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Summer of 2025

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Paul's Thorn in The Flesh

"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. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 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. 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." (2 Corinthians 12:7-11 NKJV)

This is one of the most misunderstood passages in the Bible. Religious tradition says God gave Paul the thorn in the flesh to keep him from being puffed up or proud. However this interpretation does not agree with God's character revealed elsewhere in the Bible.

So, listen carefully, I believe God's Holy Spirit has given me an accurate understanding.

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING, POINT #1 –

What exactly was the thorn in the flesh? The Bible is crystal clear on this matter. Paul said: "...**a thorn in the flesh was given to me, A MESSENGER OF SATAN...**" The word messenger in the original Greek language is **angelos**, or in English an angel. So, the messenger of Satan was an angel of Satan, or a demon spirit. Listen to this confirmation:

"And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and HIS ANGELS fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer...."

Scripture continued on the reverse ➤

...So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and HIS ANGELS were cast out with him.” (Revelation 12:7-9 NKJV)

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING, POINT #2 –

God did not give the thorn in the flesh to Paul. God does not send demon spirits to buffet his redeemed people. The thorn in the flesh was sent by Satan. Listen to these words from the Lord Jesus:

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”
(John 10:10 NKJV)

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING, POINT #3 –

Why did Satan send the thorn in the flesh to buffet Paul? Because, God gave Paul an abundance of revelations and Satan did not want those revelations revealed.

I believe some of those revelations are now called:

Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and maybe even Hebrews.

Obviously Satan was buffeting Paul, trying to prevent him from writing one half of the New Testament.

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING, POINT #4 –

How exactly was the angel of Satan buffeting Paul? Listen carefully as Paul describes some of the buffetings he experienced:

“From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren” (2 Corinthians 11:24-26 NKJV).

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ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING, POINT #5 –

Religious tradition says God gave Paul the thorn in the flesh so that he would not be exalted above measure. This interpretation is ridiculous. Listen to the following scripture:

"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6 NKJV)

If there is anyone in the Bible who was humble, it was the Apostle Paul. Yes, at one time he was a proud Pharisee, but after his conversion on the road to Damascus, he was never again proud. You can trace his ministry through the book of Acts, and confirm that he had humbled himself under the mighty hand of God. Reading through his epistles this is abundantly clear. Therefore God exalted him by giving him the abundance of revelations.

It was Satan who was trying to prevent Paul from being exalted, because he wanted to prevent Paul from writing one half of the New Testament.

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING POINT #6 –

When Paul asked the Lord three times to take away the thorn in the flesh, God did not answer **NO**. God's answer to Paul was: ***"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."***

In other words, God was telling Paul his grace was sufficient to defeat the angel of Satan and to fulfill his ministry. As an example, listen to Jesus giving grace to his disciples:

Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name. And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."
(Luke 10:17-20 NKJV)

IN CONCLUSION...

Just as Jesus gave authority to those additional 70 disciples, the same grace was available to Paul to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy.

I am glad God exalted Paul by giving him an abundance of revelations. Despite the buffetings, Paul persisted, and fulfilled his ministry. Once again, as you trace Paul's ministry through the book of Acts, you will see that he prevailed – every time – over that messenger of Satan. As a result, we now have available to us:

Romans, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, 1st and 2nd Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and very likely the book of Hebrews.