

Paul has been telling of an experience he had 14 years ago, where he was transported into the very presence of God - **3rd heaven** – **paradise** - in which he heard things so pure, so glorious, so holy, so heavenly, he was not permitted to describe them in the hearing of sinful man. Arrhetos (ar'-h-ray-tos); only place used in NT-- **unspeakable** -**sacred secrets**. 2 Cor 12:4

Because of this extraordinary experience, and Paul's proneness to pride (**as is true w/ all of us**), a thorn in the flesh was given him (**some bodily affliction**), to keep him from exalting himself.

Paul prayed to be delivered from whatever this torturous defect of person & personality, thinking it was hindering God's work thru his life. Divine insight came & Paul realized that God's will was working thru his weakness, the thorn being an instrument to show God's power in Paul. ***When I am weak then I am strong.***

Now Paul pours out his heart to Corinthian believers--a passionate appeal to get right, be right, stay right w/ the Lord. Paul's life & ministry is a template for all to follow.

His is a hands-on ministry thru suffering, pain & sorrow. His life **is** the ministry. Paul & those like him would say "If you don't like my sermon you don't like me, if you don't like the church you don't like me."

People of Corinth were fickle--famous for wisdom & wealth; luxury & license—a sexualized society w/ idol Aphrodite goddess of sex.

Sinners who came to faith & now in church often brought their sin & false gods w/ them. So Paul's 1Corinthian letter was corrective, disciplinary—deal w/ sin in the camp & false beliefs.

2 Corinthians tells of the toll taken on the likes of Paul who seek to set in order a church that is out of order. The physical hardship, mental anguish & tarnished reputation they endure.

Ch 1-9 is accommodating & encouraging while Ch 10-13 has more of a heavy tone w/ harsh rebuke. Why? All kinds came into the church, those that were sensitive & hurting & in need of comfort & reassurance, while others were wild & unruly, critical & hard to persuade. God's sheep but more like attack sheep who needed to be confronted and corrected.

1 This is the third time I am coming to you. EVERY FACT IS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES.

Pr 13:10 Through presumption comes nothing but strife, But with those who receive counsel is wisdom.

Where confusion exists it tends to control the narrative, having no true knowledge of issue at hand. Speculation, opinion, presumption, w/o all the facts can cause a lot of damage. ***Duet 19:15 "A single witness shall not rise up against a person regarding any wrongdoing or any sin that he commits; on the testimony of 2 or 3 witnesses a matter shall be confirmed***

2 I have previously said when present the second time, and though now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest as well, that if I come again, I will not spare anyone, 3 since you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me, and who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you.

Put you on notice--take no prisoners if I come. Time of reckoning for rebels—to confront the unrepentant. He came first time w/ grace & compassion, making himself vulnerable, an open book--They took advantage of his grace. Now he takes off the gloves--time to either repent or suffer consequence—exercise God's authority. Two sides to Lord--mercy & wrath—God's kindness for salvation & His wrath against unrepentant sinners. Paul brought the mercy now the wrath.

4 For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we shall live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you.

What looked weak to the world when Jesus went to the cross was in reality obedience to the Father ***Phil 2:8 He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross***'. Paul said ***1Cor 10:1 By the meekness and gentleness of Christ I appeal to you***' Meek is not weak but power under control, strength contained. Having the ability to retaliate but don't. ***Matt 26:53 Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?***

God validated & vindicated the truth of Jesus words by His resurrection from the dead. What others saw as weak in reality was God's power ready to show itself. So Paul's weakness translated into power toward the church & their salvation. ***1Cor 2:3 I...was w/ you in weakness & fear, & in great trembling,***

5 Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?

Prove my point! Look at yourself; do you believe Christ died for your sins? Do you believe He rose from the dead? Examine yourself—is Christ in you & change happening—old things passing away & a new you—a new creation in Christ? Yes!

Well, that means Christ is in you otherwise you'd not believe & your life would be the same as it has always been w/ same old sins, same old thoughts, same old desires--that is if fail the test.

6 But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.

Since your salvation is a fruit of my life, my ministry, my preaching I'm confident you are not so naive as to think we, me are less than you and fail the test & are w/o faith, w/o change in our life—remember once I was a persecutor of the church now I'm a pioneer of church.

7 Now we pray to God that you do no wrong; not that we ourselves may appear approved, but that you may do what is right, even though we should appear unapproved. 8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth.

Don't align yourselves w/ the rebels & gossip mongers & you become like them. Not to make us look good or doing it for our sakes but for the Lords sake & for what is right because you believe, are saved--life is changed.

There are those who keep speaking against us but don't you--***'do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness but rather expose them'***.

Appearances are deceiving, nice wrapping but empty inside. Marred wrapping by careless handlers but treasure inside. Those who portray us as *unapproved* God will deal w/ He is our defense.

If you let God defend you He will but if you want to defend yourself God will let you—But the outcome is very different. We make it worse God makes it better. Important when rumors fly & attacks take a toll, that, for the sake of young impressionable believers, that we expose the deeds of darkness & speak the truth in love.

Truth will always win out & error be exposed.***Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds Matt 11:19*** We would like right/wrong, truth/error to be known here & now in days we live in but it may be when Jesus returns and deals w/ the matter in the day of judgment. But be assured truth will prevail and error exposed. **Deeds exposed wisdom wins**

9 For we rejoice when we ourselves are weak but you are strong; this we also pray for, that you be made complete.

If our openness & vulnerability makes us look weak & exposes us to criticism because we deal w/ issues head in dealing w/ sin & exposing error in the body of Christ, realize this, it is for your sake, to make you strong & it's worth it. Our prayer is that you be made fully mature in Christ

10 For this reason I am writing these things while absent, in order that when present I may not use severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me, for building up and not for tearing down.

Reason I'm writing is to give you a chance to repair things & make things right because when I'm there in person, all my warnings & threats will be enforced.

I'll deal w/ the troublemakers w/ severity if need be. They will see my apostleship is not an empty boast.

It's not what I want to do but I must do if things are not made right. My ministry is building you up not tearing you down—Need to cut to heal, be severe to save. **Hair pulling**

11 Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Rejoice, be of a glad spirit in the Lord. Joy is a fruit of the spirit. A gloomy Christian is a contradiction in terms--like clean/dirt, , bittersweet, paper/towel, working/vacation, almost/saved—Sullen saints inconsistent w/ conversion..***we've traded the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Is 61:3***

Be made *complete*—set a bone, mend a net—break, tear because of sin. Be *comforted* happens when the mending takes place

Like minded by doing what bible says, living in peace w/ others, Result: God of love & peace of God w/ you—rule over heart.

12 Greet one another with a holy kiss. 13 All the saints greet you. 14The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Trinity in final greeting--- *Grace of* **Lord**-title, **Jesus**-name, **Christ**-office—*love* of God Father *Fellowship* HS w/ you all—**Binding agents of a strong church.** “**Voice** to declare **God's word**, **Light** to shine **Jesus love**, **Magnet** to draw into **fellowship** by **Holy Spirit**