

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes Book of 2 Corinthians
5-16-12

2 CORINTHIANS 12:2, 3

Paul continued his “boasting” by telling about visions and revelations he had received from the Lord. Paul explained that he didn’t know if he was taken up in his body or in his spirit, but he had been in paradise (“the third heaven”). This incident cannot be positively identified with a recorded event in Paul’s career, although some think this may have been when he was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19, 20). Paul told about this incident to show that he had been uniquely touched by God.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:7, 8

We don’t know what Paul’s thorn in the flesh was because he doesn’t tell us. Some have suggested that it was malaria, epilepsy, or a disease of the eyes (see Galatians 4:13-15). Whatever the case, it was a chronic and debilitating problem, which at times kept him from working. This thorn was a hindrance to his ministry, and he prayed for its removal; but God refused. Paul was a very self-sufficient person, so this thorn must have been difficult for him. It kept Paul humble, reminded him of his need for constant contact with God, and benefited those around him as they saw God at work in his life.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9

Although God did not remove Paul’s affliction, he promised to demonstrate his power in Paul. The fact that God’s power is displayed in our weaknesses should give us courage and hope. As we recognize our limitations, we will depend more on God for our effectiveness rather than on our own energy, effort, or talent. Our limitations not only help develop Christian character but also deepen our worship, because in admitting them, we affirm God’s strength.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:10

When we are strong in abilities or resources, we are tempted to do God’s work on our own, and that can lead to pride. When we are weak, allowing God to fill us with *his* power, then we are stronger than we could ever be on our own. God does not intend for us to be weak, passive, or ineffective—life provides enough hindrances and setbacks without us creating them. When those obstacles come, we must depend on God. Only his power will make us effective for him and will help us do work that has lasting value.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:11-15

Paul was not merely revealing his feelings; he was defending his authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul was hurt that the church in Corinth doubted and questioned him, so he defended himself for the cause of the Good News, not to satisfy his ego. When you are “put on trial,” do you think only about saving your reputation or are you more concerned about what people will think about Christ?

2 CORINTHIANS 12:13

Paul explained that the only thing he did in the other churches that he didn't do in Corinth was to become a burden—to ask the believers to feed and house him. When he said, “Forgive me for this wrong,” he was clearly being sarcastic. He actually did more for the Corinthians than for any other church, but still they misunderstood him.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:14

Paul had founded the church in Corinth on his first visit there (Acts 18:1). He subsequently made a second visit (2:1). He was planning what would be his third visit (see also 13:1). Paul explained that, as before, he didn't want to be paid, fed, or housed; he only wanted the believers to be nourished with the spiritual food he would feed them.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:16-19

Although Paul asked nothing of the Corinthian believers, some doubters were still saying that Paul must have been sneaky and made money from them somehow. But Paul again explained that everything he did for the believers was for their edification, not to enrich himself.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:20, 21

After reading this catalog of sins, it is hard to believe that these are the people that Paul said possessed great gifts and excelled as leaders (8:7). Paul feared that the practices of wicked Corinth had invaded the congregation. He wrote sternly, hoping that they would straighten out their lives before he arrived. We must live differently from unbelievers, not letting secular society dictate how we are to treat others. Don't let culture influence your behavior.