



2 Corinthians 12:1-10

An astonishing spiritual experience resulting in dependence on divine power

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

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.

- Personal experiences are not where credibility is found (*"nothing gained by it"*).
- *"visions and revelations"* - touted as a means of gaining prominence and prestige

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

Verses 2-4

- Paul distances himself from the experience because his identity is in Jesus Christ.
 - Galatians 2:20
- Paul is not on earth to make much of himself, but much of Jesus.
- What he heard and what he saw he was told to keep to himself.
- Paul is astonished by what he heard and yet he is forbidden to share it.

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

Verse 5

- Paul had the experience of the vision, but he distances himself from it because he is dead to the flesh and alive to Christ.
- Paul is not superior or a cut above other people.
- This event in Paul's life was not an award earned by a man showing exceptional spirituality.
- Paul did not see himself as an overachiever, but as a man among other men and women desperately in need of God's gospel mercy and grace.
 - 2 Corinthians 10:17
 - Luke 10:17-20

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

Verse 6

- People should not think highly of him because of his experiences.
- Paul wants people to hear the gospel that promises life and delight to all who find their hope the gospel grace.

Humble dependence is aided 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.
 - “*Thorn in the flesh*” – a physical ailment or an assortment of afflictions
 - The implied Giver is God.
 - So the thorn in the flesh is simultaneously the work of God and the work of Satan.

Humble dependence is aided 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
 - Discipline of believers
 - 1 Corinthians 5:5
 - Joseph and his brothers
 - Genesis 50:20
 - Disease, accidents, hardships and sufferings are tied to Satan but none of these can occur outside the sovereign purpose of God
 - Romans 8:28



Humble dependence is aided by the provision of
pain and suffering (7-8)

Verse 8

- There is a time to pray for deliverance and a time to pray about persevering.

Glorious spiritual experiences magnify human dependence on the power of Christ (9-10)

Verse 9

- The prayers were sincere and heard by God.
- The self-sufficient superiority claimed by Paul's opponents was a graceless superiority.
 - Matthew 5:3
- Only those crucified with Christ take delight in weaknesses bearing testimony to the power of God's sustaining grace.
 - James 1:2-4

Glorious spiritual experiences magnify human dependence on the power of Christ (9-10)

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

- Do you promote your experiences as what makes you spiritual and superior to others?
- In what practical ways do you show you are dead to self and alive to Christ?
- Is the pain and suffering of your life helping you to be humble and dependent on God?
- How do you see God's grace shining through your needs, afflictions and weaknesses?



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