

The Ecstasy and the Agony

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I. Introduction.

- A. Text: II Corinthians 12:1-10.
- B. False apostles were coming in boasting about their exploits.
- C. In order to get the attention back from the Corinthians, Paul has to compare notes.
- D. Paul surprisingly boasts about his hardships until he comes to visions and his thorn.

II. Paul's vision.

- A. Jesus Himself had taught Paul previously.
- B. In Paul's vision, he entered the third heaven, which was the invisible realm where God's throne was.
- C. The body was unimportant in this event.
- D. Paul learned and saw things he could not put into human language because it was so different.
- E. It was an unusual experience for Paul—he does not boast because he does not desire any status boost.

III. Paul's thorn in the flesh.

- A. It may have been eye problems or a speech impediment—whatever it was, it was physical.
- B. He calls this a messenger from Satan that was given to him. Both God and Satan were at work in this.
- C. Paul asks if the Lord would take the thorn away, but the Lord tells him that His grace is sufficient for him.
- D. God gave him the weakness in order to keep him from pride.
- E. Paul's resolve.
 - 1. If he ever wanted to boast, he would boast about weakness. Only an individual can keep himself humble.
 - 2. Paul does not complain—he recognizes that weakness can be the best situation for him.
- F. God keeps us in our weaknesses because when we are weak we are strong.

Application questions:

1. What is surprising about Paul's response to those who boasted in their exploits?

2. Why is it important to recognize that difficult times are both from Satan and the Lord? What does this mean?

3. How have you seen God strong in a believer through weakness? What was outstanding about that testimony?
