

THE PARABLE OF THE HOUSE AND THE PORCH

- the challenge of paradox (definition – ‘a seemingly contradictory statement that may nonetheless be true: the paradox that standing is more tiring than walking’)
- free will / predestination (Acts 2:38-40); God’s love & power / human suffering
- either / or; both / and? (CH Spurgeon – ‘the truth of biblical doctrine lies in neither extreme, nor in the mean between the extremes, but in the extremes held together’)
- very significant that this chapter contains both vv 1-11 & 12

STRENGTH & WEAKNESS (12:1-11)

- the context of Paul’s Corinthian Ministry (‘boasting’ v. 1; ‘super-apostles’ v. 11)
- the man ‘caught up to the third heaven’ – was it Paul himself? (V. 7 suggests it was)
- Paul’s thorn in the flesh (Gk skoloy – Num 33:55; Ezek 28:24; Hos 2:8; Gal 4:13) more likely to be the suffering of opposition to his ministry than a physical illness
- another paradox – ‘sufficient grace’ / ‘[God’s] power made perfect in [human] weakness’ (v. 10)

SIGNS & WONDERS (12:12)

- ‘the things that mark an apostle’
- ‘signs, wonders and miracles’
- ‘were **done** among you’ (not ‘prayed for among you’ but ‘**done** among you’ cf the words of Jesus – ‘Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.’ (Mt 10:8)
- apostolic succession
- ‘with great perseverance’

CONCLUSION

- the analogy of the D-Day landings
- ‘rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn’ (Rom 12:15)

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

- 1 How well-built is your porch? In other words, how do you introduce others to the house of faith which is Jesus Christ?
- 2 How easily do you accept biblical paradox?
- 3 Can you think of and share with the group any situations where God’s power has been made visible because of your weakness?
- 4 Are you suffering opposition at the moment? Ask the group to pray for you.
- 5 Do you have concerns about ‘signs, wonders & miracles?’ Have you been disappointed by prayers that don’t seem to have been answered? Can you share this with the group?
- 6 Ask the Holy Spirit to give you grace to persevere in seeking ‘the marks of an apostle’ for today.