Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

These notes are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye, mistakes can possibly be found. Therefore, he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabible.org.

Date: January 22, 2017

Sermon Title: Four Marks of the Cross

Text: 2 Corinthians 11:16-12:10

Author: Patrick J. Griffiths ©2017
Arnold Palmer and Gary Player were the main protagonists at the 1961 Masters Tournament. “Golf immortal Arnold Palmer recalls a lesson about overconfidence: It was the final hole of the 1961 Masters tournament, and I had a one-stroke lead and had just hit a very satisfying tee shot. I felt I was in pretty good shape. As I approached my ball, I saw an old friend standing at the edge of the gallery. He motioned me over, stuck out his hand and said, ‘Congratulations.’ I took his hand and shook it, but as soon as I did, I knew I had lost my focus. On my next two shots, I hit the ball into a sand trap, then put it over the edge of the green. I missed a putt and lost the Masters. You don't forget a mistake like that; you just learn from it and become determined that you will never do that again. I haven't in the 30 years since.”

For the apostle Paul, his focus was on JESUS as the embodiment of the GOSPEL. He knew what would happen if he lost his focus. On a text like this, we can talk of the apostle and “ooh and aah” the great gospel ambassador. But let us not lose our focus. This text, like all passages, is about JESUS.

“We come now to a very famous passage in Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians where he details all the hardships and troubles which he experienced during his ministry. Amazingly, this list of difficulties he endured -- which sounds very much like someone bragging about his exploits -- comes from the lips of Paul himself. There is no denying that a lot of people are bothered by Paul. They think he is a conceited braggart. I have had people say to me, ‘I can't stand Paul. Imagine anyone telling someone, ‘imitate me as I imitate Christ.' How conceited.’ Yet he was not conceited, but in this passage he tells us why he sometimes spoke this way. Boasting was personally very repugnant to Paul. He did it only for the sake of those who were so spiritually immature that they were impressed by outward performances, by flamboyant actions and by unusual abilities.”

Throughout Paul’s ministry he often contrasted the theology of the cross with the prevailing theology of “glory.” In this text four ideas are prevalent describing the theology of the cross: foolishness, suffering, glory, and rest. The theology of glory looks at appearance, status, experience, and growth as a way of defining the “gospel.” Paul would have none of this.

“Whether these chapters circulated as a letter independent of the preceding nine or not, the underlying issue is tension between Paul and the Corinthian church over Paul’s authority and credibility. Evidently, itinerant peddlers of rival versions of Christian faith had won the ear of the Corinthian church. It was fracturing. Paul's response shouldn't be mistaken for the huffy
rant of an out-preached preacher or a jilted suitor. The apostle uses the classic trope of the "boast," yet gives it an unexpected turn: he foregrounds not his exceptional spiritual experience, but his weakness. His being and message are congruent: both testify to the God savingly revealed in a crucified man (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:18-31).”


“It is the same with the Apostle Paul, as we shall see in 2 Corinthians 11:16-29. In chapter 10, Paul has just distinguished himself and his colleagues from those who are so bold as to compare themselves with themselves (2 Corinthians 10:12). Now, Paul does precisely that—**he compares himself with those who are his critics. He does so in three ways. First,** in verses 16-21a, Paul compares authentic apostles with the false apostles in the way they treat those under their authority. In this comparison, the authentic apostles fall far short of the authoritarian, high-handed tactics of their adversaries. **Second,** in verses 21b-22, Paul compares himself with those who take pride in their Jewishness. In this comparison, Paul comes out their equal. **Finally,** in verses 23-29, Paul compares his service with that of his opponents in terms of the price he has paid to minister to others. Here, Paul leaves his opponents in the dust. They cannot even begin to compare themselves by his standard of personal sacrifice.”

