



Lesson 32:

Paul's Vision and Thorn

2 Corinthians 12:1-21

Paul's upward vision

▲My additional harping

▼The telling about my vision

2 Corinthians 12:1 I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord.

▼The timing of my vision

2 Corinthians 12:2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven.

- ▶ Paul writes 2 Corinthians around 56 AD from Macedonia.
- ▶ "Fourteen years ago" places his vision around 42 AD.
- ▶ Paul ministered (silently) in Cilicia and Syria from 35-46 AD.

▲My ascent to heaven

▼I was caught up to heaven

2 Corinthians 12:2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. 3 And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— 4 was caught up to paradise.

▼I was captivated by what I heard

2 Corinthians 12:4 He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.

▲My awkward humility

▼I'm boasting bashfully

2 Corinthians 12:5 I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. 6 Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth.

▼I'm bothered by boasting

2 Corinthians 12:6 But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say.

Paul's unholy visitor

▲I recognize the purpose of this thorn

2 Corinthians 12:7 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh,

▲I reeled in the pain produced by this thorn

2 Corinthians 12:7 there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

▲I repeatedly prayed about this thorn

▼I was pleading for surgical extraction

2 Corinthians 12:8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

▼I was provided with strengthening encouragement

2 Corinthians 12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

▼I will proceed proudly with supernatural empowerment

2 Corinthians 12:9 Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul's unending voice of validation

▲I'm not an inferior apostle

2 Corinthians 12:11 I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior to the "super-apostles," even though I am nothing.

▲I'm not an ineffective apostle

2 Corinthians 12:12 The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance.

▲I'm not an imposing or injurious apostle

2 Corinthians 12:13 How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!

Paul's upcoming visit

▲I'm coming to Corinth

2 Corinthians 12:14 Now I am ready to visit you for the third time,

▲I'm coming without compensation

2 Corinthians 12:14 Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. 15 So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well.

▲I've come under criticism as "crafty" and crooked

2 Corinthians 12:15 If I love you more, will you love me less? 16 Be that as it may, I have not been a burden to you. Yet, crafty fellow that I am, I caught you by trickery! 17 Did I exploit you through any of the men I sent you? 18 I urged Titus to go to you and I sent our brother with him. Titus did not exploit you, did he? Did we not act in the same spirit and follow the same course?

▲I'm coming as a constructive Christian clergyman

2 Corinthians 12:19 Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ; and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening.

▲I'm coming with considerable consternation

▼I'm afraid I will find severe strife among you

2 Corinthians 12:20 For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder.

▼I'm afraid I will find sexual sin among you

2 Corinthians 12:21 I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.

2 Corinthians 12:1-21

12:1 I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. 2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. 3 And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— 4 was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. 5 I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. 6 Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say.

12:7 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

12:11 I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior to the "super-apostles," even though I am nothing. 12 The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance. 13 How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!

12:14 Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. 15 So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well. If I love you more, will you love me less? 16 Be that as it may, I have not been a burden to you. Yet, crafty fellow that I am, I caught you by trickery! 17 Did I exploit you through any of the men I sent you? 18 I urged Titus to go to you and I sent our brother with him. Titus did not exploit you, did he? Did we not act in the same spirit and follow the same course?

12:19 Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ; and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening. 20 For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder. 21 I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.

"Now I am ready to visit you for the third time..."

2 Corinthians 12:14

Paul and the Corinthians

► First visit	50-52 AD	the founding visit	Acts 18:1-18
► First letter	52-55 AD	the previous letter*	1 Corinthians 5:9-11 (written from Ephesus, 1 Corinthians 16:8)
► Second letter	52-55 AD	1 Corinthians*	1 Corinthians 1:1 (written from Ephesus)
► Second visit	52-55 AD	the painful visit	2 Corinthians 2:1
► Third letter	52-55 AD	the severe letter*	2 Corinthians 7:8 (written from Ephesus)
► Fourth letter	55-56 AD	2 Corinthians**	2 Corinthians 1:1 (written from Macedonia, 2 Corinthians 1:16; 2:13; 7:5)
► Third visit	57 AD	the last visit	2 Corinthians 12:14; 2 Corinthians 13:1; Acts 20:2-3

