

## 7th Sunday after Pentecost July 8, 2018

Sixth Sunday after the Trinity Propers 9 (14)

Year B – the Gospel of Mark

**LUTHERAN**

# LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY

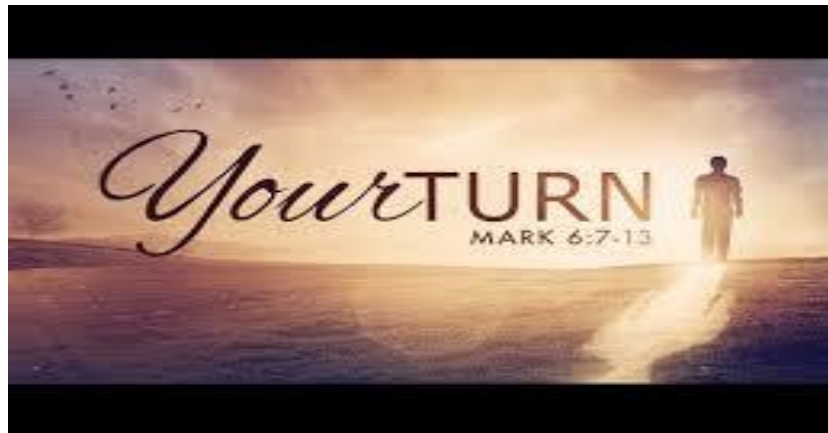
*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.  
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the  
rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

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### Gather and be blessed:

- ✦ **Thursdays at 10 AM:** Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44134
- ✦ **Fridays at 7 PM in a house church setting:** For details, contact Harold Weseloh at [puritaspastor@hotmail.com](mailto:puritaspastor@hotmail.com)
- ✦ **First Sunday of the month at 11 AM:** St. Philip Lutheran Church, 11315 Regalia Ave., Cleveland, OH 44104



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pKXRm1QsmQA>

### Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 839 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 512

“O Christ, our true and only light”

“...This hymn is straightforward in its purpose and unassuming in its approach. But don’t think that lessens its worth, for this hymn is a prayer doing exactly what a prayer should. Rather than pushing a wealth of concepts at us, each stanza gently reiterates our desire for Christ to save the lost. We repeat this desire because it’s necessary: because the lost still need saving and because we need this repetition in our lifelong struggle to conform our will to God’s. Of course, Christ will save the lost. That is why He came as a man to live, suffer, die, and rise again. Of course He will continue to enlighten them through the Holy Spirit and His Word. But through this hymn, we are being trained to pray without selfish imposition, to desire what God wants because that is simply what is best...”

- <https://www.cuchicago.edu/globalassets/documents/center-for-church-music/devotions/hymn-of-the-day-devotion-epiphany-3.pdf> Jonathan Schkade Freelance writer and editor, Jefferson City, MO
- Visit <https://www.cuchicago.edu/about-concordia/center-for-church-music/devotions-on-the-hymn-of-the-day/> for “Devotions on the Hymn of the Day”
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4BaEacSNfg> Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church 73 Lancaster St. Worcester, MA. Could you tell it was a tracker action organ? Visit <http://trinityworc.org/welcome/history/pipe-organs/> to learn more about this instrument.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lnx2aJCdtVA> Would you like to sing along in Chinese? **The Rev. Wenbin Freeman Li**, transferred from the English District on May 24, 2018 to the California, Nevada, Hawaii District, currently in Fremont, CA

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

**Ezekiel 2:1-5; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), Ezekiel 2:1-5 or 2 Samuel 1:1:1, 17-27 (Next week: Amos 7:7-15; RCL, the same reading from Amos or 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19)**

*“Passages like this one can lead in two very different directions.*

*On the one hand, the certainty of a call from God can offer strength and conviction in the face of adversaries. It can buck up a failing will to speak the truth in a community that finds truth-telling threatening. This reading of a prophetic call has been the stuff of preaching for centuries, and more than a few preachers have heard this call as a model for their own ministries.*

*On the other hand, a passage like this one can offer too much certainty for an arrogant human convinced that she has a phone line to the Almighty and has been sent by God to set the world straight...”*

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=337](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=337) **John C. Holbert** Lois Craddock Perkins Professor of Homiletics, Perkins School of Theology, Dallas, TX

## Ezekiel's Call

2 And he said to me, “Son of man,<sup>[a]</sup> stand on your feet, and I will speak with you.”  
 2 And as he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. 3 And he said to me, “Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day. 4 The descendants also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD.’ 5 And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them.

