

# Paul's "thorn in the flesh" essay sample



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## **Paul's "Thorn in the flesh" Essay Sample**

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### Introduction

Apostle Paul's "thorn in the flesh" possibly will never be explicit; scripture offers valuable insight into his suffering and directs the person who reads to its possible identity through Paul's suffering. "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh." 1 This expressions stated by Apostle Paul in II Corinthians has develop into a thorn in the flesh of it's own as perceived by theologians. Even as many are able to grasp the authenticity of Paul's "thorn" and its purpose in Paul's life, no common hypothesis has been offered to resolve its identity. It appears probable that Paul's unique addressees understood the precise character of Paul's "thorn" however; modern theologians are left mainly in the dark. Even though numerous academics raise assumptions from what Paul wrote in II-Corinthians and other books, Paul furnishes no solid information to identify the specific distinctiveness of his suffering. Paul's "thorn in the flesh" as Described in [II Cor. 12. 1-9:] Additionally, no major sources beyond scripture have ever resolved this matter, yet through these specifics numerous theories has surface on the subject.

Although an indisputable picture concerning the disposition of Paul's "thorn" may never be apprehended, scripture gives precious insight into his suffering and allows present-day readers to theorize its characteristics as Described in [II Cor. 12. 1-10]. Prior to researching the different assumptions surrounding Paul's "thorn" the text which was printed by Paul personally must be studied. The main support surrounding Paul's "thorn" is established in [II-

Cor. 12. 7-9]. Apostle Paul writes, " 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." 2 [1] II Corinthians 12. 7, KJV

[2] II Cor. 12. 7

Apostle Paul's reference to " revelations" allows the one who reads to look back to the glorified occurrence he describes in [II Corinthians 12. 1-6]. In that portion of Scripture Paul remarks, " I knew a man in Christ" who was caught up into paradise which he described as the " third heaven" and was permitted to hear " unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." 3 Even though no agreement has been reached concerning the precise nature of Paul's revelation, for the basis of this effort, it will be believed Paul is alluding to an occurrence whereby he was carried into the throne room of God. However this occurrence possibly did or didn't essentially transpire; a position that will be talked about a little more as personal hypothesis are reflected upon. 4 Subsequent to this revelation it appears that Paul was vulnerable to the transgression of pride as he clarifies the " thorn" was given him, to keep him from exalting himself. Particular reflection concerning the " thorn" will be talked about later; nevertheless, for now it will be sufficient to say in spite of its distinctiveness the effect of Paul's " thorn" resulted in humbleness. It was specified to keep Paul from " exalting himself" as a consequence of the revelations he received from God. 5 Once he presents a rationale for the " thorn" Paul talks about its character.

He writes " there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me." 6 Thorn is interpreted as " skolops" a " pointed piece of wood or stake." 7 [3] 2 Cor. 12. 2, 3

[4] Jeremy Barrier, " Visions of Weakness: Apocalyptic Genre and the Identification of Paul's Opponents on 2 Corinthians 12. 1-6, Restoration Quarterly 47 no. 1, 42

[5] John Calvin, Commentary on Corinthians—Volume 2 (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1999), 279, [6] II Cor. 12. 7

[7] James Strong, The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: Showing Every Word of the Text of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996) The site of Paul's thorn is in his " flesh". Flesh is interpreted as " sarx" and may be stated as alluding to one or both Paul's human body, or the " unregenerate desires which may linger after salvation". 8 Inside the canon of biblical text " sarx" has been used to allude to both, although, here the understanding of " sarx" significantly influence the elucidation of the character of Paul's " thorn" If " sarx" is his " flesh" this restrains the precise nature of the " thorn" to a bodily difficulty. If " sarx" alludes to mankind's sinful lusts, then Paul's " thorn" could allude to any sinful desire Paul might have been vulnerable to. No matter what the precise character of sarx, Paul says publicly the " thorn" was there to " torment" him. 9 The expression " Torment" in the original tongue is kolaphizo meaning " to beat with a fist." 10 From this depiction Paul's " thorn in the flesh" is to be affirmed as a cause of immense pain in spite of the pain being a spiritual or physical difficulty.

