

Paul's Thorn

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2 Cor 12:1 It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. 3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) 4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. 5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. 7 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.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9 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. 10 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. 11 I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. 12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

This passage has caused many to wonder why God did not heal Paul and they thus conclude that God will not heal all when we minister healing in the name of Jesus.

Did the Thorn Stop Paul? First let's look at the impact of this "thorn." In verse 12 it did not stop Paul from operating in "signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." Or as Holy Spirit says: Heb 2:3 "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great soteria-salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; 4 God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"

So it did not stop Paul from healing others. Or again: Rom 15:18 "For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, 19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." So whatever you may think the "thorn in the flesh" was, it did not stop Paul from FULLY PREACHING the Gospel which by definition includes healings and other Kingdom power signs.

So in no way does this imply that the thorn has anything directly to stopping the Kingdom from being preached in power. 1 Cor 2:4 "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Nor was Paul stopped by difficulties or resistance, even beatings. 1 Cor 16:8 "But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. 9 For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries."

Wrong Attitudes: Remember Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of His day for their failure to properly understand the scriptures and the power of God. Matt 22:29 "Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do

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err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.” This is repeated for us: [Mark 12:24](#) “And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?”

Notice Jesus warns or rebukes that their perspective was all wrong, leading to erroneous interpretations of God and His ways as revealed in the scriptures. [Mark 12:27](#) “He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the zao-living: ye therefore do greatly err.”

Hard Hearts: This message goes right into the New Testament where Holy Spirit pleads with the Hebrew Christians the same message several times. [Heb 3:88](#) “Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: 9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. 10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. 11 So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) 12 Take heed, brethren (*Christians*), lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the zao-living God. 13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

The message is clear, you may have received a new heart in the new creation, but if not properly maintained in the face of difficult situations, the Christian can develop a hardened heart and thus miss the “rest” of God.

This rest is God operating through you in power situations. In Heb 3 the comparison is to the Hebrews as they would not cross the river in to the Promised Land and destroy the giants. This is a power struggle of high order. Of that generation only Joshua and Caleb entered in, the rest of that generation died in the wilderness of no power with God. The challenge in the day of Moses was for untrained slaves to cross the Jordan and believe God to kill the giants and destroy large armies in walled cities to occupy the land. Healing and signs and wonders can often be viewed the same way. Failure to believe God to kill giants and large armies and walled cities did not stop them from being the children of God, but it did stop them from obtaining the promise of God.

This is the message of Hebrews 3 and 4. A hard heart will not stop you from being a child of God, but it will stop you from operating in the power of God and seeing His Kingdom in operation.

Bringing Peace: Note the generation that did go in, did it not by themselves, but God takes credit for what was done. [Ps 44:1](#) “We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. 2 How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out. 3 For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.”

Jesus said something very similar: [John 14:8](#) “Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. 9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? 10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. 12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. 13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”

Per John 14:10, it was not Jesus who did the miracles, but the Father in Jesus by Holy Spirit. It was not the Hebrews that conquered the land; it was God working with and through them as they faced the giants and walled cities. His power came as they engaged the enemy and swung their swords. The promise in

verses John 14:12-14 is that in the same way, Jesus will duplicate His ministry through His disciples as they learn to work with Him as He does with the Father. For this He is with us “always” per Matt 28:20.

And we are promised battles in the Kingdom. First our primary target includes the gates of Hell: Matt 16:18 “...and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Jesus gave the early believers power over the works of hell. Luke 10:19 “Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.”

And this teaching or commandment is included in the great commission. Matt 28:18 “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them **to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you**: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

Obviously Luke 10:19-20 is included in the “commanded” of Matt 28, and is included in this Holy Spirit summary of the ministry of Jesus. Acts 10:34 “Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. 36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) 37 That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; 38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.”

Notice the definition by Peter of how “peace” is to be preached: “*going* about doing good, and healing all that *are* oppressed of the devil,” which is a summary of all the signs and wonders Jesus did. But even though Jesus demonstrated God’s power over the devil in healing sick, diseased, leprous, maimed and dead bodies, it did not stop Him from being persecuted by the religious rulers unto a cruel death on the cross.

