

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

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[0 : 0 0] In 2 Corinthians chapter 12, starting at verse 7, he says, Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities and reproaches and necessities and persecutions and distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then I am strong.

That's what Paul has to say about this thorn in the flesh here. I'm not going to preach Paul's specific thorn in the flesh, but with the Lord's help here. I'd like to preach for just a little while about what Satan does to try and hinder the people of God. This is just one example of many in the scriptures of something being done to one of God's people that may try and hinder him just a little bit.

Now listen, Paul says here, he says, it was given me, a thorn in the flesh was given me. It doesn't specify whether that thorn was of God or whether that thorn was of Satan, but it goes on to say that there was a messenger of Satan that came to buffet Paul. He came to, he came to bother Paul. He came to get on Paul's nerves, in other words, came to rep against Paul. And folks, we know that that was undoubtedly Satan that done that. We know that Paul had a thorn in the flesh that got on his nerves, something that hindered his walk, whatever it was, whether it was a physical element that he had, whether it was a mental element that he had, we don't know, but we know that he felt like he hindered his work for God and it hindered his walk with God. So thrice he besought the Lord that he would remove this thorn in the flesh and thrice the Lord denied him. And Paul plainly states it here in the scriptures. It was to keep him humble. It was to keep him down to a low estate where Almighty God could use him so that Paul wouldn't feel like he was being exalted above the measure where God wanted him to be. But sometimes when we get hindrances in our life, they may come from Almighty God because the people of God are getting a big head about them. They're getting the attitude of look what I've done, look where I've been, look what I've done for God, look at where I'm going, look where God, look at the people I pray for, look at the songs that I sing, look at the lessons that I teach, look how much time I spend in my Bible. God may just slow you down. God may put you flat on your back to humble you down as a good God will do for his children. Howdy. That's my God because that, but sometimes, sometimes it ain't God. Sometimes it's the devil that hinders us.

Sometimes it's demons that hinder us. Sometimes it's those little nymphs that knows that every one of them knows that hell is going to be home one day after a while for the, hey, sometimes it's them that gets on our nerves. Paul had discernment about him. He knew what God had done. He knew that God had put that thorn in his flesh, but he also knew that this messenger that was set up above him was from Satan. Sometimes we need to use better discernment in our lives to see who's sending what. Hey, if it's from Satan, I'd call on God to rebuke it. If it's from God, I would praise God that he's injured me. I would praise God that he's done with me because if he does so, it shows I'm still his child. Amen. Because God chastises his own. God will chastise his own children. He don't mess with the world. Listen, sometimes God will go out there and he'll wake him up. He'll shake him up. He'll rattle him around the world he will, but he only chastises his own. He only busts the hides and the backsides of those which belong to him. Hey, the world's gonna do what the world's gonna do. That's why I've preached many times over. We shouldn't surprise us at the murder rate sky high.

[4 : 3 1] We shouldn't surprise us about the alcoholism and it shouldn't surprise us about the drug use because heathens will act like heathens and pagans will do what pagans do. The world has always done what the world does, but the people of God have been separated from the world. They are peculiar people. They are concentrated, segregated from the world to do the service of God. And if we have that kind of ungodliness and that kind of build in our love, our service to God is all for naught.

