

The Kingdom, The Power and The Glory

A SURVEY OF
THE NEW TESTAMENT

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Study Number Twelve / Second Corinthians

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During Paul's second missionary journey, he established the church in Corinth, Greece. Later, while ministering in Ephesus, he wrote to the Corinthian church to correct some problems they were experiencing. The believers there urgently wanted Paul to return to them but he could not because he was engaged for several years in highly productive ministry in Ephesus (western Turkey). About that Ephesian ministry, Paul reported, **1 Cor. 16:9 For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.** So Paul sent Titus to Corinth to get a first-hand report. Later, Paul and Titus (along with Timothy) met in Philippi where Titus brought the great apostle a positive report (for the most part) on the Corinthian believers.

In Titus' report, Paul learned a couple of negatives as well: The Corinthians had failed to complete the offering Paul had requested for the suffering saints in Jerusalem. In addition, some unscrupulous false teachers had railed against Paul's authority and attempted to brand him as a mercenary fraud.

“Paul now explains the change in his plans and the reason for delaying his visit. He expresses confidence in the Corinthians Christians and his tender love for them. He dwells at length upon the sincere, devoted, glorious, accredited character of his ministry. He urges them to complete the contribution for the suffering saints in Jerusalem. He sternly rebukes his unscrupulous adversaries and exposes their intrigue and deceit. He shows the absurdity of their claims, vindicates completely his position as an apostle of Christ, and warns his opponents of the severe discipline he will administer when he comes again if they persist in their hostile and wicked attempt.”

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS / CHARLES E. ERDMAN / WESTMINSTER PRESS / PAGE 9

So while still in Philippi, Paul sent the Corinthians the letter (epistle) we now study. In this letter, Paul truly opens his heart and we see the apostle more clearly than in any of his other numerous writings.

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CHAPTER ONE

2 Cor. 1:1-2

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: [2] Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

- ▶ Achaia - generally means all of Greece
- ▶ Timothy - It could be said with accuracy that Timothy was Paul's most beloved friend. Timothy had become a believer and follower of Christ during Paul's second missionary journey at Lystra (in Turkey). He became Paul's assistant and aided in establishing the work in Corinth. Note in verse 1 that Paul calls Timothy "our brother."

1. Early in this epistle, Paul reveals to some extent the sufferings he has endured for Christ.

2 Cor. 1:6-10

So when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your benefit and salvation! For when God comforts us, it is so that we, in turn, can be an encouragement to you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer. [7] We are confident that as you share in suffering, you will also share God's comfort.

[8] I think you ought to know, dear brothers and sisters, about the trouble we went through in the province of Asia. We were crushed and completely overwhelmed, and we thought we would never live through it. [9] In fact, we expected to die. But as a result, we learned not to rely on ourselves, but on God who can raise the dead. [10] And he did deliver us from mortal danger. And we are confident that he will continue to deliver us.

A. Here we learn one of the reasons why God doesn't always deliver us in our sicknesses and troubles. Sometimes we suffer and God intends it for a good purpose.

Watchman Nee and Brother Yun (The Heavenly Man) are two cases in point. Both of these men suffered beyond anything you and I can ever know. But China is now seeing revival and spiritual harvest because of them and others like them.

Brother Yun, the Heavenly Man, is tentatively scheduled to open our November missions convention.

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CHAPTER TWO

1. In his first epistle, Paul spared no words in making needed corrections among the

1 Corinthian saints. He referred to his actions in 2 Cor. 2:4: **How painful it was to**
2 **write that letter! Heartbroken, I cried over it. I didn't want to hurt you, but I**
3 **wanted you to know how very much I love you.**

4
5 ▶ One of the toughest things about being a pastor, an under-shepherd of God's flock, is
6 that sometimes we have to deal with situations that require a firm hand. We are
7 commanded to do so in scripture: 2 Tim. 4:1-2 **And so I solemnly urge you before**
8 **God and before Christ Jesus—who will someday judge the living and the dead**
9 **when he appears to set up his Kingdom: [2] Preach the word of God. Be**
10 **persistent, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and**
11 **encourage your people with good teaching.**

12
13 ▶ A faithful parent will sometimes have to be firm with a child; and it is sometimes
14 required of pastors as well. But the correction must always be in love, not anger.