[Note concerning Paul's aversion to boasting - In light of Paul's concluding observation in 10:17-18, how are we to explain his opening words in 11:1? See also 11:10,16-18; 12:1. Observe the following explanations:

"Paul is very conscious that it is no business of an apostle, or indeed of any Christian, to praise himself. Such self-commendation is only justified, in the present instance, because his affection for his converts is so great, that he will go to almost any length to prevent them from becoming dupes of unscrupulous men, and to keep them loyal to Christ" (Tasker).

"It is concern, loving anxious concern, for the spiritual welfare of those who are his children in Christ which moves him so strongly – so much so that he is prepared to appear to indulge in what he calls 'a little foolishness' by speaking about himself, in order to counteract the impact of the intruders who in their foolishness have been extolling themselves" (Hughes).

"It is not the genuine Paul who figures here; it is Paul playing a part to which he has been compelled against his will, acting in a character which is as remote as possible from his own. It is the character native and proper to the other side; and when Paul . . . assumes it, . . . he not only preserves his modesty and his self-respect, but lets his opponents see what he thinks of them. He plays the fool for the occasion, and of set purpose; they do it always, and without knowing it, like men to the manner born" (Denney).]

**THE BIG PICTURE:**
Outline:

I. Unacceptable Foolishness (vv. 16-21)

Paul considers the need to “boast” foolishness (vv. 16-21). He drives this point home with force in 12:11-13. The only reason Paul says such things is because of his love for Christ and His Church. Let us unpack this.

A. The "foolishness" of the apostle (vv. 16-18 [Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:18-21; 2:1-5])

Paul is about to boast, not because he is following the example of Jesus, but because pastoral problems in Corinth have compelled him against his nature to follow the example of his enemies. In other words, this way of talking is not that of an apostle but a fool. Thus Paul here casts himself in the role of his opponents. What they do, he will do. If they boast "according to the flesh," i.e., appeal to worldly standards of "strength" and "success," so too will he. But it is all utter "foolishness" and he wants to be certain the Corinthians understand that.⁶

B. The "foolishness" of the Corinthians (vv. 19-21)

These verses drip with sarcasm and irony. He lists the treatment they have received from his opponents:

1. enslaved (by their legalism; their domineering leadership is precisely what Paul refused to exercise)
2. devoured (perhaps financially)
3. taken advantage of (by deceit [v. 13]; this is an amplification of the first word, "enslaved")
4. they exalt themselves
5. hit in the face (figurative for humiliating treatment? or literal?)

Whatever the nature of these five actions, they are the antithesis of the humility and gentleness (10:1) required in a minister of the new covenant. Paul's sarcasm in v. 21 is biting: "Isn't it just horrible and shameful of me that I have refused to treat you as kindly and lovingly as they have!"⁷

v. 21 “It seems best, in context, to see the statement we were too weak for that as a parenthetical and ironic comment by Paul on his physical condition (weakness or sickness) while he was with the Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor 12:7-10; Gal 4:15).”⁸

II. Unimaginable Suffering (vv. 22-33)

A. His Hebraic heritage - v. 22

1. a Hebrew
2. an Israelite
3. a descendant of Abraham

B. His horrific hardships - vv. 23-33

[The following list of sufferings is Paul's exposition in practical terms of what it means to be led in God's "triumph"]

1. boasting of external affliction - vv. 23-27
   a. a servant of Christ
   b. labors (as a tent-maker)
   c. imprisonments (the only imprisonment of Paul recorded in Acts to this point is in Philippi [16:23-40]; thus we see that Acts is only a partial history of Paul and the early church)
   d. beaten numerous times
   e. often in danger of death
   f. five times he received the 39 lashes (cf. Dt. 25:1-5; blows were administered with a 3-strapped whip on both the chest [13 blows] and back [26]) - neither in Acts nor in Paul's other epistles does he refer to these floggings, once again an indication that much of Paul's ministry experience is not recorded for us
   g. three times he was beaten with rods (Acts 16:22-23; although a Roman citizen, such as Paul, should have been exempt from this treatment; there was no limit to the number of blows inflicted)

