

1 **2 Corinthians 12**

Part 1

2 **2 Corinthians 12:1-6**

It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me *to be* or hears from me.

3 **2 Corinthians 12:7-10**

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

4 **Outline of 2 Corinthians 12**

- I. A Vision of Paradise, verses 1-6
- II. A Thorn in the Flesh, verses 7-10
- III. The Signs of an Apostle, verses 11-13
- IV. Love for the Church, verses 14-21

5 **A Vision of Paradise**

1 - It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord:

- *Paul finished the last chapter on the thought that he would rather speak not of what he had done for God but what God had done for him.*
- *He gave the example of God delivering him from Damascus.*
- *He here re-emphasizes the fact that it is not profitable for him to boast of himself and again turns to speak of what God has done, now in the matter of special revelations.*

6 **A Vision of Paradise**

2 - I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven.

- "I know a man" -- *verse 7 reveals that this man was Paul himself.*
- "Fourteen years ago"
 - *Before Paul's first missionary journey*
 - *While he was preaching in the region around Tarsus*

- *Paul had kept quiet about it until the need of the church required him to reveal it.*
- "The third heaven" -- *probably a reference to several definitions of the word heaven (οὐρανός)*
 1. *The realm of birds and clouds*
 2. *The realm of planets and stars*
 3. *The abode of God*

7 **A Vision of Paradise**

3 - And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—

- *Paul repeats this for emphasis.*
- *He really does know such a man (it was himself, of course).*
- *He really doesn't know the details of how God showed heaven to him.*

8 **A Vision of Paradise**

4 - how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

- "Paradise" -- παράδεισος -- *a park, garden, paradise*
 - *Occurs three times in the New Testament*
 - *Luke 23:43 -- "And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.'"*
 - *Revelation 2:7 -- "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."*
- *"Inexpressible words" -- unsayable sayings, speakings that cannot be spoken*
- *"Which it is not lawful for a man to utter" -- Which no man has authority to speak*
- *God gave Paul a message that was for him alone -- to encourage and strengthen Paul for the work he had to do.*

9 **A Vision of Paradise**

5 - Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities.

- *Here Paul returns to the theme he took up in the previous chapter.*
- *He will not boast of himself but of what God has done for him.*
- *The identity of the recipient of God's goodness is not even important enough to be named -- he is merely "such a one."*
- *Paul's only role is to vouch that the story is true, and even then only when it became necessary to share it.*

10 **A Vision of Paradise**

6 - For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me.

- *It is not on the basis of dreams, or visions, or prophecies that a man should be regarded, but for his godly conduct and the truth of the message he brings.*

11 **A Thorn in the Flesh**

7- And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn

in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

- "Abundance" -- *exceeding greatness*
- "The revelations" -- *Paul has obviously received many and great revelations from God -- he's writing much of the New Testament -- but the revelation last mentioned above, and which is therefore referenced here, is that of being "caught up into Paradise."*
- *The "thorn in the flesh" was for the purpose of preventing Paul from becoming proud because of the revelations he had received.*
- "A messenger of Satan" -- *Satan intended it for evil, but God allowed it only insofar as it accomplished His purpose.*

12 **A Thorn in the Flesh**

8 - Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

- *It is not wrong to ask the Lord to relieve our suffering, even to ask repeatedly, as the Lord himself did in the Garden of Gethsemane.*

13 **A Thorn in the Flesh**

9 - And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

- "He said to me" -- lit., "he has said to me," -- *whether by an inner voice or an audible voice, we don't know.*
- "My strength" -- *my power (δύναμις)*
- "Is made perfect" -- *is completed, fulfilled (τελείται)*
- *We are most aware of how strong God is, when we are most aware of how weak we are.*
- "Rest upon me" -- *ἐπισκηνώση -- from ἐπι, upon, and σκηνώω, to dwell in a pitched tent -- that the power of Christ may come down upon me, and dwell in me.*
- *We are best positioned to receive the power of Christ when we are most aware of our complete dependence on Him.*

14 **A Thorn in the Flesh**

10 - Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- "I take pleasure" -- *εὐδοκῶ -- I am well content; I think it good.*
- *These things are not pleasurable in themselves, but Paul was well content to bear them for Christ.*
- "Then I am strong" -- *δυνατός -- powerful, mighty*