

**Victory Over Thorns**  
**Pastor John Carmichael**

**2 Corinthians 12:7-10**

- “God put this sickness on me to keep me humble. God is afflicting me to teach me something. Just like God gave Paul a thorn in the flesh and did not deliver him when he asked, God is doing the same to me.”
- Encouraging but challenging message. This sermon will challenge the normal take on the passage. It will challenge the exegesis of many commentators, but not all of them. Please prepare to think differently about this passage.
- Due to challenge of interpretation, we will lay a foundation for the sermon.
- Exegesis of the passage:
  - V7 - Review other translations (only the differences will be given due to space.)
    - MEV: ...be exalted above measure... twice
    - NEB: ...unduly elated...
    - Weymouth: And judging by the stupendous grandeur of the revelations-- therefore lest I should be over-elated there has been sent to me, like the agony of impalement, Satan's angel dealing blow after blow, lest I should be over-elated.
    - God gave Paul visions.
    - This caused a
      - “thorn in the flesh”: used 3x in OT: Numbers 33:55 (thorns in your side); Joshua 23:13 (thorns in your eyes); Judges 2:3 (thorns in your sides). All refer to the people of God being persecuted. Rick Renner: “Some have suggested that the words “in the flesh” refer to a physical sickness, but this is not affirmed by any scripture in the New Testament and should be taken as unsubstantiated conjecture. People have gone so far in their imaginations as to assert that Paul suffered from malaria, epilepsy, eye disease, club feet, or a hunched back. There is nothing in any New Testament scripture to back up such speculations!”
      - 2 Corinthians 11:23-30 speak of persecution. 2 Corinthians 12:10 speak of persecution. Before and after this passage it speaks of persecution and not sickness.
      - “a messenger of Satan” – 1 Thess. 2:18 – “...Satan hindered us.”
      - Never says it was from God. Never says it was sickness.
    - Conceited? Renner says, “When these two Greek words are compounded to form the word huperairo, it speaks of a person who has been supremely exalted. This is a person who has been magnified, increased, and lifted up to a place of great prestige and influence. Although huperairo could be used to express the idea of a person who has haughtily exalted himself, this is not the idea Paul has in mind when he writes this verse. Rather, this is a person who has been greatly honored and recognized due to something he has written, done, or achieved.”
  - V8-9 – Paul’s response
    - Prayed 3 times. Jesus never said, “No.” He said: Grace, sufficient. Power, perfected in weakness.
    - Grace = Power. See also [Act 4:33 NASB95] 33 And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.

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- John Bevere says: God refers to His grace as His empowerment! It's the power at work in situations beyond our ability—including our attempts to be holy. (<https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/1709-good-or-god-with-john-bevere/day/9>)
- NOTE: Paul did get delivered.
  - 2 Corinthians written 55-57.
  - Philippians written 60-61. [Phl 1:19-20 NASB95] 19 for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but [that] with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.
  - 2 Timothy written 67. [2Ti 3:10-11 NASB95] 10 Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, [and] sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium [and] at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!

**Why is it important to understand about Paul's thorn in the flesh?**

**There are 4 things to understand important truths about Paul's thorn in the flesh.**

- I. God wants you to encounter the supernatural.**
  - II. God is not attacking us, Satan is.**
  - III. God wants us to continue asking for deliverance in faith and humility, and He will empower us to endure.**
  - IV. God will deliver us and help us overcome.**
- Renners Translation of v7: "Because of the phenomenal revelations I have received and on account of the vast number of these revelations that God has entrusted to me — and to hinder the highly visible progress I am making in the Lord's cause — a special messenger has been sent from Satan to harass me with constant distractions and headaches. There's no doubt about it! Those whom Satan has stirred up against me want my head on a stake! Satan is using these people to constantly buffet and distract me in an attempt to keep me from reaching a higher level of visibility and recognition and to sidetrack me from preaching my revelations."