

TALK 11 – Trevor Faggotter

A Thorn was given me in the Flesh

2Corinthians 12:1-13

Corinth itself, and the church founded there was dynamic, yet turbulent (Acts 18:1-18). Was a big stick or gentleness needed most? (1Cor. 1:10-4:21; 2Cor. 10:1). The gospel enables us to face problems (2Cor. 12:20).

Paul sure could boast of enduring a long list of hardships: *wild beasts at Ephesus* (1Cor. 15:32), *persecution* (2Cor. 4:7-15); *beatings, imprisonments, riots, hunger, bandits, shipwrecks* (2Cor. 6:3-10; 11:16-33). In weakness, he knew in Jesus, of love's strong endurance (1Cor. 13:7).

Paul could also boast—like the super-apostles—of unusual spiritual experiences (2Cor. 12:1-4).

- 'Caught up into Paradise' (cf. Luke 23:43)

However, Paul's apostolic ministry was to boast in the power of Christ's grace amidst his own weakness, not a strength derived from unusual spiritual experiences.

What was Paul's *thorn in the flesh*?

'Earache, headache, Alexander the coppersmith, temptation, ophthalmia, epilepsy, malarial fever, Malta fever, sorrow for unbelieving Jews, hysteria, hypochondria, gallstones, gout, rheumatism, sciatica, gastritis, leprosy, lice, deafness, dental infection, neurasthenia, speech impediment, remorse for torturing Christians, messenger of Satan – a person; an unknown **type** of every Christian's *thorn*' (P.E. Hughes)

Q1. In what circumstances might you now see that Christ's grace is sufficient for you? Let it also be said, that 'there is rest in the wrestling' not in quiet-ism; importunate prayer is an important part of the life of faith (Luke 18:1; Eph. 6:13).