15
16 2. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul dealt with that congregation's acceptance of
17 a member who was living in sin with his step-mother. Apparently the church had taken
18 care of the situation: 2 Cor. 2:5-11

19 **I am not overstating it when I say that the man who caused all the trouble hurt**
20 **your entire church more than he hurt me. [6] He was punished enough when most of**
21 **you were united in your judgment against him. [7] Now it is time to forgive him and**
22 **comfort him. Otherwise he may become so discouraged that he won't be able to**
23 **recover. [8] Now show him that you still love him.**

24 **[9] I wrote to you as I did to find out how far you would go in obeying me. [10]**
25 **When you forgive this man, I forgive him, too. And when I forgive him (for**
26 **whatever is to be forgiven), I do so with Christ's authority for your benefit, [11] so**
27 **that Satan will not outsmart us. For we are very familiar with his evil schemes.**

28
29 A. Once a discipline situation in the church is dealt with, the church needs to “get on
30 with its business.”

31 32 CHAPTER THREE

33
34 1. Paul was the great apostle, yet it did not go to his head: 2 Cor. 3:5 **It is not that**
35 **we think we can do anything of lasting value by ourselves. Our only power and**
36 **success come from God.**

37
38 There are some today who perhaps think they are “big shots” for God. Only
39 eternity will reveal what “caliber” they really were.

1 2. Much of the rest of this chapter Paul devotes to comparing the Old Testament
2 (covenant or agreement) with the New Testament. 2 Cor. 3:6-11

3 **He is the one who has enabled us to represent his new covenant. This is a**
4 **covenant, not of written laws, but of the Spirit. The old way ends in death; in the**
5 **new way, the Holy Spirit gives life. [7] That old system of law etched in stone led to**
6 **death, yet it began with such glory that the people of Israel could not bear to look at**
7 **Moses' face. For his face shone with the glory of God, even though the brightness**
8 **was already fading away. [8] Shouldn't we expect far greater glory when the Holy**
9 **Spirit is giving life? [9] If the old covenant, which brings condemnation, was**
10 **glorious, how much more glorious is the new covenant, which makes us right with**
11 **God! [10] In fact, that first glory was not glorious at all compared with the**
12 **overwhelming glory of the new covenant. [11] So if the old covenant, which has been**
13 **set aside, was full of glory, then the new covenant, which remains forever, has far**
14 **greater glory.**

15
16 The “old covenant” etched in stone was The Ten Commandments. No human was
17 ever able to keep those ten laws every moment of his or her life; and not to keep it was
18 eternal death. But the new covenant - which is justification through the shed blood of
19 Jesus - brings life. It is Christ’s very life within us that makes us able to be victorious,
20 not our own power. 2 Cor. 3:18 **But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass**
21 **the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as**
22 **by the Spirit of the Lord.**

23 24 CHAPTER FOUR 25

26 1. Paul opens this chapter with a declaration of his gratitude for the ministry granted
27 him by the Lord: 2 Cor. 4:1 **Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have**
28 **received mercy, we faint not;**

29
30 Paul had come from an extremely legalistic religion, that of the Pharisees. Now he
31 is immersed in the grace of God. He wants the whole world to know the difference!
32

33

“All of the religions of the world say, ‘Do, do, do!’ The Gospel of Christ says, ‘Done!’”

34
35 2. Paul expresses the requirement of Christ’s ministers:

36
37 2 Cor. 4:2

38 **But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness,**
39 **nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth**
40 **commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.**

1 The Amplified Version puts it like this: **“We have renounced disgraceful ways–**
2 **secret thoughts, feelings, desires and underhandedness, methods and arts that men**
3 **hid through shame; we refuse to deal craftily or to adulterate or handle dishonestly**
4 **the Word of God; but we state the truth openly – clearly and candidly. And so we**
5 **commend ourselves in the sight and presence of God to every man’s conscience.”**

- 6
- 7 ▶ We as ministers are not to handle the Word “deceitfully.” In other words we are
- 8 not “hucksters.”
- 9 ▶ We are to live what we preach.

