



## 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

### *Part 2*

An astonishing spiritual experience resulting in dependence on divine power

---

# God's gracious provision of a heavenly experience (1-6)

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. <sup>3</sup> 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—<sup>4</sup> and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. <sup>5</sup> On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses—<sup>6</sup> 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.

# God promotes humble dependence by the provision of pain and suffering (7-8)

## Verse 7

- To keep Paul from exalting himself because of the visions and revelations he receives, an angel of Satan is given to afflict him.
- God blesses His people with experiences for His purpose, and God's purpose is not to **puff up** men and women who follow Him.
- God does not bless people with spiritual experiences to make them feel rewarded or superior.
- God doesn't give experiences to some special individuals or groups because they've achieved something special or because they are something special.

God promotes humble dependence by the provision of pain and suffering (7-8)

- “*Thorn in the flesh*” – something sharp that becomes imbedded in the skin causing nagging discomfort and pain.
  - Paul describes the thorn as being in his flesh, indicating it is probably a physical ailment or affliction.
  - It may be a condition that was the source of criticism and condemnation from the false teachers.
- “*was given to me*” - The implied Giver is God.
- The thorn in his flesh is simultaneously the work of God and the work of Satan.

## God promotes humble dependence by the provision of pain and suffering (7-8)

- God is sovereign over all things that occur in the world He created.
  - Ecclesiastes 7:14
  - Lamentations 3:38
  - Proverbs 16:4
- “*to keep me from becoming conceited*” – the affliction came to keep Paul’s pride at bay
  - If Paul is filled with pride because of his heavenly experience, he will not function as a proper gospel representative.
  - A humble, broken and desperate person is a better gospel witness.

God promotes humble dependence by the provision of pain and suffering (7-8)

- Satan is capable of inflicting significant human suffering for God's purposes:
  - To put God's provision of grace on display
    - Job 1:7-12, 21-22; Job 2:1-10
  - Discipline of believers
    - 1 Corinthians 5:5
  - God builds and refines His people
    - Genesis 50:20
  - Disease, accidents, hardships and sufferings for the good of His people
    - Romans 8:28

God promotes humble dependence by the provision of pain and suffering (7-8)

- Satan willingly afflicts those God permits to be afflicted.
- Satan's in it for pain while God is in it for purity!

Verse 8

- There is a time to pray for deliverance and a time to pray about persevering.
- At all times, good and bad, we are to be focused in gospel ministry.

# Jesus can meet any weakness with His grace and power (9-10)

## Verse 9

- The prayers were sincere and heard by God.
  - “grace is sufficient” – not just the unmerited favor of deliverance, but also the source of power that sustains us (“my power is made perfect in weakness”).
    - 2 Corinthians 4:7
- The self-sufficient superiority claimed by Paul’s opponents was a graceless superiority.
  - Matthew 5:3

## Jesus can meet any weakness with His grace and power (9-10)

- Not the heavenly vision, but the affliction that exposes his weakness is what makes Paul a better gospel witness.
- Only those crucified with Christ take delight in weaknesses bearing testimony to the power of God's sustaining grace.
  - James 1:2–4

### Verse 10

- Needs, afflictions and weaknesses are an opportunity for God's grace to shine.
- We need to stop focusing on ourselves and we need to start making much of Jesus!

## Questions to Consider

- Is it biblical to want glorious experiences and resent the afflictions meant to humble us?
- Do you evaluate gospel effectiveness by how people shine or by how people suffer?
- Is God's sovereign control a source of comfort or a source of irritation to you?
- Are there areas of affliction in your life God desires to see you humbly endure?



## 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

### *Part 2*

An astonishing spiritual experience resulting in dependence on divine power

---