

CAUGHT UP INTO PARADISE (Part #1)

Recently, a spiritually mature member of our church asked me an interesting question; “is there an example in the Bible of how God’s Grace works in the actual experience of death”. As a result of that conversation, we will begin a new series, entitled “Dying Grace”.

Immediately, I thought of Paul’s discussion of this very thing in our lesson text of 2 Cor.12:1-10. In the first two lessons on Dying Grace, we will study Paul’s actual experience of God’s grace working in his account of experiencing physical death.

In lesson one, we will study four aspects of Paul’s being caught up into Paradise.

1. We begin by studying our lesson text by the following three homiletic points.

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| • (2 Cor.12:1-4a) | Paul’s experience of death | Stoned (Acts 14:19) |
| • (2 Cor.12:4b-7) | Paul’s experience of Paradise | Surpassing greatness |
| • (2 Cor.12:8-10) | Paul’s experience of the thorn | Suffering for Christ |

2. In describing his experience of dying, Paul used Greek verb [oida] (to know/ perf.a.ind) seven times in (2 Cor.12:1-4a).

He credits knowing certain things of the death experience, referring to them as “visions and revelations” (2 Cor.12:1).

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| • 1 st | I know a man (anthropos) in Christ | (3 rd person) |
| • 2 nd | 14 years go – whether in the body, I do not know | (unconscious state) |
| • 3 rd | Or out of the body, I do not know | (conscious state) |
| • 4 th | God knows | (Eccl.3:2 and Phil1:21) |

(2 Cor.12:2) “Such a man was caught up (harpazo/ a.p.ptc asm) (1 Thess.4:17) to the **Third heaven**”

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| • 5 th | I know such a man (anthropos) | |
| • 6 th | Whether in the body or <u>out of the body</u> , I do not know | |
| • 7 th | God knows – God is in charge of dying grace (John 11:25-26) | |

(1 Cor.12:4a) “Such a man – was caught up (harpazo/ a.p.ind) into **Paradise**”

Principle: God is in charge of dying grace (2 Cor.5), both in the absence and presence.

Question: Did you note that Paul was caught **up and not down** to Paradise?
(Luke 16:22-23; 1 Pet.3:18-20; Eph.4:9-10/ Ps.68:18; Rom.8:11)

3. Paul used the 3rd person idea until (2 Cor.12:5-7).

In (2 Cor.12:5), Paul will change it from anthropos (man) to “me, my, and I.” We learn why in (2 Cor.12:5-7).

(2 Cor.12:5-6) “On behalf of such a man I **will not boast**; but on my own behalf I will not boast, **except in regard to my weaknesses**. For if (3cc) I do wish to boast I will not be foolish, for I will be speaking the truth; but I refrain from this, so that **no one** will credit me with more than he sees in me or hears from me.”

Paul began (2 Cor.12:1-10) with boasting (kauchaomai). He refers to it in (2 Cor.12:1, 5, 6, 9). He carried it into chapter 12 from chapter 11:16-30.

Paul shows a **positive and negative** connotation of boasting.

- **Negative** connotation of boasting is given in:

- (2 Cor.12:1) Not profitable,
- (2 Cor.12:6) Foolish, credit,
- (2 Cor.12:7) Exalting self.

It is false humility and a hindrance to one's spiritual growth in the Christian Way of Life (CWL).

- **Positive** connotation of boasting is given in:

- (2 Cor.12:5) Except in my weaknesses
- (2 Cor.12:6) Speaking truth,
- (2 Cor.12:9) Boasting about my weaknesses
 - "so that the power of Christ may dwell (episkenoō/ p.a.subj) in me,"
- (2 Cor.12:10) Content (eudokeo) with weaknesses because
 - "God's grace is sufficient (arkeō/ p.ind) for power is perfected (teleō/ p.p.ind) in weakness". (2 Cor.12:9)

Paul learned to be **content** (eudokeo) (2 Cor.12:10) [to think it good or well/ it is well with my soul] with his weaknesses of **undeserved suffering**.

This type of contentment should not distract the believer from the daily application of Categorical Bible Doctrine under the circumstances of life. It is staying focused on doing the will of God (Matt.3:17; 12:18; 17:5; 26:39, 42).

(Rom.8:35-39) "Therefore (dio/ inferential conjunction) **I am well content**

- **with** (en+inst. association) weaknesses,
- **with** insults,
- **with** distresses,
- **with** persecutions
- **and** (kai/ adjunctive of noun) difficulties (stenochoria) [anguishes].

Being between a rock and a hard place! (Rom.8:35-39)

- **for** (huper+abl) [on behalf of] **Christ's sake**;
- **for** (gar) **whenever** (hotan) [time] **I am weak** (astheneō/ p.a.subj),
- **then** (tote) [temporal adverb] [time] **I am strong**." (2 Cor.12:1) [Note the contrast]

The weaknesses, Paul once prayed to be released from, are now his greatest boast and all about the power of Christ dwelling in him and God's sufficient grace.

(2 Cor.12:9) "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me."