10

11 **WHY DO WE KEEP PUTTING “MISSIONS” AS THE PRIORITY OF THIS**
12 **MINISTRY**

13 2 Cor. 4:3-4

14 **But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: [4] In whom the god of this**
15 **world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious**
16 **gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.**

- 17
- 18 ▶ Churches and individual believers who do not put missions support in their giving
- 19 are depriving people from the only message to set them free from bondage and
- 20 give them eternal hope.

21

22 3. **I AM RICH!!!!!! 2 Cor. 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels,**
23 **that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.**

24

25 The treasure is the indwelling Lord Jesus Christ. He lives inside the believer and
26 we live from His life.

On this subject, I recommend to you wholeheartedly two books:

1. The Normal Christian Life by Watchman Nee / Christian Literature Crusade
2. The Saving Life of Christ by Major W. Ian Thomas / Zondervan

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28

29 **PAUL PAID A DEAR PRICE FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS TO GOD’S CALL**

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31 2 Cor. 4:8-18

32 **We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in**
33 **despair; [9] Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; [10] Always**
34 **bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus**
35 **might be made manifest in our body. [11] For we which live are always delivered**
36 **unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our**

1 mortal flesh. [12] So then death worketh in us, but life in you. [13] We having the
2 same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I
3 spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; [14] Knowing that he which raised up
4 the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. [15]
5 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the
6 thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. [16] For which cause we faint
7 not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by
8 day. [17] For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far
9 more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; [18] While we look not at the things
10 which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen
11 are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

- 12
- 13 ▶ Paul always believed that whether circumstances were good or bad, Christ was
14 working through him for effective ministry. For example, when he was imprisoned,
15 he wrote this to the church at Philippi: Philip. 1:12-13 **I want to report to you,**
16 **friends, that my imprisonment here has had the opposite of its intended effect.**
17 **Instead of being squelched, the Message has actually prospered. [13] All the**
18 **soldiers here, and everyone else too, found out that I'm in jail because of this**
19 **Messiah. That piqued their curiosity, and now they've learned all about him.**
 - 20
 - 21 ▶ Look at that 17th verse again: “For our light affliction, which is but for a
22 moment...” results in eternal gain. It is hard for you and me to think in light of
23 eternity; but we must, for that is where the real drama will be, not here!

24 CHAPTER FIVE

25 In chapter 5, Paul writes of his knowing his eternal future:

26 2 Cor. 5:1-8

27 **For instance, we know that when these bodies of ours are taken down like tents**
28 **and folded away, they will be replaced by resurrection bodies in heaven—God-**
29 **made, not handmade—and we'll never have to relocate our "tents" again. [2]**
30 **Sometimes we can hardly wait to move—and so we cry out in frustration. [3]**
31 **Compared to what's coming, living conditions around here seem like a stopover in**
32 **an unfurnished shack, and we're tired of it! We've been given a glimpse of the real**
33 **thing, our true home, our resurrection bodies! [4] [5] The Spirit of God whets our**
34 **appetite by giving us a taste of what's ahead. He puts a little of heaven in our hearts**
35 **so that we'll never settle for less.**

36 **[6] That's why we live with such good cheer. You won't see us drooping our heads**
37 **or dragging our feet! Cramped conditions here don't get us down. They only remind**
38

1 **us of the spacious living conditions ahead. [7] It's what we trust in but don't yet see**
2 **that keeps us going. [8] Do you suppose a few ruts in the road or rocks in the path**
3 **are going to stop us? When the time comes, we'll be plenty ready to exchange exile**
4 **for homecoming.**

5
6 In verse 10 Paul brings us back to his teaching in I Cor 3 on the Judgment Seat of Christ:

7
8 2 Cor. 5:10

9 **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may**
10 **receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be**
11 **good or bad.**

- 12
13 ▶ Remember all our works on this earth are classified by six classifications: gold,
14 silver, precious stones OR hay, wood, stubble.
15 ▶ Gold, silver, precious stones, those acts we have done for Christ's benefit, will be
16 "refined" by the fire
17 ▶ Hay, wood and stubble, those acts we have done for ourselves, will be consumed
18 by the fire and reduced to ashes. Note Paul's motivation for Christian service:

19
20 2 Cor. 5:14 **For the love of Christ constraineth us...**

21
22 That word "constraineth" is best translated MOTIVATED.

