

A Thorn in the Flesh as a Means of Grace (2 Corinthians 12:7-12)

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Guidelines: Protect confidentiality and follow the leader's prompts

Lectio Divina Rhythms/Process (Repeat three times):

- (a) Read the Scripture passage ("Lectio")
- (b) Reflect on the focus question below ("Meditatio")
- (c) Respond in quiet prayer/journaling ("Oratio")
- (d) Rest in God's invitation for you then pray/share out loud if you want ("Contemplatio")

Introduction: Many in Corinth didn't appreciate Paul's extensive ministry to them. They criticized him as a boring speaker. They said he was not a "Super Apostle" like Apollos and others who were flashy, eloquent, and entertaining. So in 2 Corinthians Paul corrected their thinking by pointing out that true greatness is seen when God's grace is manifested through our weaknesses and sufferings. He uses himself as an example, which included boasting in his "thorn in the flesh."

What is Paul's thorn in the flesh? There are many theories. The context suggests that it was the criticism he continually experienced, not just from the Corinthians but from many groups and people he ministered to. Maybe God wants to leave us guessing so that we would focus on our own personal thorn as a means of God's grace to us.

Opening Prayer: "I rely on God's grace... Not myself" (2 Corinthians 12:9, paraphrased).

Read Scripture: 2 Corinthians 12 (ESV)

7 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. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 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. 10 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.

11 I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I was not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I am nothing. 12 The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.

1st Reading: What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you? Meditate on that.

2nd Reading: Enter into the Scripture passage. What is your thorn in the flesh? What is an example and how do you feel about this? Write down a prayer or pray quietly.

3rd Reading: What is God's personal invitation for you from the Scripture? You can write down what God may be saying to you or a prayer of thanks. Or rest quietly in God.