



**Nothing adds more to the character of the gospel than the great intimacy in which "[a man in Christ](#)" is received in paradise. Stoney**

**Paul, as a man in Christ, is carried into the third heaven -- a revelation of untold blessedness while in the light of it.**

**The great point is that you and I are united to that Man in heaven.**

**Now what is the consequence of this?**

- The fact is, that if this truth were acted out it would make us just like the man in [John 9](#).
- Heaven does not minister to the flesh at all; there is no place for it there.
  - No one would have him!
  - He was no man's man!
  - He is no member of society.
  - He is only a man from heaven!

When he comes back from the 3<sup>rd</sup> heaven, **what does he find?**

- In the third heaven, where everything is for him, to this earth, where everything is against him,
- Paul returns to earth, and finds a messenger of Satan buffets him.

***7 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!***

Paul comes down from the third heaven, the highest scene, and is immediately assailed by the messenger of Satan, no doubt to hinder him, and the Lord allows it.



*<sup>7</sup> Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!*

**Question:** How does Paul's sin nature (and ours) respond to God's revelations?

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- It desires to exalt self (“I know something that you don’t know”).
- It is puffed up by knowledge.

**God's solution:**

- To give Paul (and us) a “thorn in the flesh” – by His grace
  - A thorn can be painful – physically and/or mentally.
  - A thorn can be shameful in man's eyes - Gal 4:14.
- God in His grace allows thorns in our lives to:
  - Produce self restraint in exalting self (“raising ourselves above others”).
  - Produce humility (there is nothing like being nothing). 2Cor 3:5

*<sup>8</sup> Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.*

1. He goes to the Lord about it, and asks Him to remove it, but the Lord does not do so.
2. He goes a second time, but still the Lord does not remove it.
3. He goes a third time.

Paul is asking for mercy. **What does he get instead of mercy?**

**Grace is the principle on which God acts.**

Grace sustains  $\longrightarrow$  Mercy delivers from the trial.

Grace is what is done *inside* me  $\longrightarrow$  Mercy *outside* me.

Grace is according to the measure of God's heart  $\longrightarrow$  Mercy according to the measure of man's need.

Mercy, the depths from which we are brought.

Grace, the heights to which we are brought.

<sup>9</sup> *And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.*

- He goes three times, and the third time a most wonderful change comes over him, he is brought around to the mind of the Lord, he is transformed into moral communication with God's mind.
- Now instead of being dissatisfied with the thorn, he says, "*I take pleasure in infirmities.*"
- What a change has taken place! how wonderful! he is brought into moral keeping with God's own mind.  
He is not merely resigned, but he can say, "*Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*"

*Philippians 4:6-7 (NASB) <sup>6</sup> Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be **made known** to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

The peace of God could not be comprehended by the natural mind. It is such an amazing thing; you would not know yourself. It passes ALL understanding.

Well, how do I get it then?

- I go to Him.
- I get so near to Him, that I actually acquire the very place that corresponds with that in which He is Himself !
- I can understand a person saying, “Oh, now you are speaking fables! No, I am only saying what is written.”
- I know very well how far short I am of it, but that is what it is.

*<sup>9</sup> And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.*

- The world, the flesh, and the devil say, Be powerful.
- The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit say, Be powerless – *“for My strength is made perfect in [your] weakness.”*

Most feel that personal weakness is the great hindrance to a sound Christian life, the real tragedy is the astonishing strength of the old man. The Cross for our cursed strength; the Lord Jesus for our blessed weakness.

NBTHH



*<sup>9</sup>And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.*

A while ago he was trying to get rid of the thorn, but now on the contrary he says, "*Most gladly therefore will I rather boast about my (weakness) infirmities.*"

- By the blood of the Lamb I am without a spot, and can go into the holiest of all.
- Beholding His glory I am transformed into the same image, into the very highest condition, into harmony and agreement with His glory.

**And how?** By looking at the Lord's glory in His word.

*"Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."*

"All of His servants in the Word stand before us as vivid illustrations of the value and necessity of broken material. All had to be broken in order to be made whole-to be emptied in order to be filled-to learn that, of themselves, they could do nothing, in order to be ready, in the Lord Jesus' strength, for anything and everything." - **MacKintosh**.

Our greatest liability: self-confidence.

Our greatest asset: Christ-confidence.

<sup>10</sup> *Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*

**Question:** What is your response to your “**thorn in the flesh**”?

Can our response be Paul’s response? - Is it possible for you to say:

*“... Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities (weaknesses), that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”*

**Purpose:** “that the power of Christ may rest upon me” MOLLOY

Let no one imagine that he can be effectively used in the Lord's service, or even make progress in the Christian life, without some measure of real entrance into the valuable **principle:** NBTHH

*'When I am weak, then am I strong'*



