

# THORNY THERAPY

2 Cor. 12:1-10

## Paul Is Honored By God (Vv1-6)

### **The vision of the apostle**

Where he went (vv1-3): He's transported to paradise. He doesn't know how. He stood outside himself.

It was an extraordinary honor for Paul. Moses met God on the mountaintop. Paul was afforded a personal audience with God in heaven. There he is given surpassingly great revelations.

What he heard (vv4-6): Things so astonishing! He could not express them with human words, nor would he be permitted, if he could. The things he saw and heard were not meant for the world of flesh. They belong to the world of the spirit.

First the glory, then the pain for Paul. He went from ecstasy to agony.

## Paul Is Humbled By God (V 7)

### **The vexation of the apostle**

What he received (v 7a): Satan inflicted Paul with a thorn in the flesh to torment him.

What was his thorn? No one knows for certain. My deduction is that it was a physical affliction, an illness of the eyes. Read Galatians 4:13-15, 6:11.

Whatever the thorn was, we can all relate, for we are called to endure infirmities of various sorts in our spiritual journey.

Why he received it (v 7b): God permitted the Satan to do this to keep Paul from pride.

Every child of God is prone to be proud. God therefore often uses opposition and suffering to teach humility. God places trials in our lives to restrain our sin and produce godliness. It is an act of grace.

## Paul Is Helped By God (Vv 8-10)

### **The victory of the apostle**

Paul's request (v 8): Three times Paul begged the Lord to take away the thorn in his flesh.

It makes me think of the time, Jesus prayed three times in the garden of Gethsemane, that His humiliation and suffering might pass away.

Paul prayed persistently, devotedly, nevertheless he learned that God's purposes, at times, can be better achieved when the answer is NO.

God's refusal (v 9): Each time the Lord responded, *"My grace is sufficient for you."*

*Our God is God of grace* (1 Peter 5:10). God allows the suffering so that he might display His amazing grace.

Paul wanted the thorn, literally the stake, out of his flesh; God wanted the stake in his flesh. After three requests Paul drops the request and began to rest in God's sufficient grace. Paul's accepts the Lord's answer.

Paul's realization (v 10): *"When I am weak, then I am strong."*

Paul had lost all ability, humanly speaking, to deal with his suffering, and was at the point where had to totally trust in God's will and power for him.

God not only wanted to display his grace in Paul's life, but also His power. He not only wanted the apostle to be humble, but also to be strong.

The Lord concluded his reply in verse nine by saying, *"My power is made perfect in weakness."* The best way to understand this saying is to look to the cross. The cross is the paramount example of power-in-weakness. Christ was crucified in weakness—but raised by the power of God.

I wonder if the pressure of the thorn in Paul's life was a reminder of the power of the cross. We must learn to stop praying for the removal of our thorn, whatever it may be, and understand the transforming power of the Cross that is ours in Jesus Christ our Lord ( Alan Redpath).

Paul was made to understand the value of it thorn. He saw it as a gift from above. He says, *"Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong (vv 9-10)."*

Paul not only accepted his trials and infirmities, he *gloried* in them. This is the hardest to do, isn't it?

Romans 5:3-4 *–but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

2 Cor. 10:8 *– And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*

Soli Deo Gloria

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*\*Outlines borrowed from Warren W. Wiersbe and Harold L. Willmington*