

Be Angry But Sin Not.

The title of this message is "be angry but sin not". The title will be taken from Ephesians 4 26 and the content will be taken from 1st Samuel 2 12 to 36.

Today being Father's day I am going to start off with Eli; a father. Nevertheless, my goal is to end with healing. I have been waiting for this for a long time. So I thank you for allowing me to speak before you today. I pray that the words of my mouth will strengthen your faith.

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If you do not have access to the internet; well, this is the middle of the 21st century. It is kind of like looking for a job at the end of the previous century and not having a telephone. You gotta, keep up.

Now let us turn to:

Ephesians 4 46. That is Ephesians 4 46.

-Here begineth the reading of God's holy word.

Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

1st Samuel 2 17. That is 1st Samuel 2 17.

Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

-Here endeth the reading of God's holy word.

The word says that God knows the end from the beginning, so I am going to start with the end of the story of Eli's wicked sons, and then move on to the beginning of my teaching on healing. Most of us know the story of the sons of Eli. For those who don't, the text can be found in 1st Samuel 2 12 to 36. A fitting moral of the story is "be angry but sin not".

Eli should have been angry at his sons who were scoundrels, having no regard for the Lord. He should have disqualified them from the priesthood. He had the authority to physically remove them from among the people. Nevertheless, he put up with their wicked behavior. Therefore, Eli sinned by not being angry but rather displaying a passive attitude. Another example of being angry but sinning not, was given by a pastor named Pastor Walker, when he spoke on his personal experience, with taking a child of God before the world's court system.

This verse on "be angry but sin not " Ephesians 4 26, has been one of the most misapplied scriptures in the Bible. This verse is commonly quoted to say that the Lord knows we are just human and that we will get angry from time to time. He just asks us to settle all our disputes

before the sun goes down each day. In other words, we can be angry if we don't let it last longer than one day. That is not even close to what Paul was saying.

Paul was commanding us to have a righteous anger that is not sin. Jesus got angry without sinning, and we should too. We are commanded to, hate evil. Paul was speaking of a good type of anger, an anger that is not directed at people but, at evil. We need to keep this righteous type of anger stirred up. We cannot ever let it take a rest or go to sleep ("let not the sun go down upon your wrath"). We have to work at not being passive in response to evil.

Ephesians 4 27 goes on to talk about not giving place to the devil. Being passive instead of angry at the devil gives place to him. We are supposed to resist, to actively fight against him, and this righteous anger is an important part of a violent attitude. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Nevertheless, we Christians often take a passive position when it comes to being angry at the devil, when it comes to sickness. This moves me into the beginning of this teaching on healing.

I am going to start talking about the subject of healing, supernatural, divine healing, from God and by faith. Any body who believes God exists, believes that God can do anything, but by and large the body of Christ does not believe that healing is something that you can control, that you can reach out and grab hold of it. Believing that God can heal is quite different from believing that God wants to heal and that he has given you the power to actually release healing.

He that descended is the same also that ascended, and upon his ascension Jesus said unto them, now all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. That is all power is given unto me as a man, not as God, because I already had all power as God. Jesus is holding that newly obtained power for you and me. He goes on to explain that now that you have this power over things in the earth and under the earth (which before you did not have power over demons), go ye therefore, and teach all nations, all things, including healing the sick and raising the dead.

Now that is something that is not understood. As a matter of fact that is something that is fought against. You will find that many people come out against teaching on healing because if it is true that God wants every person well, and if there are things that we can do to appropriate that healing, to make it manifest in our lives, then what about all the people who have died. What about all the people who are suffering. Many people rather than say we are operating at less than what God desires, it is much easier to say that is God's will that some of these sicknesses and diseases happen. It is easier to say that this is just part of life and we just have to accept it and roll with the punches. It is easier to say that because it takes no effort on your part. You do not have to seek God. You don't have to acknowledge God. There is no risk of failure. Whatever is God's will just automatically comes to pass. I am going to be sharing some things that are controversial. It is amazing that people fight so hard for the right to be sick.

