

**Judaizers in the church were trashing Paul's credibility.**

- They were attempting to get the Corinthians to question Paul's credibility.

**However, Paul himself would later say in verses 11 - 13 that**

- he had the signs which marked him of an apostle.

**In the last chapter Paul reluctantly boasted on his credentials**

- and he continues into this chapter,
- again, reluctantly.

**2 Cor 12:1-6**

1 It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: 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. 3 And I know such a man – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows – 4 how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. 5 Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. 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.

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

- Paul understood it was foolish to boast.

**Paul mentions visions and revelations.**

**When he was blinded on the Damascus road**

- he was given a visions and revelations by the Lord.

**For example: in Eph 3 it was revealed to him that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise (God's promise) in Christ through the gospel.**

**Gentile and Jew now have access to the cross.**

**Gal 1:11-12**

11 But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

**These visions were not his thoughts on paper, it was from Jesus.**

- all scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Tim)

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.

He's speaking in the third person

- which has led some to wonder
- if he was speaking of himself.

He clarifies in verse 7 that he was speaking of himself.

He was caught up into the third heaven (heavens of God).

The first would be the terrestrial heavens,

The second heaven would be the celestial heavens,

Paul, unlike John

- does not give a description of what he saw
- when he was caught up.

Paul used the Greek word **“Harpazo,”** he used this same word in his letter to the Thessalonians when he said, we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. (It means to be snatched away).

Paul said in chapter 5 to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

Paul believed in the snatching away, the rapture.

- sometimes people think
- they have to see to believe.

I believe the Lord gives us glimpses into the heavenly from time to time just to keep us alert.

Imagine this,

- the Lord has been working on your heavenly home
- for the last 2,000 years.

3 And I know such a man – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows – 4 how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Paradise is about the closest Paul gets to describing what he saw.

The word “Paradise” was borrowed from the Persians,

When they thought of paradise, they thought of gardens,

- full of all the vegetable products of the earth.

The words he heard

- were not possible or lawful to be uttered,

I would love to know what Paul heard.

But as we know, Deut 29:29 says the secret things belong to God and what does belong to us or for us to know is because He has chosen to reveal them to us according to.

In Revelation 10:4, John was about to write something down when an angel told him not to write this down. That’s the only time in Revelation that God doesn’t reveal something to us.

Dan 12:4 - shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”

We typically want to know everything right now,

- Lord, why have you not answered my prayers,
- or why am I having to wait, why why why!

I believe if the Lord were to drop everything on us at once it would be unbearable.

- He gives us what we can handle at the moment.

Notice in verse 3 Paul was not sure whether he was in the body or out of the body.

Some theologians think that Paul’s vision may have occurred

- when he was stoned and left for dead in Lystra,

You could argue a case for that since he would have been in Lystra some 14 years earlier.

Personally, I believe that the Lord would have had him in his right mind,

None the less,

- he had the experience and knew it to be fact.

So here was Paul, no need to boast or to defend himself.

- He never said, “Hey,” I’ve been to heaven, have you been there?

Whatever he saw he didn’t give details.

He didn't reveal what he saw but John says:

1 John 3:2

2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Some have to see before they will believe,

Paul said to set your mind on things above,

- not on things of the earth.

Jesus told Nicodemus in Jn 3:12

John 3:12

12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

Rom 8:18

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

2 Cor 12:5-6

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

Paul heard inexpressible words which were not lawful for a man to utter.

He didn't want to boast of his experience,

- his boasting was in Christ alone.

The Lord gives you what you need when you need it.

We should always recognize that

- what we have is from the Lord,

In Job chapter 2, Job's health was attacked and his wife was frustrated and she said to him:

Job 2:9-10

"Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Job knew, “hey,”

- we have to take the good and the bad alike

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me,

We all enjoy gifts,

- but none enjoy a thorn in the flesh.

The thorn Paul refers to

- speaks of something pointed and sharp as a stake.
- It was something which caused severe pain
- or constant irritation.

When Satan gives us a thorn as he did Job,

- those are meant to destroy.

But when God gives us a thorn or something that is going to make us uncomfortable,

- it's meant to develop us.

A messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him: (to strike a blow)

It's never any fun when we get beat up. The Psalmist said in Ps 119:67

67 Before I was afflicted (oppressed, humbled) I went astray,  
But now I keep Your word.

Ps 119:71

71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted,  
That I may learn Your statutes. (law, ordinance, decree)

Ps 119:75

75 I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are right,  
And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.

**Thank God for His afflictions that keep us from sinning against Him.**

That's a difficult thing to say,

- thank you Lord for my afflictions.

**Our natural reaction to trials is Lord, take me out of this!**

If we don't go thru trials,

- we can become complacent in our walk

- and begin to rely on self

**The Lord wants us to be prepared in all situations and for all situations.**

**None of us want to go thru difficult seasons in our life.**

- We'd like to move right along with no stress,
- no trials, no afflictions

**but that's not the case for us**

- so we have to rest in the Lord
- knowing that He always and I mean ALWAYS
- has our best interest at heart.

**2 Cor 12:7c**

lest I be exalted above measure.

**In other words,**

- this thorn in the flesh was given to me
- so that I wouldn't think I'm better than anyone else.

**What was this thorn in the flesh which Paul mentions in verse 7?**

- Some think he struggled with temptation,
- or malaria, migraines,
- or even epilepsy.

**Whatever it was**

- Paul pleaded with the Lord 3 times
- that He would remove it from him.

The most common answer to what Paul's thorn may have been is found in his letter to the Galatians.

**Gal 4:13-16**

13 You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first. 14 And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. 15 What then was the blessing you enjoyed? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me.

**Gal 6:11**

11 See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!

**It may be that Paul had some issues with his eyes.**

8 Concerning this thing I pleaded (to call or pray for earnestly) with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

That is, three times Paul prayed.

- Many of us have pleaded with the Lord.
- Please take this away from me,
- please heal me,
- please save him,
- please heal him or her,

And the Lord always says:

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 (I like the Greek translation here, it means "to live in) upon me.

Jesus said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you"

It seems that mankind is never satisfied.

Notice in verse 8 Paul pleads with the Lord and in verse 9 the Lord tells him, My grace is sufficient for you.

In other words,

- you don't need anything else.
- My grace will carry you thru your trials,
- thru your infirmities,
- thru your sickness.

Jer 33:3

3 'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'

So not only is God's grace sufficient but He says that His strength is made perfect in weakness.

When we are weak we are strong because it's then we rely on the Lord!

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.