1. [Ezekiel 2:1](#) Or *Son of Adam*; so throughout Ezekiel

NIV footnote: [Ezekiel 2:1](#) The Hebrew phrase *ben adam* means *human being*. The phrase *son of man* is retained as a form of address here and throughout Ezekiel because of its possible association with “Son of Man” in the New Testament.

“...As it stands, the text is a word for a particular prophet during the hard days leading up to the Babylonian exile of Israel, but, since this text has now become Holy Scripture, its message can be read or overheard not only by the prophet but also by those to whom the prophet once spoke and to whom he still speaks. It was probably meant that way from the beginning. The prophet is warned to be faithful, but we (every “we” in every age), overhearing the call to the prophet, are warned to pay attention, because the message is one of life and death.

The text first addresses ancient Israel. But what will happen when it finds its way into a Christian pulpit? Is the preacher automatically the “prophet” of the text? Have we not claimed post-Pentecost that the spirit of prophecy has been poured out on all believers? More, Ezekiel was a priest. Have we not similarly claimed that in Christ we now belong to a priesthood of all believers? So, now who is the proclaimer and who are the hearers of this Ezekiel text?

Moreover, though the office of Christian pastor retains elements of the office of Old Testament prophet, the two are not identical. So, no, we preachers don't want to hear this text too quickly and apply it only to ourselves. The task of sentinel is an essential but not sufficient description of the pastoral office. The occasional hard word of accusation, whether from the pulpit or in the face-to-face encounter, must be joined by the gentle word of the pastoral caregiver and the absolving word of the liturgist...

True, the prophet, the preacher, the faithful Christian is called to be a sentinel like Ezekiel (3:17-21; 33:1-9), and the sentinel's job is precisely to be alarming, because disaster is coming over the horizon. That may require hard, disruptive, and unpopular words, but once the disaster is perceived, the one saved from death by the sentinel's alarm will say, “Praise the Lord!” and recognize that the hard word was, in fact, sweet.

None of this will happen unless the word we proclaim is true and applies to all. The line of our text, "they shall know that there has been a prophet among them," is repeated in Ezekiel 33:33, where people will recognize the validity of the prophet's words because they have become self-evidently true. Thus, our task as preachers and Christians is not to rant about this and that or to rage against the "others" and the rebels, but to point to the one whom we confess in faith to be self-evidently "true" -- Jesus Christ.

Jesus fulfilled Ezekiel's vision completely. He "ate the scroll" fully, hard words and sweet words, so that in him the word became flesh; then, everything he said and did bore witness to God's insistent determination to save us and the world from whatever disaster is coming (from outside ourselves or inside ourselves), so that all might live. That is the role of Christian sentinels today -- pastors and parishioners: to bear the word so that others might live.

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1303](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1303) **Fred Gaiser**  
Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn

**Psalm 123; RCL, Psalm 123 or Psalm 48 (Psalm 85: (1-7) 8-13; RCL, Psalm 85:8-13 or Psalm 24)**

*"A Song of degrees. We are climbing. The first step (Ps. 120) saw us lamenting our troublesome surroundings, and the next saw us lifting our eyes to the hills and resting in assured security; from this we rose to delight in the house of the Lord; but here we look to the Lord himself, and this is the highest ascent of all by many degrees. The eyes are now looking above the hills, and above Jehovah's footstool on earth, to his throne in the heavens. Let us know it as "the Psalm of the eyes". Old authors call it Oculus "Sperans", or the eye of hope. It is a short Psalm, written with singular art, containing one thought, and expressing it in a most engaging manner. Doubtless it would be a favourite song among the people of God... "*

- <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/treasury-of-david/psalms-123-1.html> "This seven volume "magnum opus", by Charles H. Spurgeon, was first published in weekly installments over a twenty-year span in the London Metropolitan Tabernacle's periodical, The Sword and the Trowel. As each section was completed it was published as a volume until the seventh and final volume was released in 1885."



### **Our Eyes Look to the LORD Our God** ***A Song of Ascents.***

123 To you I lift up my eyes,  
O you who are enthroned in the heavens!  
<sup>2</sup> Behold, as the eyes of servants  
look to the hand of their master,  
as the eyes of a maidservant  
to the hand of her mistress,  
so our eyes look to the LORD our God,  
till he has mercy upon us.

