

Eye Problems?

Lesson 8 – Outline

I. Some people teach that Paul had a sickness that God refused to heal him of, and therefore we can't expect to be healed of all sicknesses today.

A. They attempt to verify this with Galatians 4:

Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.

Galatians 4:12-15

B. Notice the terminology in verse 13, “**infirmity of the flesh.**” This is literally talking about some kind of physical problem.

C. So people theorize that this was an ancient Aramaic disease of runny, puffy eyes that lasted throughout Paul's entire life.

D. If you can swallow that, then you can make the Bible say anything you want.

II. Let's consider a much more accurate interpretation.

A. In order to do so, we need to look at Acts 14:11-12 and 19-21.

B. Paul was preaching in Lystra and Derbe.

C. This was the instance when he was stoned and left for dead (2 Cor. 11:25).

D. Can you guess where the cities Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe were located? They were all part of a region called Galatia.

E. These are the people Paul was writing to in Galatians 4 when he said, “At first you took pity on me because of this infirmity in my flesh. You would have plucked out your own eyes for me.”

F. Instead of pulling out of the clear blue sky that Paul had some kind of an ancient eye disease, it's much more honest with Scripture to recognize that Galatians 4 is referring to the exact same time period when Paul had been stoned, left for dead, rose up, traveled over twenty miles the next day, and began preaching to the people in the next city.

- III. If Paul was talking about the fact that he had some damage to his eyes from the stoning the day before, it was only temporary.
 - A. Paul said it was only **“at the first”** that this **“infirmity of the flesh”** bothered him.
 - B. It was something temporary in his body that healed over time.
 - C. Paul got over it.
- IV. It’s also possible that when Paul said “You would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me,” he was using a figure of speech.
 - A. People say, “You’d give your right arm for me.”
 - B. Does that mean they have bad right arms? No.
 - C. It’s just a figure of speech people use to say that this person would sacrifice anything for them.
- V. The people who contend that Paul’s thorn in the flesh was sickness in the form of some eye disease go on to Galatians 6:

Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

Galatians 6:11

- A. I’ve actually heard someone use this verse to argue that Paul was so nearly blind because of his eyesight problem that his handwriting was three or four inches tall.
 - B. That’s not what Paul was talking about here.
 - C. There are different words for talking about size or quantity in the Greek language.
 - D. The word translated **“large”** in Galatians 6:11 is the one for quantity.
 - E. If you were to print Galatians out in twelve-point type (Times New Roman font), double-spaced on regular sheets of 8.5 x 11 paper, it would be more than eight pages long.
 - F. I would consider that a large letter, in the sense that it’s long.
- VI. If Paul did have any eye problems, referred to in Galatians 4, it was because he was stoned and left for dead the day before, and it was only temporary.
 - A. That would be the only correlation between what Paul was saying in Galatians 4 and his mentioning of the thorn in the flesh in 2 Corinthians 12:7.
 - B. Paul’s thorn in the flesh was not some type of sickness; it was a demonic messenger sent from Satan to stir up persecution wherever he went.
 - C. We are redeemed from sickness but not from persecution.

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Lesson 8 – Discipleship Questions

1. Read Galatians 4:12-15. Even though Paul had an infirmity of the flesh, what did he do?
2. What would the people of Galatia have done for Paul?
3. According to Romans 8:26, what does the Spirit make for us?
4. According to 2 Corinthians 11:25-26, was Paul rarely persecuted?
5. Read Acts 14:11-12. Why did the people think Paul and Barnabas were gods come down in the likeness of men?
6. Read Acts 14:19-21. What happened when the disciples stood round about Paul after he had been stoned?
7. In Derbe, Paul and Barnabas preached the Gospel to that city and taught _____.
 - A. No one.
 - B. A few people.
 - C. Algebra.
 - D. Everyone.
 - E. Many.
8. According to Acts 14:6, where did Paul and Barnabas flee to?
9. Read Galatians 6:11. Whose hand wrote the letter to the Galatians?
10. According to Matthew 23:24, what kind of guides were Jesus talking to?
11. Were they physically blind?
12. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7. Paul was given a messenger of _____, lest he should be exalted above measure.

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Lesson 8 – Scriptures

Galatians 4:12-15

Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all. [13] Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. [14] And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. [15] Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.

Romans 8:26

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

2 Corinthians 11:25-26

Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; [26] In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren.

Acts 14:11-12

And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. [12] And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

Acts 14:19-21

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. [20] Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. [21] And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch.

Acts 14:6

They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about.

Galatians 6:11

Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

Matthew 23:24

Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

2 Corinthians 12:7

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 of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.