

2 Corinthians: Encouragement in Troubling Times  
"A Real Trip to Heaven" # 25  
2 Cor. 12:1-10  
11-6-16 Sun AM

**TT-** Today we look at a real trip to heaven and see three gracious gifts God gave to Paul.

**I. Paradise [vs. 1-6].**

Much talk today about people dying and being transported to heaven to come back and write a book, make a movie, or go on appear on so-called Christian TV.

These books and movies are very popular among gullible and non-discerning Christians.

1. Note vs. 1-3- Paul was so humble that he would not even acknowledge the man was him and whether he was in the body or out of the body.

He thus referred to himself in the third person [v. 7]. Paul stated "he knew a man in Christ."

2. Three views of the timing of the vision:

(1). The vision took place between his return to Tarsus from Jerusalem [Acts 9:30 and the start of his missionary journeys [Acts 13:1-3].

(2). The vision took place when he actually died from a stoning at Lystra.

**Acts 14:19-20**, And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

(3). 14 years ago would be in A.D. 42 at Antioch [Acts 11:26].

Nevertheless, for 14 years he did not make his experience the focus of his teaching as they seem to do today. His message was focused on Christ.

3. Note vs. 4-6- He was "caught up" into the third heaven.

"The third heaven" and "Paradise" were the same place (Rev. 2:7; 22:14; Luke 23:43). Paradise refers to heaven where saints dwell with God.

The first is earth's atmosphere [Gen. 1:6-8]; the second is the stars and planets [Gen. 22:17]; the third is the abode of God.

Paul was "caught up" and did not know if in the body or out of the body." Evidently it was not important and we seem to pay more attention to it than Paul does.

Caught up is the Greek word *harpazō* and means to seize, catch (away, up), pluck, pull, take (by force).

Used of Philip in Acts 8:39  
Two times here in vs. 2 and 4  
Used of the rapture of the church in 1 Thess. 4:17  
Ascension of Jesus in Rev. 12:5  
The believer's security in John 10:28-29 "pluck"  
Used of pulling believers out of the fire in Jude v. 23

(1). He hears unspeakable [inexpressible] words which were not lawful or possible to utter to mortal ears. Evidently the words were just for him and he was not to speak them.

(2). Paul could have boasted but he wanted the Corinthian believers to judge him on his ministry and message and not his visions...

### **I. Paradise.**

### **II. Pain [v. 7].**

1. God gave him a gift of a thorn to keep him humble and from boasting. God sent it through Satan as He did with Job.

2. "Thorn in the flesh" a stake for the flesh. Some believe this to be a physical illness and others a demon to afflict or harass Paul. He was the ring leader of the false apostles.

The context of chapters 10-13 is Paul's struggle with the false apostles.

3. "Messenger" means angel. He was used to buffet Paul. "buffet" means "to rap with the fist." It was God's will to allow Satan to keep slapping him in the face!

4. The assault was painful but for a purpose. Do we see those who write these books appear to have a thorn to humble them? The thorn allowed by God accomplished its intended purpose.

5. Satan was the instrument and God was the cause.

God gave Paul...

### **I. Paradise.**

### **II. Pain [v. 7].**

### **III. Power [vs. 8-10].**

**Why the thorn?** To keep him humble so He could be used by God and always be reminded that he was a mere man [v. 11]. More on this next Sunday.

**Next Sunday am:** "God's Purpose in Pain" 12:5-11