

A Thorn in the Flesh

"I was given a physical condition which has been a thorn in my flesh ...to keep me from becoming prideful. Three times I begged God to make me well again. Each time He said, 'No, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'"

2 Corinthians 12:7b-8

Paul was certainly one of the most persecuted for his faith. He was flogged 5 separate times throughout his life for proclaiming the Gospel (2 Corinthians 11:24). Paul's response was that of rejoicing *"because he along with the apostles had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus"* (Acts 5:41-42)! Paul's suffering continued throughout his life. In addition to suffering caused by those who hated him for being a follower of Christ, he also dealt with *a thorn in his flesh* which created a physical condition that caused more suffering. What Paul learned through all of this was that he should boast in his weaknesses all the more so that the power of Christ may rest upon him. *"Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong"* (v9-10).

It is interesting that Paul not once eluded to what his *thorn in the flesh* was, as if (or perhaps because) it was not at all important to even mention!

- What's *a thorn in the flesh* (flesh being temporary) when one has been saved and set apart by God's redeeming grace.
- What's *a thorn in the flesh* when the reality is that God's grace is sufficient and that through weaknesses we are made strong!
- What's *a thorn in the flesh* being temporary, when the Believers purpose is to serve Christ so that others will know His love and sacrifice.

In reality the thorn in Paul's life literally helped him remain humble and in doing so accomplish God's work on this earth. There has been much speculation as to what Paul's thorn in the flesh was ...but that's all it is speculation, and equally unimportant. A thorn such as what Paul had (regardless of specifics) is in reality a means in which to help keep one's eyes on Jesus! God has always used "everything" including "a *thorn in the flesh*" to further His kingdom and Paul understood this ...for the sake of Christ!!

Why is it so easy to focus on our circumstances, perhaps a thorn in our flesh, rather than focus on God and others (love God and love others) ...the two greatest commandments?