

- ◆ How could this have made them feel superior and felt Paul was inferior to the other Apostles?

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS

- ◆ How can verses like 2 Cor. 12.2-4 help open up our understanding of other parts of scripture?
- ◆ Why is it important to allow the Bible to interpret itself?
- ◆ How can troubles, trials, and personal problems and illnesses be used of God?
- ◆ Should we see these as caused by God? Why or why not?
- ◆ How is respect for pastoral leadership an important part of a growing and strong church.
- ◆ How can a lack of respect for pastoral leadership hurt a church and its ministry?
- ◆ What advice would you have given the church at Corinth to get them back on track?

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2ND LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT CORINTH **THORNY ISSUES—CHAPTER 12.1-11**

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LOOKING FOR ANSWERS IN THE WORD OF GOD

[2 Cor. 12:1] Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on 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 out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. [3] And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows— [4] was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. [5] On behalf of such a man I will boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses. [6] For if I do wish to boast I will not be foolish, for I will be speaking the truth; but I refrain from this, so that no one will credit me with more than he sees in me or hears from me.

- ◆ 2 Cor. 12.1 How can boasting be both “necessary” and “not profitable” at the same time?
- ◆ Visions mean ‘to be seen’ and Revelations mean ‘an uncovering.’ What is Paul preparing to share with the church at Corinth?

- ◆ 2 Cor. 12.2 The letter of 2nd Corinthians was written around 55 A.D. Look at the following time line. What was Paul doing during this period of time?

The life of Paul can be broken down into four periods.

1. A.D. 6-33 His life before he was a believer. Born in Tarsus to Jewish parents with Roman citizenship. Studies in Jerusalem and becomes a Pharisee. Persecutes the followers of Jesus.
 2. A.D. 33-46 His early life as a believer where he learns and grows in His relationship with Christ. Converted on trip to Damascus, spent 3 years in Arabia, visits Jerusalem and then spends time preaching around the area of Tarsus.
 3. A.D. 47-57 His Missionary trips where he writes most of his letters. Trips start at Jerusalem and reach out to new areas for the message of Jesus. Ministry turns toward reaching the gentiles as his main audience. Writes letters to Thessalonians, Galatians, Corinthians, Romans.
 4. A.D. 57-64 His arrest and death as a martyr in Rome. While there he writes letters to Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon
- ◆ What does this reveal about Paul's relationship with Jesus and his understanding of spiritual matters?
 - ◆ What is Paul unsure of when it comes to this experience?
 - ◆ How is this similar to what John said happened to him while on the Island of Patmos? See Revelation 1.9-10

A TRUE APOSTLE

[2 Cor. 12.11] I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody. [12] The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles. [13] For in what respect were you treated as inferior to the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not become a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!

- ◆ 2 Cor. 12.11 How had the local church at Corinth made Paul feel foolish or inferior?
- ◆ How did Paul see himself in comparison with the other apostles?
- ◆ 2 Cor. 12. 12 What types of signs was Paul referring to? (see Acts 3.6-7)
- ◆ 2 Cor. 12.13 How does Paul see his ministry to the church at Corinth?
- ◆ What was the one thing he did not require of the church at Corinth that the other apostles required when ministering to a local church?

- ◆ Read Acts 23.3-5 Paul was a Pharisee and had served in the temple. What possible reason was there for him not recognizing the high priest?
- ◆ What is the most logical ailment or thorn in the flesh Paul could have had?
- ◆ 2 Cor. 12.8 Was this something he accepted or did he have to be convinced it was for his benefit?
- ◆ 2 Cor. 12.9 How is the answer Paul received to his prayers an important lesson for all believers to learn?
- ◆ How does this help us understand what Paul means about boasting about his weakness?
- ◆ How does Paul see this helping his relationship with Christ?
- ◆ 2 Cor. 12.10 Why does Paul feel these things have happened to him?
- ◆ How does Paul use them to be a better follower of Christ?

- ◆ Where does Paul say he went to?
- ◆ 2 Cor. 12.4 What is the name of this third heaven?
- ◆ Knowing this is the third heaven, what happened to the thief on the cross after he died? See Luke 23.39-43
- ◆ How does knowing this about Paradise make the promise in Revelation 2.7 more real and powerful?
- ◆ 2 Cor. 12.4 What was Paul able to share about this experience?
- ◆ 2 Cor. 12.5 What is Paul going to focus on here?
- ◆ 2 Cor. 12. 6 Why would Paul not want to talk about his heavenly visit?

WEAKNESS & STRENGTH

[2 Cor. 12.7] Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! [8] Concerning this I implored the Lord

three times that it might leave me. [9] And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. [10] Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

- ◆ 2 Cor. 12.7 How did God work to keep Paul from boasting or exalting himself?

- ◆ Why did Paul say this was necessary?

- ◆ Is this something God caused or something God allowed? Explain your answer.

- ◆ Read James 1.13 What do we learn about God and evil temptations.

- ◆ Read Psalm 81.12 and Exodus 7.13 What causes a person to turn to sin and away from God?

- ◆ How could Paul see his thorn in the flesh as from Satan and also something God could use for Good?

- ◆ Read Genesis 50.20 How does this statement of Joseph to his brothers help us understand how important attitude is for the believers life and faith?

- ◆ What was Paul's thorn in the flesh?

- ◆ Read Galatians 4.13 What do we learn about his thorn in the flesh here?

- ◆ Read Galatians 6.11 What do we learn about the way Paul has to write when he is not having someone else act as his scribe?

- ◆ Read Romans 16.22 Who wrote the letter to the Romans for Paul?

- ◆ Read 1 Cor. 16.21; 2 Thess. 3.17 What part of the letter to the church at Corinth and Thessalonica did Paul write?

- ◆ Read Galatians 4.15 What would the people have done for Paul if they could have?