

Caught Up Into Heaven

In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul describes something marvelous that happened to him: about how he was caught up into the third heaven. He states in vs. 2, *"I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago -- whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows -- such a one was caught up to the third heaven."* We find out later on in the chapter that Paul is speaking of himself. He just doesn't want to boast of himself.

Paul speaks of the third heaven. What is the third heaven? Vss. 3-4 says, *"And I know such a man -- whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows -- how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."* We find that it is Paradise, the same place that Lazarus went in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16). In Paradise, Paul heard inexpressible words which he could not speak of. Paul must have not only heard inexpressible words, he must have seen inexpressible beauty. What a better way to have your faith in God built up than to experience Heaven and then return to the flesh to remember it all. Nothing could have made Paul more eager to serve the Lord so that he could return to Paradise one day. Paul was a convicted person, willing to serve God whatever the cost. And by reading of his experience in 2 Corinthians 12, it is no wonder why.

We will never have the opportunity as Paul had to experience Heaven two times. Then again we will never suffer as much as Paul did either. Nevertheless, we do have the opportunity to experience Heaven once and be there forever. This should make us just as determined as Paul was to get there. What we must do is read of his experience and how he was convicted of the truth and served God. Then, we can learn of it and be better Christians because of it. We can be the convicted person of the truth that Paul was. We can be a diligent follower of Christ as Paul was. And we can be as sure of Heaven as Paul was (2 Timothy 4:6-8). It will take a lot of effort on our part for sure but it will surely be worth it all as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:58, *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."*

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