

As chapter 12 begins Paul continues onward with his boasting, uncomfortably, in an effort to defend his ministry. While he first began his strategy with his heritage as a Jew, then onto troubles and persecution, here he boasts in visions and the supernatural, but he does so in a manner different than that seen by the Super Apostles.

2 Corinthians

12:1-10

When I Am

Weak then

I Am Strong

I. COMPARING OUR STORIES

MY EXPERIENCE...

YOUR EXPERIENCE...

Life is war. Our Christian life is too. While it is not a physical battle that we face, it is one of the spiritual world. And it's in war that we make decisions of how to advance. We need to know *whom* we serve in this battle and we also need wisdom in the strategies we employ to see victory in the power of His Spirit. The challenge we often face is when God employs His strategies on our lives in ways we do not expect, or may not be pleasant to us.

II. CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

HOW have you experienced God's work in your life recently?

WHEN you consider experiencing God's plan, **HOW** often does it involve pain or suffering?

WHY do you think God uses difficult circumstances to accomplish His purposes in our lives?

WHERE have you seen the Lord use weakness, suffering, or pain to bring about His plans in your life?

2 Corinthians

12:1-10

When I Am

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Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

OBSERVATION

What does Paul go on to boast of in vs. 1?

What can you observe about this man's experience in vs. 2-4?

According to vs. 6, why does Paul refrain from boasting about this man's experience?

In vs. 7 Paul reveals the identity of this man. Who is he, and what was given to him? For what purpose?

How did Paul respond to this "thorn" in vs. 8?

What was the Lord's response to Paul's request, according to vs. 9?

In vs. 10, how does Paul say he views his weakness and for why?

INTERPRETATION

Why does Paul continue to boast, even though he feels it foolish? See 11:30 for insight.

According to vs. 2-4, does Paul know what exactly happened to him? Does God? How does this experience reveal Paul's trust in God for things unknown?

What is the "third heaven" mentioned here? How else is it referred in vs. 3? See Luke 23:42-43 for insight.

According to vs. 5-6, why does Paul think it's necessary to refrain from boasting about this vision? Why might others think of him in the way he mentions in vs. 6?

Do you think this "thorn" is physical or spiritual? Why?

Who is responsible for this "thorn", and what purpose does it serve? How else has God used this same kind of strategy to accomplish his Great Commission in Scripture? See Genesis 3:15, Luke 22:3-6.

What can you learn from Paul's prayer about this "thorn" in vs. 8 and God's response to his prayers in vs. 9?

What does it mean to boast "gladly" of our weaknesses? What does it mean to be "content" with weakness?

APPLICATION

Where do you find yourself most weak? How would you describe your "gladness" and "contentment" when it comes to areas of your weakness? What needs to change, in your perspective, in order to find your strength in weakness?