

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for April 15, 2012

Paul's Foolish Boasting
2 Corinthians 12:7

How did Paul, in spite of the surpassing greatness of his revelation, remain humble before God?

Paul was able to remain humble because God had given him a “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7-8).

The word “thorn” (SKOLOPS) refers to something sharp such as a stake or a sharpened shaft.

Most present day interpreters have concluded that when Paul spoke of his “thorn in the flesh” he was referring to some kind of bodily ailment.

Tertullian, a prolific Christian writer from Carthage, wrote late in the 2nd century that Paul's thorn in his flesh was a headache.

Chrysostom, though acknowledging the tradition of the early church, chose rather to view the “thorn” as various adversaries of Paul such as “Alexander the Coppersmith.”

During the medieval period largely fueled by a misrendering of the Latin vulgate, the Roman Catholic Church concluded that Paul's thorn was related to the lust of the flesh.

More recently, many of the commentators that have concluded that Paul's thorn in the flesh was a physical ailment have come to believe that it was some kind of severe eye problem (Galatians 4:12-15).

Although Paul's thorn in the flesh was “given” by God in order to keep Paul from exalting himself, it was sent by Satan in order to torment him.

May God give us the grace to see our afflictions as a gift designed by Him to keep us humble and to prevent us from exalting ourselves.