

PAUL'S THORN IN FLESH

Request: "If Paul's thorn in the flesh was a physical ailment, why does it say that it was a messenger of Satan?"

We will examine our lesson text by the following three homiletical points.

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| • Vain boasting | (2 Cor.11:16-30; 12:1) | Religious thorn | Exalt myself |
| • Vision boasting | (2 Cor.12:2-8) | Revelation thorn | Exalt myself |
| • Valid boasting | (2 Cor.12:9-10) | Righteous thorn | Exalt Christ |

The Greek word for boasting is kauchomai. It is translated boast or glory. The boasting can be vain or valid based on the truth of the word of God (Gal.6:12-16). "But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Gal.6:14)

This lesson will study FOUR aspects of Paul's Thorn in Flesh

1. The question: Why was Paul's affliction called a thorn in the flesh since a messenger of Satan caused it?

Let's begin by investigating why this type of undeserved suffering was called a **thorn** in flesh.

- Gen.3:17-18 introduces the biblical concept of thorns of ground (AOS).
- It was introduced as part of DI #4
- DI #1 (freedom), DI #2 (marriage), DI #3 (family), DI #4 (work), DI #5 (nation) (Gen.1-11).
- Num.33:55 speaks of the nations occupying Promised Land as thorns in side of Israel.
- Joshua 23:13 warns Israel that the paganism of these nations will be thorn in their eyes.
- Matt.27:29 says that a crown of thorns was placed on the head of Jesus for crucifixion.
- Heb.6:7-8 used thorns of land as an illustration of a non-productive life because of reversionism.
- 2 Cor.12:7 used thorn in flesh to describe extreme undeserved suffering in angelic conflict (AC) (Unger refers to it as grievous affliction).

2. Paul's thorn in the flesh was extreme undeserved suffering in the AC like Job (1:5-12, 22; 2:3-10).

This is what is meant by a messenger (aggelos/ angel) of Satan to buffet (kolaphizo/ p.a.subj/ to beat with clenched fists) Paul (2 Cor.12:7).

"And Satan answered the Lord and said, 'Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. However, put forth Thy hand, now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse Thee to Thy face.'" (Job 2:4-5)

"Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him. And said, 'prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit you?' (Matt.26:67-68) "So His appearance was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." (Isa.52:14; Ps.22; Gen.3:15)

3. Paul's thorn in flesh meant that God's protective hedge was removed.

"Hast Thou not made a **hedge** about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast **blessed** the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land." (Job 1; 10)

This was so obvious to other spiritual mature believers that when Job lost it, they **falsely assumed** that it was because of some sin [false assumption leads to false interpretation leads to false expectation leads to false application]. His spiritual friends couldn't believe that it was undeserved suffering and that God would allow it.

In the church age, one aspect of that divine hedge is the sealing of the indwelling Holy Spirit

- (1 Cor.6:19-20) "In Him, you are also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation
- (Eph.1:13-14) "Having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."

Cosmos diabolicus thinking says – God blessed Job on the basis of who and what he was and Job lived in such a way that he deserved to get blessings from God. Therefore, if God takes away these blessings, than Job will surely curse God (Job 1:21-22).

4. The occasion of the vision and revelation leading to Paul's thorn in the flesh occurred during his first missionary trip. He was stoned to death at Lystra (Acts 14:5-7, 19-20; 2 Cor.11:25).

This occurred 14 years after Paul's conversion (2 Cor.12:1-4; Gal.4:13-14; 2 Tim.3:10-12).

There were four factors associated with Paul's thorn in flesh.

- Extraordinary vision and revelation (2 Cor.12:7).
- Exalting myself (2 Cor.12:7) (huperairo / p.p.subj) [unduly elated boasting]
- Exemplary grace (arkeo / p.a.ind) [always enough] (2 Cor.12:9)
- Excellent mental attitude regarding adversities (eudokeo / p.a.ind) [well content] (2 Cor.12:10)

God's test is designed to demonstrate the believer's faith.

Satan's test is designed to destroy the believer's faith.