Persecutions Promised: Jesus promised that to follow Him would include persecutions. Mark 10:29 “And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel’s, 30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal zoe-life.” Luke 21:12 “But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name’s sake.” John 16:33 “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” And as repeated by Paul: 2 Tim 3:12 “Yea, and all that will zao-live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

Sickness Trained: But never did Jesus say He would use sickness to train disciples into the ways of God. If that were so then Jesus would have been the sickest man on earth, the disciples sick and Jesus would have struck those who resisted Him and ultimately killed Him with sickness. Sickness has never been good as it makes people self focused and if left unchecked, kills. Left on its own, sickness will rule you as a cruel master and put you in an early grave. John 10:10 “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have zoe-life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” Go back and read Job 1 and 2. God did not hurt or make Job sick, the devil did. God is the one who got Job to do the things that would allow God to heal and bless Job.

Not once did ever Jesus attribute a sickness or evil to God. Instead Jesus’ statements and attitudes match that of James. James 1:13 “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: 14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of

his own lust, and enticed. 15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. 16 Do not err, my agape--beloved brethren. 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

God does not use the devil to train men in the ways of God. That is the unique job of Holy Spirit. John 14:16 “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” John 14:26 “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” 1 Cor 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. 16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.”

Does God use the devil to train us? Not if training is a learning process. That is Holy Spirit's job. Does God use the devil? Not in the way a man can use a trained dog. Go back and look at Job 1 and 2. The devil asked to attack Job. God could not stop the devil for Job had walked in fear. Job 3:25 “For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me. 26 I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came.” God did limit what Satan could do, but God did not define what Satan did.

The only training of God in the devil is that when attacked we are to attack and win. If we do not we may well get sick, be sickly and die an early death. If we do not hang onto and use the power of the Gospel, we will live the health and death rate of the culture we are in. The only “training” of the Lord under these conditions is to get sick and tired of being sick and tired, and go back to learn and live the Gospel. Then we are to go set others free and become part of the answer to “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Our job is to bring heaven to earth.

Death by Wrong Judgment: God has told us that if we do not judge ourselves properly we will be sick, weak and die an early death. 1 Cor 11:26 “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. 27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”

Failure to take proper provision of communion for walking in divine health means we will be judged as if we are not in covenant with God through Jesus Christ by the sacrifice of His body and His blood. 1 Peter 2:24 “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should zo-live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.” By His broken, lacerated, stripped body we were healed and by His blood covenant we have our sins remitted and we are redeemed from the hand-authority-legal power of the enemy (the devil). Col 1:13 “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:”

This is a faith to faith lifestyle. Christian failure to apply the power of the work of Father God in the propitiation of Jesus by the cross per Isaiah 53 means that you will not reap the benefits of His saving

work, but you will reap the corruption of the law of sin and death in your flesh. In this way you will live as a person in your culture and not a child-son of God. Gal 6:7 “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap zoe-life everlasting. 9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

As we call to remembrance our redemption in Jesus we take our mind out of the flesh and world circumstances (the carnal mind) and put our mind on the Gospel and reap the benefits His saving-healing power. Rom 8:6 “For to be carnally minded is death-sickness, lack, poverty, defeat; but to be spiritually minded is zoe-life and peace-victory and success. 7 Because the carnal mind (*set on the present conditions and not the truths of the Gospel/word of God*) is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. 8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

Resist to Win: When we find ourselves in direct attack by the devil, or for others under attack, we are to: James 4:5 “Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? 6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.” 1 Peter 5:6 “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: 7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. 8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”

The message of both James 4 and 1 Peter 5 is the same for us. Get rid of the double mind on the reconciliation of God in Jesus by the cross through communion and the scriptures and then go attack the devil with aiteo-commands and the devil will flee to set yourself and others free. Do it God’s way, submit to Him, use the body of blood of Jesus rightly, and the devil will flee from you. You may seek the Lord to understand better all He accomplished in Jesus by the cross, but you will resist the devil by attacking him in the name of Jesus. Rev 12:10 “And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come soteria-salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”

We get this message of the power of the cross from Paul. Had that been the issue with Paul as he sought the Lord in 2 Cor 12, then Jesus would have dealt with that by having Paul go back and read his own letters. Instead this was the evil angel stirring up men’s hearts to physically attack Paul. So the real issue is men’s evil hearts and not directly the evil angel. 2 Cor 4:3 “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.”

