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WHAT WAS PAUL'S THORN IN THE FLESH?

I would have to say that the Apostle Paul did more to teach the New Testament Church than any of the other early church leaders. The book of Acts shows his conversion from radical zealot to radical preacher for Jesus. What a remarkable change!

Was it easy for him? No, it was not. He was constantly battling those that wanted to put Christians back under the law. In the book of Galatians chapter 2 it tells us in verse 11-12, ***“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision (Jews).”*** Apparently, Peter was a man pleaser instead of a God pleaser, and Paul set him straight over this. In verse 16 Paul says, ***“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”***

The Jews were trying to make the new gentile converts do what the law had required, (like circumcision of the flesh) but that no man was able to keep! They were putting burdens on the gentile believers that they were not putting on themselves, and Paul had to set them straight on this. This was an ongoing battle for Paul. In II Corinthians chapter 11 Paul warns the Corinthian believers about false leaders. In verse 13 it says, ***“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostle of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”*** Paul goes on to speak of the suffering that he endured for sharing the gospel. He would not compromise. He was buffeted by these false leaders constantly. In chapter 12 he asks God to remove these messengers of Satan that continually buffeted (beat up) him. In verse 7 it says, ***“and lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations (divine inspired information from God) there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger (one that speaks, not a disease) from Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.”***

This thorn in the flesh would be like us saying a pain in the neck, or something similar. It was not a physical thorn. It was these false teachers trying to usurp what Paul had taught by divine revelation. God gave him grace to endure these teachers and said where he was weak that God would make him strong.

We may have ***“thorns in our flesh”*** too. People that speak against us and try to tell us to do things once again “under the law,” but remember God will give you the grace to endure these things. It comes with being a Christian. If Paul could endure “them”, then we can too. God’s grace is sufficient! Just remember, that thorn is not a sickness or disease. It is someone that comes against you for teaching truth!