<sup>3</sup> Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us,  
for we have had more than enough of contempt.

<sup>4</sup> Our soul has had more than enough  
of the scorn of those who are at ease,  
of the contempt of the proud.

The prayed poem is brief but powerful. We will consider it in two parts:

Confession of trust in God (verses 1-2)

Subsequent complaint and petition (verses 3-4)

### Verses 1-2

The controlling image of the psalm has to do with the eyes or looking. In the opening line, "To you I lift up my eyes," we find the spatial image of looking up to heaven where God is enthroned as creator and sovereign over all the earth.

The second line of the verse confirms that the singer looks up toward the throne room of God. Underlying the faith articulated in Psalm 123 is the confession that God is king. The psalm opens in the first person singular 'I' but moves to the plural we/us/our in the remainder of the prayer...

### Verses 3-4

The concluding line of verse 2 introduces the mercy of God, and verse 3 continues the emphasis with the prayer that God have mercy upon this struggling community. The petition "Have mercy upon us" occurs twice. No specifics are named, only the strong plea for mercy.

Verses one and two suggest a covenant relationship for this community with the heavenly king, thus giving a basis for the plea in verse 3. The trouble the praying community brings before the divine king is the contempt or scorn they face. Some people in authority are pouring contempt on the faithful pilgrims and they have had more than enough.

These mockers are identified in verse 4 as 'the proud' or arrogant. They do not look up to the heavenly king, but look down upon those around them. Again, we are drawn to the image of eyes and the act of looking, the psalm's central image. The arrogant look only to themselves, not to master or mistress, and certainly not to the heavenly king. The pilgrim community looks to the heavenly king for a word of mercy and grace, a word absent from their current world.

### Conclusion

The psalm begins with an affirmation of trust and moves to the community's plea for help from the one it trusts. The psalm fits the crisis of ancient Israel's exile and its aftermath, but it is not limited to that setting. Like other prayers for help in the book of Psalms, Psalm 123 can fit a variety of circumstances in both the ancient and contemporary world. It is adaptable for life...

- [https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=338](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=338) **W. H. Bellinger, Jr.**, W. Marshall and Lulie Craig Chairholder in Bible, Baylor University, Waco, Texas

## **2 Corinthians 12:1-10; RCL, the same reading (Ephesians 1:3-14; RCL, the same reading)**

This is the final reading from 2 Corinthians that began June 3. Next week will begin a series from Ephesians that will continue through September 2.

"Paul is in a bit of a pickle.

He is competing with a rival group of missionaries for the respect of the Corinthian church. If Paul is to be believed -- and in matters of his reputation and that of others with whom he struggles we should always be suspicious -- the rival missionaries were violent, arrogant, moralistic, and power hungry. In 2 Corinthians 11:12-21 Paul paints their portrait. There in mock admiration he names them "super-apostles" (2 Corinthians 11:5).

One stream of Pauline scholarship has in recent years emphasized their similarity with the numerous but fairly uniform accounts of the Cynic philosophers in ancient literature. Cynics (the name refers to dogs) were noted for their hyper-moralism and their use of free speech to condemn the vices of others and to exhibit their own independence. They bark (warn) and they bite (sharply criticize). Many Cynics, not all to be sure, were downright nasty and mean.

That Paul draws upon popular stereotypes of Cynic philosophers to describe his opponents opens 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 to some interesting interpretive possibilities. Paul has gotten himself into a boasting contest in which he seeks to criticize his opponents' boasting of strength by boasting of his own weakness. Now, you might question whether it is ever a good idea to fight fire with fire, that is, whether it was wise for Paul to boast at all..."

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=3696](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3696) **David E. Fredrickson** Professor of New Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn
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### **Paul's Visions and His Thorn** (see page 10 for thoughts about what was Paul's thorn.)

12 I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. <sup>2</sup> I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. <sup>3</sup> And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— <sup>4</sup> and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. <sup>5</sup> On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses— <sup>6</sup> though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. <sup>7</sup> So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations,<sup>[a]</sup> a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. <sup>8</sup> Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. <sup>9</sup> But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup> For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- a. [2 Corinthians 12:7](#) *Or hears from me, even because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations. So to keep me from becoming conceited*

"...2 Corinthians 12 churns with irony, sarcasm, and faith. If the lector reads it right, the calm of the Pentecost season will be disrupted with prophetic speech. No "working preacher" who engages this passage will allow boredom in the congregation.



