

SERIES: II CORINTHIANS: THE HEART AND HUMILITY OF A MAN OF GOD, WEEK 47

TITLE: **PAUL'S** VISION OF HEAVEN

TEXT: II CORINTHIANS 12:1-6

INTRODUCTION: (1) THE MINDSET OF OUR CULTURE IS AGAINST POSTPONED PLEASURES OF ANY KIND.

* THIS ATTITUDE OR MINDSET IS SOMETIMES **CALLED** "INSTANT GRATIFICATION."

** IT IS A PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE WHICH SAYS, "**I WANT WHAT I WANT WHEN I WANT IT.**"

*** AND WHEN THIS ATTITUDE TAKES HOLD IN A PERSON, THEY ARE ALL TOO WILLING TO SACRIFICE THE FUTURE ON THE ALTAR OF THE IMMEDIATE.

**** NOW, CERTAINLY FOR TRUE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS, WE ARE TEMPTED AND EVEN SUCCUMB TO THIS WORLDVIEW AT TIMES.

(2) WE GET STUCK IN THE NOW AND ARE OVERCOME BY CARES, PAIN AND FLESHLY DESIRES.

* AND RATHER THAN SETTING OUR AFFECTIONS ON THINGS ABOVE, WE BECOME ATTACHED TO THE THINGS OF THE EARTH.

**** AND WE KNOW, IT'S ALL TOO EASY TO** BECOME ABSORBED IN TEMPORAL THINGS AND NEGLECT WHAT IS ETERNAL. WE CAN GET SUCKED INTO THE NOW AND NOT FOCUS ON WHAT IS AHEAD.

*** AND WHAT IS AHEAD FOR US THAT TRULY KNOW JESUS CHRIST AS OUR LORD AND SAVIOR IS HEAVEN!

**** HEAVEN SHOULD BE ON OUR MINDS.

(3) BUT SADLY, IT'S SAFE TO SAY THAT FOR MANY CHRISTIANS, HEAVEN SEEMS TOO FAR AWAY, OR WE'RE TOO BUSY TO THINK ABOUT IT, OR IT DOESN'T SEEM REAL TO US.

* HOWEVER, A PROPER CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW IS UNIQUELY FOCUSED ON HEAVEN.

** AND THOUGH SOME WOULD SAY THIS IS **"ESCAPISM," IT IS, AFTER ALL, THE VERY THING** THAT SCRIPTURE COMMANDS: FOR COLOSSIANS 3:2 SAYS: (QUOTE IT).

*** PHILIPPIANS 3:20&21 SAYS: (QUOTE IT). ALSO QUOTE II CORINTHIANS 5:1 AND ROMANS 8:18.

**** NOW WITH THOSE SCRIPTURES BEFORE US ABOUT HEAVEN AND FUTURE GLORY AND FOCUSING ON HEAVEN.

(4) LET ME SAY THAT THE APOSTLE PAUL HAD A LASER FOCUS ON HEAVEN.

* HE GROANED FOR GLORY IN II CORINTHIANS 5:2 (QUOTE IT).

** HE SAID A FEW VERSES LATER IN II CORINTHIANS 5:8 (QUOTE IT).

*** AND THEN HE SAID IN PHILIPPIANS 1:21&23 THESE WORDS: (QUOTE THEM)

**** NOW THIS DESIRE TO BE WITH THE LORD AND TO BE IN HEAVEN ENABLED PAUL TO LIVE THROUGH SUFFERINGS THAT NO ONE OUTSIDE OF JESUS CHRIST WENT THROUGH.

(5) NO HUMAN SUFFERED LIKE PAUL AS WE SAW A GLIMPSE OF THAT IN II CORINTHIANS 11:23-27.

* SO PAUL WAS NOT MOTIVATED ABOUT NOW, INSTANT GRATIFICATION, BUT WAS MOTIVATED TO GO THROUGH WHAT HE WENT THROUGH IN LIVING FOR THE ETERNAL, THE FUTURE, HEAVEN.

** **PAUL'S WORLDVIEW WAS** DEFERRED GRATIFICATION AND PATIENCE. AND THE KNOWLEDGE THAT HEAVEN WAS AHEAD WAS THE VERY THING THAT HELPED HIM ENDURE THE STRUGGLES OF THIS LIFE.

