

Suffering and the Believer
2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Paul's thorn in the flesh caused him pain. Three times he asked God to take it away.

Nine Principles From Paul's "Thorn in the Flesh" Experience

1. God allows the Christian to experience suffering. It is a normal part of a believer's life, 1Pet. 4:12. Opposed to this truth is the teaching of many televangelists who claim that believers are "kings kids" who deserve to have health and wealth.
2. There is no automatic relationship between righteousness & suffering. (Exception: Through chronic sinning, one can do damage to their mind, body, soul, relationships, etc. which & brings about suffering.)
3. There is always a purpose behind suffering, v.7. What God wants to accomplish in my life outweighs my desire for comfort.
4. Suffering keeps the believer humble, v.7. Paul experienced the great blessing of going to the third heaven where he saw & heard things that he could not express. The thorn in the flesh kept him humble & useable. It reminded him of his humanity & thus his dependence upon God.
5. God uses Satan to accomplish His purposes. God & Satan are not equal, opposing forces. God is the Creator. Satan was created.
6. It is appropriate to ask God to remove suffering.
7. God sometimes denies the request, v.9. We must ask according to His will, 1 John 5:14.
8. God's grace is sufficient in the midst of suffering, v.9. God's puts us in the middle of circumstances where we cannot figure a way out. He places us in situations where we must cry out for His grace. Daniel 3: Jesus is the 4th man in the furnace.
9. Suffering provides the opportunity for the manifestation of divine power, v. 9-10. The secret of Paul's success was not his apostleship, his self-sufficiency, or his oratorical powers. The thorn in his flesh was Paul's secret to success for it drove him to dependency upon God, v. 7-10.