**2 Corinthians 12:7-10 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. 8Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10Therefore 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.**

Have you thanked God for your infirmities today? Have you boasted in your weakness?Today, we’re going to talk a little about weakness. That’s a word that makes Americans bristle. It can cause strange reactions. More than one person has awakened in Hell because they thought trusting Jesus was weak. Atheists claim Christians are weak. Comics mock Christians because “they’re too weak to fight back.” Anyone who lives for Jesus knows that Christianity is not for the faint of heart. If you’re living for Christ, you’ll be challenged every day.

 Anyone here this morning been challenged this week? Anyone watch the hurricane and feel nervous? Go to the doctor and not like the diagnosis? Have a family member in a bad situation and feel anxiety? Then, we’re in good company! Paul says he felt that way too. Look at verse 7 *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.* Paul recognizes a thorn in the flesh – what it was we don’t know – and he says it was “given” to him. It was a messenger of Satan to buffet (meaning to be rapped hard with a fist) me. Notice that he says exalted above measure twice. This means lest he become haughty of spirit, prideful. Proverbs 16:18 says *Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall*. In Proverbs 16:5 says in part *Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.* God gave Paul the gift of revelation! And He allowed a gift of a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble.

 Some of God’s greatest gifts come in the form of a bad diagnosis, a troubled marriage, a painful injury, or an anxious situation… why? Because it reveals our need for God. It grabs us by the chin and turns our eyes back on the only source of strength we have! If God has given you a thorn in the flesh this morning, go home and praise Jesus for it!

 But listen to Paul in verse 8 - *Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.*He did it three, some of us do it continually. We never realize the blessing of that thorn, keeping us humble, keeping us focused. He pleaded! We plead. But sometimes, God’s answer is no.

 Verse 9 *And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”* God’s answer is no. He says, My grace is sufficient. Then, hear this clearly – this is a rawhide chew to work on all week this week! *My strength is made perfect in weakness*. Have you ever considered that God is making His strength perfect, His strength visible, His strength obvious through your weakness? Your weakness may be the thing making God’s strength perfectly clear and perfectly visible to someone who desperately needs to see it! We don’t like to hear that! We want to hear that God will always heal on earth, God will always remove, God will always transform… but it’s not true! That is a lie straight from Satan to get us to doubt. Paul, when he understood this said, *Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* How many of us are truly ready to boast in our infirmities so that the power of Jesus may rest upon us? In America, not many. Too many would give anything to have that thorn in the flesh taken away.

 Vs 10 *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake.*When Paul says I take pleasure, it means I think well of infirmities (sickness, feebleness), reproaches (insults), needs (poverty, lack), persecutions, and distresses (calamity), on behalf of Jesus. He sees that his suffering is perfecting God’s strength for someone who desperately needs it! Would you suffer if your child needed it? Your grandchild needed it? Your loved one needed it? Of course. But what about your enemy? Your persecutor? Hmmm, that’s another one to chew on! What if the alcoholism, the drug addiction, the sexual immorality, the cancer, the lost loved one, the bad boss is a thorn in your flesh to focus your faith? Will you think well of that and praise Him?

 *For when I am weak, then I am strong.* How in the world? It’s not of the world. Because, in his weakness, he has given over everything to God. He has acknowledged his desperate need and now trusts that, whatever comes, God is being glorified. Is the loved one still drinking? Yes. Is the boss still cussing? Yes. It means we hand it to God and believe that, come what may, *all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose* (Romans 8:28). We are showing His strength in the state of our weakness, and we can glory in the fact that we have been used for the Kingdom… for Christ.

 This week, is God perfecting His strength in your weakness? Where has God said no or not yet? What is your thorn in the flesh? How is God keeping you humble? Insecurity? Anxiety? Sickness? Poverty? I don’t know… but God does. The question is - Will we allow His strength to become perfectly clear in us, so others see His strength in us, that Christ may be glorified through us? I hope so, I hope so.