

I have written before about the fact that sometimes “I appear to be invisible”¹. Even though I am active in my congregation, there are some people that simply do not engage with me. I don’t push myself on them to get their attention, but I do look to see if they want to make contact. Most seem to people enjoy the interaction with others, but not all.

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:7, “... in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.” This sounds very harsh, and Paul asked for relief three times before the Lord answered him: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness (vs 9).” Paul then saw in this a great lesson, as he came to understand that even in his weakness, Christ’s power would rest on him.

When I have some type of struggle with people, I think about Paul’s message and think about the fact that we may all have a “thorn in the spirit” to deal with as well. I certainly feel that there is a thorn in my spirit. In fact, I have had some serious thorns; most are just annoying, like a splinter (though these can become infected and cause us great pain and loss). For the worst of these I asked God to remove it many times; nothing happened until I asked for deliverance and He almost immediately delivered me.

Church family thorns don’t happen very often, but they seem to me to occur with young aspiring leaders with whom I somehow do not fit. I suppose there is a “selective outreach” program involved.

What should we do with people who don’t like us or think that we are worthy of their attention; those who assess us as a “zero”? Pursue them? Brown nose? Let it go (if they do not want contact)? Do we need a mediator? If I knew of anything that I might have done to offend, I would apologize. That would require some kind of interaction, though. If there is a real cause for the problem, it would likely lay deep beneath the surface.

I don’t know the real answer, but I pray for these thorns that they be removed and the injuries be healed. I do not like to think of having some form of spiritual leprosy. I also don’t want the thorns to blind me² from seeing how to treat people as Christ did.

We all know that Jesus had His thorn in the flesh, so to speak, as He had a crown of thorns, as well as nails and a spear that pierced Him. He, somewhat like Paul, also asked for His role as the upcoming sacrifice to be removed (three times³). But Christ finished His work at the cross, which removed the thorn of sin from our own souls.

Think of these thorns on a spiritual level as being in the Spirit of Jesus. So I look to how He dealt with this and resolve to follow Him!

1. “I Appear to Be Invisible”, <https://www.storiesofthesecondswordsman.com/wp-admin/post.php?post=180&action=edit>
2. It is interesting to note that in the Old Testament, pagan nations are spoken of being thorns in the eyes (Joshua 23:13 and similar in Numbers 33:55). Is a thorn in our eye something like having a plank in our eye (Matthew 7:3-5)?
3. Matthew 26:36-46