

PAULS THORN IN THE FLESH

*"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me **a thorn in the flesh**, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."* 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

This thorn in the flesh that Paul mentioned has been misused by Christians to justify submitting to sickness. Satan has twisted this passage of Scripture (as he twisted scripture with Jesus in the wilderness Luke 4:10-11) to deceive many, many people into believing that God would not heal Paul, so how can they expect to be healed? Let us examine this closely and find out exactly what Paul's thorn in the flesh was.

Who sent the thorn?

Scripture says a "messenger OF Satan" (v. 7). The thorn was not from God but sent from Satan.

Why did Satan send a thorn to Paul?

In order to keep him from becoming conceited or exalted (v. 7). "lest I should be exalted above measure." Exalted in Greek means exalted above and beyond something. There is a godly exhalation. Traditionally, there has been interpretation to say the thorn was sent by God to keep Paul humble, however there is a Godly way of being exalted. God magnified or exalted Joshua in the sight of his people (Jos 3:7). God exalted His people He used into the New Covenant as well (Acts 5:13). The exalting spoken of here was not negative but a Godly kind.

Why did Satan not want Paul to become exalted?

Because of the abundance of revelation Paul got directly from the resurrected Jesus (v.7). Paul was caught up in the third Heaven and received revelation of CHRIST IN YOU (Col 1:27), our authority in Christ, our inheritance, our identity, and our righteousness in Christ. No wonder the enemy wanted to stop him. Paul was sharing this revelation and whole cities were coming to hear him. ALL of Asia heard the gospel and because of Paul's revelation people were getting set free, saved, and healed. Satan was losing ground. Therefore, lest he be exalted among the people a thorn in the flesh was sent by Satan. A thorn came to buffet him lest he be exalted above measure.

The word buffet in Greek refers to something of a boxer or when waves hit the shore. One blow after another. The thorn was sent by Satan to keep him from preaching the Gospel. TO KEEP HIM DOWN LEST HE GAIN INFLUENCE OR BE EXHALTED BY GOD.

Why did he use the word thorn?

The term "thorn" was a figure of speech used by Paul to describe something nagging or persistent. The term is used in the Old Testament 3 times (Num. 33:55; Josh. 23:13 and Judg. 2:3). Paul was a Pharisee of Pharisee (Phil 3:5-8) meaning he knew what he was talking about when he said thorn. He was referring to something persistent coming to buffet the people of God. If we try to insert sickness into the other times "thorn" was used in the Old Testament it would

not make sense. The Old Testaments use of this term were: “They will become a thorn in your sides, thorn in your eye, they will become a thorn”. God was referring to a group of people that was influenced by the devil (persistent enemy) coming to harass the people of Israel.

What was Paul referring to when he spoke about an infirmity in 2 Cor 12:9-10?

Traditionally, it has been taught that Paul was speaking of a sickness, and the reason why is because of the word “infirmity”. Infirmities is a Greek word ASTHENEIA; which means weakness. Many Christian’s have not understood the original language of this word and use it to say Paul had a sickness. If you look closely at the context of Paul’s thorn in the flesh, we find that infirmity does not mean sickness in this particular scripture. In the previous chapter Paul uses the terminology “glory in infirmities” (2 Corinthians 11:30) which was the same word he used in chapter 12. In the eleventh chapter he had just finished listing what those infirmities were. He list things such as imprisonment, stripes, shipwrecks and stoning. No where does it mention sickness.

What was going on for Paul to say he had a weakness in his flesh?

In 2 Corinthians chapter 11 Paul tells us the things he suffered in Asia, Antioch, Lystra, and Derbe. Acts 14:2 shows more people stirring up PERSECUTION against Paul and the Jews from Antioch and Iconium coming to Derbe and having Paul stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19) but God raised him up, and the next day walked at least 20 miles into the next town and starting preaching again. There was persecution everywhere Paul went. He would go and preach and then persecution would start (Acts 13:50).

