

# OpenTheo

## What Does Boasting in Our Weaknesses Look Like?

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### #STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about what the Bible means by “boasting in our weaknesses” (2 Cor. 12:7-10), what it means to “sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts” (1 Pet. 3:13-15), and whether giving our lives to Christ means we can’t have other interests besides God.

\* What does the Bible mean by “boasting in our weaknesses,” and what does this look like in our lives?

\* In 1 Peter 3:15, what does it mean to “sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts”?

\* We’re to give our lives to Christ, but how much living do we get to do outside of Christ? Can we have hobbies, jobs, relaxation time, further education, or other interests besides God?

## Transcript

Welcome to Stand to Reason's hashtag S-T-R-S-Podcast with Amy Hall and Greg Coco. And this is the podcast where you send in your questions, and then we answer them. That's how it works.

It all depends on you sending in your questions. So, if you have one, go send it in. Alright, Greg, this first question comes from Cyrus.

What does the Bible mean by God? What does the Bible mean by boasting in our weaknesses? What does this look like in our lives? Well, I think this is hyperbole. It comes from maybe 2 Corinthians. Paul is talking there about a difficulty that he was having, what he calls a thorn in his flesh.

People have speculated on what that was, like some think maybe an illness. I actually think he was a person because that's the way we generally use the language. Boy, that person is a real thorn in my side kind of thing.

And although it could have been a physical ailment, in any event, Paul besetted the

Lord and treated the Lord three times to remove this trial, this difficulty. And God said no, essentially. And what he said to him was my strength is made perfect in others' weakness.

And so Paul then kind of catapulting from that or capitalizing on that concept describes them. And well, if my strength is, if God's strength in me is magnified in my weakness, the hardship or difficulty that I'm facing, then I'm going to glory in those weaknesses that result in God's strength being more manifest. All right.

And I think that's the sense of it. Now, for me, I don't really relate to that. I don't look at my trials and say, whoa, fabulous, though it is interesting.

This is the way a number of passages put it. Considered all joy, my brother, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance and let endurance have its perfect result that you be perfect and complete lacking in nothing. That's James chapter one.

There is also Romans five that makes we exalt also in our trials. We rejoice in them. And I've been a Christian for 50 years and I have not gotten to the point of spiritual maturity where I'm rejoicing in my trials.

I am thankful for them as an act of confident faith that God is going to use them for my good. But characteristically, I'm going to say, oh, great, another hardship. What about your past ones? Do you look at some of those as having a particular purpose? Yes, I do, definitely.

But that's in hindsight. Then I see, oh, now I get what was going on there. And this is where the Hebrews 12 passage comes in where the writer says, all discipline for the moment does not seem to be joyful, but sorrowful.

But afterwards, for those who have been trained by it, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. So there are times when I can look at my life and say, that was not fun. But now it's over with and I'm enjoying the fruit of it.

Okay. The peaceful fruit of righteousness, supposedly. So there are times like that, but in the midst of it, I'm not thinking, wow, I can't wait for to see the great thing that's going to come out of this.

That's, I mean, that's my limitation, but it's the way it is for me. I imagine it's like that for a lot of people. It's in Paul's case, though, he was, he rejoiced that he could suffer for Christ.

And in Philippians, he's in jail and he says, if I am to be offered up and poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith that I rejoice. Now, of course, he's referring to his death to be poured out as a drink offering as a metaphor for dying. If I

have to be killed to serve you, okay, I'm willing to do that.

Well, good for him, you know. And even though that there may, there, I think for many Christians, and this is for me too, that if it came to the point that I would have to suffer this great loss, the loss of my life, on behalf of the faith of others, I, you know, I think I'd be willing to offer that. Paul says that he rejoices, you know, he gladly will do it.

So I think that a stage of our growth is our willingness to embrace the difficulties that God brings our way because we trust that he has good in it. In fact, part of my prayer time this morning driving to the studio entailed some prayers along that line. God, this is not fun, but I'm believing that you are allowing this particular painful hardship in my life, who good reason I'm putting my trust in you for that.