23
24 OH, THE MIRACLE OF THE NEW BIRTH!

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26 2 Cor. 5:17 **Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are**
27 **passed away; behold, all things are become new.**

28
29 Here is how Jesus described this miracle: John 5:24 **Verily, verily, I say unto**
30 **you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting**
31 **life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.**

32
33 **GOD IS NOT IN THE REPAIR BUSINESS; HE IS IN THE NEW CONSTRUCTION**
34 **BUSINESS!**

35
36 CHAPTER SIX

37
38 This is a marvelous chapter; but I am only going to stop at one place here.

39
40 2 Cor. 6:11-18

1 **Oh, dear Corinthian friends! We have spoken honestly with you. Our hearts are**
2 **open to you. [12] If there is a problem between us, it is not because of a lack of love**
3 **on our part, but because you have withheld your love from us. [13] I am talking now**
4 **as I would to my own children. Open your hearts to us! [14] Don't team up with**
5 **those who are unbelievers. How can goodness be a partner with wickedness? How**
6 **can light live with darkness? [15] What harmony can there be between Christ and**
7 **the Devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? [16] And what union**
8 **can there be between God's temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living**
9 **God. As God said:**

10 **"I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be**
11 **my people.**

12 **[17] Therefore, come out from them and separate yourselves from them, says the**
13 **Lord.**

14 **Don't touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you.**

15 **[18] And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the**
16 **Lord Almighty."**

- 17
- 18 ▶ This principle certainly involves marriage.
 - 19 ▶ If I were a businessman I would take this principle into serious consideration.
- 20

21 CHAPTER SEVEN

22 In this chapter Paul expresses joy in the report from Titus concerning positive changes
23 among the Corinthians, changes Paul indicated in I Corinthians just had to be made.
24 Paul rejoiced in knowing the congregation he had founded was making strong progress.

26 CHAPTER EIGHT AND NINE

27

28 These two chapters are Paul's teaching on giving. Paul had set out to raise funding for
29 the saints in Jerusalem who were undergoing intense persecution. Many had lost jobs or
30 had their homes and belongings confiscated. Some had lost family members to
31 martyrdom for the cause of Christ. Here Paul gives us probably the most complete
32 instructions about church giving which we'll find in the New Testament.

33

34 The Jerusalem church had not at first been all that keen about Paul's evangelizing
35 Gentiles. Paul knew that the Gentiles' generosity would serve as a good lesson to the
36 Jerusalem saints that we are all united in Christ, both Jew and Gentile, and that we bare
37 one another's burdens. In this study, Paul wants cooperation from the church in
38 Corinth in this expression of kindness and supply.

39

40 2 Cor. 8:1-6 **Now I want to tell you, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his**

41

1 kindness has done for the churches in Macedonia. [2] Though they have been going
2 through much trouble and hard times, their wonderful joy and deep poverty have
3 overflowed in rich generosity. [3] For I can testify that they gave not only what they
4 could afford but far more. And they did it of their own free will. [4] They begged us
5 again and again for the gracious privilege of sharing in the gift for the Christians in
6 Jerusalem. [5] Best of all, they went beyond our highest hopes, for their first action
7 was to dedicate themselves to the Lord and to us for whatever directions God might
8 give them.

9 [6] So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to
10 return to you and encourage you to complete your share in this ministry of giving.

11
12 1. Paul approached this subject of giving with joy and comfort. I have met many,
13 many pastors through the years who are most reluctant to receive offerings and encourage
14 the congregation to give liberally. Obviously I am not one of those preachers! I
15 believe that the pastor must give the people the OPPORTUNITY TO BE BLESSED.

16
17 2. Notice how Paul brags on the Macedonian churches (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea)
18 for their liberality. And now he tells the Corinthians he believes they will also
19 participate in the opportunity to give.

20
21 3. Paul declared that the Macedonians gave beyond their means because of their
22 voluntary and spontaneous love to spread the Gospel. PAUL PREACHED THAT
23 LIBERALITY WAS A GRACE, A TALENT FROM GOD. He indicated that “some
24 are possessed with this gift to a striking degree while others apparently are as notable for
25 their lack of this grace.”