Patience: So while Paul directly attacked the evil angel (by binding, blinding and commanding confusion on his works and commanding freedom for the people), Paul had to wait as God freed men’s hearts to hear and love the Gospel. This obviously required great patience on the part of Paul who was personally suffering the pains as these people learned by the conviction of Holy Spirit. Breaking the power of the evil angel still left men who readily sinned until their minds could be free enough to receive the agape-love of God in the Gospel.

This is the message of “the patience of the saints,” and the example of prayer in Col 1:9-29. A key verse being: Col 1:11 “Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;” And sounds very much like what Jesus said to Paul and how Paul

responded to Jesus: 2 Cor 12:9 “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. 10 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. 11 I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. 12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.” The process of the Gospel as exhibited by Jesus and the early disciples was relatively quick signs, wonders and mighty deeds and relatively long time on men's hearts being changed.

For God's will we must look to Jesus first. Heb 1:1 “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; 3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;” John 14:10 “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.” Every act of Jesus, including His total success in healing, was a message from Father God and His will.

Even in Matt 17 when the disciples could not cast out a demon, Jesus quickly healed the boy to show the Father's will, and then corrected the disciples. The disciples failure was not God's will; Jesus curing the boy was. When the leper came to Jesus, note how Jesus responded: Mark 1:40 “And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. 42 And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.”

In the Greek, the “I will” of verse 41 is very emphatic. That word will means “I delight to do this, this is what I am made for, this is what I do and this is what I want.” This fits right with: Heb 13:8 “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” Jesus is the exact will of God and God has spoken: “I will always heal.” If a healing does not take place the problem is not God. Healing is always His will, He paid the ultimate price, Jesus, and He knows what He paid and what it cost, and it is His will to always heal.

The scriptures show that God's will is not always done: 2 Thess 2:10 “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the agape-love of the truth, that they might be sozo-saved.” 1 Tim 2:5 “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; 6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” God saved all men in Jesus by the cross, so the full legal redemption is complete. Yet only those who believe receive that salvation and its eternal benefits. Rom 10:8 “But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be sozo-saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto soteria-salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be sozo-saved.”

Jesus became the price for all men, yet we know not all men receive Him unto salvation. Rom 10:16 “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?” See also Isa 53:1. It is up to Christians to bring His saving grace to earth that His will may be done. With all of the above there is no logical way one can say that Paul's thorn is an example that God's will is not to always heal, or that Jesus said to suffer the sickness until I am done training you.

Since Holy Spirit is our teacher, saying sickness is training us is saying Holy Spirit is the source of sickness. This puts one very close to blasphemy of Holy Spirit as Jesus warned the religious rulers that attributing His casting out of demons to be a work of the devil and not Holy Spirit. Luke 11:19 “And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. 20 But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.” Matt 12:28 “But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. 29 Or else how can one enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. 30 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. 31 Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.”

Here Jesus warns against saying that the Holy Spirit is the same as a devil. Since Holy Spirit is our Teacher, then saying He is teaching you with sickness is to call God the source of sickness, and that can never be. Matt 7:16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” John 10:10 “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have zoe-life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

Let no man say that any problem he has is from God. James 1:12 “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. 13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: 14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. 15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. 16 Do not err, my beloved brethren. 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

The Thorn: Now with this as a background, let us look at “the thorn.” The Greek word for thorn is skolop. It is used only once in the New Testament in this passage in 2 Cor 12, but it is used 3 times in the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was used in the times of Jesus and the early church, the Septuagint. Almost all quotes of the New Testament by the various New Testament writers came from this Greek translation.

Here is where skolop is used in the Septuagint:

- Num 33:55 “But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and **thorns** in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell.”
- Ezek 28:24 “And there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house of Israel, nor any grieving **thorn** of all that are round about them, that despised them; and they shall know that I am the Lord GOD.”
- Hos 2:6 “Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with **thorns**, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.”

