

**Ministry of The Holy Spirit**  
**A Piece of the Perfect Pie**  
**2 Corinthians 12:1-13**

Last time...Paul, who so loves this church, challenges the Corinthians to be fruit inspectors. He defended “his” Gospel, his apostleship, and himself while calling out the deceitful false apostles, children of the devil who have transformed themselves into apostles and ministers of righteousness, creating division and confusion in the church

There is a stark contrast between a true apostle and the false apostles

- the world hates the true apostle
- the world loves the false apostle
  
- for the true apostle: suffering then glory eternal
- for the false apostle: glory then suffering eternal
  
- the true apostle: tends the sheep
- the false apostle: hunts the sheep

This time...Paul, who has been given so much from the Lord and been used so mightily by the Lord, is served, and then serves us, a piece of the perfect pie

v1 Paul says that the Corinthians have essentially “forced” him to defend himself, his apostleship and “his” Gospel  
This contention fueled by the false apostles does not bear fruit pleasing to the Father (John 15:8)  
So, moving on to that which is of value...the visions and the revelations given to Paul

v2-4 The highlight being a vision of heaven during his 1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Journey (with Barnabas) In Lystra, about 14 years previously  
Acts 14:19-22 And there came thither *certain* Jews from Antioch and Iconium (previous stops), who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew *him* out of the city, supposing he had been dead. (at this point, given this vision) Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and *to* Iconium, and Antioch (all sites of 2 Cor 11:23-27-ish opposition to the Gospel), Confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God (KNOWING because he saw heaven!).

Whether he was dead or alive...

he did not know but he knows God knows...

Paul was caught up...*harpazo* also in 1 Thes 4:17, “seized”, “raptured” (Latin) to

- 3<sup>rd</sup> heaven (v2)
  1. Sky, abode of birds
  2. Space, abode of sun, moon, and stars
  3. Heaven, the abode of God
- Paradise (v4)

Not to be confused with Abraham’s Bosom  
Luke 16:19-31 and Luke 23:43  
Because Eph 4:8  
So now 2 Cor 5:8

And in heaven Paul saw things and heard things that are indescribable.

Even trying to so would not be right because human language is utterly incapable of communicating the beauty and Infinite-ness of what was shown to Paul

Examples:

- How describe an AZ sunset to a person born blind?
- How does a child born deaf describe what it was like when he first hears the voice of his mom and dad?

Who “raptured” Paul?

Who gave Paul this vision?

Who is the only reason Saul of Tarsus could see heaven?

v5-6 Therefore, of Whom will Paul boast?  
Only the Lord Jesus Christ  
1 Cor 1:30-31

And of “what” can Paul boast?

The Gospel of grace...Eph 2:8-9

Take away Jesus and the grace of God, what remains for the self-described “chief of sinners” to boast of in himself?

Only his infirmities/frailties/feebleness

The unspeakable glory Paul saw was

- because of Jesus, in spite of him
- all about Jesus and nothing about him

Whereas Paul, in his flesh, would like to boast about his experience compared to ANY experience anyone else has had (“I’m all that and worthy to be shown that!”), he will not be a fool (stupid, egotistic)

Rom 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

2 Chron 26:16 But when he (King Uzziah) was strong, his heart was lifted up to *his* destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

In addition to not being a fool, he does not want anyone else to be a fool either,  
by thinking more highly of him than they should too  
He knows that Jesus is the ONLY valid and worthy point of comparison for all people  
“Take me off that pedestal! Jesus Christ alone is to be lifted up and magnified!”

You want to compete and compare, making boastful statements?  
Compete with and compare yourself to Jesus Christ alone.  
Result: humility

v7-8 And to “establish” all of this in his heart and mind,

- the glory of Jesus Christ in his salvation, “his” ministry, and in the abundance of revelations given him
  - 3 years of Personal instruction at the feet of Jesus in Arabia (Gal 1:11-12)
  - The Holy Spirit teaching the revelations of the “mysteries of God” (14 Epistles)
  - much more not recorded
- not thinking more highly of himself than he should by getting haughty and exalting himself over other sinners no different than him,

Paul is given a “thorn in the flesh”

- an annoyance and a disability
- a messenger of Satan

to buffet him, to keep him humble  
like a tent stake to keep his heart and mind “grounded”, always reminding him of his infirmities and Jesus’ glory

What was it?

