

GOD'S

GRACE

IS SUFFICIENT

II Corinthians 12:9

I. Introductory remarks

A. In an extraordinary event, Paul was taken up into heaven, or paradise-II Corinthians 12:3 &4.

B. This happened more than 14 years prior to Paul's writing-II Corinthians 12:2.

C. When was II Corinthians written?

1. Fall of 54 or 55 A. D.-Wayne Jackson, The Acts of the Apostles from Jerusalem to Rome, pg. 420.

2. 56 A. D.-Simon J. Kistemaker, New Testament Commentary, pg. 407.

3. Summer and Autumn of 56-Hogg and Vine, The Epistle to the Thessalonians, pg. 17.

4. 57 or 58 A. D.-Authorized King James Version, John A. Dickson Publishing Co., pg. 1305

D. The time of Paul's being taken up into paradise and receiving the messenger of Satan to buffet him.

1. I'm using the latest date suggested by conservative scholars-58 A.D.

2. Since the time was more than 14 years prior to Paul's writing, we have to count a minimum of 14 full years.

3. So, 14 whole years would place the date in 43 A.D.

4. Herod's death mentioned in Acts 12 occurred in 44 A.D.

5. The first missionary journey of the apostle Paul was apparently in the years of 46 and 47.

6. So, the time of Paul being taken up to paradise was before Paul's first journey, and before Herod's death.

7. The record in Acts 11:26 speaks of Paul and Barnabas being with the church in Antioch of Syria for a whole year; so Paul's being taken up into heaven could have occurred during this time.

NOTE: The first portion of Paul's ministry is extremely sketchy!

1. He was converted at Damascus and preached there for a while-Acts 9:3, 6, 8, & 19-25.

2. Afterwards, he went to Arabia, then returned to Damascus-Galatians 1:17.

3. Afterwards, he went to Jerusalem for 15 days-see Galatians 1:18; Acts 9:25-30. This was three years after his conversion-see Galatians 1:17 & 18.

4. He then returned to Tarsus, the capital of Syria; then to Cilicia-Acts 9:30, Galatians 1:21.

5. Barnabas found Paul in Tarsus and brought him to Antioch of Syria to help him with the work in Antioch-Acts 11:25 & 26.

6. From the time of Paul's conversion in about 32 A.D., until he went to Antioch of Syria to help Barnabas was approximately 10-11 years.

II. General observations from II Corinthians 12:1-10.

A. As far as the biblical record is concerned, no one else in all history experienced what Paul did by being taken up to the third heaven.

B. Why did God allow Paul to have this unique and special experience?

**C. The bible doesn't tell us and I don't know!
But if I took a guess, I would say it happened because Paul needed these revelations of heaven to give him encouragement to pass through his many, many severe trials!**

D. The revelations given to Paul are said to have been “*exceedingly great*”-see verse 7.

1. KJV= “*Abundance of the revelations.*”

2. ASV= “*Exceeding greatness of the revelations.*”

E. Paul was not allowed to utter what was revealed to him.

“How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter”-verse 4.

F. It was because of the exceeding greatness of the revelations that a thorn in the flesh was given unto Paul so he would not be exalted above measure!

“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 (aggelos) of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure”-verse 7.

G. I hold that the “thorn in the flesh” was the messenger of Satan sent to buffet Paul.

Ultimately, the buffeting was for Paul’s salvation!

H. I would translate “aggelos” as “angel;” rather than “messenger!”

1. The word aggelos can be translated as “messenger” as it is in Philippians 2:25, where the record refers to Epaphroditus as “messenger.”

John the Baptist was the messenger (aggelon) of the Lord-Mark 1:2.

2. Nothing in the context of II Corinthians 12 indicates this aggelos was giving messages to Paul; rather he was sent to buffet Paul!

3. The record in Revelation 12:7 & 9 shows us Satan has evil angels!

I. “Buffet” (kolaphizo), literally means, “to strike with clenched hands with the fist!” It is a very severe word! It is used metaphorically in verse 7 to refer to the severe punishment inflicted by Satan’s angel upon the apostle Paul.



J. Because of the severity of the buffeting, Paul asked the Lord three times to remove the thorn.

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

K. Instead of removing the thorn, the Lord answered by telling Paul his grace was sufficient!

“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”-verse 9.

Here, I would translate the part c of the verse to read, “for my strength is fully supplied in weakness!”

APPLIED, THE THOUGHT IN THE VERSE IS THAT GOD'S GRACE IS SUFFICIENT BECAUSE HE SUPPLIES ALL THE STRENGTH, POWER, OR GRACE THAT CHRISTIANS NEED TO BEAR UP UNDER THE BUFFETING OF SATAN'S ANGEL!

L. Because that was true in Paul's case, he said, "*Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me*"-the second part of verse 9.

M. "Rest" (episkenose) means "to cast a tent, or tabernacle upon!" Paul is literally saying here, "That the power of Christ may be cast over me as a tent!"

N. Therefore, Paul could say, "*Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong*"-verse 10.



III. CLOSE

A. I like to use biblical examples, but I like to use examples from today too!

B. God's grace, strength, and power will always have the victory over Satan's buffeting angels!

C. There is no reason for any Christian not to cross the finish line-II Timothy 4:6-8.

D. The reason that's so is because Christians have God's divine help available to them as they walk through the buffetings that will certainly come to them!

E. Christians of today can have the victory just like Paul!

F. Christians must remember that when they are weak through Satan's buffetings; they are strong because God's grace is sufficient!!