The metaphors of a "stake in the flesh" or being "beaten with a fist" offers material to this study. It has got to be distinguished; Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was not a situation that already existed, however according to biblical text started subsequent to the visions in, [II Cor. 12. 1-6]. The stake was apparently "given" to him by God, because it was Him who Paul asked to take it away and it apparently was the Lord who clarified why Paul must keep the thorn. At this place in his ministry, Paul had been tormented with this thorn for fourteen years void of any lasting respite. 11 [8] John Calvin, *Commentary on Corinthians—Volume 2* (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1999), 279, [9] II Cor. 12. 7

[10] Robert M Price, " Punished in Paradise (An Exegetical Theory on 2 Corinthians 12. 1-10), *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, no. 7, 36

[11] J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians: A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes, and Dissertations*, (1874; Google Book Search, 2007), 187 Along with the torment it caused, Paul's "thorn in the flesh" produced weakness. Paul documents God as saying "His power is perfected in weakness" and Paul would "brag about those weaknesses." 12 This suggestion of "weakness" undoubtedly alludes to the "thorn in the flesh" determining it as the cause of Paul's weakness. Apostle Paul depicts the cause of his torment and weakness as a "messenger of Satan." 13 This depiction offers precious insight into the cause of his, "thorn in the flesh." No matter what the origin of Paul's torment, its origin was in the deeds of Satan and was not the status of a preexisting condition, sinful/lustful self harm, or the effect of natural conditions, but had its foundation in the actions of Satan. 14 Apostle Paul's depiction of the, "thorn in the flesh" as a "

messenger of Satan" specifies this. Messenger interpreted from *aggelos* accurately means "one who is sent" representing the cause of Paul's torment as under the instructions of Satan. 15 The torment ensuing from Paul's "thorn" grows to be more apparent due to Paul's reaction to it. Apostle Paul "beseeches the Lord three times that it might leave him." 16 Originally, Paul wasn't happy to have his "thorn in the flesh." He sought for it to be taken away. He "beseech," accurately "pleaded" for God to take it away. 17 [12] II Cor. 12. 9

[13] I Cor. 12. 6

[14] Charles C. Ryrie *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 190. [15] James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: Showing Every Word of the Text of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order*. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1996 [16] II Cor. 12. 8

[17] James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: Showing Every Word of the Text of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books*. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996), Electronic ed. Apostle Paul asks for help three different times; the Lord answered his prayer, however, it wasn't the response he anticipated. Instead of eliminating the "thorn in the flesh," the Lord blessed Apostle Paul with His grace to continue. 18 Apostle Paul testifies of the Lord's statement as "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." 19 Within this declaration, the Lord's rationale for Paul's distress is exposed. God gave Apostle Paul the "thorn in the flesh" as a consequence of his "revelations" and to display the

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His power in Paul. Relative to this obstructing Paul, it aided him to identify and lean upon the Lord's strength. 20 Paul's feelings concerning his suffering transformed once he acquired the Lord's response to his prayers. Instead of patiently waiting for the thorn to be taken away and eradicating his life of what he considers as constraint he cleaves to his " thorn." In [II Cor. 12. 9] Paul declares he is determined to, " glory in my infirmities," and pursues this by stating he " take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake." 21 Apostle Paul accepts his suffering once he becomes aware of God's reason.

Paul's " thorn" creates two principles of God: 1st it was designed to keep Paul from becoming arrogant subsequent to his revelation of heaven. 2nd to demonstrate the Lord's strength in his ministry. [18] F. F. Bruce, Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free, (Grand Rapids, Mi: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 136. [19] II Cor. 12. 9

[20] F. F. Bruce, Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free, (Grand Rapids, Mi: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 135. [21] II Cor. 12. 10

Garland writes Furthermore that Paul's " thorn" is overflowing with paradoxes: it caused him to become weak nonetheless conveyed to him strength, Satan's messenger was used to give power to however the heavenly revelation wasn't, Apostle Paul could brag regarding the " thorn" but was not allowed to enlighten anyone concerning the " unspeakable words" he listen to in his revelation. 22 Even though the " thorn" starts out as a disadvantage, Paul understands the advantage of his suffering.

