**MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU**

2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Key Verse 9

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

**Introduction**



 In this passage Paul was obligated to go on boasting even though he didn’t want to do. He talked about the visions and revelations from the Lord that others had never received. But he decided to boast his weakness all the more because he knew that he could be truly strong with the power of God when he was weak. Through this passage, we can learn why we should boast our weakness and how we can be strong.

1. **Read verses 1-4. Why was Paul obligated to go on boasting? (1a) What did he boast about?(1b). What happened to him? (2-4)**

**1-1. Read verses 1-4.**

I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. **2** I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. **3** And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— **4** was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell.

**1-2. Why was Paul obligated to go on boasting? (1a)**

***· I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained***

- We don’t gain anything through boasting ourselves. Self-boasting is useless.

- Paul said that self-boasting is foolish. **16 I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then tolerate me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting. 17 In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool. 18 Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast. (2 Co 11:16-18)**

- ‘I must go on boasting’: Paul had to boast himself for the benefits of the believers in Corinth even though he would not gain anything through the boasting and he didn’t want to boast himself.

- He decided to boast himself to help Corinthian believers to be awakened from the deception of the false teachers who boasted themselves.

- He was willing to do anything for the benefit of the believers even though he didn’t want to do it for himself.

**1-3. What did he boast about?(1b).**

***· I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord.***

- God showed him special visions and gave him revelations.

- Seeing visions is to see something that God shows supernatural and miraculous way. Vision is one part of God’s revelation.

- Paul wanted to talk about the vision and revelation because the false teachers might boast that they had visions and revelation.

**1-4. What happened to him? (2-4)**

***· I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven.***

- I know a man : a man indicates Paul himself.

- Fourteen years ago : He mentioned specific time because he wanted to showed that it really had happened to him.

- the third heaven : some people say ‘third heaven’ came from Jewish concept of heaven. Jews thought that the heaven was divided into seven different levels and this heaven is the place where righteous people go. But not many scholars support the idea. The third heaven might be the place that could not be described and the place where the God is present. **He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe (Ephesians 4:10).**

- The “third heaven” designates a place beyond the earth’s atmosphere and beyond the planets and stars to the presence of God himself.

- Was caught up : he was not taken by his own will or power. It was God who took him up.

***· Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows.***

- Paul didn’t know his self was in his body or out of his body when he was taken to the heaven.

- Paul was so overwhelmed by his heavenly vision that he did not know the detail. However, whether he was caught up bodily into heaven (like Enoch, Gen. 5:24 and Elijah, 2 King. 2:11), or his spirit was temporarily separated from his body, was not important

- God knows: God is the only one who knows how Paul experienced the heaven because God let him to experience it through certain way.

- We cannot see vision or have revelation through our own way or power. Only when God shows the vision and gives revelation through his way we can have them.

- God can give us his revelation through his ways that are beyond our senses and ability. We don’t know the ways because they are supernatural and miraculous.

***· was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell.***

* Paradise : Paradise is different expression of ‘the third heaven’ in this passage. Paradise means ‘Garden’. Ex)The garden of Eden(Genesis 2:8). It indicates the place where God exists. **You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: carnelian, chrysolite and emerald, topaz, onyx and jasper,lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl.[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel+28&version=NIV#fen-NIV-21171b)**]Your settings and mountings[**[**c**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel+28&version=NIV#fen-NIV-21171c)**] were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. (Ezekiel 28:13)**
* Jesus promised the paradise to the criminal who crucified together and accepted Jesus’ words. **Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”(Luke 23:43)**
* Also it is the place where those who have won will go. **Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. (Revelation 2:7)**

· heard inexpressible things - The vision and revelation was so mysterious that human could not describe with human language.

- The paradise where we will go in the future is inexpressible place that none of good places in this world can be compared with. The place that Jesus is preparing for us is so wonderful and amazing that even we cannot describe.

· things that no one is permitted to tell - Even Paul was not permitted to tell what he heard and saw in the heaven. God might not give him the permission to tell because it would not be beneficial to those who would hear. Rather it could cause misunderstanding and confusion to the believers.

