

*God's transforming*

**P O W E R I N W E A K N E S S**

> Studies in 2 Corinthians  
Part 1 (Chapters 1-3)



TOONGABBIE  
ANGLICAN  
CHURCH



# NOTES



*God's transforming*

## POWER IN WEAKNESS

### > Context

Paul had visited Corinth in recent months in what he describes in this letter as a “painful visit” (2 Cor. 2:1). Apparently, the Corinthian church had been largely hostile and demeaning toward Paul due to his general unimpressiveness in appearance and speech. Paul decided to give the church some space, so instead of an immediate visit he wrote them an anguished and tearful letter (2:3–4), which was then brought to them by Titus. This letter, written after 1 Corinthians but before 2 Corinthians, is now lost.

Titus reported back to Paul that much of the Corinthian church did indeed repent and again embrace Paul’s authority (2 Cor. 7:5–16), though the sharp words throughout 2 Corinthians indicate there was a vocal minority still rejecting Paul. Perhaps Paul also feared that this minority would influence others in the church to join them against Paul.

This context allows Paul to speak profoundly to the character of ministry of God to transform us through weakness. While our context is different in many ways, the gospel truths of this letter speak wonderful comfort to our circumstances. My hope is that we might be able to rejoice in the sufficiency of grace, even in weakness and “boast all the more gladly about [our] weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on [us]” (2 Cor 12:9).

## > 1:1-11 The God of Comfort

Paul nearly always starts his letters with grace and peace. Given this letter speaks so much to weakness and suffering; what does grace and peace bring to mind for you?

What has God been like to you in periods of suffering? Has he felt distant? Has he delivered you? Has he brought comfort?

What does it mean to “share in the sufferings of Christ” (v5)?

Sharing in Christ’s suffering helps us experience God’s comfort more richly. It’s very different to simply asking God to make everything comfortable (in our modern sense).

How might life look different living like this?

How might life together as a church look different living like this (note v4)?

## > 1:12-2:4 Paul's Pastoral Heart

*After opening with a powerful reminder of the comfort of the gospel (2 Cor. 1:1-11), Paul moves into the main body of the letter. In the second half of chapter 1 and all of chapter 2 Paul explains why he changed his mind and did not visit Corinth.*

What is Paul's boast? And why do you think he uses the language of boasting? (The word boast is used 20 times in the letter - see also 7:14-15, 10:12-18, 11:12.)

What is the role of "conscience" (v12) in the Christian life? See also Romans 14:23, Titus 1:15 and John 16:8.

Paul has apparently been accused of being undependable and maybe even uncaring. What was Paul's intention? What was the outcome? And how does Paul defend himself (v17-22, note also his pastoral reflection in 2:1-4)?

How does Jesus and the Holy Spirit shine in all of this (v20, v22)?

How does all this help us think about our plans, integrity and care for others?

## > 2:5-3:18 New Covenant Life

Paul calls upon the church to forgive someone who had caused grief. There had already been a certain punishment (v6). What motivation does Paul give to forgiving this person? (Feel free to also look beyond this passage to Matthew 6:14-15 and Colossians 3:13.)

Look at the all the ways that Paul describes their role in serving Jesus in v14-17. Do these descriptions resonate with how you might describe your experience?

*“The Spirit gives life” (v6) in a ministry of glory (v7-10) and brings “freedom” (v17). Paul describes this in contrast with the law which kills (v6), condemns (v9) and veils one before God (v15). Paul’s brilliant description of the Spirit’s work in us climaxes in v16-18. It is one of the most rich statements of transformation in the New Testament.*

- As you contemplate it, put it into your own words (e.g. “What does it mean to behold the glory of the Lord”).

- Go further and outline how transformation doesn't happen (e.g. "by sheer will power").
- Where does this passage leave you longing? How do you avoid feeling like you have to self-improve?

# PRAYER POINTS