Hypothesis Surrounding Paul's " thorn in the flesh:

Assumptions concerning Paul's "Thorn" while there are probably numerous hypotheses concerning the exact particulars of Paul's "thorn" this effort will concentrate on five important hypotheses: Bodily trouble, adversary problems, demonic harassment, licentious desire, and parody. The first of these hypotheses to be considered will be bodily difficulty. Advocates of this hypothesis recognize that *sarx* implies the human body and the "suffering" Paul experience to be some type of physical injury or insufficiency. The foundation for this hypothesis is taken from Paul's other letters; such as [Gal. 4. 13]

Paul speaks of a "bodily (*sarx*) infirmity," and writes in [Gal. 4. 14] "And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not" to the Galatians he was tempted in his bodily (*sarx*).<sup>23</sup> connecting these text to Paul's "thorn in the flesh" is *asthenia*, the "illness" from [Gal. 4. 13] and the "weakness" of [II Cor. 12. 5, 9, 10] are equally paraphrases of the expression *asthenia*.<sup>24</sup> This language feature is missing from numerous current translations, but recognized in the Greek with no trouble. [22] David Garland, "Paul's Apostolic Authority: The Power of Christ Sustaining Weakness (II Cor. 10-13), *Review & Expositor* 86, no. 3, 381, [23] James Strong, the Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: [24] James Strong, the Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: Paul illustrates his "thorn" as *asthenia* in [II Cor. 12] then speaks to the Galatians about his *asthenia*. {weakness'; loss of strength} Lightfoot explains the similarity connecting these scriptures is so close the accepted assumption is that they equally talk about the same topic.

<sup>25</sup> Further credence in a bodily ill is taken from Paul's depiction of his human body as a weak "earthen vessel," and a tent with no eternalness. <sup>26</sup> Smith



writes that Paul portrays himself as “ coming in weakness” and being “ troubled excessively” by a weakness in Asia. 27 Once one studies Paul’s clear depiction of weakness in [II Cor. 12] and material collected from other letters he wrote points to a bodily ill. Added support for a bodily difficulty is offered by Paul’s request to have it taken away. Many thought Paul was troubled with a sporadic illness that permitted him to travel and perform ministry between occurrences but incapacitated Paul when the thorn inflamed in or on his body. 28 Lightfoot, supposes Paul was incapacitated approximately five recognized times: During the unique revelation of Heaven, as Paul preached in Galatia, the mention of Satan’s obstruction in [I Thess. 2. 18],

Paul’s cites fear and trembling in [I Cor. 2: 3], and by way of suggestion from the allusion cited in II Corinthian and Galatians, Paul’s analysis was that a new assault caused Paul to face the topic which inspired him to write about it). 29 [25] J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians: A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes, and Dissertations*. 183 [26] Adolf Deissman, trans. Lionel R. Strachan, (1912; Google Book Search, 2007), 62 [27] Neil G. Smith, “ The Thorn that Stayed: An Exposition of 2 Corinthians 12. 7-9, Interpretation 13, no. 4, 410, [28]F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, (Grand Rapids, Mi: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 135. [29] J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians: A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes, and Dissertations*, 187

Obviously in Lightfoot’s design Paul was stricken after his last appeal for the thorn to be taken away but does not oppose the texts concerning Paul’s “ thorn in the flesh.” Should Lightfoot’s development be practical, it offers <https://assignbuster.com/pauls-thorn-in-the-flesh-essay-sample/>

considerable authority for a bodily ill. In order to establish the hypothesis of a bodily ill, advocates relate to Paul's mention of a " messenger of Satan" as the source of his suffering. It's not outside the dominion of satanic goings-on to place bodily infirmities upon people. All through the bible satanic beings have been witnessed as the basis for muteness, blindness, and seizures. 30 Every one of these could have incapacitated Paul. Ramsay writes of the observations amid the heathen of Asia Minor. He comments if a person desired to chastise an opponent they would search out a heathen god for a curse depicted as " fever, chills, torment, pallor, sweating, and heats by day and night." 31 It trail in this instance as the " messenger of Satan" one might recognize as the satanic power boosting the counterfeit god troubling Paul.

The Corinthians and Galatians would probable be familiar with this type of observations and enthusiastically comprehend Paul on this subject.