To grasp its evangelical force, this text needs to be read in the larger context of chapters 10-13, or at least with the benefit of verses 11-12, just beyond the close of the pericope: "I have been a fool! You forced me to it. Indeed you should have been the ones commending me, for I am not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I am nothing. The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, signs and wonders and mighty works."

Those "extra verses" remind us that Paul was dealing with high performers who apparently criticized his adequacy as an apostle. "His letters are weighty and strong," they noted, "but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible" (2 Corinthians 10:10).

"I think that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles," Paul responded. "I may be untrained in speech, but not in knowledge" (2 Corinthians 11:6). "And what I do I will also continue to do, in order to deny an opportunity to those who want an opportunity to be recognized as our equals in what they boast about. For such boasters are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:12-13).

In the verse preceding our pericope (2 Corinthians 12:1), Paul notes: "It is necessary to boast; nothing is to be gained by it, but I will go on in visions and revelations of the Lord." This reading, therefore, is Paul's testimony to his "foolish boast" in the Lord and his experience of the presence of the resurrected Christ..."

[http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=341](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=341) **David Tiede**  
Emeritus Professor-New Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, MN

### THE MARK CHALLENGE

If you are following the reading schedule, this week and next week's Gospel are on your list.



**Mark 6:1-13; RCL, the same reading (Mark 6:14-29; RCL, the same reading)**

*"...the Greek of this text contains some interesting clues as to how to interpret what is going on here. First, there are two different verbs in verses 2 and 6, even though in many English translations both get rendered "amazed." But the people's amazement in verse 2 (Gk: ekplesso) contains a whiff of incredulity and doubt. Jesus' amazement in verse 6 (Gk: thaumazo), on the other hand, is the more usual sense of being surprised at the situation before him. Speaking of the people's doubt-tinged amazement, the "offense" that the people take at Jesus as reported on in verse 4 is in the Greek skandalizo, which is literally a stumbling block. This could even give you a title for this sermon: "Hometown Scandal." ...' (continued after the reading)*

## The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 6th Chapter”

### Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

6 He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. <sup>2</sup> And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, “Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? <sup>3</sup> Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. <sup>4</sup> And Jesus said to them, **“A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.”** <sup>5</sup> And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. <sup>6</sup> And he marveled because of their unbelief.

And he went about among the villages teaching.

### Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Apostles

<sup>7</sup> And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. <sup>8</sup> He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts— <sup>9</sup> but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>10</sup> And he said to them, **“Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. <sup>11</sup> And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.”** <sup>12</sup> So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. <sup>13</sup> And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

- a. [Mark 6:9](#) Greek *chiton*, a long garment worn under the cloak next to the skin

### “This is the Gospel of the Lord” “Praise to You, O Christ”

“This lection from Mark 6 provides a curious set of contrasts as well as a wonderful irony.

First, we twice read the word “amazed” here: first in verse 2 and then again in verse 6. Jesus here is doing what he’s been doing ever since Mark 1 and 2 when he began his public ministry of authoritative teaching and wondrous miracles. This time, however, he’s doing this work back home among people who “knew him when.” And so although we are told that they were “amazed” at his work, this is a different Greek word than the one used in verse 6.

The people are, in Greek, *ekplesso*, a word that contains more than a hint of incredulity. This kind of amazement is not the fall back in awe sense of wonder you have when something amazes you in a delightful way but more the astonishment you feel at something you’re not 100% is even real. Sometimes people amaze me by what they say but a good portion of the amazement I feel stems from my disbelief that ANYONE could ever think in so



odd or illogical a way! (The Greek word here *explezzo* may have no linguistic connection to “perplexed” but part of this word reminds me of “perplexed”.)

For his part in verse 6, Jesus’ amazement is from the more common Greek word *thaumazo*, which is the kind of astonishment that contains little doubt but that bowls you over with power. When a gifted violinist whizzes through a series of arpeggios in a Bach violin solo, I am amazed, blown away, simply left speechless at the wonderful thing I just experienced. That’s how Jesus felt: he had no doubts as to what he was seeing before his eyes, it just took his breath away that the situation was what it was...