Amen. Amen. Paul here, he understood a couple of things. He knew one was from God. He knew one was from Satan. Satan will try and hinder you. The devils will try and hinder you. The demons will try and hinder you too many times. Y'all have heard me say it before. Satan and the demons, they don't, or they don't tempt the people of God without right, blatant sin because we know better. We know better. We know what God will do. How does he tempt us though? How do they tempt us through discouragement? They tempt us through depression. They tempt us through sadness. They'll throw different things out there in our way to make us get in our head. And if they can get in our head for one second, if they can make us doubt the presence of God in our lives, if they can make us say, oh God, where are you now? If they can do that one second in our lives, then it's one second that we have not been praising God. And folks, many seconds will lead up to a minute and many minutes will lead up to an hour. But before you know it, you'll be doubting God altogether. So we stay red up. We stay prayed up. We come at these things with the same thing Jesus Christ did. I told a while back about the three temptations of Jesus Christ that we find. We find where the Spirit of God drove Jesus into the wilderness. It led Jesus into the wilderness to have what done, to be tempted, to be tempted of Satan, to be tempted of the devil. The Spirit of God led him into the wilderness so that he would be tempted. But every time that Jesus rebuked what was going on, he used the scripture. He said it is written and he would go on to tell them what was written in the Old Testament and Satan would tempt him again. He would say it is written. Hey folks, that tells me the more this Bible I know, the better my odds are of getting under Satan's own skin when it comes against me. When the demons come, when the demons come, now listen, you be careful rebuking the demons. You be careful rebuking Satan. It cost us in doing that. Tell you what, you read over in the little book of Jude one chapter book right before the book of Revelation, you read word Michael, the archangel of God. He didn't even read Satan. He said the Lord rebuked the folks. I am powerless. I myself, I am powerless against the forces of darkness. I am powerless against the Prince of the power of the air. I am powerless against the principalities that rule this world. But with Jesus Christ, I've got all the power I need. With Jesus Christ, hey, that's all that I need. I cannot rebuk anything in and of myself, but I can call upon Almighty God to do it for me. You read over in the book of Daniel, you read where Daniel, hey, he uttered a prayer in Gabriel, okay? And he said, hey, I know from the day that you pray, from the day that you suffer your heart from, you say, the day you started to chest eyes yourself. He said this answer was coming from heaven, but the Prince of Persia, he hindered me getting there. The Prince of Persia fought against me and Michael came and he helped me to deliver this answer to your prayer.

You better believe, you better believe if they were on Daniel, they'll be on you too. I say, you're more important than Daniel. I say, you're as godly or as anything else is Daniel, because I know how we put these people, these Old Testament prophets up on pedestals sometimes, but you better believe they'll be trying to hinder your prayers as well. They'll be trying to get in your head as well. They'll be trying to get into your heart as well. They'll be trying to let you doubt God as well. What do you think? What do you think those 21 days that they were fighting when Gabriel was trying to get to Daniel before it was to make Daniel wonder if Almighty God had even heard this prayer? But he said, your prayer has been heard, Daniel, your answer has been on the way, but hey, there was a bad taking place, but Almighty God got us through, Michael came, he helped out, and here's the answer to your prayer. My God works in the same way for you, for me, and for everyone. And when I pray to God, he hears me through Jesus Christ. Every time I hit my knees, every time I bow my head, every time I utter a petition to my God, he hears and he will answer, hallelujah.

[9 : 56] Amen. My God hears me. My God hears. Folks, Paul, one of the most holy men you'll read about in Scripture, one of the most consecrated men, one of the most sanctified men you'll read about in Scripture, even he had a thorn in his flesh, even God, even had to humble Paul down, he had to humble Paul down so that he wouldn't get that big head about himself. So when God does the same thing with you and God does the same thing with me, praise him for it, praise him for it, praise him, whatever it is. And folks, I know that's a whole lot easier said than done. I understand that it's hard to praise God when you lay in a hospital bed, feel like you're about to die. Hey, it's difficult for that to do. It's hard to praise God sometimes if it's a loved one that's laying there and you don't know if they're going to be here with you the next hour or so. It's hard to praise God when you're on the sick bed, when you're on the death bed. It's hard to praise God when you don't know if you're going to have money in the check and account the next day or not. But my God will see us through. My God has promised to be with me always, even to the end of the world.

Praise God. Why would I doubt? Why would I doubt? If I know he saved me and he did praise God. If I know that he saved a filthy black wretched sinner such as I am, why do I doubt that he is going to take care of me for the rest of this time when my Bible plainly says that he, that he will, he will do so. He'll be with me. He'll walk with me. He'll be my fortress. He'll be my rock.

He'll be my high tower. He'll be my guard. He'll be my front, my back, my side. He'll be my above, my below, my God has got me. I don't doubt that. And he's got all his children. He's got all of us.

Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities. It's hard to do. Also, I take pleasure in infirmities and reproaches and necessities and persecutions and distresses for Christ's sake. All these negative things Paul says, I take pleasure in these things. But notice he adds what kind of things. He says, all these things that happen for Christ's sake, these are the things I'll take pleasure in.

Too many times, churchgoers, Christians, however you want to phrase it, they'll say, I don't know why I'm going through this. I don't know how I got into this mess. I know I did this.

[12:40] Now listen, y'all probably heard people say that too. I know I done this and I know that I shouldn't have. But now I'm here in this spot and I just don't know what God's doing. I don't even know if God hears me. You got yourself in that game. Hey, the Bible says God will never put more on us than we were able to bear. And whatever he puts on us, he'll make a door, he'll make a way of escape for it. Because the Bible not saying, in fact, I believe Paul wrote that to the same church that he wrote this letter to. But either way, he says he will not put more on us than we are able to bear. The thing is, we post stuff on top of ourselves. God ain't got nothing to do with it. God ain't got nothing to do with some of the stuff that we put on ourselves. And yet we'll scream to God, why are you doing this to me when we've done it to ourselves the entire time? Hey, church service is no different.

I'll preach this sermon here about that one time when Jesus was in the house of Martha and Mary. Hey, excuse me. He was in the house of Martha and Mary. Jesus was there and there was complaining going on. Mary there at the feet of Jesus. Martha wanted because Mary wasn't helping. Hey, it wasn't Martha's fault that she wasn't there at the feet of the Savior getting fed by the man of law. It was Martha. Martha thought she was doing what was right. She thought it was her serving Jesus and serving the disciples. And she thought that that's what she needed to be doing. What she needed to do was sit at the feet of Jesus Christ and hear what he had to say. Churches are full of people like that.

Lord, I'm there every Sunday. I open the doors an hour before anybody else gets there. Lord, I teach Sunday school. Lord, I direct all the Bible schools. Lord, I bake a dozen cakes every time we have a bake sale. Lord, I do this and I do that. I'm so wore down. Lord, why are you letting this happen to me? God says I never asked you to do those things. You're doing those things all on your own. Hey, praise God for the people that come and they unlock the doors for the church.

They vacuum the floors. They clean the windows, clean the house, clean the fellowship halls. I've been gone for those people, but don't get the whining about doing a work for the Lord.

God likes a cheerful giver. That's just another example of that. You give me the time to the service of the Lord. Give me the time to the service of the Lord. I believe you can flip back to just a chapter or two in certain Corinthians to read about how God loves a cheerful giver.

[15:10] That's right. But God loves a cheerful giver. We don't need to whine, but we need to recognize when Satan is doing something to us. We need to recognize when God is doing something to us, and we certainly need to recognize when we are doing something to ourselves.

Satan will always be there. The demons will always be there trying to hinder our walk, trying to hinder our prayers, trying to get under our skin, trying to get on our nerves.

They will always be there doing that. Folks, it's been like that from the get go. I said, I just told you about Daniel just a few minutes ago, and his prayer, or the answer to his prayer, was hinder folks.

That was a few hundred years before Jesus Christ was ever born.

And the devil was right there hindering that when Jesus Christ was born, hey, Herod wanted all the kids in the town killed, or in that whole region killed. Why was that? Because Satan wasn't on the picture. Satan has always been there to destroy Jesus Christ, to destroy the church of God, to destroy the believers, to destroy the testimony of the saints. He has always been there to do that, and he always will until Jesus Christ comes, and he's cast him into the lake of fire to burn forever.

He'll always be there doing his job, which is to get on our nerves, which is to bother the people of God. So you don't bother the folks out in the world. That's right. He's already got them. He's already got them. Who does he bother? He bothers those that are born again.

He bothers those that are Christian. He bothers those that have already been bought with the blood of Jesus Christ. He has no reason to go out here to the prostitutes. He has no reason to go out here to the homosexuals. He has no reason to go out here to the fornicators, and to the liars, to the cheaters, to the stealers. He has no reason to go to them because folks, children of God will not act in those matters. He's already got those people out there in the world. Why would he bother them? That might cause them to run on the cross. That might cause them to run to the closest church building, run to the closest preacher, and ask what must I do to be saved? He leaves those people alone and he hinders the children of God. And it's always been that way and it always will be that way.

