



## 2 Cor 12—Thorn in the Flesh

July 21

**OVERVIEW:** [2 Corinthians](#)

**CONTEXT:** We're almost finished our journey through 2 Cor. This warm pastoral letter is a celebration of the Corinthians' repentance and reconciliation with the apostle who founded their church. However, there remains a vocal minority of opposition who still boast in their spiritual experiences. It is this that Paul turns to in today's passage, boasting in his own experiences, but also in something far greater.

**FIRST, A.M. SERMON RECAP** (2 Cor 11:21-29)

- Why can pulpit swaps be useful?
- Why did Paul boast in his sufferings?
- Have you ever suffered for Christ?
- What does the world boast in? Why do Christians boast in their weakness? How is this linked to the Gospel?

**READ:** 2 Cor 12:1-10

### QUESTIONS:

1. *Paul has just been boasting of his suffering and weaknesses, then seemingly begins to boast like the false apostles, but with a twist. His boast happened some 14 years prior, probably prior to his first missionary journey.*
2. What things, skills, experiences, can people often boast in?
3. **What is boasting? Share a time when you boasted or you witnessed boasting. How was there “nothing to gain by it”?**
4. Vv. 2-6- Who do you think Paul might be referring to? How is it likely he is using the third person to refer to himself?
5. **What do you think the third heaven is?**<sup>1</sup> What would it mean to be caught up there in “body” or in “spirit”?
  1. *Paradise is often used to speak of the place where God dwells.*

6. Why would such an experience have been a boastable truth?
7. What do you think Paul saw/heard?
8. **How must we be careful about disclosing wonderful spiritual or physical experiences we have had?**
9. V.6b- What does he mean here?
10. **V. 7- What is a thorn/sliver? What do you think Paul's thorn in the flesh [body] was?**<sup>2</sup>
11. *Note God sovereignly gave the thorn, but never as the agent of evil, it came by Satan.*
12. **Why do you think Paul didn't name his thorn? He mentions possible thorns in v. 10.**
13. **V. 7- What was the purpose of the thorn?**
14. *V. 9 (see Gathsemane, Mk 13:32-41)- Three= he has finished praying, he has his answer.*
15. **V. 9- Why would the thorn remain? What does this famous reply mean?**
16. **Vv. 9b and 10b- What should we boast in and why?**
17. *These verses sum up Paul's self-defence as an apostle. We know God's grace and power through Christlike weakness.*

### Personal

18. Do you have/has the Lord given you any thorns? For what purpose? (Private reflection, unless you'd like to share).
19. How does this combat your pride and increase humility?

**NEXT TIME:** July 28, Ro 3:1-20, God's Righteousness and Our Unrighteousness

Some thoughts: (1) a psychological struggle (earlier persecution; Israel's unbelief; temptations); (2) his persecution/opponents; (3) physical affliction (i.e. 2 Cor 10:10); (4) demonic harassment

The atmosphere, outer space and God's dwelling beyond creation.