

**Paul’s Christian Experience Included Great Heights (1-4)**

- A. The source of his experience (1) - “I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.”
- B. The strangeness of his experience (2a) - “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven...”
- C. The subjectivity in his experience (2b-3) - “...whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into paradise - whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows.”
- D. The separation of his experience (4) - “...and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.”

**The supernatural experiences that God gives to His children should be communicated only when it serves God’s purpose and results in God’s glory.**

**I. Paul’s Weakness Was Not A Death-Blow (5-7)**

- A. Paul chose what he would reflect to others (5) - “On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses.”

**Because Paul wished to magnify Christ, he would only mention in passing his strengths. He would highlight his weaknesses. This way Christ was assured to be the focus in Paul’s life.**

- B. Paul desired his own decrease so that Christ increased (6) - “Though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me.”
- C. Paul recognized the process whereby he was granted humility (7) - “So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.”

- 1. His clear need - “So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations...to keep me from becoming conceited...”
- 2. His acknowledged pain - “...a thorn was given me in the flesh...”
- 3. His attacking foe - “...a messenger of Satan to harass me...”

**II. Divine Grace Was Not Withheld From Paul (8-10)**

- A. He sought relief from God (8) - “Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.”
- B. He received response from God (9a) - “But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.”
- C. He grew in wisdom from God (9b) - “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” **Far from faking that all was well, Paul openly acknowledged his struggles and welcome God’s power**
- D. He continued in grace from God (10) - “For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”