   "Beaten with a rod refers to the Roman punishment of admonitio according to BDAG 902 s.v. ῥαβδίζω. Acts 16:22 describes one of these occasions in Philippi; in this case it was administered by the city magistrates, who had wide powers in a military colony."

   h. once he was stoned (Acts 14:19)
   i. three times he was shipwrecked (Paul wrote this before the shipwreck recorded in Acts 27; thus he suffered at least four)
   j. on the sea, adrift
   k. frequent journeys
   l. in dangers from
      o rivers
      o robbers
      o his countrymen, the Jews (Acts 9:23,29; 13:45; 14:2,19; 15:26; 17:5ff.; 18:1,12)
      o in the city
      o in the wilderness
      o on the sea
      o among false brethren (Judaizers)
   m. in labor and hardship
   n. often without sleep
2. boasting of emotional anguish - vv. 28-29

In addition to the external, physical sufferings of the previous verses, is the pressure of concern for the churches (this is the climax, and perhaps the worst part, of his trials; cf. 1 Thess. 3:1-10)

a. he hurts when they are weak
b. he grieves when they sin

Paul was a "pastor" in the true sense of that term: he took the pains of his sheep personally.

3. boasting of weakness and shame - vv. 30-33

"See Acts 9:23-25. Why does Paul include this here? Evidently he regards it as a shameful experience. It shattered what little pride he had left. He had entered the city as a hunter, but left it hunted. This high and mighty, educated and respected leader had to sneak out of Damascus like a common criminal. Perhaps also Paul is drawing a contrast between the shame of being "lowered down" here and the glory of being "caught up" which he will describe in chp. 12."

III. Unspeakable Glory (12:1-6)

We have seen repeatedly in 2 Corinthians how Paul is compelled against his will to defend his apostolic authority. He finds it distasteful and foolish to do so (cf. 10:8,17-18; 11:1,16-21,30; 12:5-6), but the well-being of the Christians in Corinth is at stake. They have left him no choice. "Boasting is necessary," says Paul, "though it is not profitable" (12:1). If those who question his authority are demanding apostolic credentials, he will provide them, not least of which are the "visions and revelations of the Lord" granted him (12:1).

a. his heavenly encounter - vv. 1-6

(v. 1) Whereas on the one hand Paul acknowledges that referring to his heavenly experience is "not profitable" (v. 1), he feels compelled to describe it. Paul's point here is simply that such "visions and revelations" (v. 1), though exciting, are irrelevant to the question of apostolic authenticity.

Comments on important words and phrases:
• The word translated "caught up" is a form of the verb harpazein (used in vv. 2,4). Paul uses it in 1 Thess. 4:17 to describe the "rapture" of believers at the second coming of Christ. In Acts 8:39 we read that "the Spirit of the Lord caught up (or snatched away) Philip" and Rev. 12:5 refers to the "catching up" of Christ into heaven (a reference to his ascension to the right hand of the Father).

• The word translated "Paradise" (paradeisos) is found in only two other NT texts: Luke 23:43 (in Jesus' promise to the thief on the cross) and Rev. 2:7. It was used in the LXX to refer to the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:8,9,10,15,16; 3:1,2,3,8[twice],10,23,24; 13:10; Num. 24:6; Isa. 51:3; Jer. 36:5; Ezek. 28:13; 33:8[twice],9; Joel 2:3). It may well be that Paul is portraying heaven as a restored "Eden."

“In the NT, paradise is mentioned three times. In Luke 23:43 it refers to the abode of the righteous dead. In Rev 2:7 it refers to the restoration of Edenic paradise predicted in Isa 51:3 and Ezek 36:35. The reference here in 2 Cor 12:4 is probably to be translated as parallel to the mention of the “third heaven” in v. 2. Assuming that the “first heaven” would be atmospheric heaven (the sky) and “second heaven” the more distant stars and planets, “third heaven” would refer to the place where God dwells.”