*** I LIKE TO SAY IT WAS THE SURE HOPE OF THE SWEET BY AND BY THAT GOT HIM THROUGH THE NASTY NOW AND NOW.

**** AND BEYOND THE SCRIPTURES, WHICH IS WHAT WE HAVE, WHICH IS COMPLETE, WHICH IS EVERYTHING WE NEED, IN KNOWING ABOUT HEAVEN AND THE FUTURE.

(6) PAUL IN THE APOSTOLIC ERA BEFORE THE SCRIPTURES WERE FINISHED WAS GIVEN A GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN.

* AND IN OUR TEXT TODAY, PAUL WILL TALK ABOUT HIS GLIMPSE, HIS PEEK OF HEAVEN THAT GOD GAVE HIM EARLY IN HIS CHRISTIAN LIFE.

** AND ALTHOUGH PAUL DOES NOT LIKE TALKING ABOUT IT AND FELT FORCED TO DO IT OUT OF LOVE FOR THE CORINTHIANS, HIS GLIMPSE OF GLORY HAD TO BE A MOTIVATING FACTOR TO GO THROUGH MORE TRIALS, PERSECUTIONS, SUFFERING AND DEATH FOR HIS LORD JESUS CHRIST, THAT WAS AHEAD FOR HIM.

*** AND PAUL WILL GIVE US TODAY A PEEK, AND HE WILL DO IT TO SHOW THE FALSE APOSTLES WHOM WERE MOST LIKELY GLORYING IN THEIR VISIONS, REVELATIONS AND DREAMS, THAT HE HAD ONE THAT WOULD BE THE TOPPER. AND I HOPEFULLY WILL BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN WHAT THAT MEANS.

***** AND WITH THAT SAID, I'VE TITLED OUR STUDY TODAY, "PAUL'S VISION OF HEAVEN."**

(7) AND UNDER THAT TITLE AND THEME WE'LL LOOK AT 3 MAIN POINTS TO HELP US UNDERSTAND AND APPLY OUR TEXT FOR TODAY.

* NO. 1 THE DISCLAIMER PAUL WILL MAKE IN V. 1; NO. 2 THE DISCLOSURE PAUL WILL MAKE IN VV. 2-4; AND NO. 3 THE DISTINCTION PAUL WILL MAKE, VV. 5&6.

** AND WITH THOSE POINTS AS A MAP, LOOK AT **V. 1 PLEASE WHERE WE'LL SEE THE DISCLAIMER.**

I. THE DISCLAIMER, (READ V. 1)

A. NOW LET ME RE-SET THE CONTEXT AND **BACKGROUND FOR THE SECTION WE'VE BEEN STUDYING HERE IN II CORINTHIANS 11&12.**

* AND TO DO THAT, I WANT TO QUOTE A SHORT **PARAGRAPH FROM JOHN MACARTHUR'S** COMMENTARY ON II CORINTHIANS THAT IS A CLEAR CONCISE STATEMENT THAT WILL HELP FRAME OUR STUDY TODAY.

** JOHN SAID AND I QUOTE: **"AT FIRST GLANCE, THE STORY OF PAUL'S VISION SEEMS OUT OF PLACE IN A SECTION DEALING WITH HIS SUFFERING. (WHICH WE'VE COVERED THE LAST FEW WEEKS IN II CORINTHIANS 11) BUT THE GREEKS BELIEVED THAT THOSE WHO TRULY REPRESENTED THE GOD'S WOULD EXPERIENCE MYSTICAL VISIONS, WHICH SOME TRIED TO INDULGE THROUGH DRUNKEN ORGIES. UNDOUBTEDLY, THEN, THE FALSE APOSTLES CLAIMED VISIONS AND REVELATIONS OF THEIR OWN. THE CORINTHIANS, SWEEPED AWAY BY THEIR PHONY CLAIMS GROVELED BEFORE THOSE LYING BRAGGARTS. THUS, IT WAS NECESSARY FOR PAUL (RELUCTANTLY) TO RELATE HIS OWN GENUINE VISION."** (END QUOTE)

*** NOW THE POINT IS, THE FALSE APOSTLES IN THEIR BOASTING ABOUT THEIR CREDENTIALS AND BACKGROUNDS TO ESTABLISH THEIR AUTHORITY AS THE REAL DEAL, REAL SUPER APOSTLES, IN COMPARISON TO PAUL WHO WAS NOT A LEGITIMATE APOSTLE, MOVE ON TO THEIR NEXT BOAST, WHICH PAUL MUST DEAL WITH RELUCTANTLY.