We do not know for certain

Some say it was an eye problem (Gal 6:11)

It is not important, it was something between him and the Lord to keep him humble

But we do know that Paul fervently asked the Lord 3 times to take it away

The Lord’s answer to Paul’s fervent prayer?

v9a The Lord's answer to Paul's prayers was simple, short...and sweet!

### My grace

The undeserved forgiveness of the debtor by the Creditor

Matt 6:12-15

Matt 18:23-35

debt = sin/trespass

Our debt = our sins, which are against God alone (Ps 51:4a)

We owe God a payment for every offense, God must be re-paid;

we must make right every wrong against God,

we must "make God whole"

We cannot pay – we have absolutely nothing, we are abjectly bankrupt!

But somebody has to pay to satisfy the debt, to re-pay God, and

"make Him whole"

So the Father sent the Son, His King, to

- make the payment...for all people
- wipe away the debt...for whosoever would believe/trust Him

Our debt is paid-in-full and forgiven (as if it never existed) when we

- own up to, acknowledge our debt (confession)
- turn to Jesus to pay it (repentance)

And we give as we have been given: forgive ALL debts of ALL our debtors

1 Cor 15:3-4 whereby the undeserved forgiveness of sin/debt is warranted

### is sufficient for you

Since Rom 5:20b and Rom 6:23 and John 5:24, what else do we need?

We have everything we need today and every day in Christ and the grace of God

As God's children, we have Jesus-confidence and Jesus-esteem (vs Self-)

Phil 3:3      worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

### My strength

*dunamis*, supernatural "power" (Acts 1:8), the promise of the Father

### is made perfect

complete

seen and known for what it is

### in weakness

"infirmities" (v5)

Job 12:9-13    in His hand is the breath and very soul of every person on earth...  
with Him is wisdom and strength

Ps 18:2      The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, *and* my high tower.

Ps 27:1        The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Ps 28:8        The LORD *is* their strength, and he *is* the saving strength of his anointed.

Ps 68:35       the God of Israel *is* he that giveth strength and power unto *his* people.

Ps 46:1-3      God *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; *Though* the waters thereof roar *and* be troubled, *though* the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.

Ps 73:26       My flesh and my heart faileth: *but* God *is* the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

1 Cor 10:13    There hath no temptation (trial) taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

Phil 4:13      I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

So with God's answer to his prayers about the thorn in his flesh, the Apostle Paul was served...and is serving us...a piece of the perfect pie – humble pie

v9b      And that bittersweet piece of humble pie was sufficient for the Apostle Paul...  
as it should be for each and every one of God's children

Most gladly...with great pleasure  
therefore...since what God said (v9a) is absolutely true  
will I rather glory in my infirmities...I will boast in my weaknesses  
I have a radically different perspective of my frailties and weaknesses –  
God's perspective  
I see someone and something glorious alongside my frailties and weaknesses –  
Jesus Christ and the grace of God  
that the power of Christ...the *dunamis* power of the Almighty God  
may rest...abide  
upon me...*epi* ala Acts 1:8, Acts 2:3-4, different than *para* and *en*

Our lives need a foundation

The primary purpose of a foundation is to hold up the house.

Without it, the house would quickly sink into the ground unevenly, resulting in cracks and damage to the home.

A properly built foundation will keep the home even and supported, even during a flood or earthquake.

Man needs a foundation for life...but man is NOT the foundation for life,  
as proclaimed by the deceptive religions and philosophies of men heralded by false teachers/prophets/apostles inside and outside the Church

1 Cor 3:10-11 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Matt 7:24-27 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

v10 Therefore...now with a corrected perspective and a bigger picture  
I take pleasure...I am good with, I approve of, I can count it all joy  
infirmities...weakness, feebleness, frailties  
reproaches...insults and injuries (Ch 11:23-27)  
necessities...in need of/lacking worldly things (all of which will go the way of the world)  
when Mammon fails, because it will  
persecutions...the world's hatred because it hates my Lord Jesus Christ  
when the world pours out its fury on us because we know "gender" is NOT a  
social construct proclaimed by the spiritual disease called Progressivism  
but a design by the Creator and there are only 2 – male and female  
distresses...anguish in temporary circumstances  
when we are called racists because we stand on the Word of God  
for Christ's sake...because I choose to follow Jesus, having counted the cost and making  
a completely informed decision (based on the end of the matter, not the immediate  
circumstance before me)

