

Week 6 | “Becoming A Dependent People”

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. In 1727 Jonathon Edwards, maybe one of America’s greatest theologians was ordained the associate Pastor of his grandfather’s Church, in Northampton, Massachusetts. In 1729 Solomon Stoddard, Edward’s grandfather passed away, officially making Jonathon the new Senior Pastor.
- B. After just 5 years of preaching faithfully, Edward’s Church in Northampton witnessed a significant revival. During 1733-1734, their city of roughly 1,000 citizens saw over 300 people come to faith, radically altering the life of the community. But within 5 years, the effects of that revival had waned, leaving the city largely back where it was, at least in Johnathon’s estimation with many having backslid.
- C. In 1739 Edwards was in Boston to speak at Yale, his Alma mater, and while there he connected up with the former Rector of Yale, Timothy Cutler. Timothy said of Edwards, “*He was very much emaciated and impaired in his health, and it is doubtful to me whether he will attain the age of 40.*” Cutler attributed Edwards condition to excessive study (around 13 hours a day) and an overly strict diet that Edwards himself referred to as austere.
- D. His physical condition was also brought on through bouts of depression that Edward’s suffered from time to time, often caused by the strain of the Northampton Pastorate which Edwards had given his time to over the past 10 years.
- E. Greatly discouraged, overwhelmed and depressed, what Edwards didn’t know at this time was that George Whitefield’s visit to Northampton in the fall of 1740 would dramatically change Edward’s immediate prospects and put him near the center of a colony-wide international awakening that would transform the religious landscape and eventually have a profound political impact as well.
- F. Beloved, many times, when our strength is depleted, and were on the verge of throwing in the towel, calling it quits, and walking away, is the very moment that God wants to demonstrate His power in and through our weakness/human abilities.
- G. Often times, instead of embracing our weaknesses as an opportunity for God’s power to be displayed, we lean on the flesh, we figure it out, and continue without God’s manifest presence and power.
- H. In this season where it would be easy to stand up, speak out, lean on the flesh, be strong in ourselves, God’s calling us to bow down, embrace our human weakness and inability as a ripe environment for God’s power to be displayed in and through our lives. Legacy Church’s call is one of dependence!
- I. In **2nd Chronicles 20:12** king Jehoshaphat received word that three armies had conspired together and were coming against him in one massive assault, he made a decisive and unconventional leadership move;
 1. **2nd Chronicles 20:12** “We (I) don’t know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”

II. BLESSINGS AND BURDENS (2ND CORINTHIANS 12:7-10)

1. **2nd Corinthians 12:7** “And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.”
- B. This word **EXALTED** (which appears twice in this verse) only has one other appearance in the whole of the New Testament and it’s in **2nd Thessalonians 2:4** speaking about the Antichrist and how he will exalt himself over everything that is God.
- C. It’s clear, that because of the heights that Paul ascended in the grace of God (*the things that he saw*), the Lord knew He would need a mechanism to keep his feet grounded, and his head level as he was serving others.
- D. And God’s mechanism for Paul is what he calls, “...a thorn in the flesh...(that) was given me, a messenger of satan to buffet me...” This word thorn can be seen as a splinter, but its actual meaning is that of a stake used for torturing or impaling someone (*think of the spike driven into Jesus’ hands and feet*).
- E. Though we don’t know specifically what was afflicting Paul, we do know how it afflicted Paul. He says that this messenger (*human/demonic*) **BUFFETED** him, which means to *strike with the fist repeatedly, to beat and batter back and forth, again and again*.
 1. Like Paul, you also have things in your life that beat and batter you, again and again, continually, repeatedly.
- F. Among the pain Paul is experiencing is something even more alarming in my opinion; this messenger of satan, “...was given to him.” Given by who? God!
 1. **Revelation 13:7-10** “It was granted to him (the beast/antichrist) to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was **GIVEN** him (the beast/antichrist) over every tribe, tongue and nation...Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.”
 2. **John 19:10-11** “Then Pilate said to Him, are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You? Jesus answered, you could have no power at all against Me unless it had been **GIVEN** you from above....”
- G. Though we don’t fully understand God’s purposes, it’s clear that only blessings in life leave us proud, which is why God gives burdens alongside the blessings. The Shulamite referred to this in **Song of Songs 4:16** as God’s perfect mixture of both north (cold, bitter winds) and south (warm refreshing) winds.
 1. It’s never only a north or south wind season, it’s always a combination of both. Which means, when you’re in a **SOUTH WIND** season, don’t forget that you can’t live on the beach forever. But it’s also true, in a **NORTH WIND** season, the beach is somewhere to be found.

