

2 Corinthians 12

My Burden Carries Me

UNINTENTIONALLY, A GERMAN PHILOSOPHER CAPTURED THE GENIUS OF Paul's spirituality with these arresting words. "My burden carries me." Normally we think about difficulty of carrying our burdens. But in reality our burdens carry us to Christ by convincing us that we are not self-sufficient. They are spiritual assets, not liabilities. "When I am weak, then I am strong" is Paul's final distinction between super-spirituality and the real thing.

Warming Up to God: What burdens are you carrying today? Turn them over to Christ one by one. Feel the weight lifted from you.

Read 2 Corinthians 12.

Discovering the Word: 1. Paul describes his experience of being caught up to paradise by referring to "a man in Christ" (vv. 1-6). Why do you think he refrains from boasting about such an exalted experience? 2. Opinions concerning Paul's "thorn in my flesh" (v.7) range from eye disease (Acts 9:9; Gal. 4:15) to defective speech to his ever-present opponents. While no conclusive answer can be given about the details, what do we know about this bitter reality Paul faced? 3. How does Paul view Satan's part and God's part in his "thorn"? 4. In contrast to Paul's ecstatic experiences, the simple answer to his prayer (v. 9) is considered to be the summit from we gain the most complete view of Paul's apostleship. What effect did this answer have on Paul himself? 5. To what credentials does Paul point while pleading for his rightful place in Corinthians' hearts (vv. 11-21)?

Applying the Word: 1. Reflecting on the whole chapter, what kind of weakness or problems can we legitimately expect God to transform into a means of grace? 2. What kinds of problems or weaknesses should we not expect God to transform? 3. How does this help you to understand an ongoing problem in your life?

Responding in Prayer: Pray that you will be made strong even in your weak places, that you might serve Christ?