But there was no rejoicing in that, you know, to be clear. And I think that's another stage. And so this is why Paul uses that language.

It's not language I can tie into. It's language that describes a place that we can have what's the word I'm looking for. That's not where I'm at or to get to the point where we can rejoice in our trials.

But that's not where I'm at. Just to be right there. That's I feel like that's something I still need to figure out.

And I consciously pray about this because I think I know how to think about suffering, but I don't yet understand how to have joy in that suffering. And I think they're well, I mean, obviously Job didn't have joy. So I think there's something here I need to understand, but I don't quite understand yet.

And I hope I get it soon. Yeah. For a time.

But one thing to remember here in this passage because this this thorn in the flesh passages is 2 Corinthians 12. Paul's responding to people who are boasting in their accomplishments. So he starts saying, Hey, they're saying they're better than I am.

Look, I've got all of these credentials. I'm just as good as they are, but I would rather boast in my weakness. So this is in contrast to him, to those who are boasting in their accomplishments.

And what Paul, he gives a few reasons why he's doing this. He says it was to keep him from exalting himself. Yes.

And, but it also showcases God's glory. And we've all done this. We've all talked about times when we went through something and God got us through it.

And we're saying it not to exalt ourselves, but to exalt God. And that's what boasting in our weaknesses does. It showcases God's glory rather than ours.

So he says, well, God says to him, my power is perfected in weakness. And so Paul says, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. So boasting about our weakness also makes room for God to work in us because we won't take credit for how it works out.

When I am weak, then I am strong. So I think all of this is about glorifying God in our weaknesses. Now, one thing he does say, because I think what my, what Cyrus might also be asking, what are weaknesses? What is he talking about there? Paul actually gives a list here.

He says, I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties for Christ's sake. So those are, I think, all the kinds of things that he has in mind. I don't know if he has his own sin in mind, but I think there is a place for talking about our sin in God's grace.

And I think here of John Newton, I'm just now reading again his autobiography about his spiritual journey. What's the title of that? Oh, gosh. An authentic narrative.

It's some long, you know, they're long. That's right. An authentic narrative.

I think it starts that way. Sure. Telling about him being a slave trader.

Yes. Oh, God rescues him. And it's a pretty gruesome story.

But he starts, he's writing letters to somebody. So these are all written as letters. And he starts off saying, I don't really want to, you know, I hesitate to talk about all these terrible things I've done.

But it could serve, it's going to serve to showcase God's grace. And that's why he does it. So in a sense, he's boasting in his weaknesses, even there, by confessing all of these terrible things because it showcases God's grace.

So hopefully that gives you some idea there, Cyrus. John Newton, the author of The Great Him Amazing Grace. Yes.

Okay. Here is a question from JB. In 1 Peter 3.15, what does it mean to sanctify the Lord God in your hearts? Well, to sanctify is a word that means to set apart.

When something is sanctified, it's set apart for a certain use or a special purpose, a noble purpose, a virtuous purpose. And I think that, and I'm just going to go there. By the way, the last question I was, I noted how, even though I was giving a response about the thorn, you were, you were looking at the flow of thought of the entire passage and what John, who was it? Paul was responding to.

I'm looking at Peter now and now I got confused. So I just want to look at 1 Peter 3, because there's a passage. It's this verse is embedded in a longer flow of thought.

And he is talking about in verse 8, let all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kind-hearted, humble in spirit, not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing. Instead of you are made to inherit a blessing and to give a blessing. And he cites an Old Testament passage.

And then he says in verse 13, now, who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? There's a genuine truth to the hat that if you're really working hard to do good to other people, characteristically, usually, you're not going to suffer harm. It's going to return good back to you. Be a blessing to others, all right? But there are exceptions.

And then he addresses the exception. He said, but, verse 14, even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation and do not be troubled.

But rather, and here's a verse, sanctify Christ as Lord in your heart. And so, of course, to sanctify here means to set apart. I'm just looking at a footnote.

Where's my magnifying glass? Oh, here it is. I got my glasses on. But yes, in the footnote, it says set apart.

