

Galatians 4:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.

Analysis

Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. Paul reminds them of his initial visit. "Ye know" (oidate, οἴδατε)—you're aware, you remember. "Through infirmity of the flesh" (di' astheneian tēs sarkos)—because of weakness of the flesh. Astheneia (ἀσθένεια) means weakness, sickness, illness. Paul apparently had a physical ailment when he first came to them. The preposition "through" or "because of" (dia) suggests the illness occasioned his stay and gospel-preaching among them.

"I preached the gospel unto you at the first" (euēngelisamēn hymin to proteron)—his initial evangelization. Speculation about Paul's ailment ranges from malaria to eye disease to aftermath of persecution. The point isn't the specific malady but that despite physical suffering, Paul preached the gospel, and they received it. His weakness didn't invalidate his message. This prepares for verse 14's point about their initial reception despite his condition.

Historical Context

Acts 13-14 narrates Paul's first missionary journey through southern Galatia (Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe). Acts 14:19 mentions Paul being stoned at Lystra and left for dead. His "infirmity" may have been lingering effects of persecution or a chronic condition (possibly the "thorn in the flesh" of 2 Corinthians 12:7-9). The Galatians received the gospel despite Paul's unimpressive

physical state, demonstrating the Spirit's power, not human eloquence or appearance (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does God use weakness, suffering, and physical limitation to display the gospel's power rather than human strength?
2. Do you dismiss spiritual truth from messengers who lack impressive appearance, eloquence, or health?
3. How has God used your weaknesses and limitations to create opportunities for gospel proclamation?

Interlinear Text

οἴδατε	δὲ	ὅτι	δι'	ἀσθένειαν	τῆς	σαρκὸς
Ye know	G1161	how	through	infirmity	G3588	of the flesh
G1492		G3754	G1223	G769		G4561

εὐηγγελισάμην	ὑμῖν	τὸ	πρότερον
I preached the gospel	unto you	G3588	at the first
G2097	G5213		G4386

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 2:3 (Parallel theme): And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

2 Corinthians 11:6 (Parallel theme): But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.

2 Corinthians 11:30 (Parallel theme): If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

2 Corinthians 10:10 (Parallel theme): For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.

Galatians 1:6 (Parallel theme): I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: