

**for reflection & discussion:** (NT Wright)

1. Describe someone in the news whose pride or arrogance caused big problems?
2. Read the passage. Paul starts with teasing them by “boasting” of his experiences in Ch 11. He continues in 12:1-5. Now he talks about his spiritual experiences (v7, he is the man). Why do you think he now adds these experiences?
3. Paul goes from boasting to speaking of his “thorn” in the flesh (6-10). There are many ideas about this thorn; a recurring disease (probably most likely), but no idea what kind, it could simply be the regular persecution he suffered? We don’t know for sure. What does he say the purpose of the thorn is, in his life?
4. When have you seen God’s “no” to a prayer bring about growth in character, like Paul’s “thorn” did?
5. In Paul’s supernatural experience of going to paradise, he does not share any specifics about what he saw or heard, but he does share a word he received from God in v. 9. That word isn’t going to get him a book deal, movie contract, etc. Two questions: What does this say about all those who try to profit on telling of their supernatural heaven/hell encounters? What does it say about a cross-shaped view of spiritual gifts and “words from the Lord”? (How is v. 9 consistent with Chs. 10-11).
6. What does it look like to live v. 9 in everyday life?

Prayer: Intercede for others in situations where there is attack, misunderstanding, and pain in the tasks of serving the church/ministry.

**TRUE REVIVAL:**  
**WEAKNESS**  
AS POWER  
**PAIN**  
AS HEALING  
**STRUGGLE**  
AS FREEDOM

Our world is often driven by power games through numbers or telling stories. But when we choose to be counter-cultural and embrace our limits, we encounter a power we don’t control and experience the potential of real joy, encouragement, and sustainable living. At our limits God meets us.

**OUTLINE**

5. Paul’s Countercultural “Fool’s Speech” Part 2 *2 Corinthians 11:30-12:10*
- a. Snatched Up to Paradise of the Third Heaven *12:1-4*
  - b. Boasting Only in Weakness *12:5-6*
  - c. Paul’s Thorn in the Flesh *12:7-9*
  - d. Conclusion to the Fool’s Speech *12:10*

**PRE-TRIP**



**connect**

- need prayer? • meet with pastor Shel or Josh
- ask questions • sign-up for our weekly e-newsletter
- get information • join a Home Church
- make comments

## THE DRIVE

### c. Snatched Up to Paradise of the Third Heaven 12:1-4

<sup>12:1</sup> It is necessary to go on boasting. Though it is not profitable, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. <sup>2</sup> I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago (whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows) was caught up to the third heaven. <sup>3</sup> And I know that this man (whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows) <sup>4</sup> was caught up into paradise and heard things too sacred to be put into words, things that a person is not permitted to speak.

### d. Boasting Only in Weakness 12:5-6

<sup>5</sup> On behalf of such an individual I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except about my weaknesses. <sup>6</sup> For even if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I would be telling the truth, but I refrain from this so that no one may regard me beyond what he sees in me or what he hears from me,

### e. Paul's Thorn in the Flesh 12:7-9

<sup>7</sup> even because of the extraordinary character of the revelations. Therefore, so that I would not become arrogant, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to trouble me—so that I would not become arrogant. <sup>8</sup> I asked the Lord three times about this, that it would depart from me. <sup>9</sup> But he said to me, “My grace is enough for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” So then, I will boast most gladly about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may reside in me.

### f. Conclusion to the Fool's Speech 12:10

<sup>10</sup> Therefore I am content with weaknesses, with insults, with troubles, with persecutions and difficulties for the sake of Christ, for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

“God’s power and human power are not only not the same thing; often the second has to be knocked out of the way altogether for the first to shine through as God desires and intends.”

-NT Wright, Paul for Everyone, 2 Corinthians, 133

## POST-TRIP ARRIVAL