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## PROMISES OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

### LESSON 7: The Promise of God's Strength in Weakness

#### **Key Scripture:**

2 Corinthians 12:9 (NKJV) *"And He said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."*

The Pericope: 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

#### Verses 1-6 — Paul's Reluctant Boasting

Paul is forced into an awkward position. False apostles in Corinth were boasting about their credentials and visions, and undermining Paul's authority. So Paul, almost sarcastically, decides to "boast" too, but immediately feels foolish doing it.

He describes a man (almost certainly himself) who was "caught up to the third heaven" the very presence of God and heard inexpressible things. This was a real, extraordinary spiritual experience. But notice: Paul distances himself from it grammatically ("I know a man..."). He's reluctant to claim it as personal currency.

His point: if boasting is the game, I could win it. But I won't.

#### Verse 7 — The Pain

The word "thorn" means something sharp, like a stake or splinter, something beyond a minor irritation. Whatever it was (chronic illness, eye problems, opposition, anxiety, scholars debate this endlessly), it was:

- Painful and persistent
- Humiliating
- A counterweight to the extraordinary vision he just described

Notice the tension: the same God who gave the vision also permitted the thorn. Both came together.

#### Verses 8-9a — Three Requests, One Answer

Paul prayed earnestly, repeatedly. This mirrors Jesus in Gethsemane. It's not a lack of faith — it's honest, urgent prayer. And God said "no." But the refusal came with a reason:

"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

This is the hinge of the whole passage. God doesn't explain the thorn. He redirects Paul's attention from the problem to the resource. The answer to your weakness is not removal of the weakness, it's the sufficiency of my grace operating through it.

Verses 9b-10 — Paul's Transformation

"Therefore most gladly I will boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore 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."

Paul's response is not resigned acceptance. It's active, almost joyful reframing. He comes to understand that his weakness is the very condition that makes Christ's power most visible him.

How Paul Reaches the Conclusion. The logic moves like this:

1. I had a mountaintop experience (visions, revelations)
2. God gave me a thorn to prevent pride from that experience
3. I asked God three times to remove it
4. God refused, but explained why: grace is the sufficient answer, and is the vehicle for strength