

# THE ONE YEAR BIBLE CLUB

WITH TEACHING COMMENTARY BY NICK BOORK

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## September 11 – 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: <sup>2</sup>I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. <sup>3</sup> And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—<sup>4</sup> how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. <sup>5</sup> Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. <sup>6</sup> For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me *to be* or hears from me.

<sup>7</sup> And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. <sup>8</sup> Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. <sup>9</sup> And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

## OKAY, HERE’S MY TEACHING COMMENTARY

Now Paul shares a deep spiritual experience about being caught up to Heaven to see the Lord and the glory of that eternal celestial city! Paul called the place he visited “Paradise”. Experiencing something solidifies your prior beliefs and understanding. No doubt Paul had heard and read about the eternal Kingdom of God through the Old Testament prophets but this spiritual experience made an unforgettable impression on Paul. Why did the Lord allow Paul to have this revelation? I believe God wanted Paul to know what the saints are to inherit but also to embed within his soul an anchor of the reality of what is unseen with the physical eye. Remember that Paul was a special chosen vessel by the Lord Jesus Christ to be his ambassador to the nations. It was on the day of Paul’s encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus that the Lord told him he would be his witness of all that he saw and what would be revealed to him in the future:

Acts 26:15-18 So I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. <sup>16</sup> But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen **and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.** <sup>17</sup> I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, <sup>18</sup> to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’ So Paul was called to preach the

gospel and the Lord said he would not only be witness of the encounter he had with Christ but promised that he would reveal to him other things as well. Paul was filled with revelation knowledge about the things of God. Most Bible Scholars agree that Paul wrote about 2/3 of the entire New Testament. This experience of being caught up to see heaven happened early in his ministry. After meeting the glorified Christ on the road to Damascus, being healed of blindness and filled with the Holy Spirit when Ananias laid hands on him Paul had quite a testimony. However, it was this awesome experience of going to Heaven that seems to have made such an impact in Paul that made him unwavering and assured of the gospel that the Lord revealed to Paul to preach. He could never deny or forget what he experienced and this just made him all the more persuasive as he boldly proclaimed Christ as Savior.

This revelation also set him apart from the false apostles that were challenging his authority. Paul could testify that Jesus Christ himself took him to Heaven to show him the reality of eternal life. The false apostles could make no such claim. Paul knew by experience what he was preaching to be the truth but the false apostles just preached their own fleshy imaginations. Paul wrote about their delusions to the church at Colosse as well: Colossians 2:18 "Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshy mind." Paul was warning the church about false teachers which "INTRUDE into what they HAVE NOT SEEN". Now, especially in the last days, there will be all kinds of false prophets and spiritual gurus sent by the devil to deceive as Jesus prophesied even the elect of God. Thank God that no child of God needs to be deceived because we have the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth.

Finally, with all the revelation knowledge that had been given to Paul he could have been exalted thinking he was really something else! Well, you know pride is a terrible thing. Even Paul said that knowledge can puff people up or in other words they get a big head because they think they are smarter than everyone else. Knowledge is great to have but it's more important to love people with sincerity than show off how much of the Bible you may have memorized. It was precisely because of the great amount of revelation knowledge Paul had been given that the Lord made sure he kept humbly depending on him. How did he do it? He allowed a messenger of Satan to buffet him. I think it was a demon that constantly stirred up the unsaved to persecute Paul when he preached the gospel. There are several opinions in various theological camps about this "Thorn in the flesh"

### **Physical sickness:**

Some say it was a sickness that the Lord allowed because Paul made mention of having trouble with his eyes when he wrote to the Galatians. Others reference the time Paul was rebuked for his contention with the Jewish High Priest because Paul answered that he didn't know it was the High Priest assuming that Paul was having trouble seeing to identify him. However, I think this is unlikely because it seems to have only been a temporary condition. He never mentions any trouble with his sight in any of his other letters.

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## **Guilty past:**

Others say it was the memory of how he actually persecuted the church before his conversion to Christ but to me this does not square with Scripture because Satan is the accuser of the brethren but we overcome him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of our testimony and if any man is in Christ he is a new creation old things have passed away and all things are made new in Christ.

## **The hyper faith / word of faith movement interpretation**

This is the craziest view of Paul's thorn in the flesh I have ever heard, and I did actually hear a preacher expound this view in person. These people believe that poor Paul just didn't get what Jesus was trying to communicate to him about "My grace is sufficient for you" Suddenly 1900 years after Paul writes about his thorn in the flesh they have been given the divine revelation about how Paul really was just confused in his understanding and this is why the Lord has to give him the same answer three times. They believe that what the Lord was saying was; "Paul, you deal it – I have already given you the authority to take dominion over the devil"

The reason why this position is totally wrong is that if anyone knew his identity, position and authority in Christ it was the apostle Paul! Furthermore, they take the Scriptures out of context and try to make them fit into their Hyper Faith / Word of Faith Movement world view which believes you can use your faith to change anything and that if you are sick or suffering it's really a lack of faith to believe God's word. This position takes the Scriptures out of context because Paul himself explains his own understanding of **WHY** this messenger of Satan or thorn in the flesh was allowed against him from the Lord. He said it was to keep him humble and not get exalted in spiritual pride because of the abundance of the revelations given to him. He needed to trust in the grace and power of Christ to endure anything the devil could throw at him. If a lack of faith was the issue as these hyper faith believers think then Paul would have had very weak faith indeed as he was not able to control all the hardships, persecutions, needs, and crisis that he writes about. No, it was not a lack of faith or of exercising spiritual authority over the devil.

## **My opinion is that Paul's thorn in the flesh was a demon**

I think it was a demon that constantly stirred up the unsaved to persecute Paul when he preached the gospel. In addition to persecution I'm convinced that this demon also was allowed to harass Paul in other areas because Paul names the areas in his life where God's grace and power came to help him, he says in verse 10: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Also, it says that Satan sent a messenger against Paul. If it was a messenger then it had to have an entity or personality. The Scriptures reveal that there are several names for the devil and his demons. The persecution Paul endured was intense and I can see how he would call out to the Lord to remove this messenger from Satan. However the Lord answers Paul three times telling him “My grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in your weakness” After Paul realized that God was not going to remove this tormenting messenger and that the Lord promised his grace to empower him then he ended up doing exactly what the Lord wanted him to do and that was to humbly rely on the grace of God which brought the power of God to endure all kinds of hardships and keep going for Jesus! God will also give you and I the grace to empower us to keep soldiering on, regardless of any demonic attacks because the Bible declares in 1 John 4:4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

### **WHAT’S THE BOTTOM LINE?**

- 1) The Lord gave Paul the experience of the third Heaven
- 2) This experience and revelation established his apostolic ministry as one that was sent by the Lord compared to the false apostles sharing their self-delusions.
- 3) Paul explained his Thorn in the flesh as a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him.
- 4) The grace of God was all Paul needed to empower him to endure the attacks of the devil and keep serving the Lord.
- 5) God’s grace is sufficient for you and I, let’s pray!

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