

'For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...'

(2 Cor.10:3-6)

The Weapons of our Warfare

2) Weakness

✓ **A real apostle does not boast about himself, but about Christ, 'For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake' (2 Cor.4:5)**

✓ **Yet Paul feels he is forced to boast about himself in response to the false apostles. 'Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast. For you put up with fools gladly...' (2 Cor.11:18-19)**

✓ **But his boasting is in contrast to theirs. They boasted in their power, he in his weakness**

✓'Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness...

'...besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands'

(2 Cor.11:23-33)

✓He insists that if he must boast it will be in his infirmities

✓Infirmities is a general term meaning feeble, frail or weak

✓There is so much success he could have boasted about, but he boasts about his infirmities

✓Beatings, stonings, shipwrecks, dangers, persecution, hunger, etc.

✓'*In Damascus... I was let down in a basket through a window*'. (see Acts 9:23-25). It is as if he says, 'This is how my ministry began and this is how it continues'

- ✓ **The false apostles and carnal Corinthians would never dream of boasting in such things. For them such hardships said, 'God has not blessed me...I am not a success'**
- ✓ **They could only glory in the image of success. They thought any kind of adverse circumstances made one look weak and far from God**
- ✓ **So why did Paul boast in these? In chapter 12 he tells us why**

'It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: 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. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. 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'

(2 Cor.12:1-6)

✓ Paul wants to come onto positive things but even in this he does not boast about anything he did, but what happened to him, i.e. experiences in which he was passive ('visions and revelations of the Lord')

✓ He tells of an experience he had about 14 years previously. He was taken up to the third heaven

✓ It was such an incredible experience he didn't even know if he was in his body or out of it. It was like watching the whole thing happen to someone else. What he saw and heard he could not talk about

- ✓ **Paradise is a Persian word meaning a walled garden or park, especially a king's**
- ✓ **It is where believers go at death, Lk.23:43**
- ✓ **If a Persian king wanted to confer a favour on someone he would welcome them as a companion of the garden. This person would have the right to walk with the king in his garden and have intimate discussion with him**
- ✓ **In this experience God took him into His confidence. He saw things which greatly increased his understanding of life and what God is doing. Things he was not allowed to talk about on earth. This happened several times, 'abundance of revelations' (v.7)**

✓ He was chosen for special revelations from God as an evidence of his apostleship

✓ He could have boasted in this but didn't. Why? Because there was nothing to boast about. He was passive in the whole thing. It was all of grace

✓ He said he would be a fool to boast of this because he wanted people to judge him by their own experience of him, not by the experiences he said he had



- ✓ *'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' (2 Cor.12:7)*
- ✓ **The Greek word for thorn is skolopo which can be translated 3 ways:**
- ✓ **A thorn which becomes embedded in the flesh**
- ✓ **A sharpened stick or piece of wood which is constantly used to poke or prod**
- ✓ **A sharpened stake on which a man is impaled**
- ✓ **What was it? We don't know!□**

***The reason we don't know what it was is that we all have a different 'thorn'. A thorn in the flesh is a symbol of something which makes us feel weak and inadequate**

***It buffeted him (literally to beat with the fist)**

***It was 'a messenger of Satan', yet it was given by God. In other words both God and Satan were involved. But they both had different purposes. Satan's purpose was to destroy Paul. God's purpose was to keep him in a place where he would remain humble, dependent and usable**

***Paul thought to be usable this has to go. God says, 'To stay usable you need this'**

****'Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness"' (2 Cor.12:8-9)***

***Paul prayed 3 times for it to be taken away**

***God answered him, 'I won't take it away; but I'll give you great grace. And My grace will be sufficient for you'**

***What an understatement!**

***God's strength is manifest in our weakness**

'Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 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'
(2 Cor.12:9-10)

Paul boasts in his weaknesses because through them the power of Christ 'rests' upon him

'rest' is translated from the Greek word episkenoo = to pitch its tent upon, to dwell in, as the Shekinah glory