**** AND THAT WAS, THEIR BOASTING ABOUT THEIR ECSTATIC SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES LIKE SUPERNATURAL VISIONS AND REVELATIONS.

1. AND THEIR BOASTING MOST LIKELY WENT **LIKE THIS: "THE LORD SPEAKS THROUGH US IN VISIONS AND REVELATIONS, BUT YOU DON'T HEAR A LOT ABOUT THEM FROM THE SO CALLED APOSTLE PAUL. HE CAN'T HAVE THEM VERY OFTEN LIKE US, OR HE WOULD TALK ABOUT THEM."**

* AND THE INFERENCE WAS CLEAR: THE STAMP **OF GOD'S APPROVAL RESTS ON THE MAN WHO** RECEIVES SPECIAL COMMUNICATIONS DIRECT FROM HEAVEN AND THE PERSON WHO DOES NOT MAKE SUCH A CLAIM LIKE THE APOSTLE PAUL IS SECOND RATE, WHY PAY ATTENTION OR LISTEN TO HIM - CORINTHIANS, LISTEN TO US, WE ARE THE SUPER APOSTLES.

** **WITH THAT BACKGROUND BEFORE US, "PAUL** BEGINS IN V. 1 BY SAYING, **"BOASTING IS NECESSARY BUT NOT PROFITABLE."** AND IT IS TO SAY, PAUL MAKES A DISCLAIMER BEFORE HE TALKS ABOUT HIS GREAT REVELATION AND VISION.

*** AND THE DISCLAIMER IS, THE APOLOGY IS, SUCH BOASTING IS NOT DELIGHTFUL, BUT IT IS NECESSARY. AND IT IS WITH THE GREATEST RELUCTANCE THAT HE TELLS ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE HE HAD A LONG TIME AGO.

**** IT WAS NECESSARY FOR THE CORINTHIANS WHOM WERE SUCKED IN BY THE ELOQUENCE, THE PEDIGREE, THE BACKGROUND AND CREDENTIALS THE FALSE TEACHERS HAD.

2. IT WAS NECESSARY FOR PAUL TO LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD, HE HAD TO QUOTE BOAST ABOUT HIS CREDENTIALS AS AN APOSTLE, AND HIS BOAST WAS NOT A PROUD BOAST, BUT A MATTER OF FACT EXPLANATION OF WHAT GOD HAD DONE FOR, THROUGH AND TO PAUL THAT SET HIM APART AS A TRUE APOSTLE.

* SO PAUL IS FORCED TO TALK ABOUT VISIONS AND REVELATIONS HE HAD, AND SPECIFICALLY ONE WHICH HE WILL START TO DISCLOSE IN V. 2.

** THEREFORE BOASTING WAS NECESSARY, BUT NOT PROFITABLE IN THE SENSE THAT IT WOULD BUILD UP THE CORINTHIANS; HOWEVER, PAUL DID IT IN THE HOPE IT WOULD SILENCE HIS ENEMIES AND ENABLE HIM TO GET THE EAR OF THE CORINTHIANS BACK.

*** AND WITH THAT BACKGROUND AND DISCLAIMER BEFORE US, LOOK AT V. 2 PLEASE WHERE PAUL STARTS TO DISCLOSE A POWERFUL SUPERNATURAL VISION HE HAD.

II. THE DISCLOSURE, (READ V. 2)

A. NOW THE MAN THAT PAUL TALKS ABOUT HERE IN V. 2 IS HIMSELF. AND HE SPEAKS IN THE THIRD PERSON AND NOT THE FIRST **PERSON, BECAUSE HE DOESN'T WANT TO** APPEAR TO BE BRAGGING. HIS HUMILITY AND DESIRE NOT TO LIFT UP SELF DRIVES HIM TO RELATE THIS SUPERNATURAL VISION IN THE THIRD PERSON.

* BELOVED, THE FACT THAT PAUL WRITES IN **THE 3'D PERSON SHOWS THAT PAUL FOUND IT** DISTASTEFUL TO SPEAK OF HIMSELF IN ANY WAY THAT EVEN REMOTELY SMACKED OF SELF-PROMOTION.

