

Nagging Weakness?
Now what?

Nagging Weakness? Now what?

2 Corinthians 12:1-2, “I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained. I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. 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.”

Nagging Weakness? Now what?

2 Cor. 12:3-6 “And I know that this man – whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows – was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell. I will boast about someone like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth.”

Nagging Weakness? Now what?

2 Cor. 12:6-9, “But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, 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. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’”

Nagging Weakness? Now what?

2 Cor. 12:9-10, “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. 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.”

Nagging weakness?

The “thorn in the flesh”

- Could be a physical malady – We know Paul had a problem with his eyes. Gal. 4:13-15, “It was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God . . . What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.”

Nagging weakness?

The “thorn in the flesh”

- Could be a physical malady – We know Paul had a problem with his eyes. Gal. 6:11, “See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!”
- Could be persecution.
- Paul keeps it ambiguous on purpose. We don’t know what it was.

Nagging weakness?

The “thorn in the flesh”

- We all have some nagging weakness that we carry around.
- This isn't a sin issue or a character issue. We have a choice about that. Our weakness we cannot change (like blindness). It is outside of our control. (e.g., depression; hardship/difficulty; a scar from the past – anxiety)

Nagging weakness?

The “thorn in the flesh”

- What do we do with these weaknesses?
- We want to cover them up. We want God to take them away. Paul asks for God to take it away – three times. Sometimes God does miracles. We ought to ask until God says, “No.” (comfort/character)

Nagging weakness?

The “thorn in the flesh”

- When God says, ‘no,’ we have to choose how we’ll respond. (bitter & angry - nursing home; become a victim - divorced friend)
- Look at Paul’s response – Paul says this thorn in the flesh is a ‘messenger of Satan’ sent to ‘torment’ him. He asks for deliverance. But, he accepts grace.

Nagging weakness?

The “thorn in the flesh”

- “My grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness.”
- God’s grace is enough for us to overcome our weaknesses. God’s grace is enough for us to handle our temptations in weakness.
- Paul turns his weakness into an opportunity – an opportunity to depend on God, to discover God’s power.

Nagging weakness?

The “thorn in the flesh”

- Paul doesn't despise his weakness or run from it. He admits it, embraces it, leans into it, so he can discover God's power there.
- Our weakness is a pathway to God's power. (e.g., fear of not being loved)