

HIGHLANDS CHURCH

Study Guide

Boasting in Weakness

Thomas Slager
November 24, 2025

Major Points

- 1 Recognize our natural temptation to pride — we boast to feel loved, accepted, and like we belong, but everything we have is a gift from God.**
1 Corinthians 4:7
- 2 Receive God's protection from pride through pain — the thorn in the flesh is a gift from God to keep us from becoming conceited.**
2 Corinthians 12:7
- 3 Respond to pain with prayer — bring trials before the Lord with passion, repetition, and specificity, seeking wisdom on whether God is using them for humility.**
2 Corinthians 12:8
- 4 Rejoice in God's power rather than our own — when we are weak, then we are strong, because Christ's power rests on us in our weakness.**
2 Corinthians 12:10

Key Quotes

“Apart from Jesus, you're not acceptable, but Christ died. So his righteousness would become our righteousness so that we would be accepted by God.

at 3:34

“God in his love and in his kindness, occasionally gives us a thorn. A little pressure release valve. To keep us from becoming so conceited that we ruin our own lives.

at 22:31

“But then if he showed up and was just faithful, he can't boast himself anyways because he knows he's not good at the thing he's doing in the first place. If something happens, it's only because God showed up and did the thing.

at 27:53

“Your grace is enough. Man, if we can come to that place and in humility say, God, your grace, the gifts I don't deserve from you, that's more than enough.

at 32:04

“If we boast we boast in our weaknesses because we know when we are weakest he's actually strong

at 33:32

Discussion Questions

1. Pastor Slager talked about how our desire to boast is rooted in wanting to be loved, accepted, and to belong. How does the gospel address each of those three needs in ways that boasting never can?
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2. Paul lists his impressive credentials and sufferings in 2 Corinthians 11, then says he'd rather boast in his weaknesses. Why do you think it was important for Paul to list those credentials first before redirecting the Corinthians' attention to weakness?
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3. Pastor Slager pointed out that the thorn was simultaneously given by God and described as a 'messenger of Satan.' How does that dual reality shape the way you think about painful circumstances in your own life?
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4. Paul prayed three times for the thorn to be removed, and God's answer was 'My grace is sufficient for you.' Have you ever had an experience where God's answer to your prayer was essentially 'no, but I'm enough'? How did you respond?
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5. Pastor Slager said that when Paul may have been a poor speaker, any fruit from his ministry could only be credited to God. How might our own weaknesses and limitations actually position us to see God work more clearly than our strengths do?
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Word Studies

σκόλοψ
skolops

Greek

A pointed stake or sharp splinter driven into the flesh, conveying persistent, piercing pain rather than a minor irritation.

κολαφίζω

kolaphizō

Greek

To strike with the fist, buffet, or beat repeatedly, implying ongoing, aggressive physical assault rather than mild annoyance.

τελέω

teleitai

Greek

To bring to completion or full realization, indicating that divine power reaches its ultimate expression and fulfillment precisely in human frailty.

Cross References

Judges 7:2

God deliberately reduced Gideon's army so Israel could not boast that their own strength saved them—the same principle Paul articulates: God works through weakness so He alone receives glory.

Isaiah 40:29-31

Isaiah promises that God gives power to the faint and strength to the powerless, providing an Old Testament foundation for Paul's declaration that God's power is made perfect in weakness.

Jeremiah 9:23-24

God commands that no one boast in wisdom, might, or riches, but only in knowing the Lord—the very principle Paul applies when he redirects the Corinthians' boasting from credentials to Christ.

Exodus 4:10-12

Moses protested that he was not eloquent, yet God insisted He would be with his mouth—a direct parallel to the possibility that Paul's thorn was poor speaking ability, yet God used him powerfully.

Hebrews 11:34

The heroes of faith were described as those whose 'weakness was turned to strength,' demonstrating a consistent biblical pattern where God's power operates precisely through human limitation.

Further Reading

- **The Power of Weakness: Embracing the True Source of Strength**

by Dan Schaeffer

- **Humility: True Greatness**

by C.J. Mahaney

• **Paul: A Biography**

by N.T. Wright

Scripture References

REFERENCE	TYPE	TIME	CONTEXT
2 Corinthians 12:1-10	Read Aloud	4:57	<i>I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to ...</i>
1 Corinthians 4:7	Referenced	8:47	<i>For who makes you different? And what do you have ...</i>
2 Corinthians 11:22-30	Read Aloud	12:18	<i>Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So...</i>
Philippians 3:3-8	Read Aloud	18:16	<i>For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Sp...</i>
1 John 2:15-17	Read Aloud	21:06	<i>Do not love the world or the things in the world. ...</i>
Romans 5:8	Referenced	22:01	<i>But God commends his own love toward us, in that w...</i>
Job 1:1-12	Referenced	23:30	<i>There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was ...</i>
Romans 7:15-25	Referenced	25:57	<i>For I don't know what I am doing. For I don't prac...</i>
James 5:13-14	Read Aloud	31:15	<i>Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is an...</i>
Romans 8:28	Referenced	35:55	<i>We know that all things work together for good for...</i>
Galatians 1:12	Referenced	15:02	<i>For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I t...</i>
Psalms 19:1	Referenced	15:59	<i>The heavens declare the glory of God. The expanse ...</i>
Luke 23:43	Referenced	16:50	<i>Jesus said to him, "Assuredly I tell you, today vo...</i>
Acts 9:16	Referenced	26:17	<i>For I will show him how many things he must suffer...</i>
Galatians 4:15	Referenced	26:45	<i>What was the blessing you enjoyed? For I testify t...</i>
1 Corinthians 2:1	Referenced	27:16	<i>When I came to you, brothers, I didn't come with e...</i>
2 Corinthians 10:10	Referenced	27:36	<i>For, "His letters", they say, "are weighty and str...</i>
2 Corinthians 11:6	Referenced	27:42	<i>But though I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not ...</i>
Job 1:6-12	Referenced	23:30	<i>Now on the day when God's sons came to present the...</i>
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18	Referenced	30:55	<i>Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing.</i>
James 1:2	Referenced	29:26	<i>Consider ^{Consider} it all joy, my brothers, when you fall into ...</i>
1 Corinthians 1:31	Referenced	1:15	<i>that, according as it is written, "He who boasts, ...</i>
John 1:12	Referenced	3:29	<i>But as many as received him, to them he gave the r...</i>