



### **Strand #2 (Companions) – Team Paul**

The early church's most effective early leaders were strong in weakness...together

In week 6 of *A CORD OF THREE STRANDS*, our focus is the example of Paul and his companions on WHY the tough stuff happened, and HOW to handle it well. The key truth is this: ***When we live for representing Jesus and His Good news your Father designs the tough stuff to make Jesus shine through our weakness***

#### **GETTING STARTED** – Share and discuss the following questions

- Do you sense a calling from God to represent Jesus and His good news well?
- How do you think you represent the Lord Jesus? What does that look like?
- When you reflect on it, have you in God's "paid a price" for your commitment to making Jesus known to others?

#### **IN THE SCRIPTURES** – This week's teaching focus came from Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to the Corinthian Church.

**BACKGROUND:** As was shared, 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians is (arguably) Paul's most personal letter. His heart is "wide open" before a church which had struggled (keep in mind the issues of 1 Corinthians) with divisions, difficulties and disorders...and now (when Paul wrote the letter) was being deceived by false apostles and teaching. Bottom line – Paul, his companions, and their gospel ministry were being criticized, diminished, and disregarded by some (many?) in Corinth, and Paul's fear was these believers were being led away from Christ.

**PAUL'S HEARTFELT SHARING:** Paul openly shared the struggles the Lord had allowed into his life, but they are instructive for what God may allow in our lives. Read and discuss the following "tough stuff" Paul faced --

**1 Corinthians 1:8-11** How does Paul describe what he and his companions faced?  
What did Paul understand was the purpose for them facing this?  
How did Paul believe deliverance would happen?  
What other purpose did he identify for why we go through tough stuff (cf. vss.3-7)?

**2 Corinthians 4:7-12** What is "the treasure" that is in our jars-of-clay? (cf. 4:5-6)  
What can be the experience of those who want the treasure to shine through them?  
Vs. 11 speaks of what we hope and pray happens in people's lives. What is it?

**2 Corinthians 12:1-10** Paul was given great revelatory experiences. What was the purpose of the thorn?  
Do you think we can struggle with pride over what God has revealed to us? Example?  
Paul asked the Lord more than once for relief? What was God's answer? Why?  
Why do you think we get this turned around...that we'd rather be "strong" than weak?

**SOME TIME TO APPLY** - "When we live for representing Jesus and His good news..." – how would you finish this sentence from your Scripture study?

#### **PRAY TOGETHER THE FOLLOWING:**

- Lord, increase my opportunity to represent Jesus and His good news to someone
- Help me welcome the tough stuff that doing this may require

**Series key truth -- *In a world of unavoidable tough stuff, we are unbroken conquerors when woven together with God and godly companions.***

