

2 Corinthians 12

Sunday 6/2/2013

I appreciate her singing for me all the time. It won't be the last time. If you have your Bibles this morning, I want you to turn to 2 Corinthians 12. Last week, we finished up chapter 11 with a study on the personal attack of the devil on Paul. I showed you how his life was such an incredible life for us to study. I think of all the men in the New Testament, the greatest character study that you could ever take would be a study of the life of Paul. He had such an impact on everything, and we talked about that last week.

I want again to give you, as I told you, we've been coming through the book of 2 Corinthians for those of you that are visiting this morning. We've been coming through chapter by chapter. The purpose is that God has given us so many ministries and so many people that we're working with, and all the great things that He's got, that we wanted to take a book that really taught us as a church how to minister the biblical way. We wanted to do it by the book. We wanted to do it the way God wanted to do it, which would be pleasing to Him. That is the book of 2 Corinthians. Chapter by chapter, Paul teaches them how to minister and goes through all the different aspects. I won't go through it all again. You have them all down in your Bible now, I'm sure, and understand what we've come through.

On each chapter, I've been trying to give you an introduction to the chapter. I think that really helps put the whole chapter in perspective so that as we start working through it, you get up, you have some things already in hand, and are able to grasp and pick it up better. You'll remember we saw last week that Paul was probably the greatest Christian that ever lived. He was certainly the man whom God called to start the ministry to the Gentiles, and that is the establishment of the church in the New Testament.

Yet Paul, we talked about last week, and I don't want you to forget a few things as we're looking at this chapter today. Paul, we saw last week, was just a common, ordinary guy. He didn't have any special gifts. He didn't have any special abilities. He didn't have any great personality traits that really set him apart from anything else. He's just a common man whom God used, and the devil, obviously, as we saw, tried to stop. We saw the list of adversities that he went through. I told you last week that would put all of us under the table if we even went through a tenth of what he went through. We saw how his whole life, people tried to stop him. Not only did he have people that were out to try to stop him, but he had the devil that was against him, and the devil always uses people to try to get you to stop and to do what God has called you to do.

Yet the most amazing thing we talked about is he never quit. He never gave up on all that he went through. Remember, I talked about it: every time I teach you the Bible, I really like to stop periodically and make the parallels between something in the Bible and my own life or your own life. The great parallel is that we, as God's people today, have the same salvation, we have the same Holy Spirit of God. Yet we give up and quit almost without any real adversity in our lives. We fall and we fail and give up and quit so readily that it's hard to fathom sometimes. I understand all of the ramifications, but none of us have been through what Paul went through. In all the years I've been in ministry, and I'm sure many of you see this too, you get people who,

when one little thing goes wrong in their life, they walk out from God and Christianity, and they're all done with it. That's just unfortunate.

I can't help, in my own life—and I can't speak for anyone here today, but I can speak for myself—I know when it comes to a guy like Paul, I can't help but look at a man like Paul and not want to know what he had that we don't have. I believe that my job for myself personally—and again, I can't speak for you—my job as a Christian, not as a pastor, but as a Christian, is to be the best I can be for the Lord Jesus. The way I do that is by looking at men in the Bible, women in the Bible, looking at people in the Bible who accomplish what God wants them to accomplish. Then I take that and go on the inside, go underneath, and look and see what they had that gave them the ability to get the job done. Many of them, most of them, all of them faced great adversity. Paul is a man who went through great adversity. We talked about it last week. I showed you the incredible list of things that had happened to him.

When I look at a guy like Paul, I want to know, I want to understand for myself. And yes, I want to try to convey it to you, but first and foremost, I want it for me. I want to know that in the world that he lived in, that was so adverse to the Christianity that he preached, much like today, I want to know what gave him, what he had, what God gave him, what transpired in his life that got him through. Because today we face the same kind of issues, maybe not physically, but certainly spiritually. What happened in Paul's life that made him so determined? What transpired that gave him the courage and the strength to face the opposition that he faced?

We're so filled today with the mindset of superheroes. I remember when I was younger, back in the 70s, the Rambo series came out. Rambo was a superhero guy. He just made his last one, Rambo 9 or 10 or whatever it was, and now he's 60 years old, and he still looks pretty good for 60. So do I. But he's still killing guys, and he's still this superhuman hero, and he can still drive into a place, and there's 15 guys there, and he can kill them all. Paul wasn't like that. We've got this other guy who's a superhero, and I like all of them. This is not criticism, "The Rock." Who doesn't like "The Rock"? But Paul was no "Rock." Back growing up in the Rocky series, remember you had Mr. T? He was an incredible guy. But Paul wasn't no Mr. T. I think my favorite is Jesse Ventura, Navy SEAL, great guy. I think he was a great politician. He's somewhat really liberal on things in his life, but as far as just a stand-up guy, we need a president that is willing to say, "Hey, look, if you want to cause problems for Israel, or you want to cause problems for this, or you want to steal people, you want to steal money out of older people's pockets, you know what? I'm not taking it to Congress. That's you and I step outside the parking lot."

