

A FRESH DEPENDENCE

“To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me.” —2 CORINTHIANS 12:7

Paul gives us a gift in coming out in the open about a thorn in his flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment him. Many of us experience a ‘thorn in the flesh’, and looking at it from Paul’s perspective, we’re able to see a genuine work of God.

Paul doesn’t disclose what this thorn in his flesh is, but he tells us about it to show how threatening issues become an avenue for God to work in a new and deeper way. The danger Paul faced was something that might lead him to arrogance and pride. A few verses earlier, he writes, “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know – God knows. And I know that this man....was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell” (2 Corinthians 12:2-4).

Though Paul writes in the third person, it is evident he is talking about himself, and it was these surpassingly great revelations that caused him to be given a thorn in his flesh. Whether it was in the body or out of the body, a vision or something he was physically caught up in is irrelevant. The point is he saw and heard things that he was not permitted to talk about and for fourteen years had kept locked inside.

There is always a danger when God does something in or through our lives which we’re so excited about and grateful for that we begin to take

credit ourselves. We like to be recognized and affirmed. The old ego wants to take ownership, but then the focus shifts from God to ourselves. The temptation to go beyond what God gives is common to all of us. God works. God blesses. God provides, and we want more.

Great moments with God can lead to inner battles, but a godly man or woman is always humbled. The devil's most prominent tool is to provoke pride in a person to get them to act independently of God. The great revelations in Paul's life are offset by great tribulations that balance his life. It's the things that hurt us that humble us, and the things that weaken us that make us dependent on God. That's why Paul says he delights in weaknesses, hardships, persecutions because "when I am weak, then I am strong." The best experiences in our lives are the ones that drive us back to God with a fresh dependence on Him and a need of His grace and working in our lives.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, keep me humbled before You and others, and grant me your strength in my weaknesses. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: Do I have a thorn in my flesh that keeps me dependent on God?