They then further back this up by mentioning Jesus’ pedestrian origins in a simple family from their community. Who does he think he is anyway? He’s parading himself around as someone great, but everyone in his hometown knew better than to accept that at face value! And so they rather quickly manage to transform their initial (albeit dubious) astonishment at Jesus’ words and deeds into a scandal—a hometown scandal. In verse 4 the Greek *skandalizo*—literally to be tripped up by someone—is the word translated as “offense” in some versions of Mark 6. They found Jesus to be a stumbling block, a cause of falling down instead of a source of inspiration that could lift them up.

Jesus could not do much for or with people who viewed him that way...

In a wonderful twist, however, Mark shows us that Jesus turns right around and far from being undone by the treatment he received at the hands of his fellow townsfolk, he actually EXPANDS the mission by sending out the disciples (who will soon be referred to as “apostles” for the first time ever in verse 17 of this same chapter) armed with more power over disease and demons than they ever had before. That’s the great irony here. The more the world tries to tamp Jesus down, impugn his character, hinder his ministry, the more the Holy Spirit responds by sending out more workers to do even more miraculous teachings and deeds!

And THAT, very properly, should evoke amazement from us all!

#### **Questions to Ponder/Issues to Address**

In Mark 6 is it the case that Jesus *couldn’t* do many miracles or that he just *wouldn’t* do them? On the assumption that Jesus could do whatever he wanted with his power—that is, on the assumption that even yahoos and yokels were not sufficient to actually sap Jesus of his divine abilities—I tilt more toward the “would not” side of the ledger.

You see, miracles and deep teachings of the type Jesus had been performing were meant to redound to the glory of God. They were not sideshow spectacles designed only to be eye-popping for their own sake. This was not titillation for titillation’s sake. No, these were signs of the kingdom, arrows pointing to the new day dawning through Jesus’ presence on the earth...

Jesus did not do many miracles in his hometown because people flat out missed the point.”

- [http://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/proper-9b-2/?type=the\\_lectionary\\_gospel](http://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/proper-9b-2/?type=the_lectionary_gospel) Scott Hoezee

**A current events perspective on today’s Gospel.** [Editor’s note: The author has read this text from the perspective of an immigrant, pairing the events of the gospel reading with the events of our time, imagining the gospel taking into account our own social situation.]

- [https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=3729](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3729)  
**Cláudio Carvalhaes** Profesor de Homilética y Liturgia, McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, Ill.



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“**Thorn in the flesh**” is a phrase of New Testament origin used to describe a chronic infirmity, annoyance, or trouble in one's life, drawn from Paul the Apostle's use of the phrase in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians 12:7–9:<sup>[1]</sup>

...Paul does not specify the nature of his "thorn," and his other epistles do not directly address the topic. Throughout church history, there has been a significant amount of speculation about what Paul was referring to, although scholars...conclude that definite identification of the thorn is impossible with the evidence available.<sup>[5][6][7]</sup>

The "thorn" is most commonly interpreted as a reference to some form of serious physical infirmity that hindered his work.<sup>[8]</sup> This is also the earliest known Christian interpretation, mentioned in the early third century in Tertullian's On Modesty, where it is understood as a reference to ear or head pain.<sup>[9]</sup> One proposal is that Paul's ailment was a defect of sight, acute ophthalmia, possibly caused by the dazzling light at his conversion. This interpretation is partly based on Paul's reference to a weakness of the flesh in Galatians 4:13-14, for which the Galatians would have been willing to pluck out their eyes to give to him. It is also argued that this would account for Paul's large handwriting (Gal 6:11), his failure to recognise the high priest in Acts 23:5, and his tendency to use an amanuensis<sup>[10]</sup> (a person employed to write or type what another dictates). Other proposed ailments include epilepsy and malarial fever.

Alternatively, the thorn has been seen as a physical impediment that made Paul the object of ridicule, without necessarily making him physically weak ...Others propose a speech impediment, which might explain the Corinthian accusation that he was forceful in writing but unimpressive in person (2 Cor 10:9-11).<sup>[12]</sup>

One interpretation is that the thorn describes the persecutions and unfortunate accidents that characterized Paul's life after his conversion to Christianity; as laid out in the preceding chapter 11 of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians.<sup>[13]</sup>

Some Roman Catholic writers think that it denotes suggestions to impiety.<sup>[10]</sup> Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other Reformers interpret the expression as denoting temptation to unbelief...

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thorn\\_in\\_the\\_flesh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thorn_in_the_flesh)