Paul was no superhuman guy. He really wasn't. He's just an ordinary guy like you and me. Yet when you study great men in the Bible, I see certain things in their life when you read through the Bible, if you're really paying attention and you're looking at that, for me anyhow, it always gives me an insight into what happened in their lives because I want those same things to happen in my life. Now, it probably never will, but I want it to. When you study Paul, you see all of these things.

I. The Significance of Name Changes in the Bible

There's a great study in the Bible, and I've talked to you about it before, but we've got so many new people, most people. There's a great study in the Bible that I think is one of the premier classic studies in the Word of God. That is the fact that in the Bible, there are seven people that God changes their name. We look at that and don't really think much about it or don't even catch it. But I saw many, many years ago that there were certain people in the Bible that God actually changed their name. Now, I've come to the persuasion after many years of looking at that and studying that and examining that, that I'm going to tell you right now, I don't understand it all. I really don't. But I won't be the first to tell you there's something to that, and that is a big deal in the Bible. In every case, it was an incredible, an incredible situation. In the Bible, it means something.

Now, five of these people, it denoted a drastic change in their relationship with God in a good way.

1. You have Abram who gets his name changed to Abraham.
2. You have Jacob who gets his name changed to Israel.
3. You have Sarai, that's Abraham's wife, who got her name changed to Sarah.
4. You have Simon, whom God, which is calling him Simon, starts calling him Peter.
5. And then you have Saul whose name gets changed to Paul.

Now, two of these seven are a bad name change, and this means something. This is not my message today. I'm just kind of giving you this, throwing it out so you can understand a little bit better. But two of the seven are bad name changes.

- Jehoash
- Jehoiakim

The point I want to make here is this: Jehoash, Jehoiakim, both those names when you read them start out with J-E-H, that's Jehovah. Both of these men have Jehovah, God, that's His name in the Old Testament. Both these men start out with God's name. You know what God does? God says, "I'm taking My name off that guy." Now, I know you can't lose your salvation. I know that. I'm not saying that that's what that suggests. I'm certainly not suggesting in the New Testament that we can lose our salvation. I know that's not true, and you should know that's not true. But there's something about God taking His name off of your life. There's something about a man or a woman in the New Testament, because that's a parallel, that's a picture. I've told you about those kings in the Old Testament before. I don't know what it totally means, but I never want God to take His name out of my life.

So two of them aren't good. Five of them are incredible to study. But in five people's lives, it shows the real change in their life in a good way. When God changes a man's name in the Bible, and these five, it represents they're going to a different, higher level in a relationship. It simply means in the Bible that they've come through some things, they've learned some lessons, and now they've come to the point where God's really going to get something done with them. That's what it means in the Bible.

- Abram to Abraham
- Sarai to Sarah
- Jacob to Israel
- Simon to Peter
- Saul to Paul

I watch you people who love this church and love this ministry as much as I do. I've watched God work in your life, and I've watched you grow. I see it in so many of you that you're right there. You get saved, and you move along, and you grow. You get disciplined. Somebody helps you. You come over one-on-one. You start coming to Thursday night. You learn the Bible. You get your Bible. You start getting your stuff done. You get involved. People help you. At one point in your life, you wake up, and just like these men, and particularly Paul, whom we're going to talk about, but just like these guys, you wake up one morning, and you know what? You're done with the world. I'm not saying you're perfect. I'm not saying you're not going to mess up, but as far as going back to the world and as far as ever not fulfilling what God has called you to do, it ain't ever going to happen. You're never going back to the world. You've crossed over into that mindset that you're not perfect. You're still human, but now you understand that God has a higher calling for you, and you realize now how the foolishness of this world is going to pull you back. You're done with it. I mean, you're done with it.

Yet at the same time, I've seen God's people all my life who 20 years from now, they'll be who they are today. They refuse to grow. They keep getting entangled in the things of this whole world, as we talked about last week. But I see it in so many of you.