For...because of this truth  
when I am weak...when am I not weak?!  
then I am strong...I am powerful in the strength of Almighty Lord (Neh 8:10b)

when I am weak...when "I don't need anyone's help, I got this!" is exposed as a  
deception  
then I am strong...when "Jesus has this!" is revealed as the truth

Knowing the strength of God, Paul would now not have it any other way –  
him weak depending on God's strength  
Knowing the strength of God comes only by receiving the piece of humble pie served by  
the Lord

Testimony: Charity over and over again

Testimony: me

How can I possibly do Ch 11:28?

1. The power of Christ upon me
2. 1 Peter 5:7
3. Softball...a gift of God to give me a mental break...  
which He has transformed into a ministry

Testimony: Monica

Testimony: Calvary Ahwatukee in Egypt

Rev 3:8b **thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.**

a (worldly) weak church being used by the Almighty God to build a home for the weak (abandoned children)

the humble being used, to be a part of Is 19:19-25  
weak...but strong in the Lord!

Our piece of humble pie is the best “tasting” pie we will ever eat!

When I am strong (or so I proudly think), then I am weak (in God Who will let me try to stand on my own strength until I realize I am weak and need His strength)

And I am humbled before God

When I am weak and know it, I MUST trust the Almighty...which is right where He wants me to be

House-sitting and baby-sitting this weekend, Monica, Eloise, and I were watching *American Idol* (Eloise loves to sing).

One of the contestants, a young man, had nearly been killed in an automobile accident.

His recovery was slow and painful...and miraculous

He sang a song with the lyric “God blessed the broken road that led me back to You.”

That young man could...as had Paul and as prayerfully can we...see the purpose of his brokenness and weakness (eternal life in Christ Jesus by grace thru faith)...and rejoiced in the breath-taking beauty of humility!

v11-12 Paul says he feels foolish in defending himself...but they forced him to do it,  
i.e. the false apostles forced his hand

The church should have embraced him and driven away the false apostles...  
as Ephesus did

Rev 2:2

**I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:**

After all, the Apostle that came to them was in no way inferior to any of the other apostles...

even though he (Paul) is a nobody (Gal 1:11-16a)

as evidenced by the indicators of an apostle demonstrated in his ministry

- patience...cheerful endurance (1 Cor 4:9-13)
- signs (miracles) and wonders
- mighty deeds...*dunamis* power

God uses nobodies, not self-exalted “somebodies”...there are NO celebrities in heaven!

v13 As Paul is not inferior to the other apostles, neither is the church at Corinth inferior to the churches in Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea) that have been supporting Paul in the ministry (Ch 11:7-9)

If he has made them to feel inferior, Paul asks them to forgive him

Forgiveness need not be asked for in order to be given!

Did Jesus forgive me before I asked Him for forgiveness?

Required to forgive without being asked for it AND to ask for forgiveness:

- humility, a piece of the perfect pie
- grace
- Christ-likeness

## Lesson

Learn to love the perfect pie – humble pie

Be humble in all your relationships

Learn the beauty of humility

For what is more beautiful in the eyes of the Lord than humility?!

Matt 11:28-30 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.

The Almighty uses the weak, not the (self-deceived) strong  
God uses nobodies, not self-exalted “somebodies”

Salvation and sanctification and redemption are the Lord’s work, not ours

Phil 1:6

His work includes us but all the glory is His alone!



Learn that God's grace is sufficient for you, regardless of circumstances  
For what can possibly "top" the eternal-life-giving forgiveness of God?!

Learn that the strength of the Almighty is completed in your weaknesses  
Learn "Jesus has this!"

Learn to take pleasure in your weaknesses so that the power of Christ will rest upon you  
Seek God's perspective is correct your carnal perspective