

The Purpose of a Thorn in the Flesh

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh. **—2 Corinthians 12:7**

The purpose of the thorn in the flesh, Paul says, is to keep us from being conceited because of God's unusual blessing. In Paul's case it was because of "surpassing great revelations."

If you say, "I don't have a thorn in the flesh," then I don't suggest you pray, "O, please, Lord, give me one!" I can tell you right now that it is nothing for which you should stand in a line. It is nothing that you pray to get; you will pray to get rid of it. I don't wish it on anybody.

The first qualification for the thorn in the flesh is the fact that the Lord has been extraordinarily good to you. If He has been unusually good to you—you qualify. Is that you? It may not be "visions and revelations from the Lord" (2 Cor. 12:1), but it is nonetheless an equivalent dose of sovereign grace, so wonderful that it is humbling for you to contemplate.

The second prerequisite is that one of your weaknesses happens to be that you tend to take yourself too seriously. If you immediately say, "That's not me," then I doubt that this is true. We are talking here about a thing called "pride." We are talking about a sensitive ego. So if you are sure you don't have a problem where pride is concerned, then there is no problem for you! Congratulations! You will not have a thorn in the flesh. You are exempt, so forget it.

Now I don't want to be unfair, but if you think you don't have a problem with pride, then you show you have no conviction of sin. The more you are convicted of sin, and the more you see of God's glory, then the more you will see how proud you are.

At first you say, "I'm not that bad," and later you say, "I'm horrible." God peels the layers away—that is why you need a thorn in the flesh.

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