

"Paul's Notorious Thorn Theory"

Sample Chapter (Excerpt) from

What are Abraham's Blessings Anyway?

[Get Your Eleven Free Books Here...Now!](#)

The devil can never again use Paul's Thorn against you to convince you that your healing is not God's will for you and your loved ones!

How can physical healing be the Christian's inheritance when "everyone" knows that Paul had a thorn in the flesh? Why, "everyone" knows that Paul got the "big head", and God made him sick (his thorn) and refused to heal him of it, even though he asked him three times to do it. And, "everyone" knows that God refused to heal him of this devastating sickness that he gave him so he could use this sickness to make and keep him humble. Why, "everyone" knows this "Bible Truth" since we've heard it all our lives.

Yes. We have all heard this "Bible Truth". But, this case which we have heard about all our lives is blatantly false.

To begin with, Paul was not "big-headed" in this passage. The expression, "should be exalted above measure", (2 Corinthians 12:7), is the translation of HUPERAIRO. This word is the combination of HUPER, meaning "above" or "over", with AIRO, meaning "to raise". HUPERAIRO, then, means to "raise above". In addition, HUPERAIRO in this verse is in the Passive Voice, which means that the "raising above" or the "exalted above measure", was not done by Paul. This would require the Active Voice. Instead, others exalted Paul above measure. This is the regular function of the Greek Passive Voice.

In other words, the Greek, as is English, uses the Active Voice when the subject of the sentence performs the action described in the sentence. He uses the Passive Voice when the subject of the sentence receives the action described in the sentence when someone other than the subject of the sentence performs the action. In this case, Paul, the subject of the sentence, receives the action of being exalted by others. He is not exalting himself. Consequently, "should be exalted", HUPERAIRO, is in the Passive Voice. Put simply, Paul had quite a reputation. Those who had heard of him held him in high esteem. They "exalted him above measure". Why?

Paul was exalted above measure by other people because of "the abundance of revelations" that he had received from God. "Abundance" is the translation of HUPERBOLA, the combination of HUPER, meaning "over, above, beyond", with BALLO, meaning "to throw". HUPERBOLA, then, means "a throwing beyond" or "abundance". Paul mentions one of these revelations in this chapter. He told about the man "...caught up to the third heaven" (2 Corinthians 12:2).

Because of his great reputation, this being exalted beyond measure on the part of others for his abundance of revelations, Paul was given a "thorn in the flesh". What was this

thorn? Who gave it to him? When we identify the thorn, we will also know who gave it to him.

Paul precisely identifies his thorn in this passage. The thorn was a "messenger of Satan". "Messenger" translates ANGELOS, which means "angel". The thorn in Paul's flesh was Satan's angel! Notice that the text does not state that this thorn was God's angel. Therefore, Satan, not God, gave the angel (thorn) to Paul. This angel was not God's to give. Why, then, did Satan send his angel to Paul?

Satan sent his angel to buffet Paul. "Buffet" translates KALIPHIDZO, which means "to hit or strike with a tightly clenched fist". In other words, Satan was livid over Paul's reputation that God gave him an abundance of revelations. Consequently, Satan sent his angel to kill Paul by inflicting physical wounds on his body by stonings, shipwrecks, hungerings, beatings, staying in the deep a day and night, journeyings, etc. Satan caused these buffetings "...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; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (2 Corinthians 11:26-27). In addition, "buffet", or KALIPHIDZO, is in the Present Tense, which denotes continuous action or action that is in progress during the present time. The Present Tense of "buffet", means that Satan's angel kept on striking Paul. The Present Tense denotes no let-up in the striking. He was striking Paul and he was "keeping on striking him".

Fearing for his life, Paul asked the Lord three times to make Satan's angel depart from him. "Depart" is the translation of APHISTEMI, meaning to "stand away from", which is in the Aorist Tense. The Aorist Tense defines action, not as a process, but as a point. Three times Paul requested that Jesus require Satan's angel to "stand away from" him in one fell swoop. He asked the Lord to rid him of it in one decisive, complete act-not a long, drawn-out process. This is the most common use of the Greek Aorist Tense.

In 2 Corinthians 12:9, the Lord answered, "...My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness..." The translation "is sufficient" appears to translate two Greek words, the linking verb "is" plus the adjective "sufficient" simply describing what kind of grace it is, i.e., a "sufficient kind of grace". But this translation misleads. There is no linking verb (is) and there is no adjective (sufficient) in this sentence. This sentence contains only one verb, the verb ARKEO. And Paul casts this verb in the Active Voice, indicating that the Lord's grace actively "did something". The Active Voice does not indicate that the Lord's grace is of a certain kind, like "is sufficient". This translation misleads. Then, what does ARKEO mean? ARKEO properly means "*to ward off*" (HAGL p.51).

Thayer elaborates on this basic, proper meaning and says that ARKEO means "...to be possessed of unfailling strength, to be strong, to suffice, to be enough (against any danger; hence *to defend, ward off...*)" (JHT p.73)

Siede says that as far back as Homer, ARKEO means "...to give protection, *ward off*, to have power, to help" (NID III, p.727).