26
27 4. Listen to Paul’s counsel: 2 Cor. 8:7 **Since you excel in so many ways—you**
28 **have so much faith, such gifted speakers, such knowledge, such enthusiasm, and**
29 **such love for us—now I want you to excel also in this gracious ministry of giving.**

30
31 Some believers have faith, fluent speech, extensive knowledge of the Word,
32 unquestioned zeal, and love for friends, but they appear to have no GENIUS FOR
33 GENEROSITY when it comes to tithing and missions.

34
35 2 Cor. 9:6-15 **Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a**
36 **small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. [7] You**
37 **must each make up your own mind as to how much you should give. Don't give**
38 **reluctantly or in response to pressure. For God loves the person who gives**
39 **cheerfully. [8] And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always**
40 **have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. [9] As the**
41 **Scriptures say,**

1 proudly declare that they belong to Christ. [8] I may seem to be boasting too much
2 about the authority given to us by the Lord. But this authority is to build you up,
3 not to tear you down. And I will not be put to shame by having my work among you
4 destroyed.

5 2. Verse 5 in the KJV is one of my favorites: 2 Cor. 10:5

6 **Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the**
7 **knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of**
8 **Christ;**

9
10 Proverbs 23:7 teaches us that “as a person thinks....so is he or she.” Your mind
11 controls the way you live. You cannot help or stop random thoughts coming to you;
12 but you CAN control letting them remain.

13
14 We once had a bat come into our house, flying from room to room. We could not help
15 the reality that we had a bat; but we COULD CONTROL allowing it to stay in the house!
16 We finally got him out. That is the way through Christ we discipline our thinking.

17 3. Paul wrote that the only thing he could ever boast of was Christ: 2 Cor. 10:17-18

18 **But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. [18] For not he that commendeth**
19 **himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.**

20 CHAPTER ELEVEN

21
22 1. In this poignant chapter, Paul opens his heart to let us see him as a human being.
23 Apparently there were some in Corinth who disparaged Paul, perhaps because of his way
24 of speaking or his appearance. And those critics also questioned his apostleship. With
25 a brief pardon me in verse 1, (2 Cor. 11:1 - **Will you put up with a little foolish aside**
26 **from me? Please, just for a moment.**) Paul then defends himself and his calling and his
27 ministry.

28
29 2 Cor. 11:5-9

30 **But if you put up with these big-shot "apostles," why can't you put up with simple**
31 **me? I'm as good as they are. [6] It's true that I don't have their voice, haven't**
32 **mastered that smooth eloquence that impresses you so much. But when I do open**
33 **my mouth, I at least know what I'm talking about. We haven't kept anything back.**
34 **We let you in on everything.**

35 [7] I wonder, did I make a bad mistake in proclaiming God's Message to you
36 without asking for something in return, serving you free of charge so that you
37 wouldn't be inconvenienced by me? [8] It turns out that the other churches paid my
38 way so that you could have a free ride. [9] Not once during the time I lived among
39

1 **you did anyone have to lift a finger to help me out. My needs were always supplied**
2 **by the Christians from Macedonia province. I was careful never to be a burden to**
3 **you, and I never will be, you can count on it.**

4
5 2. Then Paul recounts some of his trials in getting the Gospel to the Corinthians and
6 others:

7 2 Cor. 11:22-33

8 **Do they brag of being Hebrews, Israelites, the pure race of Abraham? I'm their**
9 **match. [23] Are they servants of Christ? I can go them one better. (I can't believe**
10 **I'm saying these things. It's crazy to talk this way! But I started, and I'm going to**
11 **finish.)**

12 **I've worked much harder, been jailed more often, beaten up more times than I can**
13 **count, and at death's door time after time. [24] I've been flogged five times with the**
14 **Jews' thirty-nine lashes, [25] beaten by Roman rods three times, pummeled with**
15 **rocks once. I've been shipwrecked three times, and immersed in the open sea for a**
16 **night and a day. [26] In hard traveling year in and year out, I've had to ford rivers,**
17 **fend off robbers, struggle with friends, struggle with foes. I've been at risk in the**
18 **city, at risk in the country, endangered by desert sun and sea storm, and betrayed**
19 **by those I thought were my brothers. [27] I've known drudgery and hard labor,**
20 **many a long and lonely night without sleep, many a missed meal, blasted by the**
21 **cold, naked to the weather.**

