

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 254 – September 11th – 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Works frequently referenced in these notes on 2 Corinthians

Carson, Donald A	<i>From Triumphalism to Maturity: A new exposition of 2 Corinthians 10-13</i> , Leicester, IVP, 1986
Kruse, Colin	<i>2 Corinthians</i> (Tyndale Commentary), London, IVP, 1987
Martin, Ralph P	<i>2 Corinthians</i> (Word Biblical Commentary), Waco Texas, Word Books, 1986
Tasker, RVG	<i>2 Corinthians</i> (Tyndale Commentary), London, Tyndale Press, 1958

2 Corinthians 12:1

Καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ· οὐ συμφέρον μὲν, ἐλεύσομαι
δὲ εἰς ὄπτασίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεις κυρίου.

Compare 11:30. The abruptness of the text has given rise to a number of variants which seek to improve the flow. Martin translates *καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ* as 'I must go on boasting'

συμφερον, ου η good, advantage, benefit

The AV places a full stop after *μὲν*. But it is better to see the clause *οὐ συμφέρον μὲν* as a parenthesis between 'I must go on boasting' and 'I will go on to visions ...'. Note the use of *μὲν* ... *δε*. Paul views his boasting as forced foolishness, a necessary evil.

ἐλεύσομαι Verb, fut midd dep indic, 1 s
έρχομαι

ὄπτασια, ας f vision

ἀποκαλυψις, εως f revelation

Cf. Acts 18:9,10; 22:17-21; 23:11; 27:23,24.

Verse 2

οἶδα ἄνθρωπον ἐν Χριστῷ πρὸ ἐτῶν
δεκατεσσάρων – εἴτε ἐν σώματι οὐκ οἶδα, εἴτε
ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν –
ἀρπαγέντα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ.

His use of the third person "may ... suggest that he wants his readers to see that though he experiences visions and revelations like his opponents, nevertheless the man about whom Paul speaks is not the one he desires to emulate." Martin

ἐν Χριστῷ here not referring to 'the person' being a Christian but to the nature of the power that laid hold of him.

προ ἐτων δεκατεσσαρων 14 years ago

"Whatever the date of Paul's experience, it was well before the founding of the Corinthian church. What remains a mystery is to what event specifically Paul is referring. With the date of AD 44 in mind, it appears we can rule out every other visionary experience of Paul recorded in the NT... Bruce only allows that we simply have a reference to an obscure period between the time when Paul was sent to Tarsus (Acts 9:30) and the meeting with Barnabas at Antioch." Martin

εἴτε if, whether

σωμα, τος η body

ἐκτος outside, outside of

ἀρπαγέντα Verb, aor pass ptc, m acc s

ἀρπαζω take away, carry off

τοιουτος, αυτη, ουτον correlative pronoun and adjective such, of such kind

ἕως until, as far as

τριτος, η, ον third

The reference to 'third' heaven is probably not intended to reflect a particular cosmology. There were systems which variously included 3, 5 or 7 heavens, the first being preferred by the Jews and last by the Greeks. Paul probably uses the phrase metaphorically meaning the heights of heaven. Some suggest that the OT makes a distinction between the atmospheric heaven, a stellar heaven (or firmament) and the limitless or spiritual heaven, where God is located (Lincoln, Hughes).

Verse 3

καὶ οἶδα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἄνθρωπον – εἴτε ἐν
σώματι εἴτε χωρὶς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ
θεὸς οἶδεν –

A number of MSS read *ἐκτος* in place of *χωρὶς* in conformity with v.2.

Verse 4

ὅτι ἡρπάγη εἰς τὸν παράδεισον καὶ ἤκουσεν ἄρρητα ῥήματα ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι.

ἡρπάγη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s ἄρπαζω
see v.2

παράδεισος, ου m paradise

Some argue that Paul is speaking of different experiences and different spiritual locations but Hodge, Windisch, Tasker, Barrett and Hughes argue that paradise is here a synonym for the third heaven. It appears then that Paul is speaking of the one event (so also Lincoln and Martin).

