**2 Corinthians ABC 23 May 2021**

2 Corinthians Chp 12 Paul Continues to Defend His Ministry

1. Introduction

2. Paul’s visit to Paradise 12:1-4

3. Paul’s ‘Thorn in the Flesh’ 12:5-10

4. Paul’s concerns for the Corinthian Church 12:11-21

5. Conclusion

Introduction

1. Chps 10-13, the last section, is the most emotional charged words in all of Paul’s letters

2. Out of the depths of Paul’s sufferings and pain, we learn how we can deal likewise when caught in similar situations

3. These lessons emerged as Paul defends his pro bono ministry and compares (reluctantly) with the false apostles

4. Paul’s credentials were suffering / pain (2 Co 11:23-27), empathy (2 Co 11:28-30), ‘Thorn in the flesh’ (2 Co 12:7) and ‘weakness’ (2 Co 12:9-10).

2Co 12:1  It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. KJV

2Co 12:1  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. ESV

2Co 12:1  Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. NASB

What is then profitable?

2Ti 3:16  All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

2Ti 3:17  That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

All visions of this type were revelations, but not all revelations came through visions. Furthermore, "visions" are always seen, but "revelations" may either be seen or perceived in other ways.

Thomas Constable *Notes 165*

"If, as seems likely, his opponents are claiming paranormal experiences to validate their apostolate (cf. on 5:12-13), the very vagueness of Paul's reference may be his way of asserting the uniqueness of his apostolate.“

Barnett, Paul *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians.* The New International Commentary on the New Testament series.

But we do understand that such experiences are subjective and prone to misunderstanding and misapplication.

David Guzik *Enduring Word 2 Cor 12*

“I Did Not Die. I Did Not Go to Heaven.”

How the controversy around a Christian bestseller engulfed the evangelical publishing industry—and tore a family apart.

Kevin and Beth are so antagonistic now that they can’t even agree on how exactly their antagonism developed. In the middle of it all is Alex, the boy—now a man—whose story about a trip to heaven disintegrated into a very specific kind of family hell: a series of lawsuits, an ugly divorce, physical suffering, anger, loneliness, imperfect memories, mistakes, money struggles, lingering resentments and heartbreak in all directions. This is painful, decidedly earthly stuff.

Ruth Graham

https://slate.com/human-interest/2019/07/the-boy-who-came-back-from-heaven-christian-book-scandal.html

A picture containing text

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2Co 12:2

Man in Christ = Paul, speaking of himself in humility

fourteen years ago = Just before he was launched into his ministry Acts 13 (Php 1:23, Rom 8:18)

Third heaven: First heaven = Atmosphere

Second heaven = Outer space

Third heaven = Paradise v4,

God’s garden

Paul’s ‘Thorn in the Flesh’ 12:5-10

1. Text addresses the universality of human suffering
2. Paul’s deepest pain was inflicted by those most loved by him (reason why he wrote this letter)
3. This section unfolds the purpose of God in our pain
4. Paul reveals how he deals with pain and suffering here

Job 5:7  Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.

Job 5:8  I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause:

We are usually in or just emerging from or anticipating trouble every moment of the day.

Here Paul lays his heart wide open. His integrity, his character, his virtue, his honesty have been called into question by his enemies. His love and loyalty have been assaulted. His leadership, his wisdom have been questioned and undermined, his motives misrepresented as wicked and selfish.

Thorn G4647 σκόλοψ skolops skol'-ops

Perhaps form the base of G4628 and G3700; withered at the front, that is, a point or prickle (figuratively a bodily annoyance or disability): - thorn.

