

## 2 CORINTHIANS XII.

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The way in which, in this chapter, we find the highest state to which a Christian can be elevated, an exceptional one, no doubt, as an experience, and the lowest condition to which he can fall, and all the practical principles on which the divine work is carried on between these two extremes, is very striking. In the beginning of the chapter we find a saint in the third heaven, in paradise, where flesh could have no part in apprehension or in communication. He knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body. There was no consciousness of human existence in flesh; so he could not tell, nor could he utter what he had heard when he returned to the consciousness of flesh again. Such is the saint at the beginning of the chapter. At the end we find one, perhaps many, fallen into fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness, and unrepentant yet of their sins. What a contrast of the highest heavenly elevation, and the lowest carnal degradation! And the Christian capable of both! What a lesson for every saint, though he may reach neither extreme, as a warning; and how suited to give the consciousness of what natures are at work, and of the elements which are in conflict in him in his spiritual life down here! Another part of this chapter will show us where power alone is to be found to carry him along his path upon the earth in a way consistently with the heavenly good to which he is called. Paul uses a remarkable expres-