While in Paradise, Paul heard "unutterable utterances," an interesting paradox indeed! These are words that "a man is not permitted to speak," not because they are incapable of translation but because it is "unlawful" to speak them. They are things intended only for Paul (why? what might they have been?) and not for others on earth.

He had been humiliatingly let down the Damascus wall in a net like so much merchandise (11:33), only to be powerfully whisked up to the heights of Paradise to hear the voice of God.

Paul's point is this: he refuses to "boast" about the man who had been caught up to Paradise (which is precisely the sort of experience the false-apostles prized as self-authenticating), but he is more than happy to "boast" about the man brought down in weakness by the thorn.

Think about how we puff up and promote the individual with the experience, but Paul would downplay such things and rather speak of his weakness.

b. his earthly anguish - vv. 7-12

IV. Unparalleled Rest (vv. 7-12)

In 12:1-6 Paul has described his "translation" into Paradise, an event of such profound spiritual magnitude that it threatened to generate pride into his apostolic, though still sinful, heart. But in order to prevent Paul from falling into pride he was given "a bridle that held him back from haughtiness." Whatever Paul's thorn may have been, there can be no mistake about its purpose: "to keep me from exalting myself" (v. 7). Barnett notes:
"This verse [v. 7] is powerfully intentional; each of these elements is purposive: the 'thorn' was given to Paul lest he be 'over-u\-lif\-ted,' to buffet him, lest he be 'over-lif\-ted.' It was God's will for Paul" (567).

12:7 “The phrase “so that I might not become arrogant” is repeated here because it occurs in the Greek text two times in the verse. Although redundant, it is repeated because of the emphatic nature of its affirmation.”

12:7 “to buffet me--In Greek, present: to buffet me even now continuously. After experiencing the state of the blissful angels, he is now exposed to the influence of an evil angel. The chastisement from hell follows soon upon the revelation from heaven. As his sight and hearing had been ravished with heavenly ‘reveal\-ions,’ so his touch is pained with the ‘thorn in the flesh.’”

Let us note two thoughts about Paul’s thorn.

12:9 “Here καί (kai) has been translated as “but” because of the contrast implicit in the context.”

a. The source of Paul’s "Thorn"

Where or from whom did the thorn come? The subject is left unexpressed: "there was given me." Most commentators recognize this as an example of what is called "the divine passive" in which "God is the hidden agent behind events and experiences in human lives" (Ralph Martin; cf. Mt. 7:2). It is a conventional use of the passive voice to avoid mentioning the divine name. Had Paul wanted to say that Satan was the ultimate source, he probably would not have used the Greek verb didomi. As Martin points out, "this word was usually employed to denote that God's favor had been bestowed (cf. Gal. 3:21; Eph. 3:8; 5:19; 1 Tim. 4:14)." If Satan were the ultimate source of the thorn, more appropriate Greek words were available to express that thought (e.g., epitithemi, "lay upon" [Lk. 10:30; 23:26; Acts 16:23]; ballo, "cast" [Rev. 2:24]; or epiballo, "put on" [1 Cor. 7:35]).

That God is the ultimate source of the thorn is also evident from its purpose, namely, to prevent Paul from being puffed up in pride. Satan would have loved nothing more than for Paul to feel elated, elite, and arrogant as a result of his experience.

But if the thorn was from God, why does Paul say it was "a messenger [lit., "angel"] of Satan"? We must remember that God often uses the devil to accomplish his purposes (cf. Job; 1 Cor. 5:5). Although Satan and God work at cross purposes, they can both desire the same event to occur while hoping to accomplish through it antithetical results. Satan wanted to see Jesus crucified, as did God the Father (Isa. 53:10; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28), but for a different reason. The same is true in the case of Job. What Satan had hoped would destroy Job (or at least provoke him to blasphemy), God used to strengthen him.
The same is true here. Although we can't be sure, it seems likely that the demon was not acting consciously in the service of God. Most likely by God's secret and sovereign providence this demonic spirit was dispatched to Paul intent on oppressing and thereby hindering (or even destroying) his ministry. The divine design, however, was to keep Paul from sinful pride and to utilize this affliction to accomplish a higher spiritual good (cf. 12:9-10).