In Nu 33:55 and Ezek 28:24 skolop, thorns, are people causing affliction. In Hos 2:6 the message is that thorns are a painful wall or limitation around the people but not in the people.

Paul was persecuted by the religious Jews who came after him and challenged His message. 2 Cor 11:24 “Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils

in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.” Note there is no mention of sickness in this list.

In 2 Cor 12: 9 “And he (*Jesus*) 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.” Paul uses the term weakness. Nowhere in the New Testament is this word used of sickness, but it is used of Jesus in just the next chapter by Paul. 2 Cor 13:4 “For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he zao-liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall zao-live with him by the power of God toward you.” This is the same “weakness” that killed Jesus and it had nothing to do directly with a typical sickness killing Jesus.

Let us look at how Paul got the “thorn.” 2 Cor 12:1 “It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. ...7 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.”

In verse 7 Paul got the thorn for the greatness of his revelations of Jesus and “the third heaven.” Few other believers have evidenced this level of revelation and then gone and preached to the unsaved world. Few other believers qualify for this concern.

Notice in verse 7 where the thorn came from, not God but the devil; “the messenger of Satan to buffet me.” Also buffet means to keep beating on you blow after blow. Sickness does not do that, but certainly repeated beatings and stoning do. So the messenger or “angel” of Satan stirred up people continually to keep Paul from preaching the Gospel exactly as per Jesus’ prophecy to Paul. Acts 9:15 “But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.”

Command Prayer: Also look at how Paul handled his request to the Lord in verse 8: “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.” Nowhere does Jesus or the other apostles, including Paul, ever seek the Lord for healing. Instead they all commanded the sickness or disease to go. This is not seeking the Lord but rather exercising the judgment of God against the works of the devil. Jesus demonstrated, as did the apostles, that sickness and demons go rather quickly, but men’s hearts, hardened and trained in the ways of the devil, take a longer time if they are ever to convert to the agape-love of the truth. John 4:37 “And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. 38 I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.” Note the other men labored in the past and the disciples are to reap the benefits of others past labor now.

In the New Testament the only example of prayer for sickness is in James where the elders will get the sick one healed. James 5:14 “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: 15 And the prayer of faith shall sozo-save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.”

The examples in the New Testament for calling on God at act against sickness are judgments or commands, “take up your bed and walk” or “rise up in the name of Jesus” or Acts 16:18 “... Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.” This kind of action fits the use of the Greek word aiteo. Aiteo means to demand as due because the promise or requirement has been met.

Jesus told the disciples to operate in the faith of God in this way: Mark 11:22 “And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. 23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. 24 Therefore I say unto

you, What things soever ye aiteo-desire *require, demand, expect as due by covenant promise*, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”

So per Mk 11:24, the elder’s prayer of James 5:15 would include demands for the sickness and/or devil to leave and thus include aiteo in the prayer process. This is very different than seeking the Lord and is more consistent with how Jesus told the disciples to exercise the Kingdom: John 14:12 “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. 13 And whatsoever ye shall aiteo-ask-*require, demand, expect as due by covenant promise* in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If ye shall aiteo-ask-*require, demand, expect as due by covenant promise* any thing in my name, I will do it.” John 15:7 “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall aiteo-ask-*require, demand, expect as due by covenant promise* what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. 8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” This is not intercession with the Father, but rather exercising the dominion of the authority of Jesus just as Jesus did against the devil and his works.

Jesus is to be our example, not the disciples, including Peter, Paul or John. So we are to base our primary understandings in a Christ-centered way. Jesus made it clear He came to do the Father’s will and that included all the signs and wonders. Acts 10:38 “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.”

Sick Eyes: Concerning Paul in Galatia many say Paul had an eye disease that did not get healed: Gal 4:13 “Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. 14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. 15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.” Nowhere does this say Paul had an eye problem. The expression of verse 15 is more like what we would say today: “They would give me/cut off their right arm...”

