

Sometimes it seems that we “appear to be invisible”¹. Even though we are active in our spiritual community, there are some people that simply do not engage with us. When I encounter this behavior, I don’t push myself on them to get their attention. I, however, do look to see if they want to make contact. Most seem to people enjoy interaction with others, but not all.

Our brother Paul talked about having a thorn in his flesh, which he called a messenger of Satan given for the purpose of tormenting him (likely trying to lead him away from his faith)². This sounds very harsh, and Paul said that he asked for relief three times before the Lord answered him with the idea that His grace should be sufficient to overcome the thorn³. 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, especially those in the church family, 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 has been a thorn in my spirit at various times. 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 then He almost immediately delivered me.

I struggle with the question of what we should do with people who don’t like us or think that we are worthy of their attention⁴. How far should we pursue them? At what point should we just let it go? Do we need to get the help of a mediator? Having no interaction to begin with, it is difficult to think of what offense I could possibly have presented.

I don’t know the real answer, but I pray for these thorns that they be removed and the injuries be healed (on both sides). I do not like to think of having some form of spiritual leprosy. I also don’t want the thorns to blind me⁵ 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 times⁶). But Christ finished His work at the cross, which removed the thorn of sin from our own souls.

I study how the Spirit that lived in Jesus enabled Him to deal with His thorns, and I realize we must resolve to follow how He dealt with all relationship⁷ issues!

1. See “I Appear to Be Invisible”, <https://www.storiesofthesecondswordsman.com/wp-admin/post.php?post=180&action=edit>
2. “... in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.” 2 Corinthians 12:7
3. “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” 2 Corinthians 12:9
4. Paul and John both noted many enemies in their writing – e.g., Paul / Elymas (Acts 13:7-9); John / Diotrephes (3 John 9-10).
5. 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)?
6. See Matthew 26:36-46.

7. Concerning relationships, see Philippians 2:5ff.

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