

2 Corinthians 12 Paul's Vision

Boasting is necessary, though it is not beneficial; 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 In behalf of such a man I will boast; but in my own behalf I will not boast, except regarding 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.

A Thorn in the Flesh

7 Because of the extraordinary greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I pleaded with 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 delight in weaknesses, in insults, in distresses, in persecutions, in difficulties, in behalf of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

11 I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually I should have been commended by you, since I was in no respect inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody. 12 The distinguishing marks of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs, 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!

14 Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.

15 I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less? 16 But be that as it may, I did not burden you myself; nevertheless, devious person that I am, I took you in by deceit. 17 Certainly I have not taken advantage of you

through any of those whom I have sent to you, have I?

18 I urged Titus to go, and I sent the brother with him. Titus did not take any advantage of you, did he?

Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same steps?

19 All this time you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you. Actually, it is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ; and all for building you up, beloved.

20 For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish, and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there will be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, selfishness, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances;

21 I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and indecent behavior which they have practiced.

We will use five tools on our expedition that are built around five questions

- What questions were provoked within you?
- Did anything confuse you?
- Did anything move you emotionally?
- Did God instruct you to do something?
- Did you gain any insight into God's character

Paul's observations and insights

1. Why is boasting 'necessary'?
2. Whoever liked someone that boasts?
3. Why is boasting not profitable?
4. You say, 'fourteen years ago' - is this the first time you have spoken about this Paul?
5. Should we share everything we experience from God with others?
6. Have you had a vision encounter with the Lord?
7. What is it to receive 'a revelation word' from God?
8. What is Paul referring to when he says, 'being in the body' or, 'not being in the body'?
9. Why doesn't he even know?
10. Paul clearly experienced something quite wonderful and it seemed real enough to him!
11. He says, 'such a man'! It gives the impression that Paul is not speaking about himself - why would he do this?
12. What are the different 'spiritual heavens' that Paul is referring to?
13. Paul could say, 'he knows', because he was talking about himself!
14. Why does he reiterate the idea of being out of the body or being in the body?
15. What is this place called paradise?

16. To hear words beyond expression is amazing! What kind of words are these?
17. Why can't a man like Paul speak these words he heard?
18. Is Paul putting himself down a bit too much when he boasts about his weaknesses?
19. Paul is content that his life testimony, should be adequate to reveal his commitment to Jesus Christ.
20. Having had this incredible experience Paul believes God gave him a thorn 'in the flesh'.
21. Is the apostle Paul right in thinking these things about God?
22. Would God give permission to satan's messenger to torment Paul, in order to keep him a humble man?
23. If Paul believes God sent this affliction, why does he ask God to get rid of it three times?
24. Paul receives a revelation Word from God.
25. He says, 'God says my grace is sufficient for you so manage this thorn in the flesh!'
26. Many Christians have asked the question – 'what is Paul's thorn in the flesh?'
27. How can power be perfected in weakness?
28. Staying humble, enabled the apostle Paul, to operate in a greater heavenly power for a longer period of time.
29. Paul had learned that affliction from others empowered him to become even stronger.
30. Brokenness empowers Paul - what does it do for you?
31. The journey of Paul's life is how God dealt with Paul - that's not to say He deals with us in the same way.
32. Job also had his own personal encounters with devilish beings.
33. At the heart of the matter Paul knows this church should have actually honoured him, not disregarded him.
34. Paul knows his Apostolic role is the same as all the other apostles.
35. Paul was comparable with the other apostles in the performing of signs and wonders amongst the people.
36. Pauls defends the idea, that he saw this church, as less than the other churches, stating, 'he provided for himself'.
37. He says, 'I'm ready to come to you again a third time, I don't want what belongs to you!'
38. Is it right for children to be concerned about the responsibility of running a home?
39. How is it he says, 'my love for you, which is great, has evoked you to love me less'?
40. Is it sarcasm or perverseness of speech when he calls himself - 'crafty fellow that I am'? Why does he do this?
41. He knows and so do they, that Paul did not take advantage of them in any way?
42. Neither did any of Pauls helpers mistreat this church.
43. What is it to be of the same spirit as someone else?
44. What is it to walk in the same footsteps?

45. Paul knows God is listening to everything being said!
46. The purpose of a good leader is to build up the people he leads.
47. He has a concern that if he visits this church, he will be disappointed by the things he sees.
48. There seems to be a great list of flaws represented by a cup of evil in this church.
49. What is the importance of a sinner not repenting?