That is set apart. So it's when you are, when you are, be set by trials and difficulties, there's two things to do. First of all, you are acknowledging, and this is the way I would take it.

Maybe you have a different take on it, Amy. I'd like to hear it. But acknowledging the affirming, the lordship of Christ in your life.

Okay. Jesus is Lord. Okay.

This is hard. This is difficult. Okay.

First step. God knows. God's still in charge.

Jesus is the Lord. Okay. That's it.

Second step. Sanctify Christ is Lord in your hearts. Always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an answer for the hope that's in you yet with gentleness and reverence.

So there's our very well-known passage for apologetics. It has the word apologio in it. This is where the word concept comes from, making a defense.

So all right, do good. Bless others. Live harmoniously with others.

And you're going to do it really well. Now there are exceptions. And for those exceptions,

just remember- The whole book of 1 Peter said- Yeah, right.

There are exceptions. Remember, Jesus is Lord. Jesus is the Lord.

So you're in good shape. You're safe. You're under him.

Later on in chapter five, I think it says, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God so that he will exalt you in the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon him because he cares for you. And I would think it was Melinda who pointed out once that when we humble ourselves, we are humbling ourselves under the hand of God. In other words, we are not just going low, but we are going under a place of protection, which is the hand of God that's over us.

I thought it was a good commentary on the illustration that was being used, the metaphor that was being used. But notice, casting all our anxiety upon him because he cares for us. And so here it is, sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts that, all right, this is hard okay, Jesus is still Lord.

I can cast my anxiety upon him, okay, I'm safe with him even though I'm being attacked by the world, but I do have an appropriate response to the world and that is to give an answer. I mean, that's the way I would take it. So I looked at, I think we can get even closer in on, because I agree that this is about looking at Christ as Lord.

And I think we get even a closer idea of what he's talking about. If we look at what he's referring to in Isaiah, so Isaiah 8, 12 through 13, you are not to say it is a conspiracy in regard to all that the people call a conspiracy and you are not to fear what they fear or be in dread of it. It is the Lord of hosts whom you should regard as holy and he shall be your fear and he shall be your dread.

Now notice here, there's a parallel, again, he's referring to Jesus deity here because instead of saying is the Lord of hosts whom you should regard as holy, he says, sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. That's how he concludes his. So when we look at this passage in Isaiah, we see that we are not, and this is the whole point he's making in 1 Peter, we are not to fear the things that the people around you fear.

We're not to dread them. We are to dread God or I shouldn't say that we are to fear God, we regard him as holy rather than man, we are to fear God and we are to submit to God, no matter what man does to us. And a point that Peter makes over and over is it's better to suffer the hands of man now than to suffer the hands of God later.

We suffer now, we glory later and this is the point he makes, this is what Christ did. He suffered for us and he will be glorified. And if we suffer with him now, we will be glorified with him later.

So, so here in 1 Peter, he's saying, even if you suffer because of persecution, do not give

in to them, sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, not the fear of men. And so the next thing he says is, and always be ready to give an answer to those who ask for the hope that is in you. So imagine if somebody sees that you're not getting into the fear of man and you're suffering at the hands of others, just as Christ did, well now they want to know what the heck's going on, why aren't you going along with us? I don't understand.

So now you're set up to give a reason for your hope to explain why you are fearing God rather than man. Good at me. I knew you had something great to add.

I love 1 Peter. I think and I think it's so relevant right now. And I think everyone should memorize it.

So you should start today if you're listening. By the way, just for information here, you are citing Isaiah. Is that where we are in the text? Isaiah 8, 12.

Is that being referenced here in 1 Peter 3? Yes, that's what's being referenced here. So 1 Peter 14, and do not fear their intimidation and do not be troubled or king of God. But sanctify Christ.

So and that's what I often use this to point to Peter saying that Jesus is God because he's concluding, do not fear what they fear and but the regard the Lord of Hostess as being holy but Peter quotes it as sanctified Christ as the Lord knew it. I never saw that connection. Yeah.

Okay. Okay. Let's squeeze one more in here.

