



May 2025

Dear Friends in Christ,

Ever since I attended a Bible study during my freshman year of college, 2 Corinthians has been my favorite book of the Bible. In his second letter to the Church in Corinth, the apostle Paul bared his soul. He was trying to rescue this congregation from false teachers who were leading them away from the Gospel.

And the false Gospel in Corinth sounds a lot like popular American Christianity today. We are surrounded by a health and wealth gospel. It is a gospel that says if you have enough faith, you can do anything you want. The Corinthian Christians were tempted to buy into the gospel of success and power. But as Paul noted in his letter, God works through our brokenness and weakness.

Many Christians today have an idealized view of the first generation of Christians. They worked so many miracles. They saw so many people come to faith. Their congregations were so on fire. Or so we have imagined, but the reality was quite different. In 2 Corinthians, the apostle Paul is incredibly honest about his own weaknesses and struggles. He talks about his anxieties for the Church in the first century. He talks about his suffering as an apostle. He warns us about so-called "super apostles" who have great success stories, but really are just in the business of religion for their own egos.

Many today have noted that the Church is in decline in the United States. We have problems like apathy and false teaching and hypocrisy. But the first-generation Church had all those same problems. The truth is that we are living in a great time to be the Church. We have all kinds of resources and support from brothers and sisters in faith from the past and the present day. We have all kinds of evidence of the reality of the power of the Gospel of Jesus to save sinners. We have great resources and freedom to share the Gospel with the world.

We just need to be honest with each other and with the world about our weakness. God doesn't need our strength. God has plenty of strength. What God needs is our weakness, so that people can see the Gospel of Jesus is not for the powerful but for the humble.

This summer, we will be reading through 2 Corinthians together as a church at worship. I believe that we will find it very encouraging for life in the world today.

Yours in Christ,

*Phil Nielsen*