

FBC Devotion Sunday January 10 2021 2 Corinthians 12 :7-10 No Boasting Here

As we move into 2021, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is still very much with us. Even though hope of the return of a greater normality is on the horizon, we still find many everyday things and almost every aspect of our church life different and challenging.

We find ourselves **'living with it'**, just keeping going, trying to learn God's lessons in the waiting.

Things are not about to swing back to normal soon and, more positively, we have in fact got better at learning to live differently and finding ways of working within restrictions even if we don't like them.

Reflecting on this place in which we find ourselves with the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions caused me to recall Paul's thorn in the flesh in 2 Corinthians 12 verses 7-10.

"Though I have received such wonderful revelations from God, to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me. Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (NLT)

This is one of the most memorable verses in the New Testament and has helped many people through extremely difficult times. Like Paul, people who suffer physical or emotional torment consider this verse a great comfort since God's grace is all they need.

Much ink has been spilt down the years about what Paul was referring to when writing about his thorn in the flesh. **We just don't know.** But we do know he prayed about it – in fact pleaded with the Lord to take it away, but He chose not to do so.

It's not clear what Paul means by this thorn, Christians have suggested the beatings are not physical. Suggestions include: hysteria, depression, headaches, severe eye trouble, malaria, leprosy, and even a speech impediment.

But notice God's grace doesn't guarantee Paul will be rescued from his thorn in the flesh! In fact, the comfort of this verse is that despite intense suffering, God's grace is all Paul wants or needs! It's when Paul is weak the power of God is most clearly seen

God allowed Paul to endure this suffering in order to keep him humble after an extraordinary spiritual experience. The thorn was given to keep Paul from getting a big head about how important he is!

I'm sure many of us have prayed and pleaded with God for a speedy end to the current pandemic and its devastating impact on so many people near and far, as well as on our church life.

If it's not God's will to bring current circumstances to an end soon, we need to seek His grace and empowerment as we settle in for the months ahead, **'living with it' for a little while longer?**

Learning not to be resentful about that, but being resilient in God and resourceful in drawing upon His grace.