** AND NOTE THAT PAUL RECEIVED THE VISION NOT BECAUSE OF HIS ELEVATED STATUS, BUT SIMPLY AS **"A MAN IN CHRIST."**

*** IT IS TO SAY, THERE IS NO ATTEMPT TO SUGGEST THAT THIS OVERWHELMING EXPERIENCE WAS GRANTED TO PAUL AS A REWARD, NO HINT THAT SUCH THINGS ARE THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE ELITE. THEREFORE PAUL REFUSED TO USE THIS EXPERIENCE TO BOOST OF HIS OWN STATUS. NEVERTHELESS, IT WAS CLEARLY AND OVERWHELMING EXPERIENCE, NOT NORMATIVE.

**** AND PAUL WAS THAT MAN IN CHRIST.

1. AND LET ME QUICKLY GIVE YOU 5 REASONS THIS WAS PAUL AND NOT SOMEONE ELSE. 5 REASONS I HAVE GLEANED FROM THE EXPOSITORS BIBLE COMMENTARY ON II CORINTHIANS WRITTEN BY MURRAY HARRIS.

* NO. 1 PAUL KNEW THE EXACT TIME THIS EXPERIENCE TOOK PLACE, 14 YEARS BEFORE THE WRITING OF II CORINTHIANS, WHICH **WOULD HAVE BEEN EARLY ON IN PAUL'S** CHRISTIAN LIFE.

** NO. 2, PAUL IDENTIFIES HIMSELF AS THE MAN IN V. 7 OF THIS CHAPTER WHEN HE SAID: **"BECAUSE OF THE SURPASSING GREATNESS OF** THE REVELATIONS, (WHAT REVELATIONS?) THE ONE HE JUST TALKED ABOUT IN VV. 2-4, FOR THIS REASON, TO KEEP ME FROM EXALTING MYSELF, THERE WAS GIVEN TO ME A THORN IN THE FLESH.

*** AND TO CONTINUE TO KEEP PAUL HUMBLE IN LIGHT OF SUCH GREAT REVELATIONS, GOD GAVE HIM A THORN IN THE FLESH.

**** NO. 3 THE REFERENCE TO A LACK OF AWARENESS WHETHER HE WAS IN THE BODY OR NOT IN VV. 2&3, POINTS TO A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

2. NO. 4 PAUL WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO FEEL EMBARRASSMENT ABOUT BOASTING IN V. 1 ON **ANOTHER PERSON'S BEHALF.**

* AND NO. 5 FOR PAUL TO RELATE A REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE THAT HAPPENED TO SOME CHRISTIAN UNKNOWN TO THE CORINTHIANS BUT KNOWN TO PAUL WOULD **SCARCELY FIT THE CONTEXT. IT WOULDN'T** MAKE SENSE.

** SO PAUL IS HUMBLY TALKING ABOUT HIMSELF AND AN EXPERIENCE HE HAS TOLD NO ONE ABOUT FOR 14 YEARS! OBVIOUSLY PAUL WAS NOT A BRAGGART.

*** AND NOTE PAUL DOES NOT GIVE A LOT OF DETAILS ABOUT THIS UNIQUE REVELATION. AND ONE OF THE REASONS WAS, WHEN IT TOOK PLACE, IT WAS UNCLEAR TO PAUL WHETHER HE WAS IN HIS BODY IN HEAVEN, PHYSICALLY, OR OUT OF HIS BODY, THAT JUST HIS SOUL WAS IN HEAVEN, HE DID NOT KNOW.

**** PAUL HAD NO CLEAR RECOLLECTION OF HIS STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS. HAD HIS SOUL LEFT HIS BODY OR HAD HE BEEN TAKEN UP IN THE THIRD HEAVEN BODY AND SOUL HE DID NOT KNOW.

3. AND POSSIBLY BECAUSE HE WAS SO OVERWHELMED BY THE BEAUTY, JOY, LOVE, PEACE AND ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE **EXPERIENCE, IT DIDN'T MATTER, ONLY GOD** KNEW, THE ONE WHO MADE IT HAPPEN.

* AND SPECIFICALLY WHERE DID PAUL GO? **WELL HE WAS "CAUGHT UP" TO THE THIRD** HEAVEN.

