

LESSON TWELVE -2 CORINTHIANS 12: 1 - 21

Positioned between his escape from Damascus and tremendous persecution and his humbling “thorn in the flesh” Paul recounts his revelations and visions. He would not refer to what he had done, but what God had done. He had been caught up in the “third heaven” and received communications and revelations which he was not permitted to make known. This was the climax of all the evidence he had given thus far as to prove his Apostleship (vs. 1-6). With this extraordinary proof of divine favor from God, Paul was given a “thorn in the flesh”. Even though he asked three times that the Lord remove this pain from him, it would not be taken away. This was given to him to keep him truly humble. Instead of taking it away, he was told that God’s grace was sufficient, and for this Paul rejoiced (vs. 7-10). This reference to his personal experiences was very painful to him. He had been forced to speak of himself as he had done; for his external evidence should have been enough to convince them that he was an immediate messenger of Christ (vs. 11-12). They themselves were proof that he truly was an apostle. They were not at all inferior to other churches founded by other apostles. If they were inferior at all it was because he refused to take money from them. This he could not help. He was determined to continue on this same course - that he would not receive anything from their hands (vs. 13-18). All this was of little account in the final analysis, however. It matters very little what they thought of him. God is the only competent and final judge. His fear was that when he reached Corinth he would be forced to appear as a judge, that if he did not find them how they should be (pure and holy) then he would have to assume the role of the reprover (vs.. 19-21).

KEY PHRASES:

1. “*Not Expedient*” - There is nothing to be gained by it.
2. “*Visions and Revelations*” - Visions are seen, revelations are heard.
3. “*Third heaven*” - The Jews believed in three heavens;
 - The air or atmosphere (Gen 2::1,19).
 - The firmament containing the sun, moon, and stars (Dt. 18:3, Matt. 24:29).
 - God’s dwelling place (Matt 5:12, 16, 45, 48).
4. “*Paradise*” - Persian for “walled garden” belonging to the king of Persia.
5. “*Thorn*” - Can be translated ‘cross’. A stake on which victims were impaled.
6. “*Buffet*” - To beat, to strike with a fist.
7. “*My grace is sufficient for thee*” - Paul was given no explanations, only a promise.
8. “*Power made perfect in weakness*” - God’s power works wonders when we are incapable.
9. “*Signs, wonders, and mighty deeds*” - Not three classes of miracles but three characteristics of genuine miracles.
10. “*The third time*” - (1) The founding trip, (2) The “Painful visit”, (3) The upcoming visit.

OUTLINE:

1. Paul had three experiences from God (1-10).
 - Glory - God honored him (1-6).
 - Goodness - God humbled him (7-8).
 - Grace - God helped him (9-10).
2. Paul shames them
 - For their lack of appreciation, or commendation (11-18).
 - For their lack of consecration (19-21).

APPLICATION:

1. How do you view suffering?
2. Satan buffets us to get us discouraged so that we will give up. God buffets us to strengthen us, humble us, and so that we will trust in Him.
3. If Christ and His cause is truly our highest goal, how could we not glory in that which advances His cause; even if it means our suffering.
4. To “bear our cross” not only leads us “home” but it also leads us towards pain and death.

QUESTIONS:

1. Define (on a separate sheet of paper) the following; strife, jealousy, wrath’s, factions, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults, uncleanness, fornication’s, lasciviousness.
2. What caused Paul to go from asking God to remove the thorn, to praising for it?
3. What is the “thorn in the flesh” (remember the context)?
4. Does Paul tell us what it was in verse 10 (Therefore....)?
5. Why does Paul change from the first person, in chapter 11, to the third person, in chapter 12:2-4, and then back to the first person in 12:6?
6. Why was Paul not permitted to tell what happened in Paradise?
7. Who was the source of Paul’s suffering (vs 7)?
8. What does it mean “My grace is sufficient for thee”?
9. Does verse 14 say that children do not have to take care of their children? Explain.
10. If not accepting money was such a problem in Corinth, why did Paul not change his mind and accept some support from them?