This one comes from Timothy. I know we are to give our lives to Christ. How much life giving do we get, let's see how much life living do we get to outside of Christ? Can we have hobbies, jobs, relaxation time, further education, other interests besides God? Can I enjoy life? Always worrying about this? Well, the answer is yes, but it's not outside of Christ.

And I think what this person is thinking is kind of a secular, sacred dichotomy. There are things that I do that are religious. So in my religious life, that's for Christ.

Now there are things that I do that are not religious and God has nothing to do with that. It doesn't, when people think that way, they're not suggesting and I'm sure Timothy is not suggesting here that they can live ungodly and pursue all these crazy things here. But they just don't see the connection of the rest of their life and their relationship with Christ.

When we are to give our life to Christ, the language he used, we are not giving our religious life to Christ. We're not giving our eternal life to Christ. We're giving our life to Christ, all of us.

Now I'm back here this week and recording something they'll be probably later in June or early July. But I made a trip back from Wisconsin where we have a place and I have tow vehicle and a bass boat. And while I was here this week, I got some more lures in the mail and I'm excited about using those when I go back because I caught some fish on the same lures.

When I was there last week and I'm all jazzed about that. That was there with my brother and we were jazzed. And this is an area of our lives that we were enjoying.

But it was an area of our lives that we enjoy that is also part of the life that God has given us. And all these areas of our lives are part of the life that God has given us and we live under him. And that means how I comport myself in the pursuit of my hobbies like fishing or woodworking.

Those are the two major hobbies that I have that is still governed by my relationship with God. It doesn't mean I'm praying over everything that I'm praising God and hallelujah and I got to do all these religious activities. It just means my understanding that all that I'm my entire life, everything, whether eating or drinking is the way Paul puts it, we are doing to the glory of God.

And so not only the so-called religious elements, but the mundane pedestrian things of life, the vulgar in the kind of classical sense of the word, the ordinary, the down to earth, the plebeian type activities. These are all things we do under the hesitate to say authority because I don't even mean it quite that way that entails that way, under the realization that all of our life belongs to God. And so also in these other areas, then we're thinking about are there things that we're doing and living in these other so-called secular areas that really are not consistent with in the values that are expressed in our pursuit or our interest that are not consistent with honoring Christ.

And that ought to be a consideration too. Am I pursuing my legal career or my real estate sales career or my home making or whatever it happens to be? Am I doing this in a way that not only brings honor to God but is consistent with the things that God wants to happen? I mean, women who are homemakers, it isn't just like, okay, do your thing because being a mother and being a wife, these have, there are moral ramifications and moral obligations that pertain to these things. There are elements that we need to keep in mind that are part of our life with Christ expressed in that relationship.

So me as a dad and as a provider for my family, those things are also under the larger umbrella of my life in Christ and are going to be informed by that. So there isn't this either or. And what I'm not talking about is dragging now kind of religious language and religious stuff into all these other areas.

That's not what I mean. But unless you just think that anything related to God and Jesus has got to be religious, have a religious affect to it, but that's a mistake. It is religious in



that broader sense, but it doesn't mean it has to have a religious affect to it.

And you got to be a, you know, holy roller, pious about having all of these things. No, it's, you still live a down to earth life, as it were, but Jesus is part of all of it. Mm hmm.

God created Adam and Eve to do things, to tend the garden, to create. That's called the cultural mandate. God, we were created to create things and to work and to do all sorts of things.

So when you say, I know we are to give our lives to Christ, I just, I wonder along the lines of what Greg has said here, are you just picturing reading our Bible and praying because that, or in reading books about Jesus, because that's, as you so well explain Greg, that's not, that's not what, that's not the totality of what it means to be a Christian. Your Nancy Pearcey talks about this in total truth, and she talks about how Christians have failed to get a vision for whatever their, their profession is how to live that as a Christian. And what that means, how do we reflect God here? How do we serve others and be self sacrificial and reflect Christ and, and bring good to the world and create and reflect God in all sorts of these different ways that we do as human beings.

And with the knowledge that everything we're doing is glorifying him, and he's part of everything that we're doing. So maybe Timothy, you, you just need to start thinking about your life in a different way, and think about how you bring glory to God in everything that you do. And as you serve others, as you treat them with dignity, as you care about them more than anything else, you know, human beings, they're, they're all just start thinking about everything you're doing.