** AND THE GREEK VERB **"CAUGHT UP" WHICH IS** USED AGAIN IN V. 4, CAUGHT UP INTO PARADISE, IS THE VERB USED IN I THESSALONIANS 4:17 TO TALK ABOUT THE RAPTURE (QUOTE IT). (THEN WE WHICH ARE ALIVE AND REMAIN)

*** SO PAUL WAS RAPTURED UP TO THE THIRD HEAVEN, HE WAS RAPTURED UP TO PARADISE.

**** AND THEN IN V. 2, THE THIRD HEAVEN IS **NOT TALKING ABOUT 3 LEVELS OF GOD'S** HEAVEN OR DEGREES OF GLORY IN HEAVEN, THE THIRD BEING THE BEST HEAVEN GIVEN TO CERTAIN KINDS OF BELIEVERS AS A REWARD OR TO MORMONS.

4. NO, THE THIRD HEAVEN IS **GOD'S ABODE**, WHERE GOD LIVES. FOR THE FIRST HEAVEN IS OUR ATMOSPHERE, WHERE THE BIRDS FLY, THE 2ND HEAVEN IS THE PLANETARY SPACE, WHERE THE PLANETS AND MOONS ARE AND THE THIRD HEAVEN IS ABOVE THE FIRST TWO, THE ABODE OF GOD, AGAIN WHERE GOD LIVES, WHERE **BELIEVER'S SOULS GO TODAY WHEN THEY DIE.**

* SO IN V. 2, PAUL DISCLOSES A PORTION OF HIS VISION, AND IN V. 3, HE REPEATS A PORTION OF WHAT HE HAS ALREADY COMMUNICATED. LOOK AT V. 3 PLEASE.

B. READ V. 3. NOW THE REPETITION OF V. 3 RE-EMPHASIZES PART OF THE CONTENT IN V. 2 AND FORMS A PRELUDE OR INTRODUCTION TO V. 4A.

* SO WE HAVE THE EMPHASIS OF REPETITION OF V. 2 AND THE INTRODUCTION TO V. 4A IN V. 3.

** PAUL AGAIN TALKS ABOUT THE FACT THAT HE DOES NOT KNOW WHETHER HE WAS IN THE BODY OR OUT OF THE BODY IN THIS GREAT EXPERIENCE, BUT AGAIN GOD KNOWS, FOR HE WAS THE ONE WHO MADE IT HAPPEN.

*** SO THERE IS NO DISCLOSURE OF ANY MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS GREAT EXPERIENCE OF PAUL IN V. 3, BUT WE DO HAVE A LITTLE MORE INFORMATION IN V. 4. LOOK AT IT PLEASE.

C. READ V. 4. NOW HERE IN V. 4 WE LEARN THAT WHAT PAUL CALLS THE THIRD HEAVEN IN V. 2, HE CALLS PARADISE.

* AND PARADISE IS NOT ANOTHER PLACE **BESIDES THE 3'D HEAVEN, IT IS THE SAME** PLACE, A SYNONYM OF THE THIRD HEAVEN.

** IN OTHER WORDS, THE PARALLELISM OF THE TWO PHRASES DEMANDS THAT PARADISE BE EQUATED WITH THE THIRD HEAVEN.

*** AND WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT PARADISE IN THE N.T.?

**** WELL, WE KNOW THAT IT IS THE PLACE WHERE THE REPENTANT DYING THIEF WENT TO WHO TURNED TO JESUS ON THE CROSS. AND THAT IS THE SAME PLACE WHERE JESUS WOULD GO THAT DAY. (QUOTE LUKE 23:39-43)

1. NOW BEYOND THAT TEXT, THE WORD PARADISE IS USED IN ONE OTHER PLACE BEYOND OUR TEXT, AND IT IS FOUND IN REVELATION 2:7 WHERE IT SAYS: **"HE WHO HAS AN EAR, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAYS TO THE CHURCHES. TO HIM WHO OVERCOMES, I WILL GRANT TO EAT OF THE TREE OF LIFE WHICH IS IN THE PARADISE OF GOD."**

* NOW THE OVERCOMERS WHO OVERCOME THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST WILL BE GRANTED TO EAT OF THE TREE OF LIFE THAT WAS IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN AND LIVE FOREVER WITH THE LORD WHERE? IN HEAVEN.

** AND BY THE WAY, THE WORD EDEN, IS TALKING ABOUT THE GARDEN OF EDEN IN THE SEPTUAGINT, THE GREEK TRANSLATION OF THE O.T.

** NOW WHAT IS PARADISE IN THE N.T.? HEAVEN. AND THE WORD PARADISE LIT. MEANS **"WALLED GARDEN," "A PARK ENCLOSED BY A WALL,"** IN OTHER WORDS A BEAUTIFUL PLACE LIKE THE GARDEN OF EDEN WAS BEFORE THE FALL.

