2Thess #144

A thorn in the side can be part of God’s plan for your life.

Veterans day is tomorrow and I ask that we hold up all men and women who wear the uniform, whether during times of peace or times of war. Hold them up in prayer and gratitude.

This nation is blessed to have had so many sacrifice, for a population that often sweeps them under the rug with nothing more than an occasional gesture or a political speech.

Go back into the OT – Ezekiel chapter two RF.

Where we left off was the instructions and warning given to Ezekiel.

Who would be dwelling in the midst of Babylonian captivity and would witness the decline of the Levitical order and the infiltration of false doctrine and evil into the pure teaching given to men like Abraham and Moses and then handed to Joshua.

There had been infiltration and wickedness creeping in every generation and this was the final saturation point.

You had a rebuilding of Israel once the Persian empire dominated the land. Many good prophets and men who helped to keep the pure truth alive – in fact, the last three prophets of the OT Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi along with Nehemiah became instrumental in keeping GOD’s word and teaching intact.

Then you had 400 years of silence where the copies of the OT were preserved and taught.

Many changes happened for the Jewish people and then the last OT prophet John the Baptist heralds in the true Messiah – Jesus Christ.

One of the jobs of John the Baptist was also to call out the counterfeit leaders and false religious system.

So here in Ezekiel, we see GOD dealing with rebellion and the fifth cycle of discipline was under way.

[/Eze 2:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/eze/2/8/s_804008) “Now you, son of man, listen to what I am speaking to you; do not be rebellious like that rebellious house. **Open your mouth wide and eat what I am giving you**.”

This is the meaning of metabolizing doctrine, digesting the word as a steady diet. It has to be fully accepted and mixed with faith. As GOD the HS inspires the teacher, so too does the student have to digest in similar fashion.\

This is a supernatural chain of command.

The right thing done in the right way…matters!

This has to be followed and respected by everyone involved, starting with the teacher.

If you struggle respecting authority you will be a problematic student of the word of GOD, no matter who the teacher is.

Humility is teachability!

[Eze 2:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/eze/2/9/s_804009) Then I looked, and behold, a hand was extended to me; and behold, a scroll *was* in it.

[/Eze 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/eze/2/10/s_804010) When He spread it out before me, **it was written on the front and back, and written on it were songs of mourning, sighing, and woe**.

In ancient scrolls it was never a double- sided document. This is believed to be a supernatural set of lessons – highlighting the sins of Israel and the solutions and doctrines to back it all up!\

There is personal responsibility that can bring in sighs and woes, as we learn of our own negative volition and what that may bring upon us.

Until you take responsibility for your own decisions and walk with GOD, you will lack true spiritual growth.

The Bible is extremely clear about personal responsibility – with freedom comes great responsibility.

GOD gives us instruction and guidance yet HE will not force it upon anyone.

 REPEAT

When we reject HIS plans and HIS word and do things our own way – we are doing as the original man and woman in the garden – acting as our own little gods.

Very similar to the fallen angels and their leader Satan.

Let me remind you the problem of rejecting GOD’s plan and implementing our own…it always catches up with us!

/Num 33:55 But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from you, then it will come about that those whom **you let remain of them *will be* like thorns in your eyes and like pricks in your sides, and they will trouble you in the land in which you live**. 56 And just **as I plan to do to them, I will do to you.**’”\

Go into the NT – 2Corinthians 12.

The seeds of Satan were never fully destroyed in the promised land! Therefore, Israel would always have attacks and temptations all around them.

The Bel can never make friends with evil, never settle in and get comfortable with evil.

Turning a blind eye to evil in your periphery, is a guarantee you will entangle yourself into thorns and thistles and it will bring in misery at some point!

We see the doctrine of thorns can point us to collateral damage from other people’s negative decisions.

Now as I have mentioned before, certain congregations like Corinth, were very stubborn. The Apostle Paul often had to use tactics like reprimands and divine sarcasm to wake them up.

Many Christians at Corinth would question the authority of Paul and he had to correct this issue of disrespect, it is not bragging – this is factual.

2Cor 12:1 Boasting is necessary, though it is not beneficial; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.

The Apostle Paul was probably given greater visons and deeper teaching then even the original 11 apostles.

It is not random luck that the Apostle Paul wrote nearly half the NT letters.

[/2Co 12:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/2co/12/2/s_1090002) I know a man in Christ, who **fourteen years ago**—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows— **such a man was caught up to the third heaven**.

The Apostle Paul had more than one near-death experience and several visions and teachings from our LORD – this one is related to the stoning seen in Act 14:19.\

The first heaven is believed to be just above the earth’s atmosphere, or part of what we know as the space of stars above us.

The second heaven is an angelic dwelling above that and the third heaven is sometimes referenced as the new paradise, that is the dwelling place of GOD.

The Apostle Paul was raptured up to the third heaven (*harpazō)* and given NT, mystery doctrine for the CA by TLJC.

He was the perfect candidate – he was an expert on the Torah, as Saul of Tarsus he was being trained to someday be a leader of the Sanhedrin.

TLJC showed him the truth of the OT scriptures, commands and the prophecies and how it carried right into the Church Age then into the Tribulation.

[2Co 12:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/2co/12/3/s_1090003) And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—

[2Co 12:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/2co/12/4/s_1090004) was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

[/2Co 12:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/2co/12/5/s_1090005) In behalf of such a man I will boast; but in my own behalf I will not boast, **except regarding *my* weaknesses**.

