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Paul's Thorn In the Flesh - Healing #10

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It is God's plan and will to heal us, but it can be challenging to have faith for healing beyond our knowledge of the Bible, if we don't know what the word says. We might become cautious to what is said about our healing and would have questions that maybe it is not God's will to heal.

Matthew 4 and 9 speaks of the ministry of Jesus and how He went about all Galilee and the villages around, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, healing all manner of sickness and disease, demons and the devil being subject to Him. The gospel of the kingdom is going to preach life, healing and health. It is challenging to only hear the word occasionally and be able to receive what God has for us.

Before Paul's conversion, he was obsessed with the believers and had gone out of his way to persecute and bring harm to them, however on the road to Damascus he had a supernatural encounter with the Lord, heard the Lord ask "why are you persecuting me?" was made blind for a few days, taken to the house of Ananias where hands were laid on him and he received word that he was to begin to minister.

Acts 9:16 "For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." KJV

The word "suffer" is used 15 times in the New Testament in many different forms, but there is not one time that suffer is used to describe sickness or disease.

2 Cor 12:1-11 "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. 3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) 4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. 5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. 6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.** 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. 8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. 11 I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing." KJV

In this portion of scripture, Paul is defending his apostleship, the priests were always trying to cause problems regarding his ministry, turning the people away from what he was teaching, saying that he was a false prophet and teacher. The Jews were teaching that Paul was leading them away from the foundations of the gospel, they were trying to get the people back under the law, but Paul was teaching that they were free from all that through Jesus, that all the law had

been fulfilled. He is not trying to brag on himself, but is giving all the glory to Jesus; he had had visions and revelations and because of this to keep him from exalting his ministry had received a thorn in the flesh. A thorn in the flesh, is not talking about a physical condition, but something that is a reminder of what the purpose in fulfilling Gods plan for his life was about.

**2 Cor 12:7 "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."
KJV

Over the years the Lord spoke to Paul regarding his ministry and he had received many revelations on different things; righteousness, grace, who we are in Christ Jesus and what we have in Him, apart from our works.

The following scriptures taken from the Old Testament explain what was considered a "thorn in the flesh" to the children of Israel. Earlier God had given specific directions of what the children of Israel were to do regarding the nations, people and kings they would encounter going into the promised land and if they did not obey Him, how the inhabitants would become "pricks in their eyes and thorns in their sides." Joshua was reminding them what would happen if they quit obeying God.

Joshua 23:13 "Know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you." KJV

Judges 2:3 "Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you." KJV

Numbers 33:50-55 "And the Lord spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, 51 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan; 52 Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places: 53 And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it. 54 And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families: and to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance: every man's inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth; according to the tribes of your fathers ye shall inherit. 55 But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell." KJV

2 Samuel 23:6 "But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands:" KJV

The "thorns" were the other nations or people that they would encounter and because of disobedience they would become annoyance and bother to them. It was not a physical thing that would harm their eyes, causing them to be blind or something in their sides.

2 Cor 12:7 "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."
KJV

What was Paul's thorn in the flesh and why did he have it? The thorn was not a physical ailment, nothing was wrong with his eyes; it was a messenger of Satan, someone being used to

harass Paul, sent from the satanic kingdom. The messengers were Jews or religious people coming behind Paul accusing him of teaching wrong things. It was sent to continually buffet him, not letting up. Three times he asked God to remove this persecution from him, but God said no! But that His grace was sufficient to care for him. God told him that he would receive another measure of grace and that as more persecution came to him, he would find that he was at his strongest.

Persecution is going to come to all of us at sometime during our lives and usually comes from the "church" people. If we are living godly lives we will encounter some type of persecution. When we cry out to God, thinking that we cannot take anymore, we will find that we are at our strongest hour.

Paul ministered to many cities and much persecution followed him, because of the religious people trying to discredit his ministry to the Jews and the Gentiles (Greeks). He was beaten, stoned and left for dead, but he left the cities only to return and continued teaching the gospel causing multitudes to believe and be saved.

Acts 14:1 :And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed." KJV

Acts 14:6-7 "They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about: 7 And there they preached the gospel." KJV

Acts 14:19-21 "And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. 20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. 21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch," KJV

Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Lycaonia, Antioch were cities of Galatia. Paul wrote the book of Galatians that would be passed around to all these cities in the future. As Paul began to preach to the people, many miracles and healings took place. The Pharisees did not want this to be preached; so they sent people to stone him.

Gal 4:13-15 "Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. 14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. 15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me." KJV

Gal 4:13-14 "My dear friends, what I would really like you to do is try to put yourselves in my shoes to the same extent that I, when I was with you, put myself in yours. You were very sensitive and kind then. You did not come down on me personally. You were well aware that the reason I ended up preaching to you was that I was physically broken, and so, prevented from continuing my journey, I was forced to stop with you. That is how I came to preach to you. And don't you remember that even though taking in a sick guest was most troublesome for you, you chose to treat me as well as you would have treated an angel of God—as well as you would have treated Jesus himself if he had visited you? What has happened to the satisfaction you felt at that time? There were some of you then who, if possible, would have given your very eyes to me—that is how deeply you cared! " MESSAGE

Paul reminded the people of Galatia that he had been there before, he had preached to them about the liberty that they had in Christ Jesus, but he had been stoned and left not looking to

good, he returned to them to finish what he had started. Now on his second trip he was reminding them that they had been under liberty, but were now trying to backup to what they had been before, getting under the law again and were using their liberty to serve after the flesh, not discipline themselves. The people saw Paul as a messenger from God and because of their love for him; they were willing "to give him their eyes". This did not mean that the "thorn in the flesh" had something to do with his eyes being diseased.

Acts 14:21 "And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch," KJV

2 Cor 12:9-10 "But He said to me, My grace (My favor and loving-kindness and mercy) is enough for you [sufficient against any danger and enables you to bear the trouble manfully]; for My strength and power are made perfect (fulfilled and completed) and show themselves most effective in [your] weakness. Therefore, I will all the more gladly glory in my weaknesses and infirmities, that the strength and power of Christ (the Messiah) may rest (yes, may pitch a tent over and dwell) upon me! 10 So for the sake of Christ, I am well pleased and take pleasure in infirmities, insults, hardships, persecutions, perplexities and distresses; for when I am weak [in human strength], then am I [truly] strong (able, powerful in divine strength)." AMP

Grace as stated in James chapter 4, says that it is power, enabling power, it takes us out of our own strength and enables us to function above our own ability.

Acts 9:16 "For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." KJV

Paul is defending his ministry and the persecutions that he suffered. Because of the ministry to the Gentiles, miracles manifested in different ways, the cloths and the handkerchiefs that he prayed over were given to those unable to come to him, laying them on the sick and they were healed and delivered. There was such an anointing on Paul. In the following scriptures are a few of the things that Paul endured during his ministry.

2 Cor 6:4-5 "But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, 5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;" KJV

2 Cor 11:23-28 "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. 24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. 28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." KJV

Know that God is for you and is not against you. His plan for your wholeness is greater than your plan, His dream for your success in life is greater than yours and the truth of it is that He has planned step by step your comeback and resurrection in life. He has good things for you, so don't allow and let the "thorn in the flesh" tell you that you have to be sick the rest of your life. God wants us healed and healing is ours, He is just looking for a way to get into our lives if we just let Him and the key is to mix a little faith with it and believe.