

“For I do not seek yours, but you”

(A Study of 2 Cor 12)

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Introduction: How do you show God given authority without bringing glory upon yourself?

- A. One of the problems with blessings is that the temptation of pride follows.
 - 1. Paul did not want to preach himself but Christ. **(2 Cor 4:5)**
 - 2. He did not want to glory except in the cross. **(Gal 6:14)**
- B. Those false apostles freely boasted in themselves and used flattery to gain a following.
 - 1. This approach left God out! **(2 Cor 10:12, 17-18)**
 - 2. When men followed these teachers, who were they following? **(Jude 16-19)**
 - 3. Paul continues to expose the folly of their claims.

I. The Visions of a “man in Christ” (12:1-6)

- A. Who is “the man in Christ?” **(12:1-2)**
 - 1. It was likely Paul speaking of himself in the third person.
 - 2. By doing this he avoids bringing attention to himself and exalting Christ.
- B. What is the “third heaven?”
 - 1. It is the abode of God in contrast to the first two heavens: 1. The atmosphere where the clouds gather. **(Gen 2:1, 19)**; 2. The firmament containing the sun, moon and stars. **(Mt 24:29)**
 - 2. The glory of God would be so great to describe to man.
- C. What is “paradise?” **(12:4)**
 - 1. This may be a different place from the third heaven.
 - 2. This is described by Jesus to the thief. **(Lk 23:43)**
 - 3. This can also describe heaven. **(Rev 2:7)**
- D. Paul knew the danger of boasting. **(12:6)**
 - 1. Pride always leads to destruction. **(Prov 16:18; 29:23)**
 - 2. This is a danger in appointing an unqualified man to be an elder. **(1 Tim 3:6)**
 - 3. A man reveals his heart by his speech!

II. Paul’s thorn in the flesh. (12:7-10)

- A. God uses Satan for His purposes and our good! **(2 Cor 12:7)**
 - 1. Satan often thought he was working against God, only to have God use his efforts for good. (Ex. The death of Christ) **(1 Cor 2:6-8)**
 - 2. Does God allow suffering through Satan to come upon His people? Yes. **(Job 2:1-6)**
- B. The good in Paul’s suffering.
 - 1. It humbled him to pray. **(Jas 5:13)**
 - 2. It made him see the power and sufficiency of God’s grace.
 - 3. It made him see the good in suffering so as to give God more praise!

C. Are you strong in weakness? **(12:10)**

1. It depends upon where your mind is focused. **(1 Pt 1:13)**
2. Do you see how God's grace is in you and using you for a greater purpose?

III. The signs of an Apostle (12:11-13)

- A. It is almost funny to see these men try to claim superiority to the apostles!
1. Paul remembered that in God's sight this was a gift and he was nothing.
 2. Paul did not look upon his God given abilities to lift himself up. **(1 Cor 3:5-7)**
- B. The apostles could do many things other Christians with spiritual gifts could not do.
1. An apostle could confer gifts to others. **(Acts 8:14-19)**
 2. An apostle has authority from God. **(2 Cor 10:14; 13:10)**
 3. Boasters could be confident as long as an apostle was not around. These Corinthians could remember what they saw! **(12:12)**
- C. Paul did not allow this church the privilege of supporting him. **(12:13)**
1. Others churches thought this was a blessing. (Phil 4:16-17; 2 Cor 8:5)
 2. Because of the attack upon Paul about money, he refused support!

IV. "For I do not seek yours, but you" (12:14-21)

- A. Paul was doing everything for the good of the Corinthians but was being disliked!
1. Paul viewed them as a parent saw his child.
 2. Whose fault was it that Paul was not popular with some. **(Gal 4:16)**
- B. Paul saw their deceitful hearts through those men he sent to them. **(12:19)**
1. False teachers like to work in the dark and make you think one thing and do another!
 2. Be careful with those who only want you to know thing in private!
- C. Paul would not let sin go by unnoticed. **(12:20-21)**

Conclusion: What are we seeking in our service to God? **(Phil 2:1-5)**