

## 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 “His Strength Through My Weakness”

**1** It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord:

**2 Corinthians 11:16-18**

**16** I say again, let no one think me a fool. If otherwise, at least receive me as a fool, that I also may boast a little.

**17** What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.

**18** Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast.

- Paul's not boasting **OF** his infirmities – he is boasting **IN** his infirmities

**2 Corinthians 11:30** If I must boast, I will boast **in the things which concern my infirmity.**

**2 Corinthians 12:5** Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except **in my infirmities.**

**2 Corinthians 12:9** Therefore most gladly I will rather boast **in my infirmities**, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

- Boasting of God's grace and provision – the main lesson here.

**2** I know a man in Christ who **fourteen years ago**—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven.

- 14 years earlier Paul was in Lystra and Derbe preaching he Word:

**Acts 14:8-22**

**19** Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, **they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.**

**20** However, when the disciples gathered around him, **he rose up and went into the city.** And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

**21** **And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,**

**22** strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”

**3** And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows —  
**4** how he was caught up into **Paradise** and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

- Inexpressible words
- Unlawful to speak outside of Paradise
  - What language?
  - Worship?

**1 Corinthians 2:9** But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

- Paradise

- The word **Paradise** comes from **a Persian word** which means a **walled-garden**. When a Persian king wished to confer a very special honor on someone specially dear to him, he made him a “*companion of the garden*”

and gave him the right to walk in the royal gardens with him in intimate companionship. In this experience, as never before and never again, Paul had been the companion of God.<sup>1</sup>

**Genesis 2:8** The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.

**Genesis 2:15** Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

**Genesis 3:8** And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

- It will all be worth it one day!

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18**

**16** Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

**17** For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

**18** while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

**5** Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities.

**6** For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me.

**7** And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

- What was this “thorn”?

- Emotional

- Spiritual or Carnal temptations

- Relational

- Mother-in-law
- Jewish resistance

- Physical

- The word (*skolops*) can mean thorn but more likely it means stake.<sup>2</sup>
  - Sometimes criminals were impaled upon a sharp stake.
  - It was a stake like that that Paul felt was twisting in his body
- Indicates a tremendous chronic painful experience/lifestyle
- Headaches?
  - Both Tertullian and Jerome believed that Paul suffered from severe and prostrating headaches. .<sup>3</sup>
- Blind?

<sup>1</sup>The letters to the Corinthians. 2000, c1975 (W. Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, Ed.). The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

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- Another theory is that Paul suffered from **eye trouble** and this would explain the headaches.
  - Was Paul blind after his Damascus road experience?
 

**Acts 9:9** And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.
  - Paul said of the Galatians that they would have plucked out their eyes and would have given them to him.
 

**Galatians 4:15** What then was the blessing you *enjoyed*? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me.
  - Paul closes Galatians describing the large words he wrote
 

**Galatians 6:11** See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!
- Malaria?
  - Very prevalent around the Mediterranean in Jesus' day.
  - One who has suffered from it describes the headache that accompanies it as being like "a red-hot bar thrust through the forehead." Another speaks of "the grinding, boring pain in one temple, like the dentist's drill—the phantom wedge driven in between the jaws," and says that when the thing became acute it "reached the extreme point of human endurance."<sup>4</sup>
- It had a demonic origin
  - Can Christians be utterly possessed by demons?
  - Can Christians be utterly oppressed by demons?

**8** Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.  
**9** And He said to me, "**My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.**" Therefore most gladly I will rather boast **in my infirmities**, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

- Paul was one of those Super-Apostles wasn't he?
  - Paul asked 3X!
  - How come he didn't get his request answered?
  - Paul did – God answered him – the answer was No.
- **Someone once wrote: "The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you."** That's another way of saying with Paul that we never have temptations greater than we can bear. We pray for lighter burdens when we ought to pray for stronger backs. We pray for an easier path when we ought to pray for tougher feet. We pray for fewer problems when we ought to pray for better solutions.

<sup>4</sup>The letters to the Corinthians. 2000, c1975 (W. Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, Ed.). The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

**10** Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- Paul's not boasting **OF** his infirmities – he is boasting **IN** his infirmities  
**2 Corinthians 11:30** If I must boast, I will boast **in the things which concern my infirmity.**  
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**2 Corinthians 12:9** Therefore most gladly I will rather boast **in my infirmities**, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
  - **Boasting of God's grace and provision – the main lesson here.**
- **Make sure it is God's trumpet you are blowing--if it is only yours, it won't wake the dead; it will simply disturb the neighbors.**  
Maj. W. Ian Thomas, quoted in Context (Feb. 1991), Christianity Today, Vol. 35, no. 4.