



Campbell Chapel

Sermon by Bob Bradley



Glory in Infirmities

Sunday, May 27, 2018

Bob Bradley

2 Corinthians 12:1 It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 12:2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

2 Corinthians 12:3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

2 Corinthians 12:4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

2 Corinthians 12:5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

2 Corinthians 12:6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but *now* I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me *to be*, or *that* he heareth of me.

2 Corinthians 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

2 Corinthians 12:8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

2 Corinthians 12:9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Paul is writing in 2 Corinthians. He is actually defending himself. There were always false prophets everywhere that the apostle went. There were false prophets that went behind him and would always try to stir up a racket. They were always trying to discredit him and say all manner of evil against him. Usually Paul did not have much to say. However, when we get to 2 Corinthians here, you are going to find out as you read the book; you will find out that he says, "Hey, I am going to defend myself. I have something I need to tell you. I have something I need to say." These guys as you read the story, as you read the book; it is a lot like it is today.

If you turn on your TV set, and if you look, if you go to some churches sometimes; you will hear people get up and brag about what they have done and what they have seen. They want to brag about divisions that they had. The places that God has taken them

to. They have been to heaven and back. They went to hell and back. No doubt, some of these false prophets here that Paul was dealing with and around; they were saying all kinds of things. They were tooting their own horn. They were inflated in themselves. Their big gripe was you do not have any stories to tell. You do not have anything to say. You never tell us any stories about any visions you have, or any revelations you have, or any appearances of God. You never tell us about anything like that.

Do you know what Paul is going to do here? Paul is going to tell them something here that they have never heard before. Paul is going to tell them something that these guys have never experienced before. He is going to tell them about a trip he took. When he is writing this letter here, he said, "Hey, I want to tell you about a story that happened 14 years ago, to a fellow." This happened 14 years ago and he said whether this vision he had or this journey he took; I do not know whether this guy was dead or alive. I do not know. I do not understand that. But he says, God knows. He said, "I'm going to tell you about this fellow. I am going to tell you about this story. I'm going to tell you about this trip this guy took." He begins to talk about that.

2 Corinthians 12:4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

So, you know where this fellow goes. Paul is talking about himself in the third person. We know that as we read on down through here. Paul is talking about himself and where he went. He does not understand whether he was dead or alive. Some very smart thinks that this could have very well happened when he was stoned outside the city of Lystra and they left him there for dead. Some think that he might have been dead. This was in the time frame that he had this vision; I do not know that. However, it would make sense when you look at what took place there. He says he was...

2 Corinthians 12:4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Do you know what happens to Paul? Paul gets caught up right into the presence of Almighty God. He gets caught up. We know that there is an atmospheric heaven out here right above us. We can look out in the clouds and we can see that. Can we not? At night here, before long, we are going to be able to see the stars and we can see that atmosphere. That is the second heaven. Do you know where Paul went to? He went right into the place where Almighty God is at. That is where he went to. That is where God called him to. This guy here that these guys are saying he was a nobody. He has never had any visions, never had any revelations. He does not have any great things to tell them. He does not have any stories. He is going to say here, "Guys, I do have a story. I have not bragged about it. This happened 14 years ago. Since you guys want me to tell you a story then I am going to tell you a story. He says 14 years ago this happened. I was called up to paradise." He said here...

2 Corinthians 12:4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Do you know what Paul says? “Hey, I heard some things there with my ears that is out of this world. I heard some things here that is absolutely beyond human understanding. I heard some things there that for me to speak to you would absolutely make no sense to you because there are two different dimensions. There is a spiritual dimension and there is a fleshly dimension.” Paul says, “The words that I heard and the things that I saw would not make any sense to you. It breaks all-natural laws. What heard and the things that I saw breaks all-natural law.”

2 Corinthians 12:5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

So, Paul says, I am not bragging about me going there. I am not tooting my horn and I am not bragging about what God has shown me. He says I am bragging and boasting in my infirmities. When you read that it does not make much sense. Does it? You would think that if Paul was going to boast about something or brag about something; he would want to brag about or boast about him going to heaven and hearing the words that he heard and all that was going on in heaven. You would think he would want to talk about that. However, you know what? He did not want to talk about that. He wanted to talk about the infirmities that he had. If you do not read the rest of the story then you do not get the picture. If you do not read the rest of these other verses on down through here then it makes no sense to you why an individual would glory in his infirmities.

