

Calvary Chapel of El Cajon Women's Bible Studies

2 Corinthians 12

Lesson 13

This chapter of 2 Corinthians completes Paul's defense of his apostleship. Paul was reluctant to share personal experiences to validate his calling, but found it necessary in order for his teaching to be accepted. Here, in chapter 12, Paul relates his vision of heaven and the thorn in the flesh sent to *buffet him, lest he be exalted above measure*. The thought of a vision of heaven appeals to most of us. But, we, like Paul, would pray for the removal of the *thorn in the flesh*. Yet, Paul found a place of acceptance for his *thorn*. May we, through the study of this lesson, find ourselves in agreement with him.

DAY ONE: Read 2 Corinthians 12

1. Read through this week's verses using both your Observation Worksheets and another Bible translation or paraphrase. After reading through these verses, what would you say to someone if they asked you what they were about?
 - a. The twelfth chapter of 2 Corinthians has been divided into four paragraph divisions. List below the subject(s) covered in each section.

Verses 1-6

Verses 7-10

Verses 11-13

Verses 14-21

How would you title each section? Record your titles on the **Chapter & Paragraph Division Titles Chart** provided with your Observation Worksheet. Now record a title for the twelfth chapter of 2 Corinthians.

2. At the right-hand side of the same chart are columns labeled **Key Word** and **Symbol**. They have been provided for you to record the key words and the symbol you have chosen to represent each one. Record the key words listed below and their symbols on the chart.

God, Jesus, Paul, boast

New to this lesson: *come*

Now, using the symbols you have chosen, mark each of the key words each time they are used in 2 Corinthians 12. Remember, as you mark the key words to mark any personal pronouns that refer to them. You do not need to mark every word that refers to them - only those that you feel are significant.

3. Choose one of the key words above and make a list of what the text reveals about it.

Challenge: Make a list of another key word

4. The term of conclusion *therefore* appears in 2 Corinthians 12:9 and 10. Chose one of them and record what the conclusion was based upon.

DAY TWO: Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-6

1. Paul did not look to men for honor. Rather, he looked to God, as that alone is the honor that really counts. According to verse 1, what did God give to Paul?
 - a. Paul had other *visions*. Choose two of the following verses and describe the *visions* recorded. Challenge: do them all.

Acts 9:3

Acts 9:12

Acts 16:9

Acts 18:9-10

Acts 22:17

Acts 23:11

Acts 27:23

2. It is believed that Paul is referring to himself in verse 2. What happened to Paul *fourteen years* prior to his writing this letter?
 - a. The *third heaven* is believed to be *Paradise* or *Paradise* may be part of the *third heaven*. Where is *Paradise*? What can we know about *Paradise*? See Luke 23:43 and Revelation 2:7.

 - b. What does Paul tell us about his experience in *Paradise*? 2 Corinthians 12:3,4

3. God not only honored Paul by taking him to heaven, but He allowed Paul to hear *inexpressible words*. In what ways do you think this experience affected Paul's faith?
 - a. Although no one has experienced what Paul did, we all have had God do something miraculous in our lives. Briefly share a miraculous event in your life that increased your faith.
 - 1.) How did it increase your faith?

4. Although Paul's experience was certainly worth *boasting* about, he would not. In what did Paul *boast*? verse 5

5. According to verse 6, why did Paul *refrain* from *boasting* about his experience in *Paradise*?
 - a. Rather than basing their opinion of Paul on his past accomplishments or experiences, what does this say about what basis Paul wants men to evaluate him?

 - b. Why is it important to view a person in light of who they are and what they are doing right now, instead of what they did in the past?

DAY THREE: Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

1. It would have been extremely tempting to take pride in all God had revealed to Paul. *Lest he should be exalted above measure by the abundance of revelations, what was given to Paul?*

- a. This *thorn in the flesh* was a *messenger of satan*. What does Job 2:6,7 say about satan's power to harm us?

Challenge: Define the word *buffet*.

2. Paul does not tell us what *this thing* sent to *buffet* him was. Why do you think the Holy Spirit led him to not be specific?

3. How many times did Paul *plead* with the Lord *that it might depart from him*?

- a. Hebrews 5:6,7 refer to Jesus. What do these verses say about His seeking God through prayer?

4. What was God's answer to Paul? 2 Corinthians 12:9

- a. What was Paul's response? verse 9

5. Paul declared that he would not only *boast* in his *infirmities* but he would also *take pleasure in them*. In what else, would he *take pleasure*? verse 10

- a. None of these are *pleasurable* experiences. For Whose *sake* would he *take pleasure* in them?

1.) What does Luke 6:22 tell us about suffering *for Christ's sake*?

- b. What conclusion did Paul arrive at? (the last sentence verse 10)

1.) How have you discovered this truth in your own life?

DAY FOUR: Read 2 Corinthians 12:11-13

1. In these verses Paul expressed his embarrassment in allowing them to *compel* him to *boast* as he did. What did he say about himself in verse 12?
 - a. According to 1 Corinthians 9:2, what (who) was the *seal* (proof) of Paul's *apostleship*.
 - 1.) Why are saved souls evidence of God working through someone?
2. Some of the Corinthians felt their church was *inferior to other churches* because Paul received support from the other churches and refused it from Corinth. Why did he do that? See 1 Corinthians 9:12.

DAY FIVE: Read 2 Corinthians 12:14-21

1. Paul continues this section with the statement that he is still determined *not to be burdensome* to the believers in Corinth. What reasoning does he use in verse 14?
 - a. How do these words reveal Paul's care for them?
2. According to verse 15, how much is Paul willing to give of himself for their sake?

Challenge: Define *spend* and *be spent* as they are used in 2 Corinthians 12:15

3. Paul expressed a *fear* or concern in 2 Corinthians 12:20,21. Express this *fear* in your own words.
 - a. What does it say to you that *backbitings and whisperings* are listed with sins like *fornication* and *lewdness*?
 - 1.) What does Proverbs 16:28 say about *whisperers*?
 - 2.) How would you define a *whisperer* in the church?

DAY SIX: Review 2 Corinthians 12

1. Paul found himself in a position where it was necessary that he defend himself. How can you maintain a spirit of humility if you have to defend yourself against the accusations of others?
2. What can we learn from Paul's example about dealing with physical discomfort or hardship?

Personal: What are some weaknesses or afflictions you find difficult to live with?

3. How does God use weakness and affliction in the believer's life?
4. What difference should it make, when you are suffering, knowing God has promised you an *all sufficient grace*?
5. What do you look for as *signs* of God's hand on someone's ministry?

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

- Revelation 22:21