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THORN IN THE FLESH

Paul went before the throne of God and petitioned God three times to remove what he called a ***thorn in the flesh***. So, what was this thorn in the flesh?

Many think it was a physical malady, and with all the beatings and near-death experiences Paul had his body may have suffered with pain. Yet, this was not what the thorn was.

As we read II Corinthians chapter 12, we get some light on it. Paul tells us in verse 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.”***

If you study Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, and the other epistles (letters) that Paul wrote, you will see that he constantly was dealing with religious leaders that tried to kill him because their “doctrine” of works was being threatened by his teaching of the gospel. This was his thorn. Paul had received tremendous revelation about grace, healing, and so much more that pride could easily creep in. He shows great emotion and anger in some of his writings.

He declares that God allowed this thorn, or persecution, to come so pride would never take hold of him. This thorn followed him all the way to Rome where he was eventually executed.

Pride is the downfall of man. The scripture tells us this in Proverbs 16:18, ***“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.”*** Paul would have known this scripture because he was a student of “the Word.”

God did not leave him empty handed. God let Paul know that he would not remove the thorn, but he would give Paul the grace to deal with it because God’s grace is sufficient in our weaknesses. Paul goes on to rejoice when he receives this revelation. It enabled him to continue his call no matter what was said or done to him. He knew that God would be with him even when there were thorns that “irritated” him.

So, what about us? How does this apply to us? Well, we can understand that no matter what comes against us, that God is sufficient to get us through each situation.

In I Corinthians 10:13 Paul writes, ***“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer (allow) you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”***

God’s grace is sufficient even when there are thorns!