22 **[28] And that's not the half of it, when you throw in the daily pressures and**
23 **anxieties of all the churches. [29] When someone gets to the end of his rope, I feel**
24 **the desperation in my bones. When someone is duped into sin, an angry fire burns**
25 **in my gut.**

26 **[30] If I have to "brag" about myself, I'll brag about the humiliations that make me**
27 **like Jesus. [31] The eternal and blessed God and Father of our Master Jesus knows**
28 **I'm not lying. [32] Remember the time I was in Damascus and the governor of King**
29 **Aretas posted guards at the city gates to arrest me? [33] I crawled through a**
30 **window in the wall, was let down in a basket, and had to run for my life.**

Years ago, in Damascus, I stood at that wall where Paul was lowered in a basket. Not many men or women could have - or would have - endured what Paul did to evangelize the known-world.
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31
32 **CHAPTER TWELVE**

33 1. This is one of the most remarkable stories in the Bible. We have studied the
34 Apostle John's sojourn on the Isle of Patmos where God gave him the revelation of the
35 end time. John was specifically commanded by the Lord to write the vision. We have
36 it, of course, in the book of Revelation. But apparently Paul saw the same revelation or

1 at least something similar, but God apparently would not allow him to say much about it
2 except this:

3 2 Cor. 12:1-6

4 **This boasting is all so foolish, but let me go on. Let me tell about the visions and**
5 **revelations I received from the Lord. [2] I was caught up into the third heaven**
6 **fourteen years ago. [3] Whether my body was there or just my spirit, I don't know;**
7 **only God knows. [4] But I do know that I was caught up into paradise and heard**
8 **things so astounding that they cannot be told. [5] That experience is something**
9 **worth boasting about, but I am not going to do it. I am going to boast only about my**
10 **weaknesses. [6] I have plenty to boast about and would be no fool in doing it,**
11 **because I would be telling the truth. But I won't do it. I don't want anyone to think**
12 **more highly of me than what they can actually see in my life and my message,**

13
14 ▶ “The third heaven....” The atmosphere we breathe is the first heaven. The place
15 of the solar system, the stars, planets, etc., at the second heaven. The third
16 heaven, beyond it all, is the abode of God. This is where Paul was taken. What
17 he saw must have been incredible for, when faced with death, Paul observed,
18 **“None of these things are worthy of comparison of the things that await me.”**
19

20 2. Now we read about Paul’s “thorn in the flesh:”

21 2 Cor. 12:7-10

22 **even though I have received wonderful revelations from God. But to keep me from**
23 **getting puffed up, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to**
24 **torment me and keep me from getting proud.**
25 **[8] Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. [9] Each time he said,**
26 **"My gracious favor is all you need. My power works best in your weakness." So**
27 **now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may work**
28 **through me. [10] Since I know it is all for Christ's good, I am quite content with my**
29 **weaknesses and with insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am**
30 **weak, then I am strong.**

31
32 What was that “thorn in the flesh?” Some say his eyes. Others his wife. We don’t know.
33 We only know that despite Paul’s prayers, God did not remove the “thorn,” and his
34 infirmity helped keep him close to God.

35 3. In the remainder of the chapter Paul says he will soon come to them in Corinth.
36

37 CHAPTER THIRTEEN

38
39 1. Note Paul’s admonition to the Corinthian believers: 2 Cor. 13:5

40 **Test yourselves to make sure you are solid in the faith. Don't drift along taking**
41

1 **everything for granted. Give yourselves regular checkups. You need firsthand**
2 **evidence, not mere hearsay, that Jesus Christ is in you. Test it out. If you fail the**
3 **test, do something about it.**

4

5 Paul did not say, “Test other people.” He said, “Test yourselves!”

6

7 2. Paul gives a farewell and close.

8

9

10

11 *Next Wednesday night, April 1, we will study both Galatians and Ephesians.*

12

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14