b. The nature of Paul's "Thorn"²⁰

Several things are to be noted:

First, the word translated "thorn" is found only here in the NT. In classical Greek it was used with reference to a pointed stake on which the head of an enemy was impaled after decapitation (Iliad 18.177), or in reference to spikes used to impede a siege force. More commonly, though, it simply referred to a splinter or thorn stuck in the body. Paul apparently envisions himself impaled by this affliction, pinned, as it were, to the ground and thus rendered helpless by it. This must have been an excruciating condition, whatever it was, for the man who willingly endured the sufferings and anguish and deprivations listed in 2 Cor. 11 would not petition the Lord so strenuously for the removal of some minor irritation that could be easily endured.

Second, note also that the purpose of the thorn was "to buffet me, to keep me from exalting myself" (12:7; a verb that means "to beat or strike a blow with a fist"; cf. Mt. 26:67). The present tense of the verb may be his way of telling us that the affliction recurred periodically throughout his life and was even at this time bearing down heavily and painfully on him. This is confirmed in v. 8 where Paul says he prayed three times that he might be delivered. Perhaps the affliction had flared up on three distinct occasions when its humiliating effect would have been most evident. Or again, the reference to his three-fold prayer may simply be Paul's way of likening his suffering to that of Christ's in Gethsemane, who also petitioned God three times but was not delivered.

There is another possibility. "Possibly 'three times' was a conventional symbol for repeated prayer. . . . Threefold actions appear to have been customary in matters relating to piety (cf. John 21:17; Acts 10:16); prayer was offered three times a day (Ps. 55:16-17; Dan. 6:10,13)" (Barnett, 571).

Third, the thorn was "in the flesh" (v. 7). The Greek permits either of two translations, depending on how one interprets Paul's use of the word "flesh". If "flesh" is a reference to his physical body or his "mortal existence," in the flesh is the appropriate rendering. That is to say, the thorn was embedded in his body, as if some sort of physical malady or some experience that battered his body in an extremely painful way. However, if "flesh" refers to his fallen nature, for the flesh or with regard to the flesh would be more accurate (cf. 1 Cor. 7:28 where Paul describes those who marry as having "affliction for the flesh"). If one adopts the second view, Paul is more likely to be describing a thorn that was relational in nature (see below). However, Calvin wrote:
What exactly was the thorn? Most have adopted the view that Paul suffered from a severe case of ophthalmia or conjunctivitis. In Gal. 4:13-15 he said,

"But you [Galatian Christians] know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you for the first time; and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself. Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness, that if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me."

Evidently Paul suffered from a painful eye affliction that was especially humiliating, because loathsome and repulsive to others. Although the statement in v. 15 may only be figurative, emphasizing the sacrificial love the Galatians had for Paul, it is just as likely an indication that this loathsome illness from which he suffered was related to his eyes. We should also note that Paul closes his letter to the Galatians by saying, "See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand" (6:11), "a statement one is tempted to understand in terms of some sort of ophthalmic disability" (Belleville, 306).

It has been suggested that perhaps Paul contracted this eye affliction as a direct result of the visionary experience. In other words, the brightness(?) of the experience, the impact of what he "saw," damaged his eyes. Some argue that he suffered from something similar to solar retinitis, an affliction caused by staring improperly at an eclipse.

**Shepherding the Sheep:** (What is the NEXT STEP?)

First, **Paul learned something about divine providence and how to respond to it.** His reaction in v. 9, once the Lord had declined his request three times, was not one of stoical resignation to an inexorable fate, but a joyful delight in the privilege of being an instrument for the manifestation of Christ's power.