I am not condemning anybody who is sick. I am not condemning anybody who is lost and saying that he or she is a terrible person. Many times people don't know because they have never heard the truth. I am not condemning, but I am saying that you do not have to live separate from the Lord. You can choose to be saved, and you can choose to be healed. It is not God who sovereignty chooses to heal one person and not heal another person, any more than it is not God who sovereignty chooses to save one person and does not choose to save another. It is God's will that every person be saved and come to repentance, and it is also God's will that every person be healed. As we learn the truth from God's word about this, this truth is going to make you free. Even if you have to be dragged to freedom kicking and screaming. As long as you are willing to hold on to the truth of God's Word and not say, "I used to believe that salvation, healing, prosperity or deliverance were true, but now I have changed my thinking".

I know that this is a hot issue, and that there are many people upset about this. There are a lot of people who fight for sickness. If what I am teaching about sickness is true, then it condemns other people. It shows that there is more, that there is a level of victory available through Christ that the vast majority of people are not living in. Rather than change, rather than say that there is something that I don't know, that I don't have to be sick every flu season. It's just so much easier to be like everybody else, to not rock the boat, to not be told that I'm missing out on something. It is going to interfere with my watching "as the stomach turns". I might have to start believing God. I might have to start doing more than my unsaved neighbor does. Most people are not willing to do that. So they will sit and put up with sickness, disease, pain, suffering, grief, sorrow, they will see people die prematurely and they will simply say it is all God's will.

It is true that the bible tells us that, "all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be". Nevertheless, It is also true that the bible tells us, "neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?"

Therefore, yes, God knows, or can know, exactly when, where, and how we will die. God knows absolutely everything about us. So does this mean our fate is sealed? Does this mean we have absolutely no control over when we will die because people cannot die before their time?

Nothing we can do will change what God already knows will happen. Nevertheless, obviously, a person who commits suicide causes his own death. A person who commits suicide would have lived longer had he not committed suicide. Similarly, a person who dies because of a foolish decision (like drug use) "expedites" his own death. A person who dies of lung cancer from smoking would not have died in the same way or at the same time if he had not smoked. A person who dies of a heart attack due to a lifetime of extremely unhealthy eating and little exercise would not have died in the same way or at the same time if he had eaten healthier foods and exercised more. Yes, our own decisions have an undeniable impact on the manner, timing, and place of our death. Therefore, because God knows the time of our death, it does not mean that no man dies before his time. The bible specifically says that people, particularly evil and foolish people, do die before their time (Ecclesiastes 7 17). Guess what? Unrighteous

people do. And guess who else does? The unknowing. The bible says, "my people perish because of a lack of knowledge. God's people, that is Christians, die or perish before their appointed time, because of a lack of knowledge. God has given us a promise of long life. Not all of God's people live to fully collect on that promise. Some of God's people perish before their time. Many of the Israelites coming out of Egypt did. Moses said that by strength you can live longer. By strength Moses lived until 120. Nevertheless, all of the other people from Moses's generation died before their time except one.

Everybody tries to fight against sickness. One of the largest expenses in people's lives today is pills, medication and preventive type of things. Medicine is just huge with doctors and their expenses.

You can turn and find a medical facility on every corner because people want to be well. Nevertheless, when you start sharing from the word of God and what it says, and how he has given us the power to heal and to walk in health, people get mad; saying "evangelist so and so loved his wife more than anybody I know, nevertheless she died". They reject God's healing. They believe that is radical and extreme, to heal the sick, or to raise the dead, how can these things be?

If people really believe that God is the one who wants you sick. If they really believe that it is God's will, and that this is just our lot in life. If they really believe that God is somehow working a redemptive purpose and accomplishing something good in our lives through all this suffering. If people really believe what they say they believe, then they would never go to the doctor, they would never take medicine, they would never have surgery. If God is the one who put this on you to teach you something, then why are you putting so much in trying to get out of God's will? That is hypocritical. It is not logical. It is just inconsistent.

