

Precepts That Preach

The Preaching Ministry of

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A LESSON FROM A LEARNER II Corinthians 12:1-10

Our Scripture lesson is found tonight in the 12th chapter of the book of II Corinthians. I want you to notice these thoughts with me as we read these verses.

I. THE EXPERIENCE OF PAUL...vs. 1-4

Paul shares with the believers in Corinth an experience that occurred in his life about or over 14 years ago. It is possible that Paul is recounting his experience at Lystra...Acts 14:19.

****And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.*

A. The Wondering...What Paul did not know

About this experience Paul makes it clear, he did not know whether he was actually dead or alive...in the body or out of the body.

B. The Wonder...What Paul did know

Paul knew without a doubt that his spirit was caught up into the 3rd heaven. He was consciously there, hearing things that were so glorious that it would be a crime to try to describe them. Paul is saying that there is no language; there are no words that can describe the experience that he had.

*ILL...Blind Girl

There once was little girl who was blind, but the problem was not irreparable. A specialist performed a series of operations on her eyes. They begin to take the bandages off slowly, a few at a time, to allow more light to penetrate the optic nerves, until finally they took off the last bandages. The little girl sitting on her mother's lap as the bandages were removed, begin to look around. For the first time she could see her mother's face, the doctor's face, the room. She got off her mother's lap, walked over to the window, and looked outside. She saw the blue sky, the green grass, the flowers, the trees, the children playing. She burst into tears and came back running to her mother. She fell into her arms sobbing. Her mother said, "What happened? What's wrong?" She said, "Oh, mommy, why didn't you tell me it was this beautiful?" She said, "I tried but it's just hard to describe in words the colors, the clouds, the sky. I did my best."

...Once of these days when we get to Heaven should we go up to the Apostle Paul and say, "Paul, you were here. Why didn't you tell us it was this beautiful?" Paul will look at us and say, "I told you it would be a crime to try to describe this place. There are no words in any language that can tell of the beauty and glory of this place."

II. THE EXPLANATION OF PAUL...vs. 5-6

Paul makes it clear that he does not want the Corinthians to think of him as something special. He was not trying to elevate himself in their eyes. Paul had shared this experience with the Corinthians because the truth he was declaring was being challenged.

III. THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL...vs. 7-10

A. The Presence of the Thorn...Purposed by God (there was given to me)...v. 7

The word used for thorn in the Greek is actually a stake or a tent stake. The scripture remains silent on what it is, so we need to remain silent on what it is, also. The thorn could be described as...**something which frustrates and causes trouble in the lives of those afflicted.**

B. The Problem with the Thorn...Punched by Satan...v. 7b

Notice the phrase, the messenger of Satan to buffet me. The word buffet means to 'punched'. Satan no doubt jumped at God's permission to afflict Paul with malice. Paul felt like he was beaten black and blue by this messenger of Satan.

***Quote...Alan Redpath**

...Often the many who is being most blessed by God is being most buffeted by Satan.

C. The Prayer of Paul...v. 8

1. Paul's Prayer was Practical

Paul did exactly what any believer should do.

2. Paul's Prayer was Passionate

Many expositors agree the word 'thrice' is a Hebrew figure of speech that really means much more than three times. It is a Hebrew figure for ceaseless, continuously, over and over again.

3. Paul's Prayer was Particular

(a) Physical Dimension...remove this stake

(b) Mental Dimension...refrain this messenger of Satan from buffeting me

(c) Spiritual Dimension...regard the prayer of your servant

D. The Proclamation of God...v. 9a

God said the answer is not **ME removing this thorn.** The answer is **YOU realizing your weakness.**

*TRUTH...How to relieve a burden

...There are two ways to relieved of a burden.

1. *It can be done by removing the load.*

2. *It can be done by strengthening the shoulder that bears the load.*

...Instead of removing the thorn, God would strengthen Paul under it using grace to accomplish the task. God would show His strength through Paul's apparent weakness.

E. The Perception of Paul...vs. 9b-10

Paul learned that God is attracted to weakness. He will not resist those who...

1. Humbly

2. Honestly

3. Heartfelt

admit how desperately they need HIM. The admission of our weakness, in fact, makes room for HIS power and strength.

***CLOSING**

Tonight God has given us a WORD. We have learned a lesson from a learner.

1 What is your thorn?

2 Are you tried of being punched at by the Devil?

3 Have you prayed that God would take it away and He hasn't?

...It may be God is saying to you I am not going to remove the thorn until you realize your weakness. When you confess that you are

totally helpless then I will give you grace to shoulder it. You will find my strength sufficient. Our admission of weakness makes room for HIS POWER to work in our life's!

I am going to ask you to come tonight, and find a place in this altar and pray...

- 1 Lord, I am too weak to handle this thorn
- 2 But, your grace will be sufficient.
- 3 Make my heart good soil in which you can work.
- 4 Through Your Power begin a fresh work in my life!