

**Sermon “Thorns and Flesh”**  
**2 Corinthians 12:1-10**  
**July 25, 2021**

2 Corinthians 12:1-10. (ESV)

**12** I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. **2** I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. **3** And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— **4** and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. **5** On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses— **6** though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. **7** So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations,<sup>[a]</sup> a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. **8** Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. **9** But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. **10** For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

**Boasting and the “super apostles.”**

2 Corinthians 11:16-29 (ESV)

**16** I repeat, let no one think me foolish. But even if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. **17** What I am saying with this boastful confidence, I say not as the Lord would but as a fool. **18** Since many boast according to the flesh, I too will boast. **19** For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves! **20** For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face. **21** To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that! But whatever anyone else dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. **22** Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. **23** Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. **24** Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. **25** Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; **26** on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; **27** in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. **28** And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. **29** Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?

Persecution and prosperity.

Prophecy and pride.

“A thorn given me in the flesh.”

John Piper Quote -

“God is putting the father of pride to work to destroy pride in Paul.”

“my power is made perfect in weakness.”

Strength and weakness go together.

“Theology of Glory or “Theology of the Cross.”

From a “thorn in the flesh” to a crown of thorns.

At the moment Jesus appears weakest, He is reshaping the cosmos.

### **Grow Group Discussion Questions**

- What did God say to you during our Sunday gathering?
- What is it to boast?
- Paul is concerned that Christian teachers are boasting of things things don't reveal true Christian substance and authority. Why are eloquence and affluence seen as validating qualities in leadership?
- What is Paul trying to convey about “knowing a man” who was caught up into heaven? Have you bought one of those books or seen one of those movies? What is Paul's concern?
- Who gave Paul the thorn? God, Satan or both? How do you explain this?
- Paul talks about a power that does not come in strength. Can you explain what he is getting at? How does this cause you to rethink your weaknesses?
- God seems more concerned about you being conceited more than you being comfortable. Are you ok with that? How have you seen this principle play out in your life?
- Consider a difficult circumstance you are dealing with. Are you asking for God to change the circumstance or change you? Could you be trying to fix the very thing that God is using to fix you?
- How can your Grow Group helps you apply this passage to your life this week?