

Giving Sufficient Grace

BIBLE BASIS: Lesson Scripture:
2Corinthians 12:1-10

BIBLE TRUTH:

Jesus Christ should be the one in whom we boast and not in ourselves. Eph. 2:8-9,

MEMORY VERSE:

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 2Cor. 12:9

Lesson Aim

That we learn the gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to save and to grow believers, not our personal supernatural experiences. Rom. 1:16, 2Cor. 11:30

Introduction

- Paul seldom if ever talked about himself from the pulpit. His constant mission was to preach Jesus Christ and him crucified. Gal. 6:14
- Because of his hesitancy to speak about himself, the false teachers and critics of Paul were saying that he lacked in spiritual experiences, that his salvation and ministry were suspect because he had not had the kind of experiences they had. They thought to themselves; “How could Paul be called of God if he has not had spiritual visions and revelations from the Lord? We have had them. If he has really been called of God, why has he not had them?”
- Paul never tried to draw attention to himself and boast about his knowledge or experiences in Christ. The Judizers on the other hand boasted of how much they knew about the letter of the law and boasted of their self righteousness. Instead of arguing with them, Paul writes to the Corinthian that he was much more knowledgeable than the Judaizers. He had the knowledge not only of life on earth, but also of the things in the lower parts of the earth (paradise) and even in the third heaven. Paul not only had revelation of these things but he also had vision of them. Eph. 4:8-10
- In our lesson today, Paul is defending himself against his critics, and protecting the church from false teachers. This is the reason he shares this spiritual experience. However, even in sharing this experience, he wants no attention on himself, but rather all attention on Christ.

Vision And Revelations

- 2 Cor. 12:1 It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.
- Paul was reluctant to talk about himself and his personal experiences. For a minister's to boast in himself is unprofitable. Rom. 3:27-28
- Here, Paul had to defend his apostleship. He was not one of the original Apostles that walk with Jesus. Therefore, the Jews questioned his authority and apostleship. As stated, Paul had no choice; he had to defend himself against the false accusations. His salvation and call from God were real. God had saved him and called him into the ministry. Acts 9:1-6, Act 26:17-19
- Therefore, he had to reveal this vision and revelation to the Corinthian church to confirm his authority and apostleship. 2Cor. 11:5, 13-15
- Note how cautiously Paul moved in boasting or in sharing any of his spiritual experiences. This is a much needed lesson: we must always lift up Jesus always and not ourselves. The gospel of Christ alone can reach and grow people, not our personal spiritual experiences. Paul knew this, and we must learn it. John 3:30
- In this verse, Paul speaks of both vision and revelation. Revelation is the putting aside of the veil, the unveiling of hidden things. Vision is the sight, the view, seen at the unveiling. So many things concerning Gods economy and administration in the universe were hidden. The Lord has revealed, unveiled, these things to the apostle, and he has received visions of these hidden things. Jer. 33:3

Paul Had A Supernatural Experience

- [2] I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.
- According to verses 2 through 5, Paul regards himself a two persons. Paul called himself “a man in Christ”; he did not share this experience in the first person. He was reluctant to speak about himself and his supernatural experiences. Ps. 34:1-2
- The supernatural experience happened fourteen years ago. God had given Paul this revelation and vision one or two years before the launch of his missionary journeys. Paul uses this experience to testify to King Agrippa about his heavenly calling. Act 26:19
- The man in Christ was not Saul, but the Apostle Paul not as the old creation but as the new creation. It would be good for us to recognize what we were in Adam and who we are in Christ. We are two people and must learn how to follow the new man in Christ. 2 Cor. 5:17
- What Paul describes here is mysterious. Not even Paul was able to tell whether he was in the body or outside the body.
- What Paul does say, he was caught up into the third heaven. The third heaven is God’s dwelling place. For Jews, the second heaven was considered the heavens which house the sun, the moon, galaxies. Paul was caught up into the heaven where the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost dwells. 1John 5:7,

A Paradise Experience

- [3] **And** I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) [4] How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.
- Notice the conjunction “and” indicating that the third heaven and paradise are entirely two separate places. John 14:1-3
- Jesus Himself revealed that paradise is a place which is divided into two areas and are separated by a great gulf that is impassable. One area is the place called hell. Hell is where unbelievers go. The other area is a place of paradise where believers go. This Paradise is where the beggar went and the spirits of all just men are, awaiting the resurrection of the dead. 1Thes. 4:13-18, Luke 16:22-26
- Paradise is where Jesus went after His death and stayed until His resurrection. If we rightly divide this Word, paradise must be in Hades or the lower **parts** of the earth. Lu 23:43, Eph 4:9, Mat. 12:40, 1Pet 3:19
- Paul heard unspeakable words which were unlawful for him to utter. Note this: it means that the deep, intimate experience was for Paul alone. God forbade him to share it. What a lesson for us! Our intimate experiences with the Lord are to be as personal as our intimate experiences with our spouses! We are not to be boasting of supernatural experiences with the Lord. Such boasting, tends to make others feel inferior, and cause others seek and focus on experiences instead of the Lord.....Paul may have shared a glimpse of that vision to the Philippians church. Phil. 1:20-23