*** IT IS THE PLACE WHERE GOD RESIDES, WHERE ALL THE DEAD IN CHRIST PRESENTLY ARE AWAITING RESURRECTION. A PLACE FAR ABOVE THIS WORLD AND OUT OF THIS WORLD, A GLORIOUS PLACE.

**** NOW WHAT DID PAUL HEAR WHEN HE WAS RAPTURED TO HEAVEN 14 YEARS BEFORE HE WROTE II CORINTHIANS?

2. WELL, ACCORDING TO THE LAST PART OF V. 4, PAUL **"HEARD INEXPRESSIBLE WORDS WHICH A MAN IS NOT PERMITTED TO SPEAK."**

* AND THE WORD INEXPRESSIBLE LIT. MEANS WORDS THAT CANNOT BE SPOKEN, UNSPEAKABLE WORDS, WORDS THAT ARE SO EXALTED AND SO WONDERFUL, WORDS THAT NORMAL HUMAN LANGUAGE CANNOT EXPRESS.

** WORDS TOO SACRED TO BE UTTERED AND THEREFORE NOT FOR PUBLICATION.

***** AND IT DOESN'T MEAN THAT PAUL COULD** NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT HE HEARD IN HEAVEN, BUT THAT THERE WERE NO WORDS IN HUMAN LANGUAGE TO CONVEY OR COMMUNICATE WHAT HE HEARD, NOR, NOR, WOULD HE HAVE BEEN PERMITTED TO SPEAK ABOUT IT EVEN IF IT WERE POSSIBLE.

**** IT IS TO SAY THE VEIL BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH REMAINS IN PLACE. AND WHAT GOD WANTS KNOWN ABOUT HEAVEN IS REVEALED IN HIS WORD THE BIBLE.

3. AND IN APPLICATION, HOW UNLIKE PEOPLE TODAY WHO SAY THEY HAVE DIED AND GONE TO HEAVEN AND GO ON TV AND PLACE TO PLACE ON SPEAKING TOURS AND WRITE BOOKS ABOUT IT.

*** AND BELOVED, WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY IS WE DON'T NEED BOOKS LIKE "HEAVEN IS FOR REAL" ABOUT A 3 YEAR OLD BOY'S TRIP TO HEAVEN AND BACK, ONE OF THE BEST SELLING BOOKS OF 2011, WITH OVER 6 MILLION COPIES SOLD, WHICH BY THE WAY IS HEADED FOR HOLLYWOOD TO BE MADE INTO A MOVIE WITH T. D. JAKES AS CO-PRODUCER.**

**** WE DON'T NEED BOOKS LIKE THAT TO TELL US THAT HEAVEN IS FOR REAL. AND IF A PERSON REALLY DIED AND WENT TO HEAVEN AND CAME BACK, LIKE PAUL, THEY WOULD HAVE HEARD INEXPRESSIBLE WORDS WHICH A PERSON IS NOT PERMITTED TO SPEAK.**

*** AND ALL WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HEAVEN **IS IN GOD'S WORD. AND MAY WE DELIGHT IN** THOSE TRUTHS REVEALED, RATHER THAN BE NAÏVE AND GET OUR VIEW ABOUT HEAVEN FROM A BOY WHO WENT THERE WHEN HE WAS 3 AND IS **TOLD BY HIS FATHER IN HIS SON'S** OWN WORDS.

**** AND A FOOTNOTE, THE MARKETING FOR THIS BOOK IS INCREDIBLE BEYOND THE MOVIE COMING OUT WITH **T-SHIRTS, DVD'S, A** CONVERSATION GUIDE, AN EVANGELISM PACKET, 13 WEEK SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS FOR CHILDREN, AND AN AUDIO OF IT, AND A HEAVEN IS FOR REAL KIDS E-BOOK.

4. AND BROTHERS AND SISTERS, LET'S GO BACK TO THE WORD AND NOT BE SO GULLIBLE AS TO BUY THINGS LIKE THAT. THANK GOD HEAVEN IS FOR REAL BECAUSE GOD SAYS IN HIS WORD IT IS REAL AND NOT BECAUSE A 3 YEAR OLD SAW IT AND NOW LIVES TO TELL ABOUT IT.

