

II Corinthians 12 - Handout #8

Paul's opponents believed it was important to boast of ongoing revelation to prove your apostleship. Paul, although boasting to shut them up, would show that boasting is futile. Nothing is gained by boasting. There must be humility.

v.1 - Paul presses on in bragging (of necessity) but claims there is nothing to be gained. But he will tell of his own revelations and visions. (The Corinthians seemed to find these phenomena important)

v.2-4 - He refers to his own experience in the third person (I knew a man in Christ). He was caught up to the third heaven, paradise, in presence of God, somewhere out of space and out of time. A place of joyful fellowship with the Lord. He was not permitted to tell what he heard.

v.5-6 - What Paul was saying was the very truth. And the man that experienced these things (himself) could be boasted about, but rather he will boast on his weaknesses, his infirmities. He will underline his infirmities and weaknesses in the face of these revelations. When we experience the glory of the Lord, we see clearly where we are in comparison. Paul did not want them to think more highly of him than they should because of revelations and visions. Judge the ministry of a person by what you see him do and hears him say.

v.7-10 - Paul claimed that he had been given a "thorn in the flesh" so that he would not be exalted above that he should just because he had received some revelations. We do not know what that thorn in the flesh was (there is a lot of speculation). We do know it was a hindrance and a source of aggravation for Paul. He prayed three times (at this point) that it be removed from him, but the Lord's reply was "my grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." So he takes pleasure in things that challenge him, infirmities, reproaches, need, persecution, distress for Christ's sake, "for when I am weak, then am I strong (in Christ).

v.11-13- Paul claims to be foolishly boasting, when it should have been the Corinthians that should have boasted for him since they knew how he faithfully labored with them. They saw his works with their own eyes. They had everything that any other church had except one thing—they did not have the gift of supporting him. He (sarcastically?) asks for forgiveness for this wrong.

v.14-15- preparing for third visit to them, he let them know that he would continue not being a burden to them. He considered himself their father who should take care of them, and not the other way around. He would love them even more and more, though they may love him less and less.

v.16-18-Paul refutes the idea that his not taking support was some kind of ploy to trick them into confidence concerning the collection. They knew his behavior and that of those he sent, namely, Titus and the brother. They both operated in integrity as he did, and the Corinthians knew it.

v.19-21-Paul defends himself to the Lord, not them. He fears he will find them operating in their sins and still unrepentant. Still carnal.