

I. QUIZ & REVIEW

A. Quiz on Chapter 11.

B. Review: 2Cor. 11:29-33

- i. Paul elaborates on the pressure he feels on behalf of the churches under his care by way of two questions...

1. *Who is weak, and I am not weak?*

- Paul's concern for the churches was such that if anyone was experiencing human weakness, especially due to hardships, he would identify with that person, feeling his pain.

2. *Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?*

- Paul reflects a spirit of a true minister in that his indignation was not against those who tried to harm him, but against those who caused God's children to stumble!

3. Unlike those who boast about their achievements, Paul boasted about his painful and humiliating experiences as an apostle:

- His first humiliating experience as an apostle was at Damascus, where he escaped his enemies by being let down in a basket through a window of the city wall.

C. Paul had shared his freedom to minister to the Corinthians without their financial support and his sufferings in ministry as grounds for boasting.

D. Next, Paul mentions the visions and revelations that God had granted him.

- i. He does this to further boost the Corinthians' confidence that he is an authentic apostle of Christ...

II. CONTINUATION

A. 2Cor. 12:1 (ESV), "*I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.*"

- i. Paul felt he needed to go on boasting to convince some of the Corinthians of his apostleship.

- ii. Otherwise, boasting -- except in the Lord -- has no place in the kingdom of God!

B. 2Cor. 12:2 (ESV), "*I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows.*"

- i. The "*man in Christ*" was Paul, as we shall see later in verses 7-9.

1. Paul most likely spoke of himself in the third person to avoid sounding as if he were boasting of his supernatural experience. (cf. vs. 5).

2. He also does not want others to think more of him as a man (cf. vs. 6).

- ii. Paul kept this vision a secret for 14 years!

1. Holding back this information for this long shows Paul's unwillingness to boast.

- iii. The three heavens

1. First heaven – the atmosphere (clouds, birds, air).

2. Second heaven – the universe (sun, moon, stars, planets).

3. Third heaven – the spiritual realm.

- iv. Paul gets caught up into this realm in an instant! He was snatched up!

1. Perhaps this explains why he felt disoriented, trying to figure out what happened!

- Was I in the body? Was I away from my body? I don't know!!!
- However, God knows all things! So Paul leaves it at that!

- C. 2Cor. 12:3 (ESV), “*And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—*”
- i. Paradise literally means a park or garden.
 1. Spiritually, Paradise is the realm of the righteous dead.
 - Jesus told the dying thief that he would be in Paradise with Him (Luke 23:43).
 - It is also the location of the Tree of Life (Rev. 2:7).
- D. 2Cor. 12:4 (ESV), “*and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.*”
- i. Interpretation 1:
 1. Paul could not express in human words what he heard.
 - ii. Interpretation 2:
 1. Paul was not permitted to repeat what he heard.
 2. This interpretation seems to be the stronger one since Paul, at the second clause, says “*which man may not utter.*”
 3. Taking this view shows that one should not put their faith in those who claim to have gone to Heaven and back.
 - Many who claim to have died and gone to heaven and returned not only differ in what they claim they saw, they UTTER what they saw!
 - And what they do utter often differs from the Scriptures
 - i. A young boy claimed to have seen the glorified Jesus with brown hair and beard and blue eyes, riding a unicorn.
 1. Rev. 1:12-18 describes the glorified Jesus in a different way: snow-white hair, eyes like flaming fire.
 - ii. A neurosurgeon claimed to describe God as an inky darkness which was emanating love.
 1. 1Timothy 6:16 says God dwells in unapproachable light.
 - It is good to keep in mind that the Scriptures does also say that it is appointed for man to die once, then he faces judgment (cf. Heb. 9:27).
 - iii. In any case, this experience surely strengthened Paul’s faith and hope that the Lord would abundantly reward his sufferings.
- E. 2Cor. 12:5 (ESV), “*On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses—*”
- i. Again, Paul re-emphasizes what he said earlier in verse 1: there is nothing to gain by boasting!
 1. If he is to boast about supernatural experiences, he will boast as if it happened to another man.
 2. But regarding himself, he will boast only on the things that show his dependency on God, so that the credit may be given to God and not to him.
- F. 2Cor. 12:6 (ESV), “*though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me.*”
- i. If Paul wanted to boast about his flight to Paradise, it would not make him a fool, since he spoke the plain truth!
 - ii. This leads us to think that Paul’s critics, who were already labeled as false apostles and servants of Satan (11:13-14), were exaggerating the truth in their boasting.
 - iii. But as Paul said in 1Cor. 2:5, he does not want to boast on anything that would create in the Corinthians a worldly-minded trust in him, a mere man, rather than in God.
 1. His desire is for them to conclude that the things they see in him or hear from him is of God and therefore, God is to get the praise!