* WELL, PAUL DISCLOSES VERY LITTLE ABOUT HEAVEN HERE AND DOES NOT GO ON A SPEAKING TOUR TO TELL ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCE OR WRITE A BOOK, IN FACT FOR 14 **YEARS HE DOESN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT IT,** AND ONLY DOES TO HELP THE CORINTHIANS SEE HE TRULY WAS AN APOSTLE OF GOD AND NOT A FALSE APOSTLE LIKE HIS ENEMIES AT CORINTH.

** WHICH LEADS US TO OUR LAST POINT TODAY, THE DISTINCTION? LOOK AT V. 5 PLEASE.

III. THE DISTINCTION, (READ V. 5)

A. NOW PAUL DISTINGUISHES HIMSELF FROM THE FALSE APOSTLES AGAIN, BY COMMUNICATING THAT HE WILL NOT BOAST ON HIS OWN BEHALF LIKE THEY DID.

* FOR UNLIKE HIS ENEMIES, PAUL WOULD NOT YIELD AN INCH TO ANY TEMPTATION TO SELF-PROMOTION.

** HENCE, PAUL CONTINUES TO SPEAK OF HIMSELF **BY SAYING, "ON BEHALF OF SUCH A MAN I WILL BOAST, BUT ON MY OWN BEHALF I WILL NOT BOAST, WITH ONE EXCEPTION, IN REGARD TO MY WEAKNESSES."**

*** MEANING: WHEN BOASTING OF WEAKNESS, **PAUL DIDN'T MIND MENTIONING HIMSELF. BUT** WHEN BOASTING OF VISIONS AND REVELATIONS OF THE LORD, HE WOULD NOT APPLY THEM DIRECTLY TO HIMSELF, BUT RATHER SPEAK OF THEM IMPERSONALLY, INDIRECTLY, IN THE THIRD PERSON, AS HAVING OCCURRED TO SOME MAN HE KNEW.

**** PAUL WAS NOT DENYING THAT HE WAS THE ONE WHO HAD THE EXPERIENCE IN V. 5, BUT WAS SIMPLY REFUSING TO LIFT UP SELF, HE WANTED TO BE IN THE BACKGROUND IN HIS HUMILITY AND NOT BLOW HIS OWN HORN.

**** AND FOR CLARITY, PAUL WOULD BOAST ABOUT HIS WEAKNESSES, FOR THEY PROVIDED COMPELLING PROOF OF HIS APOSTLESHIP.

1. I MEAN HOW **ELSE COULD PAUL'S HUGE IMPACT FOR THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL BE EXPLAINED, EXCEPT THAT GOD'S POWER WAS AT WORK IN HIM.**

* SO WHO BOASTS OF WEAKNESSES? HUMBLE PEOPLE, GODLY PEOPLE, PEOPLE USED BY GOD, NOT BOASTERS.

** AND PAUL WAS STRONGEST WHEN HE WAS WEAKEST, AS WE WILL LEARN NEXT WEEK LORD WILLING.

**** SO PAUL DISTINGUISHES HIMSELF AGAIN FROM THESE SO CALLED SUPER APOSTLES, AND HE DOES IT SOME MORE IN V. 6, OUR LAST VERSE TODAY. LOOK AT V. 6 PLEASE.

B. READ V. 6. NOW HERE IN V. 6, PAUL COMMUNICATES THAT HIS BOAST WAS NOT FOOLISH, FOR UNLIKE THE FALSE TEACHERS AND THEIR LYING CLAIMS, HE WAS SPEAKING THE TRUTH; HIS VISION REALLY HAPPENED, AND TO DENY THAT WOULD BE FALSE HUMILITY.

* NONETHELESS, HE IN HUMILITY WISELY DECIDED TO REFRAIN FROM RESTING HIS CASE FOR HIS AUTHORITY AS AN APOSTLE ON HIS VISION.

** AND WHY DOES HE REFRAIN FROM SAYING ANYMORE ABOUT HIS VISION? WELL, USING IT FURTHER TO PROVE HIS APOSTLESHIP WOULD OPEN THE DOOR FOR RELIGIOUS HUCKSTERS AND CHARLATANS LIKE THE FALSE APOSTLES TO CLAIM MORE AUTHORITY TO SPEAK FOR GOD BASED ON THEIR OWN ALLEGED MYSTICAL EXPERIENCES AS SOME CHARISMATICS DO TODAY.

