

2 Corinthians

Chapter 12:1-13

Why is boasting necessary?

- Paul doesn't relish the idea of continued boasting but finds it necessary to refute the false apostles because it is what the Corinthians must hear.
- Paul already told us that boasting is not how Christ chose to spread the gospel, but His boasting in the Lord is accomplishing its goal with the Corinthians.
- Paul's main point in these verses isn't the boast of power, however -- it is the boast of his own weakness.

What does Paul start this boast talking about?

- His vision of the third heaven
- Whether or not it was just a vision or a real experience, Paul does not know
- But again, Paul gives God the glory

What is the third heaven?

- Hebrew writing and scripture mentions 3 heavens
- The heavens where the birds live
- The heavens outside of earth, where the sun, stars, and planets exist
- The place where God dwells

What or where is Paradise?

- According to Luke 16:22-23, in the ages before the cross and the resurrection of Jesus, the intermediate place of the dead had 2 compartments, one for the righteous (Abrahams bosom), and one for the wicked (Hades).
- Jesus' words to the penitent thief (Luke 23:43) suggest the compartment for the righteous is also called paradise.
- Ephesians 4:8 tells us that on the day of Jesus resurrection he took captivity captive with Him.
- Revelation 6:9, 15:2 tell us the souls of the redeemed are now under the alter, before the throne.
- Until Christ died, the sins of the righteous were just passed over, not pardoned. (Romans 3:25)
- Paradise is now in the third heaven, or is a part of it. That is the place to which Paul was "caught up."

Is Paul boasting about himself in verse 5?

- No. Paul is talking about himself, but he has nothing to boast about from the revelation of this vision. It was not his own power that caught him up to paradise. Paul himself did not walk around in paradise every day. Since this was not something he did, but something that was done to him, he has nothing to boast about.
- This experience did not make him any better than any other Christian.

What is the weakness Paul is boasting about?

- Paul's weaknesses are worthy of boasting about. Paul undoubtedly has many other revelations and visions he could boast about. Paul could boast about overcoming his weaknesses. But those would be egotistical.
- Rather, Paul is boasting about his weaknesses themselves as evidence that he was in himself nothing at all.
- Paul does not want to boast foolishly as he indicated the false apostles were doing. If Paul were to boast it would not be foolish, because it would be the truth. But he refrains and gives God all the glory.

What was the purpose of the thorn in the flesh given to Paul?

- To prevent Paul from exalting himself, from the surpassing greatness of the revelations that were being revealed to him.
- Maybe something similar to what happened to Job?

Why is Satan allowed to inflict bodily suffering on God's chosen?

- To keep them spiritually humble.
- To magnify their weaknesses and make it their strength in the Lord
- Job 2:7, Luke 3:16, Acts 10:38, 1 Corinthians 5:5.

What is God's goal in allowing Satan this power?

- To magnify the weaknesses and show Gods true power.
- To remind the righteous that in weakness one finds Gods strength.
- To invite Christ to dwell in us richly.

Who required Paul to become foolish?

- The Corinthians.
- By listening to the Judaizers and other false apostles, the Corinthians forced Paul to resort to this "defense of foolishness"
- If the Corinthians had stood up for Paul and refuted the false apostles, he would not have needed to write chapters 10-13 at all. But as a lesson for us, we have the recorded word of what a failure in faith looks like.

Is Paul a nobody?

- The Judaizers would like the Corinthians to think that.
- No. Paul contributed much to the foundation of the early church, but Paul is more than willing to give God all of the glory for that.
- Paul demonstrated the power of God in signs, wonders, and miracles to the Corinthians so that they would KNOW that it was God who was bringing this message of hope, not just a man named Paul.
- You can hear the sarcasm as Paul asks for forgiveness from the Corinthians for not being a burden to them.

What final reminder does Paul end this appeal with?

- Paul took NOTHING from the Corinthians
- He asks for forgiveness for NOT taking from the Corinthians, if that is what caused them to doubt, even for a moment, that he was an apostle of Christ.

Next week

- Paul has appealed to the Corinthians to recognize his apostolic authority (10:12-18), and to esteem him more highly than the false apostles esteemed him (11:1-12:10). Having called attention to the reason he had to make this appeal concerning his apostolic authority (12:11-13) Paul has one more appeal in this third letter.
- 2 Corinthians 12:14-13:10 - Be ready for Paul's third visit.