Vine declares, "ARKEO primarily signifies to be sufficient, to be possessed of sufficient strength, to be strong, to be enough for a thing; hence *to defend, to ward off...*" (WEV, I, p.234).

ARKEO means possessing enough power to give protection and *defend against by "warding off"*. And, each individual context in which ARKEO occurs in the Greek New Testament, reveals just what is being "*warded off*" in each particular context.

ARKEO occurs eight times in the Greek New Testament; four times in the Active Voice, and four times in the Passive Voice. In all four instances in the Active Voice, ARKEO means to "ward off" adverse consequences caused by some need, i.e., something beneficial that is lacking in each context. Cited below are all four uses of ARKEO in the Active Voice in the Greek New Testament which illustrates the above.

Matthew 25:9 – "But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." The scene, here, is the ten virgins, five wise and five foolish. The foolish want some of the oil belonging to the wise, who refused to let them have any. They refused because a divided oil supply would result in the adverse consequences of not enough oil for all. "Enough" is the translation of ARKEO. In this passage, the adverse consequence to be "warded off" is the danger of the bridegrooms' appearance while they are away buying the oil they do not possess. This adverse consequence happened to the five foolish virgins. They were away when the bridegroom came. Consequently, they had the door to the wedding shut in their faces. This lack of, and need for the beneficial oil, caused the adverse consequence of a shut wedding door. Since an adequate oil supply, "enough" oil, would fill the lack and meet the need, then enough oil would, consequently, "ward off" this danger of a "shut wedding door". Therefore, the translators chose the word "enough" as the translation of ARKEO in this passage. The following, expanded translation of the Greek into English makes the above discussion clear. "Lest by no means the divided oil wards off the adverse consequence of the shut wedding door for us and for you."

John 6:7 – "Phillip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." Phillip made this statement at the feeding of the five thousand people. The adverse consequences Jesus "warded off" here were hunger, weariness, and possibly even sickness produced by hunger. The lack of beneficial bread caused these adverse consequences since they simply didn't have enough for everyone to eat. Their bread supply was not "sufficient". "Sufficient" translates ARKEO. The accurate, literal translation reads that their bread supply "suffices not for them", or does not "ward off" the adverse consequences of hunger for them.

John 14:8 – "Phillip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." In this context, Phillip considered his inability to see the Father with his physical eyes as an adverse consequence. Since this adverse consequence was caused by his need for seeing

the Father, then to actually see him would "ward off" whatever Phillip considered adverse about it. So, he said to Jesus, "...shew us the Father, and it (this showing) wards off the adverse consequence for us".

2 Corinthians 12:9 – In this passage, the adverse conditions are the physical "blows" Paul experiences, caused by the demonic being, Satan's angel, doing everything in his power to kill Paul physically. Now, when Jesus said, in response to Paul's' urgent plea for help, "My grace suffices thee", just exactly what did He mean?

From the four Greek dictionaries we quoted earlier, we determined that ARKEO means "possessing enough power to give protection and to defend against by warding off". We further determined that each individual context reveals just what is being "warded off". We have already examined three contexts and discovered what various, adverse conditions, caused by the lack of or need for some beneficial thing were "warded off". In Matthew 25:9, we found that a sufficient oil supply "warded off" the adverse condition of "a shut wedding door". Enough oil had the "power" to "defend them against", i.e., to "ward off" the closed wedding door.

In John 6:7, the adverse conditions were hunger, weariness, and sickness caused by the lack of bread. "Enough" bread provided the "power" to "defend them against", i.e., to "ward off" the adverse condition of hunger, etc.

In John 14:8, seeing the Father "warded off" whatever adverse conditions Phillip felt from this lack.

In 2 Corinthians 12:9, the repeated blows of Satan's angel are the adverse conditions Paul experiences. The initial cause of these adverse conditions is, of course, Satan. The context makes this plain. Satan sent the angel to Paul. But the angel continues physical attacks on Paul for only one reason: Paul lacks enough strength to counterattack and force the demon being to depart from him. Paul's absence of strength allows the continuation of the adverse "beatings". Jesus acknowledged once and Paul acknowledged twice his problem of lack of power to dispel, i.e., to "ward off" Satan's angel.

Jesus acknowledged Paul's absence of power with his remark in verse 9 that "...my strength is made perfect in weakness". "Weakness" is the translation of ASTHENIA, the combination of A, meaning "negative", with STHENOS, meaning "strength". ASTHENIA, then, means a negation or the absence of strength. Jesus recognized Paul's problem as the "absence of strength" to overcome Satan's angel. But Jesus said to his greatest soldier, "Hang on! Help is on the way. Your back's to the wall and you haven't strength to prevail. But, I have all power. And it's in situations like yours that I bring my power to completion. My complete power will defend you and keep on defending you. My complete power will protect you and keep on protecting you. My complete power will ward off that demon from you and keep on warding off that demon from you!"