Sometimes in life we want to talk about the good times. we want to talk about when we are healthy or feel good and when we have money. We want to talk about those times. we want to talk about when we get the raise on the job and the company is doing good and we are making money. The company just got a contract for 10 years. We want to talk about those things. We are not hurting. We wake up in the morning and we do not have a lot of pain to deal with and we go to bed at night and we do not have a lot of things to deal with. We like to glory in those things. Do we not? We like to say thank you, God that we do not have all that stuff. Thank you, God that we do have jobs, homes, food and raiment as we should. Paul says here, I am not going to brag about going to heaven but I am going to brag about the infirmities. Do you know what he is going to tell us? Paul is going to tell us, “Because I went to heaven, the trip I took to heaven and because of that; I have all kinds of issues.” Amen! That is what he is going to tell us. “I went to heaven, but because I went to heaven; I have all kinds of issues. I’m not going to brag about my trip, what I saw, what happened, or the words I heard; but I am going to brag about my infirmities.”

How often do we thank God for our infirmities? How often do we thank God for the issues in life? How often do we thank God for where we are at and what is going on in life and when things are not comfortable? How often do we thank God for that? Do you know what Paul is going to do here?

He is going to give us some insight into some things that sometimes in life that we need to thank God for our infirmities.

2 Corinthians 12:6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but *now* I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me *to be*, or *that* he heareth of me.

Do you know what he says here? “I’m not going to brag about where I went. I do not want people to think that I am some super-duper guy. I do not want people to think of me above who that I really am. I am going to tell the truth. However, I do not want people to exalt me. I do not want people to brag upon me. I want people to look at me and see who I am and know who I am and recognize who I am. I don’t want people to think that I am somebody that I am not.” He said, “I’m not going to brag about that. I am not going to be a fool. I am going to tell you the truth, but I am not going to be a fool and brag about what God has shown me.”

Get this. He goes to paradise. He goes right to the place where God dwells. I do not know how long he was there. I do not know how much time he spent there. I do not know what was said. I know if you read some commentaries sometimes they want to tell you what was said, but that is sort of crazy to even read that.

Listen. If Paul did not tell us what was said then how in the world does some commentator going to know what was said. That is not going to happen. Is it?

2 Corinthians 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

Paul says, “I had all kinds of revelations. I saw things and heard things that are absolutely unlawful, things that breaks all-natural law, things I heard and saw that if I told you would make no sense to you. I saw that. I was there. I saw what goes on in the next world. I saw and I was around the throne of Almighty God. I saw what was going on in that world. I saw all of that. I am not going to brag about that but I saw that.”

Get this. How many times in life—and it is easy to do—does God really bless us and do some great things for us and then we want to get all puffed up in self? We want to be inflated. We want to be like a balloon that somebody just put air in and we get bigger and bigger. You might say I never did do that. I hope you did not. However, it is very easy to do. It is very easy for people to get exalted in themselves when God does some great things for them. Amen! When God blesses people and their ministry that God may have called them into. It is easy when God is blessing and God is doing some extraordinary things with you and for you and for your family. It is easy to get to the place in life that “Hey, I have done all this myself. I worked this. I did that. I got this. We have all this stuff. I really worked hard.” That is great. However, we have no reason, we have no right to boast about what we did and who we are and what we

accumulated and what God is doing with us. We have no reason to boast about that. Amen! Do you think you do? Do you think you have a reason to brag about what you are doing? You do not have.

Do you know what? As great a man, as the Apostle Paul was, and he was a great man; there was within him the possibility that he would get exalted. Amen! There was within him the possibility here that because of what he saw and how God blessed him and what he saw working in yonder's world and what he heard; there was within Paul the very thing that he could be exalted in himself. The possibility was there. That same possibility that was in Paul is in you and me.

Many times, in ministry I have seen young men come along, and young women. However, young men that God has called into the ministry. God has blessed them. God has used them. They have preached and did some great things. I have seen them get exalted in themselves. They have got to the place that they could never do anything because they were so exalted in themselves. Amen! I have seen young people, middle aged people, and old people—I could mention a guy's name that you all would know.

