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Weekly Letter – 7 July 2024

2 Corinthians 12:2-10

FROG – Fully Rely On God

A few years ago, silicone wristbands were all the rage. Yellow 'Live Strong' bands were promoted by the cyclist Lance Armstrong, before he was discredited and a number of other charities followed, including the Christian Aid 'Make Poverty History' campaign. There were also religious bands: WWJD – 'What Would Jesus Do' and FROG – Fully Rely on God.

Our reading finds Paul kind of defending himself from critics in Corinth. We only have his side of the conversation, but perhaps they boasted about their visions. We know some of them wanted to identify with other apostles (1 Cor 1:12), and some liked the showier gifts (1 Cor 14:23). Paul appears to talk about his own spiritual experience in the third person, to avoid boasting about his visions. Rather he emphasises his weakness. The 'thorn in the flesh' that he asks God to take away three times, is one of the memorable aspects of Paul's life. It shows that people of faith are not immune from suffering and pain. I think of David Watson in more recent times.

God does not take away Paul's 'thorn', but God does say, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.' It suggests Fully Relying on God, and rather than trying to do things in our own strength, letting God work through us. I don't find this easy, because God gave us talents and skills and we acquire knowledge and experience which I think God wants us to use to the best of our ability. I suppose the emphasis is on putting those gifts to work for God, and earnestly seeking what God wants of us.

Paul goes on to boast about his weakness: he can't quite help being defensive, despite pointing to God's grace as being all important. It doesn't help that in our culture being open about our vulnerability is often seen as weakness. In contrast, Brené Brown talks about vulnerability as the courage to get involved even when we don't know what the outcome will be. You can see a video about this, or Google the transcript: <https://brenebrown.com/videos/ted-talk-the-power-of-vulnerability/>.

We know our vulnerability as churches in our society where we appear to be declining in numbers, relevance and influence. We could react with shame that this has happened or look for people to blame. Instead, we can accept the situation as it is and find the courage to continue being partners in God's work in the world. The antidote to shame and blame is God's grace, the free gift of love embodied in Jesus, and that grace will be sufficient for us. That's why we pray for it regularly: 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ...'

Simon

**Sunday Morning Worship in Christ Well, and on Zoom at 10.30 am will be led by Rev Simon Walkling
We will celebrate Communion. Bible Readings: Mark 6.1-13: 2 Corinthians 12.2-10.**

Cycle of Prayer in the Region – we will pray for Hall Street, Llanelli

Prayers for every household - we will pray for St John's Road no. 22-43: 66-92

Tea and Chat - Tuesday, 9th- Meal at the Manselton Hotel – 12 noon.