[17:32] It always will be that way. You read in Revelation chapter 12. You read about a woman. You read about a woman. She's about to give birth. There was a dragon right there in front of her waiting on the child to be born, waiting on him to devour it as soon as it was born. That was Satan to devour Jesus Christ. That was Satan to devour the church. That was Satan to devour the plan of God as soon as it was born. As soon as it was to enter into the world, the dragon was there waiting to destroy it.

But folks, hey, that child was preserved. That woman was sent over in the wilderness. God will take care of his own. She was sent to the wilderness. God took care of her. He provided for her all the while when all hell is breaking loose around them. She's in the wilderness with God providing for her. And he does the same thing for his people. He does the same thing for his church. He does the same thing for the people of God. It's done been quoted once tonight. David said, I was young and now I'm old. I've never seen the righteous forsaken nor see beggin for bread. Praise God. The people of God will not do without help or vibe for them. It might not be a deep wound. It might not be a rib eye. It might not even be a hamburger. It might be a bologna sandwich. But either way, God will provide for his people. He'll provide, hey folks, if he didn't, if God didn't provide for me, like this book said he would, I'd chuck it in the trash. You never see me open the doors of this church again. But he does. He does and he will continue to do so. He will continue to take care of his own. Paul here suffering a thorn in the flesh. Whatever that was, we don't know. Not only that, from God, he was suffering a messenger from Satan. He was getting it from both sides.

He was getting it from both sides. Had enough discernment about him though to understand, hey, this is coming from Almighty God and this is coming from the enemy. Most you have an enemy. You have an adversary. You have a liar. You have a cheater. You have an accuser that constantly stands before God, accusing the brethren. We have an enemy there. But praise God. He is a defeated foe. He's already been defeated by Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ died, was placed in the grave and arose the third in a point of mourning. Victorious over death. Hell in the grave. It was forever. Satan was defeated regardless of how much he bothers you, gets under your skin, annoys you or hinders you. He is a defeated enemy. Hallelujah. He's done been beat. We have nothing to worry about. We got nothing to worry about. The Bible says, I am he that liveth him, was dead, behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And hold the keys of hell and of death. That's Jesus Christ, Revelation 118, where he says that he holds the keys of hell and of death and no one will ever take them from him. That's my God. That's the one that saved me. That's the one that shed his blood that I could be saved. That's the one that made a way for me when there was no other way. When I was out in the world and I was hopeless. When I was out in the dark, when I was stumbling around, unable to see what was causing me to fall. He's the one that came to that dark place. Came to that black place. He's the one that picked me up from the mire I was in. Placed my feet upon a solid rock and established my goings. And he's alive forevermore. I'm his and he's mine. My beloved is mine and I'm his. Praise God. I'm his. Folks, have discernment. Have discernment. Be sure you know where your hindrances are coming from. Be sure you know if it's from God, God's getting your attention.

God's wanting something from you. He's wanting you to pay attention to something. If it's from Satan, he's wanting to draw your attention away. He's wanting to draw you away from God. He's wanting to draw you away from the fold. Hope from them sheep are in the fold. There's no safer place for them to be. I'm talking literal shepherds and literal sheep and literal foes right now. They're in the fold. That shepherd to give his life. Jesus said I give my life for the sheep. He gives his life for the sheep. Today's coming a separation day one day. Matthew chapter 25. Jesus said those on the right, the sheep on the right, and the goats will be on the left. So I'm going to separate. There's going to be a separation one day. Praise God. I'm a sheep. Praise God. I'm going to be on his right

because those on the left were told to depart and everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels depart and to everlasting power, everlasting flage. There's an entire world out there. There are churches right now and there is doctrine right now that says the hell is not forever. The hell is just a ministerial moment of time. There's people out there that say the hell is not real but my Savior said that it was real. He preached about hell more than he did heaven.

[22 : 50] He wanted the morning to go out. There's punishment out there. There's punishment out there for those that don't believe there's punishment for the goats.