Second, **although Paul willingly embraced his thorn, it was only after he had passionately prayed that it be removed.** Clearly, Paul believed that physical affliction was something from which we are to pray to be delivered. In other words, neither Paul nor we should embrace physical affliction as being God's will unless shown otherwise by death or divine revelation. Paul was shown otherwise by divine revelation and happily embraced it at that time.

The question has been raised: "Who is the 'Lord' to whom he prayed? God the Father or God the Son?" In view of the response he receives in v. 9, clearly it is God the Son. In v. 9, the "Lord" to whom he has prayed says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." He then identifies this power as the "power of Christ" (v. 9b). The deity of Christ is thereby affirmed once again.

Third, **Paul learned the value of human weakness: it provides a platform for divine strength.** This does not mean that we are to seek out suffering on our own. Paul is not encouraging morbid, self-imposed suffering or asceticism. His affliction was God-given, for Christ's sake.
Paul's joy was not in pain but in his realization of the complete adequacy of God's grace in Christ to meet his every need and to transform his weakness into an opportunity for the glory of Christ to be displayed.

"Only a morbid fanatic can take pleasure in the sufferings he inflicts upon himself; only an insensitive fool can take pleasure in the sufferings that are the consequences of his folly; and only a convinced Christian can take pleasure in sufferings endured 'for Christ's sake,' for he alone has been initiated into the divine secret, that it is only when he is 'weak,' having thrown himself unreservedly in penitence and humility upon the never-failing mercies of God, that he is 'strong,' with a strength not his own, but belonging to the Lord of all power and might" (Tasker, 179).

Fourth, note the word in v. 9 translated "dwell" in me. This is a rendering of the word episkenose, which is used of the tabernacle of the old covenant where God is described as 'pitching his tent' with his people (Ex. 40:34). This word is also found in John 1:14 describing the incarnation of the Word (he "pitched his tent" among us). It is also used to describe God's future dwelling with His people (Rev. 7:14; 12:12; 13:6; 21:3). "In what has been described as a 'bold metaphor,' Paul teaches that Christ in his power 'pitches his tent' with his saints in their weaknesses. Ecstasy has all the appearances of divine power; but the reality is otherwise. Christ draws near to us, and gives his grace and power to us, in weakness" (Barnett, 575). See especially 1 Peter 4:14.

For those with an understanding of Greek verb tenses, their is much to learn here, for "the Lord's reply is in the perfect tense: 'He said to me --- and what he said continues to hold good. . .' Moreover, the content of his words to Paul is in the present tense: his 'grace' 'is sufficient' (present tense) and his power 'is being made perfect' (present tense). The stake/thorn remains, and Paul continues to be buffeted. But the Lord's reply stands: his grace is sufficient, his power is being made perfect in the unremoved 'weakness' of the stake/thorn" (Barnett, 573).

Fifth, observe that in v. 9 Paul says "I will rather boast about my weaknesses." The word "rather" implies a comparison. In comparison with what does he prefer this boasting? He probably has in mind his rapture to the third heaven described in vv. 1-6. His point, then, is that "such an experience, astonishing though it doubtless was, does not accredit his apostleship. He will make nothing of it, that is, 'boast of it.' 'Rather' than boast of his ecstatic, (non)revelatory experience, he 'will most gladly boast' of his 'weaknesses" (Barnett, 575).

Sixth, Paul learned that his spiritual purity was more important to God than his immediate physical pleasure. Of greater value to God than Paul's comfort was Paul's holiness. If, in the divine wisdom, it was necessary to give him pain in order to protect him from pride, Paul was willing to yield to the divine purpose. If, as God saw it, the best way to make Paul humble was to make him hurt, so be it.

"The culture is eyeing the churches these days, testing our credibility. Congregations may imagine that they cannot think about public witness until their internal problems, doctrinal and
budgetary, are all resolved. But it may be precisely our internal challenges that press us into the kind of engagement with each other and with the Spirit that can turn us, sooner rather than later, away from cloying self-absorption and outward to the world God loves. Even in our weakness, maybe even because of it, we become credible witnesses of saving news in this frantic, fearful world.”