Everybody prays for healing, even people that are not born again, that do not spend any time seeking God, when they get in a crisis they will cry out. That is not going to get you healed. There are ways in which you can renew your mind, and you can literally walk in supernatural healing. I am going to share with you the things that God has shared with me. Let me say right up front. I am not the perfect example. I have not arrived, but I have left. Jesus said, he who receives the one whom I have sent receives me. Jesus sent Andrew Wommack. Andrew Wommack sent me. Therefore, Jesus sent me.

Let me be clear. I do not understand everything about healing. There are people whom I pray for, that do not get healed. Some will say, if that is true then what right do you have to talk about it. I do not claim to know it all, but I have seen healing work in my life. I had a brain aneurism and the doctor told me I should have been dead because I did not get to the doctor in a matter of minutes. On a different occasion the doctor told me that my condition would progressively get worse such that unless I received a back operation, I would be back to him in a year or two maximum, begging him for a back operation to relieve the pain. That was over seven years ago. Not only didn't the condition get worse but it got so much better that it is off

the scale. I am not saying this to boast in any way, but I am saying this to say that this is an area in which I have seen work in my life. I am not talking about a gift of healing on my life. I am talking about my experience with the truth of God's word in my life, which has set me free.

God wants you well. The bible has more to say on healing than most of you even want. I tell you if you are sick, you should want everything you can get to get well. Sadly there has been a lot of confusion about this, which I have already expressed. The very first point, which I have tried to establish is, that healing is for us today, that it is part of Christ's atonement. It is wrong to say that the real basic thing that we have is the forgiveness of sins.

No! Jesus died to produce forgiveness of sins, healing of your body, prosperity, and deliverance. All of these things are included. It is wrong to piece meal them and say that I am only going to accept one fourth of what Jesus provided for me, the forgiveness of sins, and I am just going to reject the others. This has hurt individuals. There is a lot of grief and suffering, because people are not receiving their healing. There are a lot of people turned away from the Lord because the church is representing God as the one who is the author of sickness and disease. No! God wants you well. That is his nature. God says I wish above all things that you would prosper and be in good health. Not some things, but all things.

Furthermore, healing is one of the greatest tools that we have to draw people to God. If we would reach people where they are, then we could bring them to where they are supposed to go. Most people are not thinking about heaven and hell and eternal issues. They are just muddling through on a daily basis. Some of them are hurting so much that their prayers are not about eternity. They are just thinking about how do I survive today. How do I get through these things today?

I tell you one of the reasons that the church is not more relevant and that our society is going more and more secular is because the church has reduced Christianity to just an insurance policy for heaven and hell and its eternal things, and it does not apply to the average person's everyday life. That's wrong. When Jesus taught, he taught on farming, things that every one of them dealt with every day. He healed their bodies. He set people free. He prospered people. He blessed them, and because he could reach people in the physical, natural realm, they were open, thinking, he can also do the greater things. I know that the church is missing a great opportunity by not accurately representing that it is always God's will to heal.

What I want to do now is to start dealing with some of the objections. It is sad to say that most of the objections against healing come from the church. Unbelievers may not be really seeking God. They may not think a lot about God, but they are not really resistant. Frequently, it is easier to minister healing to people who are not saved than it is to minister healing to people who are saved. True, sometimes the non-believer won't let you pray healing for him, but when they do it is often easier for him to receive healing. Many people who are saved have also been taught wrong doctrine that sometimes God is the one who has put this thing on them. As Jesus

said in Mark 7 13; "your traditions make the word of God of none effect". It is religious tradition, which has taken people's faith away from healing.

One of the things, which is a major obstacle to the wrong thinking that God is the one who has put this thing on them is the interpretation of Paul's teaching about his thorn in the flesh, which I will address in a minute. Nevertheless, these traditions and doctrines of men are so ingrained in our thinking that you cannot even mention Paul's thorn in the flesh, without people immediately beginning to think the wrong things about it. It is going to take me a little while to counter this and come against it. Anyhow I will be teaching on that in a minute and I think it will really help you.

The scripture says in Revelation 12 that they overcome the devil by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. Testimonies show that these things are happening today, that God is still alive today. When we hear the large number of doctor certified testimonies we are either going to accept the truth of the testimonies or we are going to bury our heads in the sand and call the doctors and the patients liars.

Again I say, the church by and large, or Christians in general, have rejected healing. Although most Christians believe that God can heal, and even sometimes people do get healed, nevertheless although we may accept healing on a random basis, yet to come out with a statement that healing is in God's will for you, that it is part of the atonement, it is not just for some people, it is for every person. As a whole the body of Christ would reject that. Now when I say the body of Christ, there are churches that are doing a marvelous job, but a large segment of the church is falling short in this area. A powerful verse along the line, that God wants everybody well, is 3rd John chapter 1 verse 2.

3rd John 1 2.

-Here begineth the reading of God's holy word.

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

-Here endeth the reading of God's holy Word.

The text says "I wish above all things, not some things, but all things; that you might prosper and be in good health". That is not the attitude of the basic Christian today. Instead they have actually embraced sickness, thinking that in some cases it is something good that God has sent or allows.

Now I will address the churches mis-interpretation of Paul's teaching about his thorn in the flesh, which kills the faith of many. I do not believe that the bible teaches that God gave Paul some eye problem, and that God would not heal Paul because God wanted Paul to stay sick in order to humble him. Therefore we conclude that, God sometimes puts sickness on us, or allows sickness on us, in order to teach us something. This is the traditional religious interpretation. I believe that the reason why people teach that, is because it is a convenient

theology. You have to want to believe it to find it in scripture, because the scripture makes it very clear that Paul's thorn in the flesh was not from God, rather it was a messenger of Satan. Sickness and disease is a tool of the devil. God does not have to use the tools of the devil to teach us. He uses his word. The devil ment it for evil, but God used it for good. You don't have to keep banging your head up against the wall to learn that banging your head up against the wall is not a good thing to do. God uses his word to teach us. He doesn't need you to bang your head up against the wall. He allows you to bang your head up against the wall. Just like God allows people to reject Jesus. Yet, he wants all men to be saved.

Let me first say this. If you did not already have a bias and prejudice, about the interpretation of Paul's thorn in the flesh. If this had not been taught against so much. I do not believe that people could get from these scriptures what religion has taught. Nevertheless, once it is taught, and once it is mentioned over and over, you cannot even mention Paul's thorn in the flush without people getting this misconception.

Turn with me to 2nd Corinthians 12 6 to 10. That is: 2nd Corinthians 12 6 to 10. You will have to be looking at this, as I am dissecting it, in order to believe that I am not misinterpreting what I am reading.

2nd Corinthians 12 6 to 10.

-Here begineth the reading of God's holy word.

6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

7 And 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.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

-Here endeth the reading of God's holy Word.

Let us take a moment to examine each verse of 1st Corinthians 12 6 to 10. Please bear with me for a moment. Going through the text utilizing a verse by verse analysis, I will probably repeat some things that I have already said, nevertheless I feel that the previous introduction was necessary. Often times when I teach, I use what might be referred to as, shock therepy. I paint myself in-to such a corner, that people begin to pay really close attention to see how I am going to get myself out of the corner. This is me crawling out of the corner, and this is you paying really close attention and as James Brown might have said and watching me do God's thing. (Speaking in tongues - And don't forbid them to speak).

Let Us Look At:

2nd Corinthians 12 6.

For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

Paul had just said that the only thing he would glory in was the sufferings he had endured for Christ. Here, he was saying, "Even if I wanted to boast about my accomplishments, I would not be lying or exaggerating like a fool. Everything I would brag about would be the truth." Paul could have silenced all his critics with his credentials, but he refused to do so, lest someone think too highly of him.