How, how does my relationship with God relate to what I'm doing now and what he's called me to do in terms of, you know, the, the commandments he's given in his goal for the world and all those sorts of things. And everything we do works towards that. I wish people would get a better sense of how their jobs are actually serving God.

I remember one time I heard it must have been Dan Cathy, it was someone from Chick-fil-A, but it was probably him. And he just gave a talk about how he created the systems in his store to bring dignity to his workers. And it was one of the most beautiful things I've ever heard.

And he's talking about running a chicken sandwich place. But it, it honestly, I, I was so moved by it. It was just such a beautiful vision of reflecting God to the world through his work.

So maybe Timothy, you can start kind of brainstorming ways. And if you haven't read Total Truth, this might be a good time to read that. Well, I have one final suggestion on this line and I have mentioned in the past on the air, my own program and maybe hear about my evening prayers.

So I try to have time with the Lord in the morning. That's really my main focus for that. But all through the day as well, my sense of communing with God and tossing up prayers here and there, you know, as things happen, as I think of things and even sharing my emotions and my feelings like I would share with someone else.

But at night I have my evening prayers. Now, this is nothing overly formal or even overly time consuming. But before I go to bed, I take a knee and then I just, I thank God for the day that he got me through.

All right. And what, characteristically, I think of, and I thank you for the things that I did. Now, just an insight into me, I think it's really important to be industrious.

And that's a big part of my, just my work ethic, whatever. And Proverbs is big on industry too. But I find that when I'm thanking God for the things of the day, I'm just walking through from the morning to the events of the day, the time I had with him, the people I talked to, the little things.

I washed my truck. I took this thing and dropped it off at the post office. I went to see the doctor and got this taken care of.

And I finished this project. And I'm just going and thanking God for these particular things, these mundane things that brought satisfaction to me because I checked him off the list as something that I got accomplished that's meaningful to me. And usually I end with then some thoughts, some brief prayers for other individuals that I think of and generally that's members of my family and my immediate family.

And so before I climb into bed, I look at sometimes it takes me 60 seconds. Sometimes it takes me six minutes, sometimes maybe 10 minutes. Just depends on what's on my heart.

But I'm using that as an example, not to weigh my spiritual flag or anything. But this is my attempt to kind of close the day like I started. Corum Deo, C-O-R-A-M-D-E-O, Corum Deo, before the Lord.

And so I start before the Lord and I am before the Lord during the day. And then I close the day before the Lord and just say, hey, by the way, these things that happened, that was satisfying. That was fulfilling.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Maybe that's a little practice that Timothy or anybody else can begin to put into their life.

That might help them integrate the ordinary things of life into their walk with God. God moves people into every area of our society. He wants us to be salt and light.

So don't feel like your job is useless in his kingdom. He's moved you there. He wants to be a presence there through you.

And we can glorify him in all our work. Do you remember that? Is it still on the undercover boss? Oh, I don't know. But I remember what it was.

That's another show where I would watch and I would be so moved by. There was usually an employee who was such a good employee. It was just a beautiful thing to see.

People who were janitors and just things that you wouldn't think is glorious job, but they actually brought glory into it. It was such a beautiful thing to see. And we can do that.

We can be one of those people who brings glory to God through our mundane tasks. And we can make those tasks beautiful by the way we performed them. This particular program was this worker that you're talking about was part of a larger organization.

It was the boss of the head of the president, whatever, that would come in unbeknownst to their environment and interact with them and see these great things. It was all filmed and everything like that and then would reveal his role and say thank you for being so faithful. It was very touching for that person who was on the bottom of the pecking order, so to speak, and the company for that the head would come down and condescend to encourage them.

It's a great Christian mentality. So there's a number of things about that that relate to the question that we're dealing with right here. Well, thank you all for your great questions.

We've gone over a few times last few episodes, but the questions are so good. So send us your question. We look forward to hearing from you.

This is Amy Hall and Greg Coco for Stand to Reason.