

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 7TH, 2024 // 2 CORINTHIANS

### VISIONS AND REVELATIONS (2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-5)

#### "BOASTING IS NECESSARY"

Paul considers it not profitable to continue to boast in himself. Still, the worldly thinking of the Corinthians and the deception from the "super-apostles" **made it necessary for him to share his visions and revelations.**

- In thinking so little of Paul, **they inadvertently began to think little of Christ**, though they had yet to recognize it.

#### BOASTING IN GOD ALONE

Paul points out that **he waited 14 years to share his vision** when the "super-apostles" would not have hesitated.

- Paul was trying to avoid boasting in himself so much that **he communicated in the third person and avoided boasting in himself** but in the vision given and his personal weaknesses.

#### THREE HEAVENS?

Paul indicates he was **"caught up to the third heaven fourteen years ago."**

- Paul uses terminology that would have been familiar in his day, referring to the **"blue sky" as the first heaven, the "starry sky" as the second heaven, and the place where God dwelt and reigned as the third heaven.**

#### "CAUGHT UP INTO PARADISE"

Paul could not explain how his vision took place. He repeated twice that **he did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body but that only God knew.**

- Paul understood what was communicated to him, because it helped shape his ministry, but **he was not permitted to say the heavenly things he heard.**

### A THORN IN THE FLESH (2 CORINTHIANS 12:6-10)

#### "BECAUSE OF THE EXTRAORDINARY REVELATIONS"

Paul admits that **if he were to boast about all his experiences, though they would be true, they would think more of him than what was warranted.**

- We tend to exalt those around us who we believe to have had an extraordinary experience with God when **God is the only one to be exalted.**

#### "SO THAT I WOULD NOT EXALT MYSELF"

Paul indicated God gave him **"a thorn in the flesh...a messenger of Satan to torment me so that I would not exalt myself."** We don't know if Paul's "thorn" was a physical or mental ailment, spiritual harassment, persecution, or a severe temptation.

- By not telling what the "thorn" was for Paul, **we are able to take our own "thorn in the flesh" and put ourselves in Paul's shoes.**

#### "LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN TO GOD"

Paul asked **three times for God to remove "the thorn."** God still answered Paul, but the answer was no.

- God's divine grace was sufficient for him. God, through grace, wants us to receive comfort and security in Jesus. **God is glorified and magnified by displaying His great strength through our weaknesses.**

#### "SO THAT CHRIST'S POWER MAY RESIDE IN ME"

As a result, Paul quit asking for "the thorn" to be removed. Instead of complaining, **he chose to boast even more about his weaknesses because it was an opportunity to rely on God and his vast strength.**

- Everything Paul endured was cause for joy, because, **in those moments, Paul was strong in the power of Christ.**

### FOOLISH BOASTING (2 CORINTHIANS 12:11-13)

#### THE CONCERN FOR OTHERS OF A TRUE APOSTLE

Paul desired to write about Christ and points out how **the Corinthians had forced him into taking on the strategies of the opposition by writing more about himself than he desired.**

- It wasn't the presence of the "super-apostles" that concerned Paul, but **it was the influence that their presence had over those in Corinth.**

#### THE HUMILITY OF A TRUE APOSTLE

Over and over, Paul had **displayed the signs of a true apostle** to the church in Corinth, and **the greatest sign was recognizing he was nothing apart from the grace of God.**

- The signs, wonders, and miracles Paul performed with unfailing endurance among them should have solidified the divine authority given to Paul.

#### "FORGIVE ME FOR THIS WRONG!"

Paul asks the church in Corinth, **"In what ways are you worse off than the other churches, except that I personally did not burden you?"**

- If Paul was inferior to the "super-apostles" in any way, it was in that sacrifice that he never took anything from them. **They could not be worse off than the other churches because they were the ones supporting the ministry.**

### GRAVE CONCERN (2 CORINTHIANS 12:14-21)

#### BACK AGAIN?

Paul's first trip to Corinth was to establish the church and he remained there for 18 months (Acts 18:11). He visited a second time, briefly between writing the two letters of Corinthians. Now Paul is **ready to return to Corinth for a third time.**

- Paul is coming a third time to collect an offering, but he wants to ensure them **the money is for the benefit of others and not himself.**

#### "CHILDREN OUGHT NOT SAVE UP FOR THEIR PARENTS"

Paul did not serve the people of Corinth to see what he could gain from them, but he could give to them. He said, "I am not seeking what is yours, but you."

- As their spiritual father, he didn't want to be a burden on his children. There comes a time when children mature enough to no longer need the financial support of their parents.

#### "I WILL MOST GLADLY SPEND AND BE SPENT"

Paul told his children that he would gladly **"spend and be spent for [them]"**. He ensured the Corinthians he had their best interest in mind and would give everything he had including himself.

- Paul asked as a concerned parent would of a wayward child whether **if he continued to love them this way would it be reciprocated or push them away?**

#### REPENT

Paul was fearful that this other Jesus, spirit, and gospel (11:4) being taught by the "super-apostles" had **stripped the Corinthians of the ability to change and that he would find them caught up in the same sin** as previously.

- Paul was grieved and he mourned for the Corinthians' worldly thinking. **His plea was not for them to be perfect, but to repent.**

### VISIONS AND REVELATIONS

- We tend to think this is more of an OT topic; it is more common in the NT than we may realize, but that does not mean it is an ordinary occurrence.
- Visions from God will be consistent with what He has already spoken in His Word.
- Prayerfully examine God's word to ensure the vision is in alignment with His word.
- Typically, visions are meant for the one receiving the vision, so we should be cautious when someone claims to have a vision regarding us. God will not say something to someone else about us that He has not already said to us.
- **Prayerfully seek God for the meaning and the proper response to a vision.**

### HE IS SUFFICIENT!

- "I wish it were possible to put into words this all-sufficiency, but it is not. Let me retract my speech: I am glad that it cannot be put into words, for if so it would be finite, but since we never can express it, glory be to God **it is inexhaustible, and our demands upon it can never be too great.**" (Spurgeon)
- **We are unable to see the sufficiency and power of Christ until we recognize our own insufficiency and powerlessness.**
- **God's grace is his favor and love in action. His favor for us and the love displayed to us is more than enough.**
- **His grace is available for all of us to receive at this moment.**