Paul wanted the Corinthians to respect him and acknowledge his apostolic authority, but he didn't want them to worship him. Paul's desire was not to draw attention to himself; rather, his ultimate goal was that Christ should be glorified.

Let us look at:

2nd Corinthians 12 7.

And 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.

Verse 7 says clearly, this thorn in the flesh was given to Paul by a messenger of Satan to buffet Paul, not a messenger of God; (there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me). Nevertheless, despite what the scripture says, religion has turned this around and said that this was from God, that God willed it. What part of the messenger of Satan is not understood? The word for messenger is the exact same Greek word that is translated angel. This is talking about a demonic angel came and afflicted Paul and buffeted him. The word buffeted means to strike over repeatedly. For example the waves buffet the shore. They hit and recede, and come back and hit again. This is talking about Paul was just hit with this messenger of Satan, over and over.

Now there are some things here in verse 7, that on the surface when you look at it they might make you think that this came from God, but it very clearly says that it was the messenger of Satan and that should trump anything else. Here is one of those things that make people think that this is from God. He says lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh.

Paul's use of the word "exalted" here has caused many people to assume God was the author of this "thorn in the flesh." The reasoning is that, "being exalted" is pride, and certainly, God is the one who would counter pride. However, the Scriptures speak of a godly type of exalting that has nothing to do with pride.

Nevertheless, they conclude that the purpose of this thorn in the flesh was to debase Paul. People just automatically assume that God is the only one that wants to debase anybody. Here we conclude that Satan would never want to lower anyone in prestige, position, or rank, that God is the one who is always doing this. Well there is a wrong type of exaltation or pride, and God resists the proud.

Nevertheless, there is a Godly type of exaltation. If you read over in Joshua chapter one, the Lord told Joshua, every place that you set the sole of your feet, I am going to be with you. The same promises I made to Moses, I am going to make to you. Then he told Joshua, I am going to exalt you in the eyes of the Israelites, so that they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses. So God talked about exalting Joshua. There is a Godly type of exaltation. It also says over in 1 Peter 5, "humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he might exalt you in due time. It was this Godly type of exaltation that Satan buffeted Paul against. Satan came against Paul to keep him from being magnified, that is glorified in the sight of people. Paul performed miracles and people were healed; and the people fell down and began to worship him or exalt him because they saw the power of God operating in him. Satan continuously attacked Paul in order to stop people from honoring Paul.

This exaltation is not speaking of Paul having a pride problem that God had to deal with through affliction. This exaltation is speaking about Paul being so respected and honored in the sight of people that Satan had to do something to make him and his Gospel less attractive. He did that through persecution. The devil gave Paul a "thorn in the flesh" to keep him from being exalted in the eyes of people.

Paul made it very clear that this "thorn in the flesh" came because of the abundance of revelations he had received. So, those who are claiming to have a thorn like Paul's would also have to have a similar number of revelations. Paul's revelations produced about one-half of the New Testament scriptures and one of the greatest missionary thrusts the church has ever had. Until they receive revelations that are proportional to Paul's, they shouldn't hide behind Paul's thorn in the flesh.

The phrase "thorn in the flesh" was not original with Paul. It was an Old Testament term that referred to the negative influence ungodly people had on righteous people. In Numbers 33:55, Moses said, "But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell". Joshua 23 13 says, "Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you". Judges 2:3 says, "Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you". Paul drew on Old Testament terminology to refer to the persecution he had suffered.

There has been much debate about what Paul's thorn in the flesh was. Most people believe it was sickness sent from God to keep Paul humble. That is not the case. Paul's thorn in the flesh was persecution that came from the devil, to make people think twice about accepting the Gospel, because of the persecution that accompanied it.

One of the reasons people think Paul's thorn was sickness is because of the use of the word "infirmities" in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. They presume "infirmities" is referring to some type of sickness. However, the word "infirmities" in context is referring to persecution.

