificent 7 / 7 impressive elephant bulls living in the Kruger Park over 30 years ago / all with tusks weighing more than 50 kg each / Mafunyane – the irritable one / his carcass was found in 1983 / wild, dangerous, moody / chasing cars and human beings / he had a hole in his skull / he was wounded by hunters or during a fight with another elephant bull / never got healed / redefined his whole personality / he isolated himself / sad – as hy maar net veearts toe gegaan het!

In the mean time ..

- the blood of Christ cleanses us – present continuous tense
- there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ
- ex-aboratio – Jesus bought us out of the slave market!!