

I. REVIEW

A. 2Cor. 12:7-10

- i. After allowing Paul a grand entry into Paradise, God wanted to keep Paul from becoming conceited so He gave him a thorn in the flesh.
 1. The word “thorn” denotes a point or prickle, annoying and painful to the flesh.
 - ii. God allowed a messenger of Satan to inflict Paul.
 1. An example of Satan being used by God to inflict torment is found in the book of Job.
 - iii. Satan is not a merciful being. Therefore, this thorn must have been intense.
 1. So intense that Paul begged the Lord three times to remove it!
 - iv. Paul’s initial supplication for the Lord to remove this thorn indicates that he didn’t initially appreciate the significance of it nor was it something easily borne.
 - v. But the Lord told him it was necessary for him to have that thorn so that:
 1. He would remain humble.
 2. He would be empowered by God’s grace when undergoing immense hardships!
- B. Now Paul ends his “foolish speech” and removes the disguise of a fool and reminds them of the authenticity of his apostleship...

II. Continuation

A. 2Cor. 12:11a (ESV), “*I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you...*”

- i. Paul admits to being a fool by adopting the boastful tactics of his critics.
 1. However, Paul was not truly a fool; he was just playing the part of a fool.
 2. The real fools were those who took their boasting seriously, that is, his critics!
 3. The Corinthians were also made out to be fools because they allowed themselves to be captivated and led astray by foolish boasting!
 - They have dishonored themselves by betraying their apostle and failing to defend him!
 - And since they failed to defend him against his critics, he had to defend himself!
 - i. The truth had to be told!
 - ii. And this was done more to save the Corinthians from such fools than to save Paul’s reputation.
 - The Corinthians were swept off their feet by these impostors who commended themselves and turned away in shame from their apostle who seemed too weak, too afflicted and too tongue-tied!
 - Since the Corinthians were the seal of Paul’s apostleship (cf. 1Cor. 9:2) and his letter of commendation to be known and read by all (cf. 2Cor. 3:2), they should have jumped to his defense and spoke of his accomplishments among them.
 - It is self-evident that the church was founded through Paul’s preaching (cf. Acts 18:1-11), but he also asserts that they received apostolic demonstration of power, except that he did not allow himself to become financially dependent on them, as we shall see in the verses to follow.

- B. 2Cor. 12:11b (ESV), “...*For I was not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I am nothing.*”
- i. Paul repeats what he said earlier in regards to his critics, sarcastically calling them, “*super-apostles*”
 1. 2Cor. 11:5 (ESV), “*Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles.*”
 - ii. However, Paul goes on to give an honest self-evaluation by saying, “*I am nothing.*”
 1. This was his honest status before God!
 - Whatever Paul has comes from God.
 2. And if he is nothing, so are all the others who work in God’s field (1Cor. 3:5-9).
 3. However, the critics do not recognize that they are nothing before God and strut around as if they were kingpins of the kingdom!
- C. 2Cor. 12:12 (ESV), “*The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.*”
- i. Paul asserts that certain signs were accomplished that verified that the power of God was at work that authenticated his minister as Christ’s apostle!
 - ii. The miracles alone that the Corinthians have witnessed through Paul should have motivated them to defend Paul against his critics.
 - iii. Signs, wonders and mighty works (or miracles) are identical terms that emphasize, respectfully, their authenticating value, astonishing effect and supernatural power:
 1. Sign: An indication (like a sign on the highway) that points to something.
 - In Mark 16:17-20, the driving out demons and the speaking in new tongues are said to be signs which confirm the gospel message.
 - The miraculous activities of Jesus are said to be signs that point towards His divine authority (John 2:23; 3:2; 6:14).
 2. Wonder: Something that provokes awe and amazement.
 - The people in Acts 2 were utterly amazed and astonished at the fact that the Galileans (i.e., the 12 apostles) were speaking languages they never learned (Acts 2:6-9).
 3. Mighty works (or miracles) shows divine power.
 - Paul’s raising a dead man (cf. Acts 20:9-10).
 - Not to mention, Paul’s ability to withstand tremendous hardships and ministerial difficulties (cf. 2Cor. 12:9-10).
 - iv. What these signs, wonders and mighty works at Corinth were, we are not specifically told!
 1. But perhaps they were similar to those done in other places, such as the healing of the sick.
 2. In addition to that, knowing that Christ’s apostles had the ability to pass along the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit to those newly baptized (Acts 8:14-17), the presence of these gifts among the Corinthians (1Cor. 12) were the result of Paul laying his hands on them as he did to the newly baptized Ephesians in Acts 19:6.

D. 2Cor. 12:13 (ESV), “*For in what were you less favored than the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong!*”

i. Apparently, the Corinthian church, with the help of Paul’s critics, felt that he cared more of the other churches than he did them.

1. Why?

- Perhaps they felt Paul neglected them by changing his travel plans and not visiting them as he said he would (2Cor. 1:15-18).
- However, Paul implies here that if he saw them as less favored, then why did he patiently perform signs, wonders and mighty works among them if he didn’t care for them?

2. The only reason for them to “feel” that they were less favored is due to the fact that Paul refused to be a financial burden to them while working among them!

- The phrase “*I myself*” sets Paul apart from his opponents who have exploited the Corinthians according to chapter 11...
 - i. 2Cor. 11:20 (ESV), “*For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face.*”
- If refusing to sponge off of them and becoming a financial burden, Paul sarcastically says, “Forgive me for this ‘wrong.’”
- Sometimes we do this as well:
 - i. When we try to help someone for their own good, and they respond as if we were doing wrong, we may be tempted to sarcastically say, “Forgive me for loving and caring for you!”