Whatever the infirmity of verse 13, if it was sickness, it was healed and is not mentioned again in the entire rest of the New Testament. Not all healing is instant. By the word healing, it is a process. Miracles are instant. Healing takes time. So Timothy’s stomach problems in 1 Tim 5:23 or Epaphras in Phil 2:27 are snapshots in time. There is not one indication that they did not eventually get healed.

There is no indication that Paul ever had an eye problem. Gal 6:11 “Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.” Some use this verse linked with Gal 4:15 to indicate Paul had an eye problem. Even if Paul did, it got healed as it is never mentioned again. Also many scholars believe that Galatians is actually part of a longer letter (perhaps even Hebrews). Also Paul’s letters were written by scribes. So whether Paul was referring to the fact that he himself had written all of Galatians, or that it was part of a much longer work is not clear. But per the original Greek it does not indicate that Paul wrote in large letters because of an eye or vision problem.

Thorn = Persecution: Paul’s thorn was a demon sent to persecute him though other people to keep him from preaching the Gospel and to destroy the effectiveness of his converts. For this reason we have his letters, all of which address this in some way. The most obvious example being the letter to the Hebrews (which if not authored by Paul it was by someone very close to him) where they were going back to the temple to get forgiveness of sins by the blood of animals, and to avoid persecution, rather than trust the once for all sacrifice of Jesus.

Jesus’ answer of sufficient grace was that Paul does not directly list sickness as what he glories in to experience the strength of Christ. 2 Cor 12: 9 “And he (*Jesus*) 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. 10 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. 11 I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. 12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”

Yes, Paul may have been attacked with sickness many times, but nowhere does the scripture conclude that, if so, he did not get healed of every one. The words in verses 9 and 10 for infirmities and verse 10 for weak can include more than just physical sickness or weakness and are not used just for sickness, but are much broader in their use. Verse 12 seems to indicate that in spite of all this the miraculous signs of duplicating Jesus’ ministry in healing, signs and wonders continued steadily throughout his service to the Lord.

[Note: One source of error in healing teaching seems to have its source in delayed answer to people being changed in behavior versus the kind of quick miracles seen in Jesus and the believer’s ministries in the Bible. Healing someone of a disease is clearly portrayed in the New Testament as relatively quick action. Because many modern believers have prayed for people to change, i.e., a heart matter, and it did not happen quickly (if at all) assumed that the result should be just as quick as Jesus raising the dead boy at Nain or Paul healing all on the island Melita in Acts 28. Changing people’s behavior is a heart matter. You may even cast out a demon associated with a particular behavior, but if the thought processes of that behavior are still desired by the person, they will still do them, although with less vigor, or even for a short time stop, but the behavior without a heart change, will return. God does not often change us into robots or a donkey. But many believers have unforgiveness toward God on why people in their lives did not change into more godly behaviors at their prayers. Even Jesus could not change the hearts of those who knew yet put Him on the cross. After a while in His ministry every act of healing became another reason to kill Him.

But unforgiveness towards God in unanswered prayer of any kind means that faith is hard to work when in ministry for healing. Thus one way to see more healing is to start with forgiving God for all prayer failures in the past and start anew knowing if there is a problem in any answered prayer to any right Bible promise, it is not God. Num 23:19 “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” Our experience does not define God or His word, but His word can define our experience. If your experience does not match His word, you are looking at the wrong word to describe your experience or wrongly interpreting the word you are looking at. Titus 1:2 “In hope of eternal zoe-life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;” Heb 6:17 “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 18 That by two immutable things (*promise and oath*), in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: 19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;”]

Redemption Letters: Jesus promised the disciples and spoke directly to Paul that they would suffer persecution for the Gospel. Prior to his conversion, Paul was one such persecutor. Paul was seeking an answer on how to reduce the strength of the demon stirring up so much trouble. The thorn was not sickness but was the continual attempt of numerous Jews who attempted to stop Paul and to re-convert his Christian converts to the Law.