He lived in Kentucky. He was a very prominent evangelist. He went all over the place and preached over there. No doubt, hundreds were saved because of his ministry, where he went and the revivals that he preached there. However, do you know what he did? He got so lifted up in himself that instead of preaching when he went to the meetings, he wanted to tell everybody how many people had been saved at his meetings, how many people that came to his meetings and all that he had done. Do you know what? Twenty-five years ago, everybody knew him. I could mention him today now in those same counties and no one would know him. Do you know why? It is because he dried up and blew away. That is what pride does in a Christian's life.

When we start bragging on ourselves then we just wither up and dry up and we blow away. Get this. God can do without you. Okay? The world will still yet turn tomorrow if you are not here. The sun will come up in the morning if you are not here. Amen! Things will go on without me and you. We need Him.

Paul says here...

2 Corinthians 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

In other words, at least I should get lifted up in pride because of all the things that God has shown me.

2 Corinthians 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

Paul says this was given to me, lest I should be exalted above measure, lest I should get lifted up in pride and think that I am something and I am special; there was given to me—get that. There was given to me a thorn in the flesh.

I do not know a lot about thorns but I do know this. They hurt. Your sweat bees are one thing but thorns are something else. Do you know that? Great big thorns—you can get stuck by them. They will fester up. You will get infected. If you do not get them dug out, they will hurt and hurt.

Paul says here...

2 Corinthians 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

I do not have any idea what it was. I do not have any idea about the physical issue that Paul had. I do not know. I do know—the Bible tells me, that it was given to him. The Bible says here...

2 Corinthians 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

Do you read that? That is there. Is it not? We do not like to talk about that. We do not like to talk about those things sometimes. Do you know what God knows about me and about you? God knows what is needed in my life to keep me humble. Amen! God knows what is needed in your life to keep you humble. It would be great to say hey, I am not going to get exalted in myself. It would be great to say, if we could live in a way that God can bless us and do great things with us and use us and we never get exalted; that would be great if that was possible. However, for most of us it is not. For the apostle Paul it was not. Since it was not possible here for Paul to live without getting exalted and without being lifted up in pride—I would pretty well say that we are in the same category as Paul. If we went to heaven and saw what he saw; we would want to brag about it. We would want to write books about it. We would want to sell CD's about it. We get all exalted in self. Are you not glad that God loves us enough that He will keep us in a place that He can use us.

Get this. This is the whole lesson.

2 Corinthians 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

The messenger of satan came to buffet me. When you read that it is like satan was beating on him with his fist. He was not just looking at him. He was not just flipping him. But it was like satan was beating him with his fist. Bang bang bang; day in and day out, week in and week out. Do you know what Paul could have said? We know

that he prayed, “Lord, I have revivals to preach. I have letters to write. I have churches to visit and I have all these issues; what is going on? Help me out here. Give me deliverance from what is going on in life.” We know Paul prayed three times. Do you know what God told him every time? “Thy grace is sufficient for you.”

Do you know what Paul learned? Get this. This is the lesson. Paul learned something because...he went to heaven. Paul learned something after he came back from that visit; he learned something that he needed, that he must have if he was going to be able to carry on the work of the apostle that he was to teach and to preach and to hold meetings and write books and do all that he was doing. There was something that he absolutely had to have. This messenger of satan that was buffeting him; it brought Paul exactly what he needed. That was infirmities, problems, heartaches, and pain. It brought Paul exactly what he did.

Get this. When I am feeling good, life is going well, no aches, no pains and that is not very much anymore, as you get old. Some of you know that. As you go through life with no aches and no pains and everything is going pretty well, our prayer life is just ho hum. We do not get very serious about it. We may pray two or three times a day. We may go through some words and we may go through some words. We may have some kind of prayer that we recite but sometimes it does not mean anything.

Get this. When infirmities come, when satan begins to beat on us with his fists; do you know what we know? We figure out real quick how weak we really are. Amen! We figure out how weak we really are.

I have issues tonight. If I could heal them, do you know what I would do? bam! I would heal them tonight. Wouldn't you? If I could heal you tonight, I would walk down every isle. Do you know what I know? I know you all have issues. Everybody here has problems. Most of us needs something that we could use a touch from God about. Amen! If I could do that I would do that. If I could heal you, I could probably heal myself. I cannot do either one of them.