"What makes the church thrive is the confidence that “when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10). That’s hard to put into a strategic plan, but I think trusting in the presence of the life-giving God and trusting in the power of the living Christ is a strategy for true success.”

“Holiness often is confused with personal power. A holy person is construed as one who is disciplined. He or she is a person with a rigorous code of conduct. Holiness is believed to be the expression of religious fervor, the measurement of oneself and others by a demanding litany of religious criteria. The problem with this way of seeing holiness is that it misses the very heart of what holiness is all about in the first place. Perhaps that is why Paul says so much about weakness when writing to the Corinthians. As Greeks, the Corinthians took great pride in their intellectual and cultural history. They were especially enamored with the classical virtues of wisdom and power. In their approach to the Christian life, they championed all the ancient Greek virtues that were part of their heritage. Paul, to the contrary, knew that the message of the cross put all virtues in a very different light. The cross was shameful. To the Jew it was the symbol of God’s curse. To the Greek, it was the ignominy of public disgrace. To the Roman, it was the death of traitors and rebels. Nothing in the whole structure of ancient culture, either Jewish, Greek or Roman, prepared anyone for the preaching of the cross. It was a stumbling block to Jews and absurd to the Greeks. But to those whom God had called, it was Christ—the wisdom of God and the power of God. In a contemporary culture that stresses personal autonomy and social advancement—even in a Christian sub-culture that at times succumbs to the siren song of political clout—we should more directly conform our mindset to the gospel of our weakness.”

“During the Battle of the Wilderness in the Civil War, Union general John Sedgwick was inspecting his troops. At one point he came to a parapet, over which he gazed out in the direction of the enemy. His officers suggested that this was unwise and perhaps he ought to duck while passing the parapet. "Nonsense," snapped the general. ‘They couldn't hit an elephant at this distance--.’ A moment later Sedgwick fell to the ground, fatally wounded.”

“Sedgwick was killed by a sharpshooter at the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House on May 9, 1864, making him and Major General John F. Reynolds (July 1st, 1863 Gettysburg) the highest ranking United States soldiers to be killed in the war. He is well-remembered for his ironic last words: ‘They couldn't hit an elephant at this distance.’”

Friends, let us not get overly comfortable in our JESUS SPEECH or in THE GOSPEL. WE do not move on from the GOSPEL. The GOSPEL must always and forever be our focus. The moment we begin to subtract from or add to JESUS, we are dead.
1 http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/o/overconfidence.htm
2 http://www.raystedman.org/new-testament/2-corinthians/the-cost-of-love
4 https://bible.org/seriespage/15-reluctant-fool-2-corinthians-1116-29
5 http://www.samstorms.com/all-articles/post/2-corinthians-11:1-33
6 http://www.samstorms.com/all-articles/post/2-corinthians-11:1-33
7 http://www.samstorms.com/all-articles/post/2-corinthians-11:1-33
8 https://net.bible.org/#!bible/2+Corinthians+11:15
9 https://net.bible.org/#!bible/2+Corinthians+11:15
10 https://net.bible.org/#!bible/2+Corinthians+11:15
12 http://www.samstorms.com/all-articles/post/2-corinthians-12:1-10
13 http://www.samstorms.com/all-articles/post/2-corinthians-12:1-10
14 https://net.bible.org/#!bible/2+Corinthians+12:1
15 http://www.samstorms.com/all-articles/post/2-corinthians-12:1-10
16 https://net.bible.org/#!bible/2+Corinthians+12:1
17 The Commentary on the Whole Bible (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, 1871).
18 https://net.bible.org/#!bible/2+Corinthians+12:1
19 http://www.samstorms.com/all-articles/post/2-corinthians-12:1-10
20 http://www.samstorms.com/all-articles/post/2-corinthians-12:1-10
21 http://www.samstorms.com/all-articles/post/2-corinthians-12:1-10
24 http://www.journeywithjesus.net/Essays/20060703JJ.shtml