Who was influencing these people?

Satan was behind it. The word messenger in Greek means ongelious and means angel. Many angels fell and became demons. It was a demon stirring up trouble for Paul. A demon went to buffet Paul to stir up city to city and stop him from being exalted among the people because of the extreme amount of revelation of all the we possess now in Christ.

What about when Paul pleaded with God three times to remove the “thorn”(2 Cor 12:9-10)

“Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Most Christians have ran with this verse to say that Paul had a sickness and asked God to remove it three times but God would not. We already saw that the thorn was not a sickness, but rather a persistent enemy sent by the enemy to stop Paul from preaching the Gospel. Paul was asking God to remove persecution. God has redeemed us from sickness (Is 53:4-5), poverty (Gal 3:13, 2 Cor 8:9), ALL curses (Gal 3:13) but not persecution (2 Tim 3:12). Scriptures say Whoever wants to live Godly shall suffer persecution. God could not take it away but he told Paul, my grace is sufficient for you Paul, for when you are weak my grace will kick in and you will remain strong.

Paul said “I suffer **persecution** for your sake, So that the gospel may be preached (Col 1:24). If your never persecuted then you’re not preaching the TRUE gospel. There is a grace that will make you strong when you are weak, that will make you strong in front of your persecutor, that will allow you to know what to say in front of your persecutor.

What about in Galatians when spoke about his infirmity in the flesh (Gal 4:13)?

After Paul was stoned in Lystra (Acts 14:19) he got up and went to Galatia (Derbe). There were four cities in Asia where the devil had sent a thorn in the flesh (messenger of Satan) that was constantly persecuting Paul. When Paul got up from being stoned, he went to Galatia. Paul even talks about marks in his body (Gal 6:17); he got stoned, bruises on his face. In Galatians 4:13 Paul says you would’ve done anything you could have to help me. Paul did have a weakness in the flesh but it was after a series of buffeting. Paul said you did not despise me in the flesh because of my infirmity but you received me like an angel of light, you would’ve even given your own eye for me (Gal 4:15).

In Galatians 4:13-15; Here Paul says that he preached the Gospel to these Galatians through an infirmity of the flesh, and in verse 15, he makes reference to these people being willing to poke out their own eyes and give them to him. From this, I have heard ministers preach that Paul's thorn was a rare, ancient disease which was characterized by runny, puffy eyes. But let us look at whom Paul was speaking to when he said this. He was writing to the people who lived in the region known as Galatia, which had as its major cities, Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium. The instance we mentioned earlier, where Paul was stoned and left for dead, happened in Lystra, a city of Galatia. The next day Paul walked to Derbe, another city of Galatia, and began preaching unto them. I'm sure he had runny, puffy eyes, along with multiple cuts and bruises, but they were not the result of some disease. They were the result of having just been stoned (Acts 14).

Summary

*Paul's Thorn is one of the most misinterpreted scriptures CHRISTIANS will use to say God does not want people well. If a believer gets ahold of truth; that God wants them well, the number one doctrine that will be brought up is Paul's Thorn. Through this study we can see that this was not God who would not take away some sickness from Paul. A demonic angel was sent to buffet or persecute Paul to keep him from spreading the gospel. "Thorn in the Flesh" was a figure of speech used even in the Old Testament and referred to a persistent enemy. Paul lists all that he went through in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 and never mentions sickness. As a believer we are not redeemed from persecution thus why God did remove it after asking three times. God wants his children well. He has already made provision for healing through the atonement of Jesus Christ. Scriptures prove that Jesus bore your Grievs (Hebrew- **Sickness and disease**) and carried your sorrows (Hebrew- **pain**)(Is 53:4-5). Galatians 3:13 says you have been redeemed from ALL curses (Deu 28:15-68)(Deu 28:61). If Jesus took ALL sickness on the cross, you do not have to. Become rotted in God's love and goodness for you and do allow bad doctrine to steal what rightfully belongs to you (Col 2:8).*