In Paul's life, his name gets changed in Acts 13. This is where, by no coincidence, he officially starts his ministry where he gets his name changed. I have to tell you this, and I don't fully understand this, but all I can say about this is, "Wow, wow, and wow." From chapter 13, it looks like in this particular case, and everything has its relevance, and everything has its reason. But it looks like from Acts 13:7 that his new name, Paul, is based on a guy by the name of Paulus in that verse, who was the first guy he won to Christ. Now, I'm telling you right now, there's a lot to that thing right there. That's something that bears some chewing on for about 20 years. I don't understand the ramification of that, but the guy in the New Testament that establishes the church is a picture of you and me. When God changed his name, it was directly related to the first person he won to Christ. Incredible.

II. The Process of Spiritual Growth

I know and totally understand that spiritual growth is a process. I never demand spiritual growth from anybody. I demand it if you're going to be a leader, but I don't demand it in the sense of you come to this church, and if you don't jump through a certain set of hoops, that you're not welcome. That's not true, because I've learned, realized that spiritual growth is a process. Some of you will pick it up faster than others. Some of you will pick it up the moment you walk in the

door. Some of you will pick it up six months after you walk in the door. Some of you will pick it up a year, year and a half after you walk in the door. Some of you may be here four or five years before the light bulbs come on. So I understand that it's a process, and it's a different process for everybody because we all have to go through different things in our lives, and some things, people are different. So being a pastor, you have to understand that. You have to allow for that, and you have to work people through that and help them with that. That's just the way it works.

But I want to tell you, after many, many years in the ministry and serving the Lord to the best of my ability that I could, and watching people, I can tell you that if you really ever get to that place where God really uses you the way that He wants to, and you ever allow these things to come into your life through a growth process—and again, I don't care how long it takes. I'm here to help you. I'm here for you. I'm not against you. I'm here to help you do whatever you've got to do in your life. I've got patience up the kazoo, I can deal with. I'm not sure what a kazoo is, but I've got patience up there, and I'm willing to help you any way I can. But I want to tell you, if you ever get to that point in your life, the end result will be simply five things that change you to the point that gives you the ability never to look back. Through the process of growth in time, you'll put five things in your life as you grow into them. Paul had them in his life. I've never seen anybody who ever really did anything for God who didn't have them in their life. At some point, you'll get to that point where Paul did, and you'll never look back again.

As I said, you're going to have your issues. You're still in your old flesh, and so am I. But to draw this old world and all that it has will not be one of your problems. Something inside you will trigger, and these things after the process. When I teach the Bible or work with you one-on-one, or we have Sunday morning or whatever I do, I've got to tell you, it's always in the back of my mind in developing you. There's not a person that I don't look at that shows that they've got really good ability and really have all of these things that I just, like a caged lion, just want to get in there and tinker with it and make you better. But, you know, it has to be in your own time.

I told you last week that it's the tough time that you go through by God's design to make you, never to break you. God puts things in our lives that we will run to God, but in most cases, we always wind up running from God. That's a shame. We all think because of that that there are good things in life that happen to us, and there are bad things in life that happen to us, and we're so bombarded with that that when something good comes into our life, we're praising the Lord, but when some tragedy or something comes into our life, we don't praise the Lord.

Yet the Bible says in Romans 8:28:

Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

If that verse means what it says and says what it means, then in your life and my life, there are no bad things that happen to us. There are just things that come into our life that are opportunities for us to grow through to get closer to God. It's just that simple. It's just that simple. I have found that a right biblical relationship with God that brings you to that point where you really now

don't look back at the world, and you're ready to go, and you get to that point where Paul did, and you get to that point where these other men did in the Bible. It comes down to simply five things that you get in your life, and you see them in Paul's life. When you get to this place in your life, I believe it's the change, spiritually speaking, where God looks at you and me and in His mind changes our name. Now, you're not going to go to sleep one night and wake up, and God's going to pick up your lipstick, sweetheart, right on your mirror. Your new name now is this. It's a spiritual thing. When I talk about all the time, here we talk about Philadelphia and Christianity, or someone who has the courage to never give up or to quit. These five things are in their life. These five things were in the Philadelphia church age because these things are what will get you through. I'm telling everybody now, they worked for Paul, and they'll work for you. But keep in mind, this is our introduction today. But I want to give you these five things. I think as an introduction to seeing what happened to Paul's life, if you want things to happen in your life, then here it is.

III. Five Qualities of a Transformed Life

- 1.) Hearing the Inaudible
- 2.) Seeing the Invisible
- 3.) Touching the Intangible
- 4.) Believing the Infallible
- 5.) Doing the Impossible