Rather than stop Paul, the demon actually forced Paul to write in detail what it means to be justified by faith in Jesus Christ and thus a blessing to mankind through the centuries. Rom 10:4 “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” Acts 13:39 ”And by him (*Jesus*) all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Gal 5:3 “For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. 4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” Gal 2:21 “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”

Apostolic Failure: The only example we have of disciples failing to get someone healed was the nine with Jesus when Jesus, Peter, James and John returned from the mount of transfiguration. Matt 17:14 “And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, 15 Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. 16 And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. 17 Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. 18 And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. 19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? 20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. 21 Howbeit this kind *(of unbelief)* goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.” This is also repeated in Mark 9:17-30.

To show the will of God, when they brought the boy to Jesus, He immediately delivered the boy and cured him. Hear the anger in the voice of Jesus over this failure in verse 17: “then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.” This was aimed at the disciples, the ministers of Jesus who could not get the job done. It also may have been aimed at members of the crowd, but only the disciples came back to find out what was wrong.

Jesus then tells them that if they had even a little faith they could move mountains (note mountains is related to casting out demons and curing people and, while including them, is not just literal mountains), but because of their unbelief they could not do it. His answer was that prayer and fasting was the way to get rid of this kind of unbelief. Jewish prayer is not a shopping list, but repeating the prayers in the scriptures and seeking God to fulfill His promises. It is very different for what many call prayer in our day.

A good place to start is to pray the Psalms, especially Psalm 119 while you fast. Faith is the noun form of the Greek verb translated believe. So how do you get faith in God? Go to the scriptures and obey them! Rom 10:16 “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? 17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Per this scripture it is not just any word but the focus is to be on the word of the Gospel. Note verse 16 refers directly to Isaiah 53 where the propitiation of Jesus is described, which combines physical healing and forgiveness of sin in one act. An effective modern way is to include time with a recording of the scriptures (in the same translation as your Bible) and read out loud along with the recording.

Greatness to Lost Power: In Mark 9 it is useful to note that after Jesus tells them that this kind of unbelief comes out by prayer and fasting the disciples are still arguing over who is greatest among themselves. Mark 9:33 “And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? 34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.”

We do not know the details of “the greatest,” but they were in strife over pride and world power. Jesus addressed this several times to the Jewish leaders as the source of their unbelief. John 5:44 “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” Matt 23:4 “For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. 5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, 6 And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.” John 3:20 “For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. 21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” John 12:43 “For they agape-loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

Seeking the Father's Perfect Will Every Time: Rather than seeking His own will, power and advantage, Jesus only sought the will of the Father. John 5:30 "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

Jesus sought the Father's glory at His own expense. Jesus is the true servant who seeks only His Master's greatness and not His own. Phil 2:3 "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. 5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Based on the juxtaposition of the scriptures before and after Matt 17 and Luke 9, a source of unbelief was that the disciples had yet to become Father pleasers and were still seeking earthly advantage over one another and the nation in general. So the process of prayer and fasting may best start with confession of idolatry of earthly things and Psalm 51 to start the heart cleansing process along with the prayers in Ephesians 1 and 3, and Colossians 1. 1 John 2:15 Agape-Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man agape-love the world, the agape-love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Note: Please see our article "Wrath of God" and the video series "Overcoming Sin the Jesus Way" at www.CovenantPeace.com for the full process of New Testament confession and healing of sin.

As with many things Jesus said, it was not new, but a reminder of what God has said in fullness. Matt 4:4 "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not zao-live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." This was quoting this Old Testament scripture: Deut 8:3 "And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live."

So study the word in depth and then look for ways to do it, not just academic but to become a lifestyle as you obey. 2 Tim 3:15 "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto soteria-salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

Effective Faith: There is another New Testament scripture that shows how to make our faith effective. Philem 6 "That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus."

So a good place to start is to make a list of all the benefits of the new creation and make them as confessions/affirmations to the Lord of what He has done for you in Jesus as you fast and pray. Heb 13:15 "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name *and making confession in His name.*" Psalm 23 and 91 are also great for this. This is part of the process used to renew our minds.

Note our book, *Championship Affirmations in Christ*, is very effective in explaining and guiding in this process. For those wanting more on healing our book, *Battle Prayer for Healing* is a valuable tool to help

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