In 2 nd Corinthians 11 23-30, Paul listed the things that he called his infirmities. None of these included sickness. His infirmities were the hardships that he suffered because of the preaching of the Gospel. In the next verse, he confirmed this again by listing five things that he suffered joyfully. None of them were sickness. Although a sickness may be an infirmity, infirmities are not limited to sicknesses. Again in context here, infirmities are persecutions.

Paul made it very clear in 2nd Corinthians 12 9-10 that Satan was the author of this thorn, not God. The reason God didn't take Paul's thorn away was not because He wanted to afflict Paul; it was because believers are not redeemed from persecution. Paul later stated this in 2nd Timothy 3 12: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

If the Lord stopped all persecution against His followers, Saul would have died before he became the Apostle Paul. Paul was one of the leaders of the persecution against Christians. The Lord didn't redeem Stephen from persecution but used it to glorify Himself and prick the heart of the future Apostle Paul. Therefore, the Lord has not redeemed us from persecution. He even loves those who persecute us just as He loved those who persecuted Him. He desires their conversion, not their judgment.

The Greek word that was translated "messenger" here means "angel". This word is specifying a demonic angel that was assigned to Paul by the devil.

Paul made it very clear that this was a messenger of Satan, not of God. However, the false belief that the devil can only do what God allows him to do (see Romans 8:28) has led many people to change Paul's clear statement and place the responsibility on God for Paul's thorn in the flesh. That is not the case. God is not the author of people's problems.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines the word "buffet" as "to hit or beat, especially repeatedly." This is describing the work of this messenger of Satan as being a repeated action. Paul suffered persecution everywhere he went (Acts 20:23). If Paul's thorn was a sickness, it would have to have been repeatedly given and retracted to carry the full meaning of this word "buffet." But the Scripture clearly states that it was not a disease but the messenger of Satan sent it to repeatedly strike against Paul. Paul spoke of these attacks as being reproaches, persecutions, and distresses for the sake of Christ in 2 Corinthians 12 10.

Let us Now look at:
2nd Corinthians 12 8.

-Here begineth the reading of God's holy word.

2nd Corinthians 12 8

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

-Here endeth the reading of God's holy word.

It's possible that Paul made this request three times, modeled after Jesus beseeching His Father three times to accomplish salvation some other way.

If you accept the idea that Paul's thorn was persecution that came from a demonic angel, then you might wonder why he would pray three times to have this removed. It is possible that Paul accepted persecution as an inevitable part of the Christian life but wasn't sure he had to put up with a demonic spirit that incited this persecution. The Lord told him that God's grace would be sufficient and that He would use these persecutions to display His strength in Paul. Once Paul saw this, he actually took pleasure in the persecutions he suffered, knowing that God would get the ultimate glory.

It is interesting to note that Paul made special mention of the fact that he prayed about this thorn in the flesh three times. Average Christians today would have no way of knowing how many times they have prayed over situations. Typically, they pray incessantly over the same request. That was not Paul's way of praying. Apparently, praying three times over one thing was unusual for Paul.

Let us Now look at:
2nd Corinthians 12 9.

-Here begineth the reading of God's holy word.

2nd Corinthians 12 9.

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

-Here endeth the reading of God's holy word.

One of the main reasons many people interpret Paul's thorn in the flesh as a sickness is because of the use of the word "infirmities." Yet the word "infirmity" is not limited to sickness. The word literally means "lack or inadequacy." It was used that way in Romans 8 26 when it referred to not knowing how to pray as we should. The N.I.V. translates this word as "weakness" not sickness.

The Lord didn't remove Paul's thorn, because Jesus didn't redeem believers from persecution. If Paul's thorn had been sickness or poverty, then he could have prayed and received deliverance. But in persecution, the Lord doesn't deliver believers; He strengthens them to be able to bear all things, thereby bringing glory to Himself and conviction to their persecutors.