Here the thing. When we get to the place in life that we have infirmities—Paul in chapter 11 here, of 2 Corinthians lists a whole bunch of issues that he had. All the things that happened to him. When we get to the place in life that satan is buffeting us and we have this thorn in our flesh—whatever it is—that causes issues and pain, and we get to the place that we understand that we absolutely cannot do this without the power of God. When we understand how weak we really are, then do you know what we can do? Do you know what we can do? We can say thank God for the infirmities.

Get this. Do you know what Paul wanted above everything else? Paul wanted the power of Christ to be upon his life. Paul understood that if he was going to preach that he had to have the power of God upon his life. If he was going to establish churches and pastor churches and ordain people and do all that he was going to do; Paul knew he had to have the power of Christ. Do you know what he understood? He understood that he would rather have these infirmities because it put him to the place that he knew

he was weak and Paul, when he got weak; he says, I was really strong. I was weak. I knew I could not do it. I knew that I could not heal myself. I could not get rid of these infirmities that I have. When I got to the place that I knew who I was and how weak I really was then I was able to experience the power of God. That is why he is glorying in infirmities. That is why he is glorying and boasting and bragging about all that is going on in life because it brought him to the place that he understood how much he really needed the power of God upon his life.

None of us like pain. I hope you do not think I am saying that. I do not think that at all. None of us likes that. None of us likes infirmities. None of us likes all the reproaches and things that Paul went through and the necessities of life and the persecutions and the distress—None of us likes those things. However, do you know what Paul says here?

2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

When I got to the place that I understood that I cannot do this by myself, I cannot make it by myself. I cannot teach. I cannot preach. I cannot build. I cannot do this on my own. When Paul says, hey, when I got to that place in life then I was able to experience the great power of God upon my life.

Folks that is where it is at today. That is where it is at today. Everything we do in life, as far as Christians and Christianity and the work of Christ goes; we need His power. Every day when we get up, we need His power. We need His presence. We need Him.

Paul says all the problems, the infirmities, the distresses, the persecutions, the necessities of life that I need; all those things brought me to the place that I figured out how weak I really was. Because of that, the day I figured out how weak I was is the day that I became strong.

Listen. If you think you can do this by yourself, you are wrong. If you think you have all this figured out by yourself and you can do it all by yourself and you do not need God's power; you are wrong. We need God. We need Him today, like we have never needed Him before. Our churches today, across America needs the presence of God in the churches like we have never had Him before. Do you know why? Because so many people...

I talked to someone yesterday. Two years ago, I talked to this same individual and all they wanted to talk about was church. Going to church and participating in church and God was blessing and God was doing so much. I talked to them for I do not know how long yesterday. They told me about their job. They told me about all kinds of other issues, not necessarily issues but all kinds of other stuff that was going on, how happy they were, how things were just great and rosy. However, not one time did that

individual ever mention Jesus Christ. I found out that they do not go anymore. They got so involved in things that was so important to them, so they do not go anymore.

Listen. We need Jesus Christ. You need Jesus Christ. That individual needs Jesus Christ. The sad thing about it is that soon and very soon a lot of people are going to realize just how bad they need Jesus Christ but it is going to be too late.

The question I ask you tonight...do you know Him? Do you know Jesus Christ as your Savior? If you do not know Him, you need to know Him. You need Him.

Those of us that are saved, do you know what we should thank God for? When we are living in the will of God and when God is doing some great things for us and when some issues come along sometimes, instead of getting torn up about them; do you know what we should do? Thank you, Lord that you love me enough that you do not want me to get exalted. Amen! Do you know what pain will do? It will drive you to your knees. Amen! We need it. We need to pray. We need to call upon the God of heaven. When we do that and figure that out then we can experience the power of God in our lives.

If you are here tonight, if you are listening to me tonight wherever you may be at; God is speaking and God is calling then you need to come to Him. He loves you. Jesus died for you. He died that you could be saved. He died that you could go to heaven when life comes to an end.

Do not brag on your goodness. Do not think that your righteousness is going to get you there. Do not be so lifted up in pride to think that you do not need Him because you do need Him. You need Jesus Christ. You cannot get to heaven without Him. Come this evening.

Come and pray—