

The background is a deep red with a subtle, darker red cross-like pattern. On the right side, there is a crown of thorns made of dry, brown twigs with sharp, dark thorns. On the left side, there is a decorative, light-colored flourish consisting of several overlapping loops.


# The Ministry of the Thorn

## 2 Cor. 12:7-10

All Scripture is NKJV unless  
otherwise noted.




## 2 Cor. 12:7-8

- And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. <sup>8</sup> Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.
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## 2 Cor. 12:9-10

- <sup>9</sup> And He said to me, “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. <sup>10</sup> 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.
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# Introduction

- **Cups** teach about the *wrath* of God
- Rev. 14:10, “*The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation...*”






# Introduction (cont'd)

- **Storms** teach about the *worship* of God
- **Thorns** teach about the *ways* of God
- “*Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?*” Job 2:10





# 1. Paul's Thorn (v.7)

- *It was rooted in pride*
  - *“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.”*
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# Paul's Thorn (cont'd)

- **“exalted above measure”** – over-exalted, used only one other time in the New Testament in **2 Thess. 2:4**



## 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

- *“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”*



# Paul's Thorn (cont'd)

- **It was revealed in pain.**
- **“a thorn in the flesh was given to me”** – denotes a pointed stake; a splinter; excruciatingly painful.






# The Reason for the thorn:

- To keep Paul from being overly-hyper exalted because of the abundance of the revelation, in order that the Lord could achieve his greater usefulness.
- Suffering is one of God's tools used to build godly character (Romans 5:1-5).





# What was the thorn?

- Eye affliction-Gal. 6:11
  - Epilepsy, headaches, malaria
  - John MacArthur believes it may have been deceivers sent to seduce the Corinthians into a rebellion against him-  
II Cor. 11:28-29
- 




# What was the thorn? (cont'd)

- Others say an intestinal disorder or speech impediment.
- Some think it was mental or spiritual in nature; nagging criticism, nagging doubt, or a persistent temptation.





# What was the thorn? (cont'd)

- Martin Luther and John Calvin both thought that one of Satan's emissaries kept on throwing evil suggestions, or fiery darts into his mind.
  - Alan Redpath said it may have been something in his own personal character and life.
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# Paul's Thorn (cont'd)

- All of this is mere speculation; it is good that we do not know, because no matter what our suffering may be, we are able to apply the lessons Paul learned and get encouragement.



# Paul's Thorn (cont'd)

- *It resulted in a principle*
- **“a messenger of Satan to buffet me”**
- Whatever the precise nature, Paul regarded it as caused by Satan but allowed by God and used by God to accomplish an important purpose.



## 2. Paul's Transformation (v.8)

- *“Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.”*
- Reminds us of **Matt 26:36-46** when Jesus was in Gethsemane.



## 2. Paul's Transformation (cont'd)

- Matthew 26:44, *“So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.”*
- When the Lord permits suffering to come into our lives, there are several ways we can deal with it:



# Ways to Deal with Suffering (cont'd)

- Become bitter and blame the Lord.
- Give up and get “out of the boat” – as a result, miss the blessing out of the experience.



# Ways to Deal with Suffering (cont'd)

- **Grit our teeth and put on a brave front.**
- **Ask the Lord for deliverance and accept His answer.**



# Paul's Transformation (cont'd)

- *He prayed for a substitution*
- When Paul prayed 3 times for the removal of the thorn, he was asking for a *substitution*.
- “Give me deliverance instead of pain and weakness; give me health instead of sickness.”



# Paul's Transformation (cont'd)

- ***God met the need by transformation***
- Sometimes, God does meet the need with substitution, but other times He meets the need by *transformation*.



### 3. Paul's Testimony (vv.9-10)

- *<sup>9</sup> And He said to me, "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. <sup>10</sup> 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.*



# Paul's Testimony (cont'd)

- Paul embraced his *thorn* as God's gift.
- P.T. Forsyth, "*It is a greater thing to pray for pain's conversion than its removal.*"





# Paul's Testimony (cont'd)

- Thorns can:
- Reveal our character
- Humble us
- Draw us closer to God
- Allow God to display His grace and power in us





# Invitation