ἄρρητος, ον too sacred to be put into words

ῥημα, ατος n word, thing, matter
ἐξεστιν impersonal verb it is permitted, it is lawful, it is proper, it is possible

λαλεω speak, talk

A "counter-blast to gnosticising secrets putatively revealed to the opponents." Martin. It was given for Paul alone, to strengthen and encourage him in the ministry to which he had been called.

Verse 5

ὑπὲρ τοῦ τοιούτου καυχῆσομαι, ὑπὲρ δὲ ἑμαυτοῦ οὐ καυχῆσομαι εἰ μὴ ἐν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις.

ἑμαυτου, ης reflexive pronoun myself
ἀσθενεια, ας f see 11:30

Cf. 6:4-10; 11:23-28, 30.

Verse 6

ἐὰν γὰρ θελήσω καυχῆσασθαι, οὐκ ἔσομαι ἄφρων, ἀλήθειαν γὰρ ἐρῶ· φείδομαι δέ, μὴ τις εἰς ἐμὲ λογιῆται ὑπὲρ ὃ βλέπει με ἢ ἀκούει τι ἐξ ἐμοῦ,

ἐαν if, even if, though

θελήσω Verb, aor act subj, 1 s θελω wish

'even if I should choose to boast.'

καυχῆσασθαι Verb, aor midd dep infin
καυχασμαι

ἔσομαι Verb, fut indic, 1 s εἰμι

ἄφρων, ον gen ονος fool, foolish

"Paul could choose to boast of himself, for he would have solid grounds on which to do so. Unlike his opponents, who probably boasted of visions they did not have..., Paul has just related a vision which he has experienced." Martin

ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality; ἐν ἀ. truly

ἐρῶ Verb, fut act indic, 1 s λεγω

φειδομαι spare, refrain from

'but I will refrain [from boasting]...'

ἐμὲ Pronoun, acc s ἐγω

λογίσηται Verb, aor midd dep subj, 3 s

λογίζομαι reckon, credit, suppose

'so that no one will think more of me than...'

βλεπω see, look, be able to see

"Both the verbs *sees* and *hears* are in the present tense, emphasising that it is upon present performance that Paul wants to be judged." Kruse

Verse 7

καὶ τῇ ὑπερβολῇ τῶν ἀποκαλύψεων. διὸ ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι, ἐδόθη μοι σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί, ἄγγελος Σατανᾶ, ἵνα με κολαρίζῃ, ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι.

If the opening words are construed with v.6 (see below), the sense must be something like 'even with respect to the extraordinary revelations'

ὑπερβολη, ης f surpassing, beyond measure

ἀποκαλυψις, εως f revelation

διο is omitted by many MSS resulting in the first 5 words of this verse becoming an integral part of what follows. διο is included by ⋈ A B G etc., resulting in the first part of the verse concluding the thought of v.6. Metzger believes that some copyists mistakenly began a new sentence with 12:7a and this led to some witnesses omitting διο.

διο therefore, for this reason

ὑπεραιρωμαι be puffed up with pride

Only here and 2 Thess 2:4.

ἐδόθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s διδομι

i.e. by God.

σκολοψ, οπος m thorn, splinter

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body

κολαρίζω beat, strike, harass

There is not enough evidence for us to identify this *thorn in the flesh*. Most modern commentators think it a physical ailment; some, in the light of Gal 4:15, suggest an eye problem. Ramsay suggested recurring malarial fever, others a speech impediment. A few commentators have argued that Paul is speaking of his opponents whom he terms 'messengers of Satan' and considers 'a pain in the side.'

Several witnesses omit the second occurrence of ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι as unnecessary and superfluous.