Furthermore a person suffering such a hardship might be scorned and observed as an individual who has been placed beneath a divine curse. 32 This goes well with Paul's remark concerning the Galatians encouraging welcome in view of his physical circumstance. 33 without doubt losing the capacity to preach because of an infirmity and being viewed as cursed might certainly convey the humbleness Paul illustrated in [II Cor. 12:] [30] Charles C. Ryrie Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth, (Chicago, Il: Moody Press, 1999), 188. [31] William Ramsay, A Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, (1899; 2008), 423 [32] Ibid., 223

[33] Gal. 4: 14

Although the prior opinions support a bodily illness, several assumptions

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have been made concerning its literal character. The early theologian Tertullian thought Paul endured from pain to his head or ears. 34 Various academics as well as, Lightfoot and Bruce have suggested epilepsy. The convulsions linked to epilepsy appear to agree with the satanic activity connected with the " messenger of Satan." 35 Indeed the " trembling" Paul spoke to the Corinthians regarding might in truth express a seizure. 36 Nevertheless, anything besides epilepsy appears to be unsubstantiated. Ramsay supposes the illness was a harsh fever present with a headache; a problem that was widespread in Asia Minor. 37 Despite the fact that this emerges as possible, it might make it past the sphere of numerous expositors viewpoints. The last assumption of Paul's affliction was the effect of an eye infection. This assumption has a solid textual dispute since Paul wrote the Galatians would have readily gauged out their eyes and offered them to him. 38 Previous to this mentioning Paul had just talked about his " physical infirmity." This closeness disputes profoundly for an eye illness. Price writes that further implications have been made counting; malaria, neuralgia, colic, rheumatism, leprosy, and many other probable illnesses linger unspecified by academics. 39 once the facts are assessed, it appears the bodily difficulty hypothesis supports an epilepsy or eye illness. [34] Neil G. Smith, " The Thorn that Stayed: An Exposition of 2 Corinthians 12. 7-9, Interpretation 13, no. 4, 410 [35] " Epilepsy"\* Encyclopedia Britannica, 2008. Encyclopedia Britannica [36] II Cor. 2: 3

[37] William Ramsay, A Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, (1899; 2008), 425 [38] Gal. 4: 15

[39] Robert M Price, " Punished in Paradise (An Exegetical Theory on II Cor.

12. 1-10), *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, no. 7, 35 Every additional idea seems to be purely theories deficient of any textual or chronological support necessary for sound reasoning. Another hypothesis to study regarding Paul's "thorn" is the individual rivals who attempted to block his ministry. The previous result is taken from the background in which Paul is noting in II Corinthians. In its entirety II Corinthians is filled with clashes involving Paul and individuals generally recognized as "super-apostles." 40 In (II Cor. 11) Apostle Paul speaks to the dishonesty he considers the Corinthians may have had to deal with through the ministry of phony apostles. 41 Paul additionally notes, Satan has the ability to camouflage himself as an angel of light and his satanic follower's masquerade as "servants of righteousness." 42 The accepted correlation is that Paul compares the counterfeit apostles with servants of Satan. It would not be an illogical conclusion to equate the followers of Satan with the "messenger of Satan" Paul notes this in his explanation of the "thorn in the flesh." 43 The dispute for adversaries is strengthening owed to the outcome the "thorn" formed in Paul's body. Paul notes the "messenger of Satan" had been sent to "torment" him.

44 "Torment" at this juncture is a translation of *kolaphizo* that illustrates a person's action relating to "beating with the fist." 45 The "beating with a fist" might be accurate as Paul reports having been beaten on numerous occurrences, or it may possibly be a metaphorical account of the malevolent activities of Paul's adversaries as they usurp his influence with counterfeit teachings. 46 [40] Terrence Mullins, "Paul's Thorn in the Flesh," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 75, no. 4, 301 [41] II Cor. 11: 1-14

[42] II Cor. 11: 14-15

[43] II Cor. 12: 7

[44] II Cor. 12: 7

[45] Terrence Mullins, "Paul's Thorn in the Flesh," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 75, no. 4, 301 [46] II Cor. 11: 24, II Cor. 6: 5

Additional facts for a human being antagonist are established in Paul's account of his suffering as a "thorn in the flesh." That may possibly be devotedly acknowledged by Paul's Jewish addressees to signify an adversary. Numerous Old Testament scriptures portray the opponents of Israel in comparable expressions; {Numbers 33: 55 "thorns in your sides," Joshua 23: 13 "thorns in your eyes," and Ezekiel 28: 24 "painful thorn." Mullins writes, Paul's "thorn" is markedly comparable to the abovementioned text. Paul's statement has a similarity to the OT scriptural text; his could be easily replaced by any of the above, and not change the inference of the text. 47 The Jewish addressees might quickly recognize what Paul had noted concerning human resistance. Ought the adversary to be thought of as the cause of Paul's "thorn," an investigation has got to be made concerning their discovery. Surely the "super-apostles" in II Cor. 11: 5 must be considered as key competitors.