"Strength" in verse 9 is the translation of DUNAMIS, which means "power". Our word "dynamite" comes from DUNAMIS. "Perfect" in verse 9 translates TELEIOO, which

means "bring to completion", i.e., nothing lacking; it is complete. Therefore, the translators used "perfect". In other words, Jesus told Paul that in situations where his warriors lacked prevailing power that he brings his complete power to bear, "protecting" and "defending" them by "warding off" adverse conditions caused by their lack of power.

No wonder Paul wrote, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, that am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9b-10). "Infirmities" in verses 9 and 10, is the translation of ASTHENIA, the same word translated "weakness" in verse 9. "Weak" in verse 10 is also the same basic word, ASTHENIA. In all, this word occurs four times in verses 9 and 10, and means in each instance, "absence of strength".

"Power" in verse 9 translates DUNAMIS, the same word translated "strength" in verse 9. "Powerful" in verse 10 is the same basic word DUNAMIS. This word occurs three times in these two verses.

Paul, the greatest warrior, took pleasure in situations where he lacked strength. He discovered in that condition, Christ's "complete power" rested upon him; "protecting, defending, and warding off" from him those adverse conditions caused by his own lack of beneficial strength. "Rest upon" is the translation of EPISKANA. This word combines EPI, meaning "upon", with SKANA, meaning "tent". EPISKANA, then, means to cover over like a tent. At Paul's weakest point, Christ's power covered him like a tent. This covering rendered him powerful.

Paul's adverse conditions were damages to his body caused by his lack of strength to stop the demon. No, Paul was not demon possessed, but under continuous demonic attack from without. Sickness was not his "thorn". The demon was his "thorn". It would be rather naïve, however, to believe that any man could endure the physical abuse that Paul did and not be sick from it. He had to become ill at times. But in this context, the "thorn" is the demon. If any sickness is implied, that is just one of the adverse conditions created by the demon and allowed to continue because Paul lacked the strength to stop him. Now we can answer the question we asked previously.

When Jesus told Paul, "My grace suffices thee", what exactly did he mean? He meant that, "I am going to protect you, Paul, my greatest warrior. I am going to defend you. I will bring my complete power to bear in your adversity, my power before which nothing can stand, and I will ward off that demon, making him stand away from you in one act. But, not only will I do this, I will keep on doing it. I will keep on protecting you. I will keep on defending you. I will keep on warding off the demon from you. I will keep on making the demon stand away from you!" ARKEO in this passage is in the Present Tense, which means continuous action in present time. No wonder Paul took such pleasure in this. And, no wonder he took pleasure in the other things in verse 10 that caused Christ's power to cover him like a tent.

The Greek text refuses to allow the traditional view of this passage, which states that God refused to "ward off" this thorn and instead substituted his "sufficient kind" of grace in place of a complete deliverance, that is, a "warding off". The supposed result of such a fabled substitution is, of course, to enable Paul to keep on carrying his thorn in the flesh, but "act like a man" while doing so. But, in no way can anyone stretch the borders of ARKEO enough to cover any idea of "substitution". Nothing in this word even implies "substitution". The word means "possessing enough power to give protection and defend against by warding off". "Substitution" is not a synonym for "possessing enough power to give protection and defend against by warding off". If, therefore, Paul really meant that God substituted his grace in place of a complete "warding off", a complete "making the demon stand apart from him in one act", then a word other than ARKEO would have been used. ARKEO absolutely does not mean "substitution".

Finally, the New Testament writers cast ARKEO in the Passive Voice when the need had already been fulfilled and the adverse conditions caused by the need or lack had already been "warded off". Then, ARKEO is translated "content" in all four occurrences of the Passive Voice in the Greek New Testament.

The following brief discussion demonstrates this:

In Luke 3:14, the soldiers suffered no adverse conditions caused by lack of "wages" since they were receiving "wage". Therefore, Jesus told them to be "content" (ARKEO) with their "wages".

In 1 Timothy 6:8, Paul mentions no adverse conditions caused by lack of "food and raiment" because they have "food and raiment". Therefore, Paul said to be "therewith content" (ARKEO).

In Hebrew 13:5, the author cited no adverse conditions caused by the lack of "things" since they already have "things". Consequently, the author tells them to be "content" (ARKEO) with such "things" as they have.

In Third John 10, Diotrephes suffered no adverse conditions caused by a lack of "malicious words". But, even this doesn't "content" (ARKEO) him. In addition, he refused to receive the brethren.

One final appeal to common sense. If Paul really had developed the "big head", if he really had become "proud" over his revelation, position, or for any other reason, the last thing in the universe Satan would do is send his angel to buffet and kill him. For when Paul or any Christian becomes "proud", Satan is tickled pink. Not only does he love it, but he will help you become "prouder". No, Paul was not "proud" in this context. Jesus absolutely "warded off" Paul's thorn and kept it "warded off" for the rest of his life.

To learn more about this foundational, faith building book, see [What are Abraham's Blessings Anyway?](#)

