

## Notes:

Sierra Community Church September 3rd, 2023 Part 5 -Dan Wilvers



## When Paul Gets Caught Up to Heaven 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

*This boasting will do no good, but I must go on. I will reluctantly tell about visions and revelations from the Lord.<sup>2</sup> I was caught up to the third heaven fourteen years ago. Whether I was in my body or out of my body, I don't know—only God knows.<sup>3</sup> Yes, only God knows whether I was in my body or outside my body. But I do know<sup>4</sup> that I was caught up to paradise and heard things so astounding that they cannot be expressed in words, things no human is allowed to tell.*

*<sup>5</sup>That experience is worth boasting about, but I'm not going to do it. I will boast only about my weaknesses.<sup>6</sup> If I wanted to boast, I would be no fool in doing so, because I would be telling the truth. But I won't do it, because I don't want anyone to give me credit beyond what they can see in my life or hear in my message,<sup>7</sup> even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud.*

*<sup>8</sup>Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away.<sup>9</sup> Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.<sup>10</sup> That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

### Community Group Questions:

Paul's purpose was to grow the church with the true Gospel of Christ, he cares little for bragging about the things God has done for him, he only wants people to grow in Christ.

1. How does Paul's story help to disarm those that want to boast about their faith experiences for personal gain and influence?
2. Why do you think Paul didn't say much about his heaven revelation?
3. How would you explain to someone this verse: "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness."
4. Name a weakness in your life and how verse 9 could change your attitude about it?

## I. Context of why Paul boasts.

*This boasting will do no good, but I must go on. I will reluctantly tell about visions and revelations from the Lord.* 2 Corinthians 12:1

**Why Paul is saying this?** There were some false teachers, who had come to Corinth and were twisting the gospel. Paul, out of real concern for the people, was saying, "Trust me, don't follow them." I want for you to understand who I am versus them.

## II. The Heaven experience

*I was caught up to the third heaven fourteen years ago. Whether I was in my body or out of my body, I don't know—only God knows. <sup>3</sup>Yes, only God knows whether I was in my body or outside my body. But I do know <sup>4</sup>that I was caught up to paradise and heard things so astounding that they cannot be expressed in words, things no human is allowed to tell. <sup>5</sup>That experience is worth boasting about, but I'm not going to do it.*

**What is this?** Paul is teaching us that people who have actually come right into his presence of the living God, dislike having to talk about it.

A famous 17<sup>th</sup> century preacher, William Guthrie, wrote of his own supernatural encounter:  
*"It is a thing better felt than spoken of."*

## Paul tells us why.

*If I wanted to boast, I would be no fool in doing so, because I would be telling the truth. But I won't do it, because I don't want anyone to give me credit beyond what they can see in my life or hear in my message, ...* 2 Corinthians 12:6

## What is the third heaven?

*I was caught up to the third heaven fourteen years ago. Whether I was in my body or out of my body, I don't know—only God knows.* 2 Corinthians 12:2

An old traditional way of saying the first heaven is the atmosphere, the second heaven is the stars, and the third heaven is the presence of God.

## III. The Thorn Experience

*I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud.* 2 Corinthians 12:7

In Paul's experience with God, he received multiple revelations, six others in the Book of Acts aside from this one. Paul is saying: "I was so lifted up I would have become conceited by it all."

**What is the thorn?** We don't know and since he doesn't tell us everyone can read their thorns into the story as well.

**What he says is,** "God gave me something."

*I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud.* Verse 7

## How Paul processed the thorn.

Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. 2 Corinthians 12:8

## God always answered the same.

Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:9

If God's grace is good enough to save you, then it's good enough to strengthen you in any difficulty you face.

## The Lesson Paul learned he wants us to learn.

So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. <sup>10</sup>That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the *insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles* that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:9,10