

What was Pauls Thorn



Pastor Chuck Kennedy

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Table Of Contents

<u>Chapter 1 Paul's Revelations and Challenges</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Chapter 2 Eutychus Dies and is Resurrected</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Chapter 3 Alexander the Coppersmith</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Chapter 4 Strife Between Paul and Barnabus</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>Chapter 5 Paul's Resume of Attacks</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>Chapter 6 Properly Defining Infirmities</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>Chapter 7 Biblical Uses of the Word Thorn</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>Chapter 8 Paul's Eyes Were Not The Thorn</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>Chapter 9 Scripture is it's Own Commentary</u>	<u>22</u>
<u>Chapter 10 Conclusion: Understanding Paul's Thorn</u>	<u>24</u>

What was Pauls Thorn

What was Paul's Thorn?

By Pastor Chuck Kennedy

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What was Paul's Thorn

Introduction: The Truth of Paul's Thorn

One of the intriguing misunderstandings in the Bible is the mention of Paul's thorn in the flesh. This enigmatic phrase has sparked numerous interpretations, ranging from a physical ailment to a metaphorical struggle. In this book, we invite you to delve into this topic, explore the Biblical definition, and allow God to open your eyes and unveil the truth from His infallible word.

What is your interpretation of Paul's thorn in the flesh? In this book, we will explore this intriguing topic in depth. We will delve into the biblical definition of a thorn and present specific references from the Word of God.

Many scholars have offered their perspectives on Paul's thorn in the flesh, leading to a rich tapestry of interpretations. Unfortunately, most scholars have a misguided perception of this topic. As you search for information online, you will often find conflicting views. This is not intentional but rather due to many assumptions being made.

What was Paul's Thorn

The question today is: What was Paul's thorn in the flesh? Many believe it was a sickness, with most speculating it was an eye disease. I'll soon show you from the scriptures why they might think this. However, I believe we may be reading too much into the scriptures with these interpretations. The Bible plainly tells us ***it was a messenger from Satan sent to buffet Paul***, hindering his preaching and teaching ministry, and the Scriptures show us how it accomplished this.



What was Pauls Thorn

Chapter 1 Paul's Revelations and Challenges

We will start with **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.

So here it tells you Paul received an abundance of revelation, more than anyone else. He wrote the majority of the New Testament, with most of the epistles being his. Spiritually, he was very enlightened. Even before meeting Jesus, Paul was highly knowledgeable in the Law. This provided him with a solid foundation, as he knew the Old Testament inside and out.

Then, when he meets Jesus, the living Word, he really takes off. The abundance of revelations he received could have potentially led to pride or an attitude of superiority. But more importantly, Paul became a greater threat to the devil's kingdom due to his extensive knowledge of God's will and workings. He understood that, as believers, we have authority over Satan, and it was revealed to him that we are more than conquerors in Christ.

What was Paul's Thorn

This caused Satan to be even more determined to stop Paul's revealed message from reaching the world. You understand what I'm saying.

There was given to him a thorn in the flesh—in other words, a demon. The messenger of Satan pursued him and interfered with everything he did, causing him constant problems. We know this happened because it is clearly documented in the scriptures.



What was Pauls Thorn

Chapter 2 Eutychus Dies and is Resurrected

When Paul was preaching one time here in **Acts 20:9** And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.

Picture this: three stories up, a man is sitting in a window while Paul is preaching for a long time. He falls asleep, tumbles out of the window, and falls three stories down. The scripture says he was taken up dead.

So, I would say that was definitely a messenger of Satan causing that disruption to buffet and interrupt Paul's preaching. Here it says Paul was long preaching. He must have been deeply engaged in sharing the word with them. Then, this young man falls asleep and tumbles out of the window—that's a hindrance, a real problem. As a pastor, I can tell you that you don't need that kind of interruption, especially someone dying during your service. But that's exactly what happened: the man fell out of the third-story window, and when he hit the ground, he died.

What was Pauls Thorn

Acts 20:10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing *him* said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.

Acts 20:11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

Acts 20:12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

They stopped the service, and Paul went down, fell on the young man, and said, "Don't worry. He's okay. His life is not ending." The young man got up, and everyone was happy. They all went back upstairs, and Paul continued preaching. So, while Satan did hinder the meeting to some extent, he did not fully accomplish his mission. Instead, God turned it into a miracle service.

What was Pauls Thorn

Chapter 3 Alexander the Coppersmith

We are talking about watching this satanic messenger interrupt Paul in various ways and locations. Next, we see another instance with Alexander the Coppersmith in 2 Timothy 4:14-15.

2Tim 4:14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works:

2Tim 4:15 Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.

Alexander the Coppersmith greatly resisted the preaching of the gospel, particularly targeting Paul. Again, we see the messenger of Satan sent to hinder Paul's work. First, we witnessed this through the dramatic incident of Eutychus falling out of the window and dying after a three-story fall. That would certainly stop the service, but it didn't. Paul raised him up, and everyone resumed their worship and preaching.

What was Pauls Thorn

In another instance, Alexander the coppersmith did much evil to Paul. He greatly withstood the words that God had given Paul to teach and preach. Despite these disruptions, Paul continued to fulfill his mission, demonstrating that while Satan's messengers did cause trouble, they could not ultimately thwart God's plans.

Again, we see Satan's messenger at work in a different way, yet still attempting to hinder the mission God gave to Paul. Let's explore further to see what else we can find.



What was Pauls Thorn

Chapter 4 Strife Between Paul and Barnabas

Acts 15:35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

Acts 15:36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see* how they do.

Acts 15:37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

Acts 15:38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

Here, we see another instance where Satan's messenger attempts to create disruption: Paul and Barnabas are having an argument regarding their ministry and the trip they are planning to take. This disagreement further illustrates how obstacles were continually placed in Paul's path to hinder his work for God. Let's delve into this situation to understand its impact.

What was Pauls Thorn

Acts 15:39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

The contention between Paul and Barnabas was so sharp that they parted ways. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus, while Paul continued his journey separately. This division shows how even close ministry partners can face significant challenges and disagreements fueled by Satan's attempts to stop the spreading of the Word. Despite these obstacles, their commitment to their mission remained unwavering.

Acts 15:40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

Acts 15:41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

Eventually, Paul did receive Mark back later, but here we see another example of the messenger of Satan at work. By causing great contention, division, strife, and dissension, he tried to hinder the gospel work of the Apostle Paul. This conflict was so intense that it separated two godly men, forcing them to go in different directions. That's amazing, isn't it? And if that's not enough, look at Paul's track record in 2 Cor 11:21-30.

What was Paul's Thorn

Chapter 5 Paul's Resume of Attacks

2Cor 11:21 I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.

2Cor 11:22 Are they Hebrews? so *am* I. Are they Israelites? so *am* I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so *am* I.

So here begins Paul's resume of his credentials and the price he paid. As you look at each of these hardships in 2 Corinthians 11:21-30, you'll see the messenger of Satan buffeting him, trying to stop him in a multitude of different ways and manners.

2Cor 11:23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I *am* more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

This is what the thorn in the flesh referred to. Paul endured more abundant labors, frequent floggings, and imprisonment. He even faced death multiple times and was brought back to life. Each of these hardships illustrates the relentless efforts of Satan's messenger to hinder his mission.

What was Pauls Thorn

2Cor 11:24 Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one.

Wow! Talk about the messenger of Satan trying! He certainly did. Paul received 39 lashes on five separate occasions for preaching the gospel. This intense suffering shows the relentless efforts of Satan's messenger. Jesus experienced this once, but Paul endured it on five different occasions!



What was Pauls Thorn

2Cor 11:25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

2Cor 11:26 *In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;*

Look at that. One of his trials was the perils among false brethren. This shows that not only was he physically persecuted, but he also faced dangers from those who pretended to be his allies, further illustrating the persistent efforts to hinder his ministry.