This is not speaking of physical weakness or character flaws. The Lord was telling Paul that when he gave up, then the Lord took over. Anytime we cease trusting in ourselves and trust in God, the Lord shows His strength. It is when we lean on our own abilities that we get in trouble.

Paul had more reason to trust in himself than his critics did. He had the better track record. But Paul learned the lesson of not trusting in himself. He counted all his accomplishments as manure, and he became totally dependent upon Christ living through him. He learned to be weak in himself so that Christ could be strong in him.

The Lord's power delivers us from things such as sin, sickness, and poverty. That is not to say that we Christians never sin, never get sick, or never have financial problems. But the Lord's power is always available to bring us victory over all these things. However, concerning persecution and the many day-to-day problems that we encounter, the Lord hasn't provided deliverance from these. Rather, He has given us the strength to endure. We have to have the motivation to change the things that we can change, the strength of Christ to persevere through the things we can't, and wisdom to know the difference.

As explained in 2nd Corinthians 11 30 this word "infirmity" can refer to sickness or frailty, but it can also mean "a failing or defect in a person's character", (American Heritage Dictionary). In this context, it is easy to see that Paul was not referring to sickness but rather to persecution. This becomes very important in discerning Paul's "thorn in the flesh".

The word "infirmity" here is not referring to sickness. The context of this verse makes this very evident. In 2nd Corinthians 11 23 to 30, Paul listed the things that he called his infirmities. None of these included sickness. His infirmities were the hardships that he suffered because of the preaching of the Gospel. In verse 10, he confirmed this again by listing five things that he suffered joyfully. None of them were sickness. Further examples of Paul's persecutions and infirmities are given in Acts.

Paul was not just glorying in suffering, as some masochists do today. The reason he took pleasure in suffering was because he knew the Lord's strength would be manifest in his weakness and the Lord would use this to bring glory to His name.

An example of this is found in Acts 14 19 to 21. Paul was stoned and left for dead at Lystra. If he wasn't dead, he was so close to it that those who wanted to kill him thought he was dead and left. "Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city". The next day he traveled (probably walked) at least twenty miles to Derbe. This wasn't bad for a man who had been killed the day before.

It had to be God's strength that enabled Paul to travel the day after his stoning. There were probably cuts, bruises, and swollen parts of his body that testified to what he had been through, yet he didn't miss a day of ministering for the Lord. Certainly, this was an even stronger witness of God's power to those he ministered to in Derbe. God's strength overcame Paul's weakness.

Let us Now look at:
2nd Corinthians 12 10.

-Here begineth the reading of God's holy word.
2nd Corinthians 12 10.

Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

-Here endeth the reading of God's holy word.

Even though Paul asked three times for the infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses to be removed, God's reply was that His strength, that is, God's grace, would strengthen Paul to continue in victory regardless of the circumstances of life. Paul's statement that he would gladly glory in his infirmities, that is, his weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon him was a mindset that he developed of a continuing faith and dependence upon the Lord regardless of the circumstances that he faced. A parallel passage could be Philippians 4:11-13 where Paul concluded that his Christian life was lived through the strengthening power of Jesus Christ.

Paul listed five things that he took pleasure in suffering: infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses. Four of these things (excluding infirmities) are clearly referring to hardships that Paul endured as a result of preaching the Gospel. Therefore, it would be inconsistent to interpret "infirmities" as some type of sickness when all the other things listed here refer to things inflicted by people. The word "infirmities" is referring to lack or inadequacies caused through people.

There is a big difference between suffering for Christ's sake and just suffering. Some teach that all suffering is therapeutic, but that is not so. Peter said, "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1st Peter 4 15 to16). Suffering persecution and hardships related with preaching the Gospel is what Paul was speaking of here.

God's strength is infinitely superior to ours, physically, mentally, and emotionally. Therefore, one of our biggest liabilities is trust in ourselves. When we are recognizing our comparative weakness and trusting in God, then we are truly strong.

I pray that this message although long, has been a blessing to you. Thank you for listening. Grace and peace be unto you, from God our father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.