- Paul could tell what he saw and heard to boast himself like the false teachers did but he didn’t tell the detail about it, because he was obedient to God and considered believers’ benefit.

- Because the words were for him alone, Paul was forbidden to repeat them, even if he could have explained them.

2. **Read verses 5-7. What did Paul want to boast about instead of himself? (5) Why would he not be a fool even if he chose to boast? (6a) Why did he still refrain from boasting? (6b) Why was Paul given a thorn in his flesh? (7)**

**2-1.** **Read verses 5-7.**

**5** I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. **6** Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, **7** or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

**2-2. What did Paul want to boast about instead of himself? (5)**

***· I will boast about a man like that,***

- By calling him a man a third person, Paul didn’t expose him. Rather he hid himself. He boasted himself as a man for the benefit of the church.

***· but I will not boast about myself***

 - Paul didn’t have intention to boast himself at all.

- He clearly showed that the purpose of the boasting was not to boast him but to fight against the false teacher for the benefits of the church because the false teachers boasted their mysterious experiences.

***· except about my weaknesses***

- But Paul boasted his weakness. The false teachers and some of Corinthian believers attacked Paul by mentioning his weaknesses.

- But Paul boasted his weakness instead of feeling shame of it or covering it. Usually people boast their strong points and hide their weakness. But Paul did opposite way.

- We shouldn’t be ashamed of our weakness and difficulties or problems. Rather we should boast them because we can experience God’s power and lift up His name through our weakness and problems.

- People in the world boast the good things they have to glorify themselves. But believers boast their weakness to glorify God.

**2-3. Why would he not be a fool even if he chose to boast? (6a)**

***· Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth***

- If Paul wished to boast about his unique experience ([v. 1–4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2Cor%2012:1-2Cor%2012:4)) he would not be a fool, because it really happened. He refrained from boasting about it, however, because he wanted the Corinthians to judge him based on their observations of his ministry, not on his visions.

- False teachers might boast themselves not based on truth or exaggerating things.

- In contrast, Paul told the truth without exaggerating or adding up things to exalt him.

**2-4. Why did he still refrain from boasting? (6b)**

***· But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say,***

- Paul refrained from boasting with the worry that people would exalt him instead of Jesus and think more of him than was warranted.

- Also he was afraid that the believers could misunderstand what he did and said and get confused. He wanted the benefit of church first all the time.

**2-5. Why was Paul given a thorn in his flesh? (7)**

***· or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.***

· Surpassing great revelations - The revelations that Paul received were so amazing and mysterious that it is so rare for people to have such revelations.

· In order to keep me from becoming conceited - Paul could be proud considering him as a great person because of the revelation. It is true that there have been many people who got proud after receiving God’s much grace and corrupted.

- God gave him a thorn in his flesh. God didn’t want Paul to become proud. Thus God gave him the thorn to prevent him from falling.

- God gives us different types of thorns to protect us from becoming conceited.

· Thorn in my flesh: It might be disease in his body. It is known that Paul had eye disease that bothered him so much as he served the ministry.

- We don’t know for sure. Some suggest it was a spiritual problem (anxiety, sexual temptation or perhaps guilt). Others think it was a physical ailment (headaches, epilepsy, malarial fever, a speech impediment or eye problems). Still others speculate that it referred to Paul’s frequent persecutions.

· a messenger of Satan, to torment me

- It shows that the thorn bothered him and his ministry so much and he had severe pain because of the thorn.

- This was sent to him by God, to keep him humble. As with Job, Satan was the immediate cause, but God was the ultimate cause.

- God was allowing Satan to bring this severe trouble in the church for the purpose of humbling Paul who, having had so many revelations, including a trip to heaven and back, would have been proud.

- It also shows that Satan is still under God’s control and can be used by God for the benefits of believers.