III. GOD’S STRENGTH MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS (2ND COR. 12:8-10)

1. **2nd Corinthians 12:8-9** “Concerning this thing (this messenger of satan) I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore most gladly I will boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

- B. The Bible is so humanizing, in that it allows us to see that many people, including Jeremiah, David, Jesus and here Paul prayed that God would take them out of the hard places of life. Like you and I, Paul also wanted deliverance.
- C. Paul PLEADED with God three times that He would take away this evil affliction, and you should also do the same thing. But if God chooses, like Paul to not take it away, we learn a profound lesson; God's intention is to strengthen you IN weakness, not TAKE YOU OUT of weakness.
- D. Most often our desire is to pray that God would make us strong TO GET OUT of trouble, but God's plan is often to make us strong IN trouble. His strength is made perfect, not OUT OF THE TROUBLE, or WHEN THE TROUBLE IS GONE, but IN THE TROUBLE, THROUGH THE TROUBLE.
- E. God uses these areas of trouble in our lives to create dependency. To forge a people that say, "You are God and I am not. You know what's best for me. It's not that I don't know anything, it's just that You know so much more than me. So I'm going to surrender, I'm going to submit, I'm going to follow, I'm going to trust."
1. Abraham was unable to fulfill the promises of God in his life—The promise of children, but totally unable to do it on his own.
 2. Gideon, along with a small band of water lapping soldiers defeats an army who are as many as the sand on seashore, and their weapons—torches, clay jars, and trumpets.
 3. God destroyed Jericho, the biggest fortress of its day—with a silent protest, and a short burst of shouting.
 4. Moses lead God's people into freedom—with a wooden staff, a rod!
 5. **Hebrews 11:30-40** tells us, "...through faith (they) subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions...(and also by faith) others had trials of mocking's, and scourging's, yes of chains and imprisonment...ALL THESE, having obtained a good testimony through faith..."
- F. It's clear, when Paul hears the Lord say, "...My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect IN weakness..." that he shoulders up, realizing this thorn isn't going away, and embraces the fact that God's desire is to strengthen him IN/THROUGH weakness.
- G. People do one of four things when pressure comes into their lives;
1. They get offended, and grow bitter, developing callouses over their hearts.
 2. Other's simply quit or throw in the towel. They fail to receive blessing from the trouble, because in their mind God is nowhere to be found.
 3. Others grit their teeth and power through it. Though this is courageous, and often celebrated here on earth and among the Church, the reality is it's draining and emptying as our strength is insufficient to sustain us through trouble.
 4. But others embrace God, they find Him in the pressure, in the pain, in the trouble, and they grow, allowing the instapot of God to come to a simmer, so that Christ might be served through them to the nations.

- H. Beloved, the trial is real, the trouble is real, the pain is real, but His grace is also real, His grace is also present, His grace is also powerful.
- I. It's common for us to get so fixed on the trouble that we forget about the sufficiency of God's power/strength IN weakness. We can get so fixed on the issue that we forget about Christ. We get so fixed on the darkness, that we forget about the light. We get so fixed on the mountain, that we forget about the small seed of faith needed to remove the mountain.
- J. Paul didn't get the answer he wanted, but he got the answer he needed.
1. **2nd Corinthians 12:10** "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."
- K. A better word is used here than, "...take pleasure..." and that's, "I've learned to be content." It's not that Paul loves these pressures, it's that he's learned to be content in them, seeing them as the will of God for his life. Paul makes this crystal clear in **Philippians 4:10-14** when he tells us that he's, "...learned in whatever state I am, to be content..."
- L. This doesn't happen overnight for us, but overtime. With that being said, you must take advantage and find the opportunities of the current pressures if you hope to one day become content.
1. In infirmity(s) = Pestilence, plague, illness In reproache(s) = Insults, being reviled, being spoken of as evil In need(s) = Hard to live with, trouble, or needs that cause a person to suffer In distresse(s) = Circumstances that are hard, difficult spots, narrow places, being somewhere that's confining, or compressing In persecution(s) = Being a part of a system that's organized to harass people, or to afflict them with great pain

IV. CONCLUSION

- A. Beloved, God is calling Legacy Church to become a dependent people, a people dependent wholly upon God. This dependency comes by involuntary weakness (which we've mostly talked about this morning) and voluntary weakness;
1. Giving money away is a form of voluntary weakness—It's weakening our financial position.
2. Fasting—We get hungry and weaken our physical state.
3. Serving others—We are losing time that we could spend for ourselves, by giving it to others.
4. Prayer—We are losing personal opportunities to solve life's problems, and challenges.
5. Praying for the sick—We are choosing to say, I can't, but You can.
- B. The weaknesses that are associated with our lives are not something to be viewed as navigate, but as opportunities for God's to display His power.
- C. You need to get prayer this am for the trouble areas of your life! But if God doesn't deliver you, than take it as His invitation for you to be made STRONG IN IT!

- D. Beloved, the pain of our lives, the trials of our lives, the subjecting and submitting to God and His purposes are for a glad boast in the sufficient grace of God in our weakness. IT'S ABOUT BOASTING, IT'S ABOUT REJOCING, IT's ABOUT JOY—the Pain is great, the trial is great, the insults are great, but God's grace in that moment, if we will allow it to work, is far greater!!!! It's the greater glory.

- E. My appeal to you is stop covering up your weaknesses, stop covering up your short comings, stop covering up your inability with human zeal, with human strength, WHY? Because God uses the foolish things to confound the wise, meaning, God uses those who don't mind becoming foolish to demonstrate His purposes!