

2 Corinthians

Visions

Interpreting the Text:

1. “The foolishness of God is wiser than humankind” (1 Cor 1:18-25) is harkened to in Paul’s discussion here. How does this theme from 1 Corinthians appear in 2 Corinthians 12 and 13? Are there ways in which this letter is different from the first?
2. Paul refers to a “thorn in his flesh” and asks that God remove it three times. What might the significance of this threefold prayer have for the readers? Is it a coincidence, or might it be intentional?
3. The end of this letter has Paul preparing to visit again. How does this ending compare to the ending of other Pauline letters? What do we learn about Paul’s understanding of God, and perhaps the Trinity?

Applying the Text:

1. How do you understand the Gospel to be “foolishness”? If someone asked you to explain what that means, how would you, drawing on Paul’s speech here, try to answer that question?
2. Paul is focusing on visions as a spiritual device in these chapters. Do ecstatic or extraordinary experiences of prayer or closeness to God play a role in your own life and are they accompanied by some “thorn in the flesh” as Paul would say?
3. Paul always ends his letters with a benediction and some helpful reminders. What ways are these useful for us in our daily life? How might we remember this practice in our own communication styles?