

Gleanings of Grace

2 Corinthians 12

Lesson 8

In the midst of Paul's challenges to the church in Corinth, he departed from defending his apostleship because of his credentials and care. He reluctantly spoke of a vision that he experienced and the resulting affliction given to him to prevent him from improperly boasting. As you study this chapter, you will be encouraged to scan the latter verses of this chapter in the background section, noticing how they relate to the prior chapter. The focus of this lesson will be on the first ten verses. In grasping these verses, we can be set free from the dominating thoughts we can have when life gets rough.

OBSERVATION: Read 2 Corinthians 12

1. Read through this week's verses using both your Observation Worksheet (the last page of this homework) and another Bible translation or paraphrase. After reading through these verses, what would you say to someone if they asked you what they are about?
2. Key words help us to better understand the verses. We have listed below key words. Mark each one in a distinctive way (either with a symbol, highlighting, or some form of boxing, circling, or underlining). Mark each of the key words each time they are used in the text. Remember to mark any personal pronouns that refer to *God* (the Father) and *Jesus*.

Key Words: *God*, *Jesus*, *boast(ing)*, and *lest*
3. The term of conclusion *therefore* is used two times in this chapter. Mark the word. Choose one instance of its use and record what it is based upon.
4. The contrasting words *but*, *yet*, and *nevertheless* are used 7 times in 2 Corinthians 12. Mark the words. Choose one instance of their use and record what is being contrasted.

5. Paul used the precautionary term *lest* six times. Make a list of what Paul was trying to avoid.
6. Paul cautiously used the word *boast* five times. After reading his use of the word, give your initial impression of his concern.

Background:

1. Paul's letter of 1 Corinthians was written to correct many errors in the church. According to 2 Corinthians 2:9, why did he write this letter?
2. Paul was placed in a position of defending himself. Scan through 2 Corinthians 11 and list some of the statements Paul made to defend himself.
 - a. Describe Paul's care for the people in the church in Corinth.
3. Couched between Paul's defensive words of 2 Corinthians 11 and 2 Corinthians 12:11-21 are words that, if taken to heart, can change our perspective in every trial we experience. Before we bask in these words of encouragement, read 2 Corinthians 12:11-21 and record some points that you feel are important to note.
4. What might be some of the consequences of a church that does not receive godly counsel or instruction?

Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-6

1. Moving from his attempts to justify his qualifications to exhort the church in Corinth, what did Paul *come to*?
 - a. Define the following:
boast

visions

revelations

2. Using 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, what did Paul:

not know

know

3. *Paradise* is the *third heaven*. Revelation 2:7 promises to *overcomers* (all believers) the *tree of life*. Where is it?

a. What promise did Jesus make to the thief on the cross? Luke 23:43

4. Paul not only saw; he heard. How did he describe the *words* he *heard*? 2 Corinthians 12:4

5. Rather than *boast* in his experience in *Paradise*, what did Paul want to talk about? Verse 5

a. As Paul continued to write, he will indeed share valuable insights about *infirmities*. What are some ways that speaking of our *infirmities* can be an even more profitable witness to the power of God than a *vision* or *revelation*?

6. According to verse 6, why did Paul choose to *refrain from boasting*?

a. Why do you think we can sometimes be over-impressed with people because of their experience?

1.) Why do you think Paul wanted to avoid that?

Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-8

1. Paul was also concerned about his own ego. What was his concern?

a. Hezekiah was one of the most godly kings. Yet he succumbed to pride. What does 2 Chronicles 32:25 reveal happened as a result?

- b. Read the following verses and describe Paul's other revelations:

Acts 9:3,4

Acts 9:12

Acts 16:9

Acts 23:11

Acts 27:23,24

- c. You may or may not have experienced these types of *revelations* from the Lord. In what ways has He personally touched you that has encouraged your faith?

2. To prevent Paul from being *exalted above measure*, what did God give him? 2 Corinthians 12:7

- a. What did Paul write about his *thorn in the flesh*?

- 1.) The word *buffet* indicates a continuous or repeated action. As far as we know, Paul was plagued by this *thorn* for the rest of his life. What does Job 2:7 tell us Satan did to Job, when God gave him permission to do so?

- b. We know the reason behind both Paul's and Job's *buffeting*. You may not know the reason as to why you are being *buffeted*. What do you know?

3. Who did the author of Hebrews encourage us to *consider* in our suffering (Hebrews 12:3)?

- a. What do you *consider* about Jesus' suffering and endurance that helps you in times of struggling?

4. What did Paul do about his *thorn in the flesh*? 2 Corinthians 12:8

- a. Using synonyms, define the word *pleaded*.

- 1.) For what did Paul *plead three times*?

5. Reflect upon two other times men *pleaded* with God in prayer. What was God's answer?

2 Samuel 12:16-18

Matthew 26:39-44

- a. David's suffering was a consequence of his sin. Jesus' suffering was to accomplish the saving of all those who would believe in Him. Some suffering is simply because we live in a fallen world. What does Romans 8:28 promise us about all suffering?

1.) Describe your understanding of this *good*.

6. Mark 1:40 records a time when a *leper implored* (pleaded with) Jesus. What did this *leper* know?

- a. According to Romans 8:29, what can we know is God's will for us?

1.) How does this help you in times of struggling and pain?

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

1. The Lord answered Paul's prayers. Reflectively write out His two responses.

- a. Using your own words define:

grace

sufficient

- 1.) In what ways have you discovered God's:

grace to be sufficient?

strength made perfect in weakness?

- 2.) What does Isaiah 40:29-31 teach us about *strength*?
- b. What do you think the Lord wanted Paul to understand?
2. Rather than be discouraged that his *pleading* did not result in the removal of his *thorn in the flesh*, Paul said that he would *boast* in his *infirmities*. What did he understand God could do with his *infirmities*?
- a. What are some practical examples of the *power of Christ resting* on someone?
3. Paul began to understand that the Lord's answer to his pleading was applicable to far more than his *thorn in the flesh*. Using 2 Corinthians 12:10, what did Paul say he would *take pleasure in*?
- a. Why?
- b. How can we be *strong in weakness*?

REVIEW: Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

1. What thoughts have been provoked in you as you have studied this chapter?
2. In what ways have you been challenged?

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
- *Philippians 4:13*

Observation Worksheet

2 Corinthians 12

It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord:

² I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a one was caught up to the third heaven. ³ And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- ⁴ how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. ⁵ Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. ⁶ For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me.

⁷ And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

⁸ Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ⁹ And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. ¹¹ I have become a fool in

boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing. ¹² Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

¹³ For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong! ¹⁴ Now for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. ¹⁵ And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.

¹⁶ But be that as it may, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you by

cunning! ¹⁷ Did I take advantage of you by any of those whom I sent to you? ¹⁸ I urged Titus, and sent our brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same steps? ¹⁹ Again, do you think that we excuse ourselves to you? We speak before God in Christ. But we do all things, beloved, for your edification. ²⁰ For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults; ²¹ lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced.