

Pastor Sarah Wiles  
2 Corinthians 12:7-10  
November 26, 2023

Today's service is a little different. It's a time for us to reflect on what healing would mean in our lives. Some things are better expressed without words, so this morning I'm going to reflect very briefly, and then Molly will open space for the Spirit as she plays a longer piece for us.

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## 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 The Message

[Paul writes:] <sup>7-10</sup> Because of the extravagance of those revelations, and so I wouldn't get a big head, I was given the gift of a handicap to keep me in constant touch with my limitations. Satan's angel did his best to get me down; what he in fact did was push me to my knees. No danger then of walking around high and mighty! At first, I didn't think of it as a gift, and begged God to remove it. Three times I did that, and then God told me,

My grace is enough; it's all you need. My strength comes into its own in your weakness.

Once I heard that, I was glad to let it happen. I quit focusing on the handicap and began appreciating the gift. It was a case of Christ's strength moving in on my weakness... And so, the weaker I get, the stronger I become.

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I don't think handicap is quite the right word for what I think Paul's describing here. Maybe we could say he had a difficulty—we don't know if it was physical, mental, or spiritual—but we know he didn't like it.

Paul says Satan caused it. I wouldn't say that, but notice: he doesn't blame himself, and he doesn't think God caused it.

Paul prays for healing repeatedly. It never comes. Which is mostly my experience with prayers for healing, if what we mean by healing is a cure. What Paul found, instead of a cure, was a new relationship with his pain. His weakness became a gift. That's real healing.

Which is not easy. We mostly talk about healing as if it was a lovely thing. It's about feeling better.

But also, healing can hurt. Surgery, chemo, CPR—they all cause pain as they heal. Facing trauma, abuse, addiction, mental illness that's not going to go away—these are hard. There's no easy way out. But folks in every wisdom tradition say it's in the difficulty that the deepest healing happens.

For Paul, that healing came through accepting his limitation. Accepting our brokenness—whether physical or emotional or spiritual—and realizing we're powerless to fix it ourselves, is always the first step to healing. When Paul accepts the reality he's facing, he finds a strength beyond himself. He finds grace.

So, I wonder, what would real healing mean for you? What grace might you find in your weakness? Let's hold that in prayer.