*** AND BELOVED, PAUL WAS CONCERNED ACCORDING TO THE LAST PART OF V. 6 THAT NO ONE SHOULD CREDIT HIM WITH MORE THAN HE SAW IN OR HEARD FROM HIM.

**** AND PLEASE UNDERSTAND THIS, AND PONDER IT PRACTICALLY.

1. THE TRUE MEASURE OF A MAN OF GOD IS NOT HIS ALLEGED MYSTICAL EXPERIENCES BUT HIS GODLY LIFE AND HIS FAITHFULNESS TO THE WORD OF GOD. WHAT YOU SEE AND HEAR FROM THEIR LIVES, NOT THEIR VISIONS, REVELATIONS AND DREAMS.

IN WRAP UP AND IN APPLICATION: (1) THE MEASURE OF A MAN OR WOMAN OF GOD IS CHARACTER, LIFE, HUMILITY AND PROPER PERSPECTIVE.

* BE CAREFUL AND DISCERNING IN NOT GETTING SUCKED INTO BOASTS TODAY OF VISIONS, DREAMS, NEW REVELATIONS, AND THINGS THAT ARE NOT REPEATABLE OR VERIFIABLE THAT LEAD PEOPLE TO BOAST AND EVEN MAKE MONEY FROM IT.

** WHAT I WOULD CALL **"TOP THIS" KIND OF** SPEAKERS WHO ARE THE HAVE PEOPLE, NOT THE HAVE NOTS. I HAVE THIS GIFT OR EXPERIENCE, OR REVELATION, OR VIEW OR DREAM, OR I SAW JESUS THE OTHER DAY WHEN I WAS IN THE BATHROOM.

*** OUR FAITH IS BUILT UPON THE HOLY WORD OF GOD. THE ONCE FOR ALL FAITH DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS IN JUDE V. 3, THE COMPLETE REVELATION OF GOD, WHAT IS PROFITABLE FOR TEACHING, FOR REPROOF, FOR CORRECTION, FOR TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS IN II TIMOTHY 3:16&17, THE HOLY SCRIPTURE.

**** AND BE EXTRA CAREFUL OF ANYONE WHO PUTS EXPERIENCE OVER TRUTH. THAT IS A BIG RED FLAG.

(2) LASTLY, WHY DID GOD GIVE PAUL THIS GLIMPSE OF GLORY, A PEEK INTO HEAVEN IF HE WAS NOT TO SHARE IT WITH OTHERS.

* WELL JOHN CALVIN GIVES US AN ANSWER AND I QUOTE: **"THIS THING HAPPENED FOR PAUL'S OWN SAKE, FOR A MAN WHO HAD AWAITING HIM TROUBLES HARD ENOUGH TO BREAK A THOUSAND HEARTS NEEDED TO BE STRENGTHENED IN A SPECIAL WAY TO KEEP HIM FROM GIVING WAY AND TO HELP HIM TO PERSEVERE UNDAUNTED."** (END QUOTE)

** TO ADD TO THAT, R. KENT HUGHES SAYS IN HIS COMMENTARY ON II CORINTHIANS THESE PRACTICAL WORDS AND I QUOTE: **“PAUL WAS GRANTED A GREATER VIEW OF THE GLORY TO COME IN ORDER THAT IT MIGHT SUSTAIN HIM IN HIS EPIC BEATINGS AND SHIPWRECKS AND BETRAYALS AND HEARTACHES THAT ROSE AND FELL WITH THE FORTUNES OF HIS CHURCHES. THIS EPIC EXPERIENCE SUSTAINED AN EPIC HEART.”** (END QUOTE)

*** NOW WHAT ABOUT US TODAY? WE KNOW **THAT HEAVEN IS FOR REAL, BECAUSE GOD’S WORD SAYS IT IS SO.**

**** SO MAY WE STAND ON THAT TRUTH TO HELP US THROUGH ANY TRIAL WE ARE GOING THROUGH TODAY.

(3) CLOSE WITH II CORINTHIANS 4:17&18 AND ROMANS 8:18.

* BELOVED, THE BEST IS YET TO COME. MAY THE SWEET BY AND BY BE SET BEFORE US TO GET US THROUGH THE NASTY NOW AND NOW. PRESENT TRIALS CANNOT BE COMPARED TO FUTURE GLORY. THINK ABOUT HEAVEN MORE!

(LET'S PRAY)