Total KJV occurrences: 1

**Thorn:** Headaches, Carnal lust, Ophthalmia, Epilepsy, Malaria, Malta fever, Loss of hair, Hysteria, Hypochondria, Gall stones, Gout, Rheumatism, Sciatica, Gastritis, Leprosy, Lice in the head, Deafness,

Dental infection, Neurasthenia, Stuttering etc

Flesh G4561 σάρξ sarx

Probably from the base of G4563; flesh (as stripped of the skin), that is, (strictly) the meat of an animal (as food), or (by extension) the body (as opposed to the soul (or spirit), or as the symbol of what is external, or as the means of kindred, or (by implication) human nature (with its frailties (physically or morally) and passions), or (specifically) a human being (as such): - carnal (-ly, + -ly minded), flesh ([-ly]).

Total KJV occurrences: 151

Paul being influenced by a demon / Satan?

Why not? Job, Peter (Luke 22:31) & Judas (Luke 22:3) were examples.

Why God allows suffering?

1. Reveal our spiritual condition
2. To humble us (2 Cor 12:7)
3. To draw us to Himself (2 Cor 12:8)
4. Display Grace to us (2 Cor 12:9)
5. Demonstrate God’s power (2 Cor 12:9)
6. To strengthen us (1 Pet 5:10)
7. For His glory (1 Pet 5:11)

That’s all part of the revelation that builds trust. Your trouble will manifest your spiritual condition.

And that’s not only good for everybody to see, because they can see the reality of your character, but it’s good for you to see, because you can see the weaknesses there and know where you need to be strong.

John MacArthur

“You have two choices: you can either be humble or humbled.”

Charles Spurgeon

Few words on demon exocism and praying for blessings.

Grace G5485 χάρις charis khar'-ece

From G5463; graciousness (as gratifying), of manner or act (abstract or concrete; literal, figurative or spiritual; especially the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including gratitude): - acceptable, benefit, favour, gift, grace (-ious), joy liberality, pleasure, thank (-s, -worthy).

Total KJV occurrences: 156

Grace

Common Grace

Uncommon grace of Salvation

Grace – that sets Christianity apart from all other religions of the world

Jesus – full of grace (Jon 1:14)

Through Jesus – we received ‘grace upon grace’ (Jon 1:16)

God is able - to make all grace abound to you (2 Cor 9:8)

God has given us the grace to save us. God has given us the grace to sanctify us. God has dispensed to us the grace that will bring us to eternal glory. God has given us the grace to serve him and proclaim his truth. The question here is has God give us the grace to handle the sufferings of life?

John MacArthur

You are never going to know that grace if you don’t have the exigencies that call for it. You’re never going to know that grace, and you’re never going to know the joy of that grace and the exhilaration of that grace until you have to have that grace.

John MacArthur

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,  
He sendeth more strength when the labours increase;  
To added afflictions He addeth His mercy,  
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,  
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,  
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources  
Our Father’s full giving is only begun.

His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,  
His power no boundary known unto men;  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus  
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.

Annie Johnson Flint 1866-1932

Paul's focusing on the signs (evidences) of an apostle, rather than on the rights of an apostle, is helpful for all servants of the Lord to observe. We, too, should concentrate on demonstrating the proofs of our ambassadorship in our works, especially our perseverance, rather than expecting those we serve to follow us because we are "claiming" our rights.

Thomas Constable

Moreover, he feared that he might suffer humiliation over their failure to repent of the attitude that had embarrassed him on his former painful visit. This situation would cause Paul to "mourn" over those in the church who had "not repented" of their former sins. The sins mentioned seem to have been unrelated to Paul's critics, though the critics may have practiced them as well. Paul's concern here seems to have been mainly the ungodly conduct that had marked the Christians in Corinth since the founding of their church.

René A. López, "A Study of Pauline Passages with Vice Lists," Bibliotheca Sacra 168:671 (July-September 2011):301-16.

We may not have experienced as high of spiritual highs, or as low of spiritual lows, as Paul did, but we too are in constant need of being aware of God's supernatural power. Our success does not depend on our natural abilities, but on God's "power" working in and through us. Human weakness can be a profound blessing if it results in our depending more on God and less on self.

Thomas Constable Notes pg 169