2Cor 11:27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

2Cor 11:28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

2Cor 11:29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

2Cor 11:30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

What was Paul's Thorn

Chapter 6 Properly Defining Infirmities

Notice the word "infirmities" here. He never once mentioned any sickness or bodily disease in these passages. Despite all the trials and sufferings listed, he referred to them as his infirmities. This underscores that Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was not about physical illness but the many hardships and persecutions he faced.

Most people think of sickness when they see the word "infirmity." In the Blue Letter Bible, the Greek word for infirmity is "astheneia." It is translated as "infirmity" 17 times, "weakness" five times, "disease" only once, and "sickness" only once. The actual use relates to a lack of strength, weakness, or frailty, whether of the body or the soul. It can mean feebleness of health or a weakness of the soul, such as the inability to understand or do things that are great and glorious, to restrain corrupt desires, or to bear trials and troubles.

When Paul mentioned his infirmities, he was referring to the trials and troubles he faced, not to any eye disease, sickness, or bodily disease. This context helps clarify that his "thorn in the flesh" was about the challenges and persecutions he endured rather than physical ailments.

What was Pauls Thorn

The thorn in the flesh was a messenger of Satan sent to hinder Paul by buffeting him, trying to beat him down through discouragement and hardships while preaching the Gospel. It was not an eye problem or a sickness. In all the infirmities he referred to, not one was a disease or illness. Therefore, you cannot interpret the word "infirmity" as sickness or disease when Paul specifically referenced hardships, not sickness, in his body.



What was Pauls Thorn

Chapter 7 Biblical Uses of the Word Thorn

In the Bible, the term "thorn" is used only seven times. The Greek word for thorn is "skolops," which is translated exclusively as "thorn." Its actual use refers to a pointed piece of wood, a pale stake, a sharp stake, or a splinter.

The first mention of thorn is in **Job 41:2** Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or **bore** his jaw through with a **thorn**? That is not a sickness or disease.

Prov 26:9 As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so *is* a parable in the mouth of fools. That is like a splinter.

Isa 55:13 Instead of the **thorn** shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign *that* shall not be cut off. That's literal. It is not sickness.

Ezek 28:24 And there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house of Israel, nor *any* grieving **thorn** of all *that are* round about them, that despised them; and they shall know that I *am* the Lord GOD. That is representing the people there, not sickness or disease.

What was Pauls Thorn

Hos 10:8 The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the *thorn* and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us. That is literal also.

Mic 7:4 The best of them *is* as a brier: the most upright *is sharper* than a *thorn* hedge: the day of thy watchmen *and* thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity. A literal thorn.

Of course, there is our New Testament scripture which we are studying here. I am trying to point out that the word "thorn" was never used in the Bible to refer to sickness or disease. So why would it suddenly be interpreted that way in 2 Corinthians 12:7? It wouldn't. It is not a disease.

What was Pauls Thorn

Chapter 8 Paul's Eyes Were Not The Thorn

It was never meant to indicate a sickness. It is not saying that Paul's eyes were giving him trouble. Paul's eyes were healed! We know that he was blinded on the road to Damascus, but Jesus sent Ananias and healed him.

