



# The “thorn in the flesh”

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*So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” 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.*  
2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (ESV)

Paul talks about his own thorn in the flesh, but most Christians will testify to having a thorn in the flesh. It may be present for a while, but also something you may have to deal with for the rest of your life.

***A thorn in the flesh can take on many forms.***

**It may be physical or spiritual.** Some people experience it through looking after a terminally ill patient, having a disabled child or parent, having your own disability or bedridden. Other people constantly have money problems and are poor. Some may have a job they hate, or are lonely or must cope with challenging living conditions, suffer from depression, a bad marriage or don't like the calling God gave them. Many people have trouble with their own personality and therefore has constant conflict with people. Paul informs us that it can take on many forms: *“weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities.”*

But let us be very clear about this: a thorn in the flesh has nothing to do with sin in your life. Sin needs to be confessed, and we must break with it. Jesus died to set us free and cleanse us from all our sins.

## Get Practical

- ❖ **Look at your life and identify the things you see as a thorn in your flesh.** There should be at least one or two things. Don't make a list of all the things bothering you thinking everything is a thorn in your flesh. That is not what the Bible tries to teach us. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you which issues in your life are thorns in your flesh, in other words things you have prayed for God to take away, but are still there.

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- ❖ **Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the purpose of it.** Write it down.

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- ❖ **Make peace with the thorn in your flesh.** Just to state it again: a thorn in the flesh is not a reference to sin in your life. You will only be able to make peace with your thorn in the flesh when you consider the character of God, his sovereignty and when you can see his love for you. Write down a prayer telling God that you accept his will for your life, that you believe that He knows what He is doing and that you will not doubt his love and omnipotence and the way he is dealing with you. Job 1:21-22: *And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong."* James.4:10: *"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."*

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- ❖ **Use it to honour God, to be a blessing unto others and to grow spiritually.** Ask the Holy spirit to show you what you should learn from your situation and how you can be a blessing to others. Write down your thoughts and ask God to help you.

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- ❖ **God always uses a thorn in the flesh to keep us humble, to show us any form of pride in our hearts and afterwards to bring you to repentance.** *...a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. (2*

Cor.12:7) Also look at Jer.17:9: *“The heart is deceitful (constantly deceiving us) above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”* Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you every form of pride in your life – admit it and confess it.

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❖ **God uses a thorn in the flesh to show us that our knowledge of spiritual things, of Him and our huge spiritual experiences have no power.** 2 Cor.12:9: *“But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify this verse and write down your own prayer about it.

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❖ **Prayer of surrender.** Choose to accept that the thorn in your flesh is given to you by God and in your prayer of surrender you declare that you accept his will and that He will bring his will to fruition and that you are willing to live with this thorn until it pleases God to remove it. Read the following Scripture and write your own prayer accordingly: *“But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” 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. (2 Cor.12:9b-10)*

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