

GROVER PARK

Baptist Church + KNOW CHRIST. MAKE HIM KNOWN.

“Understanding Your Thorn In The Flesh”

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2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Introduction: What Is A Thorn In The Flesh?

1. The word thorn (Skolops) according to Thayer’s Lexicon means a pointed _____, a sharp piece of wood. The word illustrates the intensity of Paul’s suffering, and it is clearly not a mere splinter. It was used as a means of execution, or torture, or emotional trauma from seeing a head on a stake, or impaling the flesh as did the spear that penetrated Jesus’ side.
2. J.B. Lightfoot, on P. 186 of his commentary, lists all the _____ interpretations as to what Paul’s thorn might have been:
 - (1) Tertullian, Jerome, Pelagius, Irenaeus: Some _____ Ailment.
 - *Infirmity (astheneia): weakness or handicaps that go with having a weakness depriving someone of accomplishing what they wish to do.*
 - (2) Chrysostom: Believes the thorn refers to all his _____.
 - (3) Monks & Ascetics: later believed the thorn referred to _____ thoughts & temptations.
 - (4) Luther & Reformers: Believed the thorn referred to _____, or _____.
 - (5) Some Recent Interpreters: Believe the thorn refers to emotional _____.

I. Thorns Often _____ The Best Of God’s _____. (2 Cor. 12:1-4)

“It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast.

I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord:

*I know of a man in Christ... who was **caught up** to the third heaven.”*

1. Paul continues to share a defense of his credentials by informing the Corinthians about several of his _____ and _____ from God. (2 Cor. 12:1)

2. Once again he shares this information very _____ in the third person and speaks of how unprofitable boasting is. (2 Cor. 12:1-2)
3. _____ also shared a repeated thorn-like infirmity as Paul told him to *“use a little wine for his stomach’s sake and his frequent **infirmities**.”* (1 Tim. 5:23)
4. _____ was riddled and buffeted with physical and emotional difficulties. (Job 1:13-22)
5. Charles H. _____ was frequented with many infirmities and even depression, and saw it as his “thorn in the flesh.” (Article by Spurgeon: “The Ministers Fainting Fits”)

II. Thorns Often Humble Us And Strip Us Of Our _____. (2 Cor. 12:5-7)
*“And lest I should be **exalted** above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me.”*

1. As noted in Chapter 11, Paul was a spiritual _____ in many ways, as was illustrated in Lystra. (Acts 14:8-16)
“The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men. And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes.”
2. Some believe that it was in _____ that Paul received his “thorn in the flesh.”
“They stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.”
3. Paul later told the _____ in Lystra that:
 - *Galatians 4:13-14 “Because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first. And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God... You would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me.”*
 - *Galatians 6:11 “See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand.”*
4. Paul said in 2 Cor. 12:7
“Lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, let I be exalted above measure.”

III. Thorns Often Are Very _____ And _____ Our Divulging Them To Anyone But God. (2 Cor. 12:8)
*“Concerning this **thing** I pleaded with the Lord three times that **it** might depart from me.”*

1. As we said in the introduction, Paul never clearly _____ us what his thorn really was.

- Thorns are not necessarily right or wrong, moral or immoral, ethical or unethical.
- It was probably personal, or possibly everyone just knew: “Thing:” “it.”

2. I believe God _____ left that information out.

- Why would God leave this out?

3. God used Paul’s thorn to _____ to himself. (2 Cor. 12:8)
“I pleaded with the Lord.”

4. The word “_____” is (parakaleo).

- Means: “to call along side oneself.”

5. This is the same word that Jesus used to describe how He could call upon God to deliver Him with _____ of Angels. (Matthew 26:53)

IV. Thorns Often Are Used Of God To _____ And Produce God’s _____ In Our Lives. (2 Cor. 12:8-9)

*“I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said, ‘My **grace** is sufficient for you, for my **strength** is made **perfect** in weakness. Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the **power** of Christ may rest upon me.’”*

1. Notice first that God did _____ the thorn. (2 Cor. 12:8)

2. God instead gave Paul the _____ to manage the thorn sufficiently. (2 Cor. 12:9)

- Grace means God’s favor, not His fervor.
- Grace is used over 150 times in the New Testament.

3. The intent of the thorn is to _____ us. (2 Cor. 12:9)
“My strength is made perfect in weakness.”

4. God uses our thorns to demonstrate His _____ when we are weak or infirm.

- The word “power” (dynamis) is used twice in verse nine.

V. Thorns Often Can Become A _____ Testimony Of God’s _____ In Our Lives. (2 Cor. 12:10)

*“Therefore I take **pleasure** in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

1. What _____ is there in suffering?
*“I take **pleasure** in infirmities.”*

2. James speaks of _____ in trials. (James 1:2)
“Consider it a joy when you fall into various trials.”

3. Some believe, as we said in the introduction, that verse 10 suggests that Paul’s thorn was the _____.

4. Anytime we see God work, we can feel pleasure, whatever the _____.
(2 Cor. 12:10)
“When I am weak, then I am strong.”

5. The _____ is seeing our thorn as something we endure for Christ’s sake, not ours.

Conclusion: Our Thorn Can Never Be An Excuse For Sin Or Disobedience.

Our Mission is: “To Know Christ and to Make Him Known”
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