

The Balance Series - Lesson 3

THORNS

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- There will be MANY times in our walk with Christ that we will have to deal with nay sayers. Those that won't believe, won't receive, and just plain don't wanna hear the truth of the word.
- Not only will some not hear you , but many will try to fight against you. The devil will send people to make you feel alone, crazy, or like the odd ball because you are standing for truth and not the foolishness that they have bought into.
- God allows this to keep us needing him! He allows people to come against us and fight against us at times so we will never feel that we are better than the world. Just because we have received the truth doesn't mean that we should get comfortable and chill in the spiritual cut! We must continue to pray for and reach out to the world and those in the church that are asleep.
- Paul was troubled by those that were fighting against him. In his efforts to win the lost, he was faced with much persecution.

2Cor. 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.

2Cor. 12:8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

2Cor. 12:9 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.

3 things that are clear in this passage

- Paul was put in a position to need God's grace.
- Paul's thorn was definitely from Satan!
- Paul prayed against it, but God did not remove it but rather enabled him to overcome it.

The bible uses the phrase "thorn in the flesh" in the Old Testament to describe persecution from the ungodly.

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".

Numbers 33:55 - "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".

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".

Ezekiel 2:6 - "And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among SCORPIONS: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house".

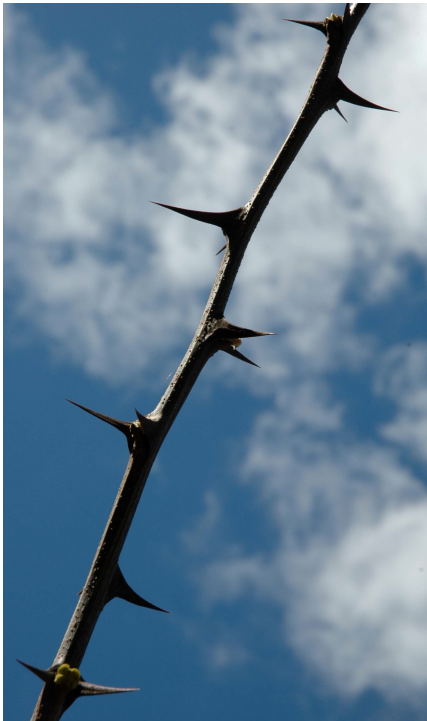
Thorns are people that are attached to you or in your life, sent by Satan, to persecute or cause you to fall. These thorns give us balance and keep us trusting and believing in the power of the living God. They can be:

- People on your job, to keep you silent about your beliefs
- In your family, to keep you from maturing as a true believer
- In your life, to tempt you with sinning.
- In society, to keep sin marketable and the truth unpopular
- In church, to keep ministers of unrighteousness at the forefront of ministry.
- In government, to keep laws in place to promote the antichrist agenda and silence true believers.

Thorns, or persecutors will come. This is apart of being a Kingdom of God citizen in a darkened world.

Romans 5:2-6 *"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we GLORY IN TRIBULATIONS also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope:*

Prosperity preaching with no balance can cause us to believe that persecution or trials should not be coming and we can financially give ourselves out of it. We begin to believe that any trouble or opposition we are having is because we lack faith, power, or have a financial curse on us. These liars that teach these things are thorns themselves from Satan to make us comfortable in this world. **2Cor. 11:15** *Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*



How do we handle thorns? Do what Paul did.

1. Obviously, God wasn't gonna destroy or remove those that persecuted Paul. So, He gave a measure of Grace to Paul to make it through the persecution or infirmity (weakness).
2. God doesn't desire to kill off those that are in our way or those that cause harm to us, but rather they be saved. So we must endure weakness and grow in grace. The more we stand our ground, the stronger we become.
3. Paul's thorn was to keep him from being exalted or puffed up. When we struggle with weaknesses or are persecuted for Christ's sake, it keeps us humble. This is why there is no self glory in true Kingdom work. The glamour, the glitz, the glory should all belong to God!

Summary - In order for us to stay in a place of humility, God will always allow thorns in our flesh. Though we face persecution, we should never be distressed. Sure, we desire for our enemies to leave us alone and let us be the believer we desire to be, just as Paul did. And many times we pray

for God to deliver us from our thorns and He seems to be silent in His responses. This is because God knows what's best for us. If there is no pain, how will we know his healing power? If there is no adversity, how will we appreciate victory? It's all apart of God's plan for us and we must accept what He allows. Remember, we can't have roses without thorns.

2Cor. 12:10 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).