**3. Read verses 8-10. How did Paul plead with the Lord? (8) What was the Lord’s answer? (9a) What did Paul decide to boast about? (9b) Why did he delight in his weaknesses? (10)**

 **3-1. Read verses 8-10.**

**8** Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. **9** But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. **10** That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

 **3-2. How did Paul plead with the Lord? (8)**

***· Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me***

- Three times I pleaded: Three times could mean how much earnestly Paul prayed to the Lord for him to be released from the thorn.

- Paul, longing for relief from this painful hindrance to his ministry, went to his Lord, Jesus Christ begging Him to remove it. The demons are only subject to His authority.

- The 3-fold repetition of Paul’s request parallels that of Jesus in Gethsemane ([Mark 14:32–41](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%2014:32-Mark%2014:41)). Both Paul and Jesus had their requests denied, but were granted grace to endure their ordeals.

**3-3. What was the Lord’s answer? (9a)**

***· But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”***

· My grace is sufficient for you- Paul wanted to receive grace of the Lord for his weakness but the Lord said that he had given enough grace to Paul.

- Jesus’ grace was that he provided Paul with all things that he needed to serve the ministry despite his weakness.

- The present tense of the verb translated “is sufficient” reveals the constant availability of divine grace. God would not remove the thorn, as Paul had requested, but would continually supply him with grace to endure it.

- Sometimes we don’t know what kind of grace and how much grace we have received from God and we could keep asking his grace even though we have received enough.

- Instead of focusing on our weakness we better think carefully about what grace we have received from God.

- The Lord gives us sufficient grace all the time.

· for my power is made perfect in weakness.

- The Lord’s power is revealed through our weakness.

- If Paul had not had any weakness he could have become proud after doing powerful work.

- Because of his weakness Paul became humble and confessed that everything was done by God’s grace. **But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.(1 Co 15:10)**

- God works in us with his power when we depend on him in our weakness with humble heart.

- The weaker the human instrument, the clearer God’s grace shines forth.

- Our weakness is the perfect chance for us to experience God’s power. God is delight to reveal his power through our weakness.

- Paul realized that often the Lord does not “fix” situations because through our pain we see him work a better plan. Not only can God sustain us, but his power can be more clearly demonstrated in our weakness ([v. 10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2Cor%2012:10)).

- If we are willing to submit to God’s plans, then we can see the Lord accomplish greater things than we could do in our own strength.

**3-4. What did Paul decide to boast about? (9b)**

***· Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.***

· Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses

- Paul was not despair or sad or discouraged because of his weakness. He was also not ashamed of his weakness. Rather he boasted all the more gladly about his weakness because the more he had weakness the more Christ’s power would remain on him.

- Paul took no pleasure in the pain itself, but rejoiced in the power of Christ that it revealed through him.

- We should be thankful and glad with our weakness instead of being sad or discouraged because Christ’s power will rest on us all the more through the weakness.

- If some people boast their strength and power they are acknowledging that they don’t rely on God’s power.

- If we have any kind weakness, we should come to God for his power with humble heart instead of becoming sad and discouraged.

**3-5. Why did he delight in his weaknesses? (10)**

***· That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.***

- for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses - Paul wanted to glorify Jesus’ name through his weakness. He delighted in his weakness because it is the chance for him to exalt Christ among people.

· in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties.

- Paul experienced his weakness in all kinds of insults, in hardships, in persecutions, and difficulties.

- When we are in difficult situation all our weaknesses are exposed. That is the moment to let God’s power work in us.

· For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- When we are weak we are strong because that is the very moment when God makes us strong with his power.

- When we are weak actually we are not weak because God’s power is with us.

- We believers don’t live with our own strength. Rather we live with the power of God that works through our weakness.

 **Conclusion**

 Like Paul, we can boast our weaknesses because Jesus’ power can be made perfect in our weakness. We don’t need to be sad, discouraged or despair. Rather we can delight with our weakness, because the more we have weakness the more God’s power will work on us. May God help us to come to Jesus with our weaknesses by faith so that we may become truly strong through the power of Jesus Christ.

**One word: I am strong when I am weak!**