That's where I take pleasure in infirmities and reproaches and necessities, persecutions and distresses for Christ's sake. For when I'm weak, I'm strong. In the final words in that particular passage, for when I'm weak, I'm strong. It completely goes against the grain of everything that we have as human beings. That goes against your pride. That goes against your self-will. That goes against everything that you know as being a human being. When I'm weak, I am strong. But folks, when God makes us weak, whatever infirmity it is that he makes in our way, when he makes us weak, then we're going to be the strongest that we've ever been because when he makes us weak, we have to depend on him that much more. When he makes us weak, we have to depend on his strength.

We have to depend on his mercy. Hey, when we feel like we're doing it all ourselves, we tend to put God on the back burner. We tend to put Him in the back seat, maybe even in the trunk for just a little while. So God will get our attention sooner or later, one way or another. And when He does, it is to prove just how weak we are and just how strong He is.

Amen. My God's strong. I got it all weakly. Look at what He's done to Peter. Look at what Jesus done to Peter. Look what He's done to Peter. Up on his pedestal, foot and mouth. He says, Lord, I won't deny you. Right after Jesus said, every one of you will be offended at me this night.

[24 : 30] He says, not me, Lord. I will be finished. He says, Peter, you're going to deny me. Before the cock crows twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when that happened, what happened to Peter? He says, he wept bitterly. He wept bitterly when that cock crowed the second time. He wept bitterly.

Does that mean that Peter was a sissy? No. It meant that God had done exactly what Peter needed to be done. He had broken down. He had gotten down to a level where he could use them, gotten down to a level where he could show him some things. I've said it a million times and I'll say it a million and one. If you've never seen that you are a sinner, if you've never seen that you're a wretched, you're depraved and you're filthy in the eyes of God, then praise God, you have never been saved.

You've got to see that. You've got to see that. And the Holy Ghost will show you that. The Holy Ghost will show you what kind of shape you are in and show you just how depraved you really are. Adam and Eve is perfect as they were. They were still depraved. They were still depraved without God. And the sin that entered in and cursed all of mankind is proof of that depravity. They needed God regardless of how perfect he created them. They still needed God. I need God just as much now.

I say born again Christian as I did 15 years ago before I was saved, 20 years ago before I was saved, 30 years ago before I was saved. I need Him just as much. I need Him more now that I'm saved than I did then. But why is that? Because I've got more of a battle on my hands than I did then. I've got these infirmities that God places on me. I've got messengers of Satan that bump with me. I've got demons that whisper in my ear. I need God to help me discern, help me find. I need God to lead and to help. Hallelujah. Amen. He will do all these things for His own. When I'm weak, I'm strong.

Folks, when God makes me weak, He has all intentions of making me strong. He's going to make me weak and lead me there. He will not do that. He didn't save us and then say, okay, you own your own.

[26 : 44] Shoot, get away. No, He saved us. He gave us this wonderful instruction to go by. He gives us a guidance of the Holy Spirit in our lives. God did not save us to just forsake us. God saved us for a purpose. He saved us for His own glory. He saved us for His own magnification. He didn't save me because I was a good fellow and I deserved it. He saved it to bring glory to His own name. He saved me to bring glory to the name of Jehovah God. He helped with the name of Jesus Christ. He saved me that Jesus Christ would not die in vain. That's why He saved me. So when He makes me weak, He's my Father. He got every right to do so. Thank you, Jesus. He's got every right to do

so, but He will not lead me in that state. He'll make me stronger and I'll come back stronger the next time around. Now, it was the first time. Folks, we experienced things in this Christian Markville and unfortunately it takes experience sometimes to realize it. It takes experience to build this discernment that I've been talking about. It takes experience to determine what's sin and what. If it's a messenger from Satan or if it's something from Almighty God, it takes experiences in our lives to help and to maintain and to help this discernment grow, to help our judgment grow, to help our learning to grow. It takes discernment to do all these things. It takes experience to do all these things, but praise God. He will not leave us.

He will help us. He will guide us. He cares and loves His children. Hallelujah. Amen. When I'm weak, I'm strong. Church, don't forget that. Don't forget that.