In this view Paul's "thorn" might possibly be used to speak of his knowledge as well as ridicule these adversaries. Calvin supposes Hymenaeus, Philetus or Alexander may be in considered. 48 unquestionably, any of the broad choices of adversaries Paul faced throughout his ministry might be referred to. It could be that Paul's "thorn" was the reality that his ministry might be filled with resistance until his death. A third theory, satanic assault, comes

from an expressed evaluation of (II Cor. 12: 7-10). In this hypothesis the, " messenger of Satan" is used to indicate one of Satan's demonic subordinates. Ryrie writes the universal function of evil satanic spirits is to press Satan's schema on earth. Undeniably distressing an apostle could come under this schema. 49 [47] Ibid., 301

[48] John Calvin, Commentary on Corinthians—Volume 2 (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1999), 279 [49] Charles C. Ryrie Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth, (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 187.

Conviction for a satanic assault is established in the rendition of " messenger". Interpreted from *aggelos*, that's most frequently suggested as " angel" in American bibles. 50 An accurate interpretation should be that the " thorn in the flesh" is an " angel serving Satan." While evil spirits are commonly seen as " messengers of Satan, it might not be outside of God's realm to use demonic spirits to bring the Lord's intentions to past. Providing the Lord had " given" Paul the " thorn" God could definitely use a satanic messenger to cause Paul to become humbled, from a unending satanic assault. 51 In the book of Acts, Luke's letters offers an abundance of evidence about Paul's battles with satanic authority. 52 biblical texts show God's using evil spirits to carry out His intentions, which leaves no reason for keeping Paul from suffering at the hands of satanic spirits. 53 A fourth consideration of Paul's " thorn" is weakness to a particular sinful hunger. In disagreement to a bodily ill, advocates at this juncture view *sarx* as the sinful desires lingering after salvation. 54 While this hypothesis has created hardly

any supporters and Calvin embraces this observation to be preposterous, hard work has been done to gather support.

55 Petitions to biblical text are completed during Paul's suggestion in [I Cor. 9: 27] where he have to labor to conquer bodily temptation. 56 [50] James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: Showing Every Word of the Text of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books.* (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship. 1996) [51] Charles C.

Ryrie *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*, (Chicago, Il: Moody Press, 1999), 197. [52] Acts 16: 18, 19: 14

[53] Judg. 9: 23, I Sam. 16: 14, I Kings 22: 22

[54] John Calvin, *Commentary on Corinthians—Volume 2* (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1999), 279 [55] *Ibid.*, 279

[56] Robert M Price, " Punished in Paradise (An Exegetical Theory on 2 Corinthians 12. 1-10), *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, no. 7, 36  
Conclusion concerning Paul's " Thorn" Once one abandons the preceding hypothesis, two continue for concluding thought, satanic assault and bodily illness. In the closing study, neither hypothesis can be straight forwardly thrown away. With this thought, it might be more advantageous to see Paul's " thorn" as mixture of each one. It appears best to study Paul's " thorn" as an irregular bodily illness provoke during satanic assault. Introducing these assumptions in concert assist in persuading several of the situations Paul sketches in [II Cor. 12: 6-10]. The most noticeable stipulation is Paul's indication of a " messenger of Satan". A straight forward interpretation of this expression undoubtedly points to a satanic assault. Next, a bodily illness completes the condition for " weakness". As written previously, bodily

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weakness is well inside the dominion of an attack by evil spirits. Additional, the irregular character of the illness aids to persuade Paul's three entreaties to have it taking away and supports his depiction of his sickness in [Gal. 4: 13, 14]. Conclusion:

In the concluding investigation of Paul's " thorn" it must be made known that despite flawless exegetical doctrine, flawless comparative research, or perfect chronological restoration academics and laymen equally might still carry on fundamentally in the unexplained concerning its clarification.

Debates and conversations will by no means be fully squashed, regardless of the perplexity concerning its identity; individuals who read about Paul's " thorn" should keep in mind the proper truth of the thorn, in spite of the uncertainty of its identity. The Lord had a reason for Paul's " thorn"; through the thorn God is personally shown to be concerned with individuals that are chosen to serve Him. Through the thorn it's discovered that God is shown to be personally engaged with individuals who are chosen to serve Him.