Paul Refuses To Boast In Himself

- [5] Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. [6] For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.
- A man with such spiritual experiences has the right to boast. But, when Paul refers to himself, he is speaking of his old man (Saul). Therefore he would glory only in his infirmities. Infirmities are character defects and weaknesses.
- What Paul is saying, if he knew a man who had had such a spiritual experience as this, he would personally boast in that man, but he will not boast in himself.
- Paul desired but one thing: not to be judged by such spiritual experiences, but by what is really essential—what they saw in his life and what they heard him preach and teach. 1Cor. 11:1
- Paul could have proclaimed the truth of his experience describing it in detail, but he would not, lest people begin to think too highly of him. Exalting the person who has had some supernatural experience is always dangerous; therefore, Paul kept his experiences to himself. He wanted men to know *only* the absolute essential in life: the testimony of his pure life and witness for the Lord. Phil. 1:9-10, 1Tim. 1:5

Revelation Followed By Suffering

- [7] And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. [8] For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.
- This verses indicates that revelation comes with the danger of the believer becoming exalted. Revelation knowledge also seems to be followed by suffering. Phil. 3:10
- The Lord, in order to prepare Paul and to broaden his view beyond his earthly knowledge to a more complete revelation, brought him to the third heaven and also to paradise.
- God, knowing the danger of such revelation, sent Paul a thorn, a messenger of Satan , to buffet him and cause him pain. The purpose of this thorn was to remind Paul how weak he really was and keep in on his face before God seeking supernatural strength. Just what the thorn was is not known. The best guess seems to be some physical ailment he obtained from his experiences. 2Cor.11:23-32
- Why did Paul want the thorn removed? Because, it brought him pain, it distracted him from his labor. The thorn exposed his weakness, it made him appear personally weak and sickly.
- Why did God refused to remove the thorn from Paul's flesh? First, God wanted to guard against Paul's being puffed up. Second, God wanted to manifest his power in Paul's weakness. 1Cor. 1:27

God Answers Prayer

[9] And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Note God's answer to Paul: My grace is sufficient for thee: To magnify the sufficiency of the Lord's grace, our sufferings are required. To show forth the perfectness of the Lord's power, our weakness is needed.

Sufficient means the strength to withstand any danger. 1John 4:4

The way God answers our prayers are not always the way we expect it.

Paul asked the Lord 3 times to remove this thorn in his flesh and the Lord answered him, My grace is sufficient for thee.

“My strength is made perfect in weakness”: If a man is self-sufficient, he does not need God; but if he is weak, he needs God he will seek God, he will depend upon God. Matt.19:26, Eph.3:16-20, He.11:33-34

Paul was glad to glory in his infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” Note the point of this statement: infirmities are purposeful. The believer suffers for a reason: that the power of Christ may be demonstrated and clearly seen in his life. Rom. 5:1-5, Rom. 8:18

The word “rest” means to fix a tent upon. The idea is that the power of Christ rests upon the suffering believer just as the Shekinah glory dwelt in the holy place of the tabernacle. What a glorious thought! John 1:14

God wanted to teach Paul to live for Christ. When Paul suffered some infirmity or weakness, it gave Christ the chance to overcome the weakness for Paul. 1Cor. 15:57-58

Your Infirmities Gives God Opportunity

- [10] Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong
- Paul's infirmity gave Christ an opportunity to prove Himself. Therefore, Paul says that he took pleasure in infirmities: a general term meaning all kinds of weaknesses. Mark 9:23, Jer. 32:17
- The power of Christ can overcome any weakness or temptation **For The Believer**. Zach 4:6
- The power of Christ is more than enough handle any situation in your life, be it: reproaches, meaning: ridicule, insult, slander, rumor, or whatever. In necessities: which include, hardships, needs, deprivations, hunger, thirst, lack of shelter or clothing, or any other necessity. In persecutions, which include; verbal or physical attack, abuse, or injury, in distresses, tight situations, perplexities, disturbances, anxious moments, inescapable problems. Ps. 119:165
- The great need of the believer is to acknowledge his weakness before the Lord. When he does, the Lord pours His strength into the believer's mind and heart. The Lord empowers the believer to overcome and conquer all infirmities and weaknesses. Rom. 8:26-27
- How could Paul be weak and strong at the same time? He recognized he was 2 people, Saul the old man represented his weakness, Paul the new man represented the new man. 2Cor. 5:17, Eph. 3:16, 4:24

- **Hell— Jesus Christ, Triumph**: this passage clearly says that Jesus Christ “went and preached unto the spirits in prison.” It says in particular that He preached to the souls of those who had lived in the days of Noah but had rejected God’s salvation and long suffering. What does all this mean? In order to determine the meaning, we must note four points.
- 1. First, note where the spirits of unbelievers go when they leave this world. Scripture says that the place where unbelievers go is a *prison* (1 Peter 3:19), and the picture in the Greek is actually that of a prison. Just as men put rebellious people into prison, so God shall imprison those who rebel against Him. Scripture even pictures God having Satan bound with a chain and cast into the prison of the bottomless pit. It also pictures God having the angels who rebelled with Satan bound with the chains of darkness and cast into the prison of hell. The point is that hell, the place where unbelievers go after leaving this world, is pictured as a prison.
- Scripture uses four words or terms to describe the prison. Note how each word or term describes a different section or cell block or compartment to the prison of hell.
- There is the cellblock or compartment which is called *Hell* or what the Greeks called *Hades* and the Hebrews called *Sheol*. This is the place where unbelievers go when they die and enter into the next world. Hell is the torment section for the human race, the place where all unbelievers are placed and punished until the end of the world. At the end of the world, they are all taken out of hell and cast into the lake of fire. Luke 16:19-31, Matt. 5:22
- This paradise differs from the Paradise mentioned in Revelations, which will be the New Jerusalem in the millennium. Rev. 2:7