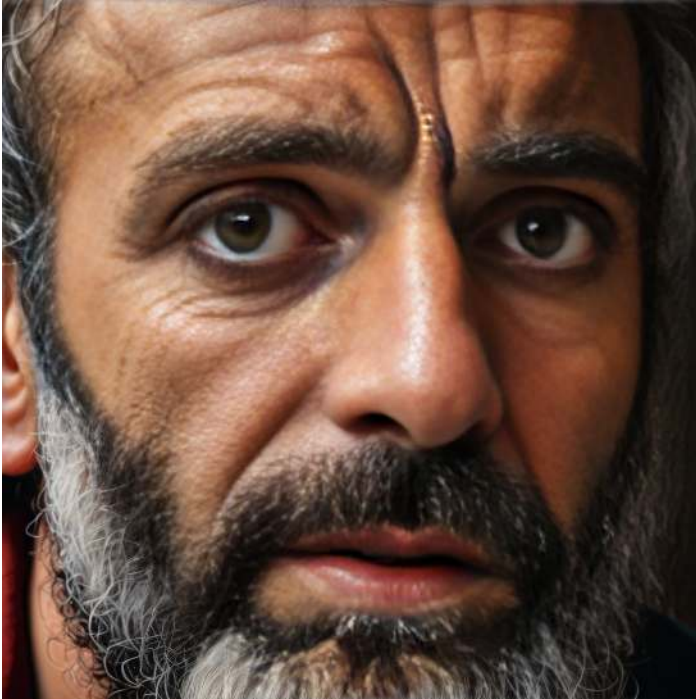
Acts 9:17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

Acts 9:18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

Here is Paul's healing from eye trouble: He did not have continual eye problems. When he met the Lord on the road to Damascus, he was blinded by the brightness of God Almighty appearing to him in person. Then, God sent Ananias to pray for him, healing him from the blindness.

What was Pauls Thorn

These scriptures show that he was healed, so don't put it back on him. If he was healed, and God said he was healed, that is all we need. Take it as it is; do not add to or subtract from the Word of God.



What was Pauls Thorn

Chapter 9

Scripture is it's Own Commentary

There is so much more to this. At the very least, this exposition should show that Paul's thorn in the flesh was a messenger or demon who caused trouble for him everywhere he went, trying to hinder his ministry. In our scripture, it is specifically called the messenger from Satan. Let the scriptures be their own commentary, not people, not man.

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.

The scriptures define themselves, and here it says that he received a thorn in the flesh, which was the messenger of Satan, to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure. Please understand that it was not sickness or disease; it was, in fact, all the difficulties mentioned in scripture.

What was Pauls Thorn

It was Alexander the Coppersmith. It was Eutychus falling out of the window and dying during his preaching. It was the contention between him and Barnabas. It was all these things he mentioned here: labors, prisons, thirty-nine stripes five times, three times beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked, a night and day in the deep, in perils in journeys, perils of water, robbers, perils from his own countrymen, perils from the heathen, perils in the wilderness, perils in the sea, perils among false brethren, weariness, painfulness, watchings, often hunger and thirst, fasting, cold, and nakedness. Nowhere in these infirmities can I find sickness or disease. That was what the messenger of Satan was sent to do to Paul.

What was Paul's Thorn

Chapter 10 Conclusion: Understanding Paul's Thorn

In conclusion, Paul's thorn in the flesh, from a purely Biblical perspective, was not an illness or a physical ailment. It was a messenger of satan, sent by satan, manifesting through relentless persecution and numerous hardships aimed at hindering his ministry. From physical attacks to constant perils and challenges, these were the true thorns in his flesh.

John 8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free..



What was Pauls Thorn

A few key takeaways from this lesson are:

- The thorn was the messenger of satan sent by satan, to buffet Paul in his ministry.
- It was not sickness, disease, or anything to do with his eyes.
- Satan targeted Paul due to his extraordinary revelation from God.
- God did not send the devil after Paul; Satan targeted him due to his revelations and the high calling of God on his life. Satan intended to stop his ministry, but God turned it around for good in that Paul was humbled.
- Paul struggled with it, but God reminded him of the grace he had revelation of and instructed him to use his authority to remain victorious.

By understanding this, we gain a clearer insight into the nature of Paul's struggles and the strength of his faith in overcoming them. From a purely Biblical perspective, that was Paul's thorn in the flesh. Let us take this knowledge to heart and remain steadfast in our own journeys, trusting in God's purpose and grace.

What was Pauls Thorn

Your comments are always welcome. Thank you for reading this book.

About the Author



Pastor Chuck Kennedy is passionate about spreading the love of God. He founded Faith International Christian Center in 2003 and has preached in many countries worldwide. For the past ten years, he has published a Christian newspaper, He's

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