The mature Christian realizes who they are IN CHRIST, that it is the only thing they can put confidence in.\

No one can brag about how great thou art in our flesh. When we try and brag about our spiritual life, it exposes that the flesh is in control.

The spiritual life is completely dependent upon our Triune GOD. It gives us great comfort once we understand that and accept our weakness of flesh.

[2Co 12:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/2co/12/6/s_1090006) For if I do wish to boast I will not be foolish, for I will be speaking the truth; but I refrain *from this,* so thatno one will credit me with more than he sees *in* me or hears from me.

***IF*** is a Greek 3rd class condition - meaning maybe it will, maybe it won’t happen. Yet, usually having a strong probability in the positive.

In other words, Paul is stating - even if I do seem like I am boasting, it is all related to who I AM IN CHRIST.

/Spiritual confidence is sometimes mistaken as pride, yet it should never be misconstrued. When a SM Bel stands in truth and relies upon GOD it is not arrogance. God wants us to grow to maturity and have spiritual strength which projects a calm, confidence without chest-pounding and braggadocios statements. It is a life of a relaxed mental attitude while becoming the man or woman GOD created you to be!\

The Christian who is comfortable in their walk with GOD - becomes the person GOD created them to be – not a fake, not a religious robot.

Their own unique personality and quirks are magnified under a divine light and they are a joy to be around.

They do not change because of people around them or circumstances they are thrust into.

 REPEAT

**/**[2Co 12:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/2co/12/7/s_1090007) Because of the extraordinary *greatness* of the revelations, **for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given to me a thorn** (*skolops*)**in the flesh,** a **messenger of Satan to torment me**—to keep me from exalting myself!

Part of the doctrine of thorns teaches us that, at times, GOD allows a thorn (problem or defect) to keep us in check and going toward a super-grace life.\

SKUL-UPS, is a very unique type of thorn like a sharp, singular stake.

Like a tent peg.

This is believed to be a medical issue and it is allowed by GOD to have one of Satan’s messengers, inflict this upon the Apostle Paul.

Part of this doctrine of thorns shows us that within this spiritual battle, this temporal walk, attacks are allowed to fall upon Bels. Physical, mental or financial attacks are part of spiritual warfare.

Much of it may have to do with undeserved suffering.

How we handle undeserving suffering gives us a view of where we are spiritually.

 REPEAT

This is a pain or disability or whatever it is, described as a very painful and consistent buffering, which really is like a punching or hitting on and off in the original language.

And then the Apostle Paul said he had prayed about;

[2Co 12:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/2co/12/8/s_1090008) Concerning this I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might leave me.

[/2Co 12:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/2co/12/9/s_1090009) And He has said to me, “**My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.”**Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

Unanswered prayer should always be viewed as one of 3 answers. WAIT, NO or holdfast and rely upon CHRIST to help guide you through.\

Many do not like to hear this but prayer is not always immediately answered or answered in a fashion we desire.

The best way to handle this type of adversity, is maintain your doctrinal intake and application and also use prayer.

Three times is a good rule of thumb that I often suggest – then hand it over to GOD.

You can always circle back around in the future and pray again, but we have to trust GOD hears us and is working in our favor.

Remember - prayer is not a problem solving device.

/God’s grace is interrupted by our own efforts and human viewpoint. Many times, the best place to be is a position of vulnerability, completely weak and allowing God’s grace plan to take the lead. Paul was highly intelligent, strong willed and given incredible insight into the plan of GOD. At this point it was what was needed for his own growth and his ministry. It is during this period that Apostle Paul would leave his tent-making career and go full time into his ministry as well.\

Perhaps GOD was telling him to drop everything and focus on the ministry he was called into.

It is also a time that men like Timothy, Luke, Barnabas, Silus and Titus began to take on stronger supporting roles in the journey of Paul’s ministry.

None of us are designed to be an island unto ourself.

The Apostle Paul needed to be pressed into this circumstance and sometimes it becomes a very intimate matter between GOD and HIS child.

Never assume a Bel who is going through difficulties - physically, financially or mentally that it is divine discipline. It may be a very personal matter between GOD and HIS child.

[2Co 12:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/2co/12/10/s_1090010) Therefore I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in distresses, in persecutions, in difficulties, in behalf of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

God never leaves a prayer hanging out with no answer – it comes in HIS timing and has to be aligned inside HIS plan.

/Personal challenges and a thorn in the side (medically, financially or mentally) may be designed for a reminder that GOD is in control. We have to release our fleshly power, our human viewpoint and fall back into HIS grace to guide us through. Part of our blessings, crowns and rewards for eternity are released because we endure all the challenges of spiritual warfare. We become a victor by not crying out and blaming GOD, by not peeling away and embracing the cosmic system during the tests and attacks.\

Job is a great example of this. He had some times of failure but in the end he remained faithful to GOD.

The Apostle Paul had a few times he stumbled and fell into his flesh – yet in the end, he remained steadfast as an incredible spiritual warrior and leader for all of us to witness and learn from.

Sometimes what seems to be a painful and frustrating experience, or even a difficult change in your life, may be GOD calling you to the witness stand or preparing you for a new ministry.

/Your current thorn in the side may be exactly what God used to get your attention, or perhaps to keep you grounded in HIS grace plan. God will allow you to know HIS exact intention, when you accept HIS power and plan fully. Then walk in HIS truth and grace with no other expectation or manipulation.\