Verse 8

ὑπὲρ τούτου τρις τὸν κύριον παρεκάλεσα ἵνα ἀποστῇ ἀπ' ἐμοῦ·

τρις three times

"The number three is a reminder of Jesus' temptations in the Garden of Gethsemane and the three times he petitioned the Father to remove the cup from him." Martin

παρακαλεω exhort, encourage, urge
ἀποστῆ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s ἀφισταμαι go
away, keep away

Verse 9

καὶ εἰρηκέν μοι Ἄρκει σοι ἡ χάρις μου· ἡ γὰρ δύναμις ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ τελεῖται. ἥδιστα οὖν μᾶλλον καυχῆσομαι ἐν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις μου, ἵνα ἐπισκηνώσῃ ἐπ' ἐμέ ἡ δύναμις τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

εἰρηκέν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s λεγω

Suggests a decision that is final.

ἄρκεω be enough, be sufficient

"Paul is convinced that neither the thorn nor trials of any sort will cause him to cease in his service of God. The following clause restates the same theme." Martin

The 'power' spoken of is the power of Christ.

ἀσθενεια, ας f weakness, illness
τελεω complete, finish, fulfill

τελειουται is found in $\aleph^2 D^2 E K L P$. The stronger witness supports the text τελεῖται ($\aleph^* A B D^* F G$).

"Barrett is certainly correct, if slightly anachronistic, when he writes, 'Divine power is scarcely perceptible in the impressive activities of the ecclesiastical potentates with whom Paul has to contend.'" Martin

ἥδιστα (superl of ἡδεως) most gladly
μαλλον adv more; rather, instead

i.e. rather than in revelations.

καυχασομαι boast, boast about
ἐπισκηνωω rest upon, live in

Cf. Jn 1:14

ἐμέ Pronoun, acc s ἐγω

"What we can see is that Paul has experienced a higher degree of communion with God because of suffering in general and the thorn in particular. We probably will never know the invaluable aid the experience of 12:1-10 played in strengthening Paul over the arduous years of his ministry." Martin

Verse 10

διὸ εὐδοκῶ ἐν ἀσθενείαις, ἐν ὕβρεσιν, ἐν ἀνάγκαις, ἐν διωγμοῖς καὶ στενοχωρίαις, ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ· ὅταν γὰρ ἀσθενῶ, τότε δυνατός εἰμι.

διο see v.7

εὐδοκεω be pleased, take pleasure in
ὑβρις, εως f insult, mistreatment
ἀναγκη, ης f necessity, distress

διωγμος, ου m persecution

καὶ is supported by $p^{46} \aleph^* B 104$... Other MSS read ἐν which appears to have arisen from copyists seeking to continue the series with the same preposition.

στενοχωρια, ας f distress, difficulty, trouble

"Such an idea repels the mistaken concept of suffering that has sometimes pervaded church history. Those who have experienced or encouraged self-afflicted wounds, endured martyrdom simply as a means of seeking to become righteous, and practiced asceticism solely as a means of securing God's favour are guilty of emphasising merit, not faith... Human suffering in and of itself does not display divine power. Such bravado only produces rewards for the morbid fanatic or the foolish... Or, as Hughes proposes, 'a joyless theology of insecurity' is the outcome of such endeavours. Rather, Paul exhibits a joyful walk with God undergirded by a firm security in God's grace. So deep-seated is Paul's delight that what he has endured does not compare to what is his in Christ." Martin

ὅταν when, whenever, as often as

ἀσθενεω be ill, be weak

τοτε then, at that time

δυνατος, η, ον possible, strong, powerful, able

"Whenever God's servants humble themselves and acknowledge their weakness, then the power of Christ can flow through them." Martin

"Paul's weaknesses – whether exhibited in his sufferings for the Gospel or centred in the thorn in the flesh – have been his criteria for true apostleship. He has entered into the fray, not in order to boast of his own achievement, but to boast of his weaknesses. By doing so he has offered the Corinthians an alternative to the opponents that harass him. The alternative is strength-based-on-weakness, a theme no doubt foreign to the opponents of Paul, but one that expressed the heart of the Gospel of a crucified Lord." Martin