

None of us goes through this life looking for pressures, trials, disappointment, heartaches, sorrow of failures or rejection. They manage to find us all on their own. But how we handle them is our choice. The enemy knows many of our weaknesses and seems to know the absolute perfect time to draw us to our knees. This can work to his demise if we are believers; for on our knees is exactly where we can find our "help in time of need" (Heb. 4:6). I read one time that **"Whatever brings you to your knees in weakness carries the greatest potential for your personal success and spiritual victory."**

Paul could have listed many accomplishments but he chose to tell those who would read this letter what he had found to be the key to experiencing a victorious life.

2 Cor. 12:9

*"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."*

1. **Are you growing weary from trying?**
2. **Would you say you are in a valley experience of life?**
3. **Do you fear your weakness is going to get the better of you?**
4. **Are you, like Paul, dealing with a thorn in the flesh?**

When we accept our weakness as an area we cannot control on our own, that is the time we can release the trial and allow our God to go to work. I saw a bumper sticker one time that said "Let go and let God" I did not even recognize the magnitude of those five little words that day. To live the Christian life is to allow Jesus to live His life through us. He has given us the Holy Spirit to comfort, counsel and guide us. Adversity is a bridge to a deeper relationship with God.

As you begin to study chapter 12 today please pray and ask God to help you see and hear all he is saying to you. Then choose this week to put it into practice. Our God is loving, willing and able to do far more than we could ever imagine as we walk in obedience to his word.

In this chapter Paul has no desire to brag or boast about this event that happened 14 years earlier. He had not mentioned it to them when he was with them before but now these false apostles have come in, lied and were deceiving his beloved Corinthian brothers and sisters. He would not stand by and allow this to happen without trying his best to shed the light of truth on their dark deeds.

Read the chapter at least twice, it might be beneficial to go online to [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) choose the version of the Bible you would like to have it read aloud from, I prefer English Standard Version. Enter 2 Corinthians, chapter 12, then click play. It is beneficial to read along while you are listening.

Pray and ask God to open your eyes and heart to all he has for you as you spend time in His word. May God richly bless you is my prayer.

Let's begin by looking at verses 1-6. Obviously the false apostles were making some amazing claims.

1. **What does Paul say he has experienced? How did it differ from the claims of the false apostles? Vs. 1 " \_\_\_\_\_"**

Paul's reluctance to boast caused him to refer to himself in the third person. We know it was Paul because it would have done him no good to relate a story of someone else.

Notice the claim in verse 2, he was “\_\_\_\_\_ Christ.”  
**When did this event happen?**

Paul uses the phrase “caught up” which in the Greek is the word *Harpazo* which means to seize, carry off by force to snatch out or away. This is the same word used to describe what will happen to believers when Christ returns for us in 1 Thessalonians 4:17

*Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and remain with him forever.*

In verses 2-4, Paul is not describing two separate events; he simply refers to where he was carried to as the third heaven or paradise.

In Luke 23:43 Jesus speaking to the thief dying beside him “*Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.*”

The 1<sup>st</sup> heaven is the earth’s atmosphere, the 2<sup>nd</sup> is the atmosphere where the stars and planets are hung, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> is the dwelling place of God.

- 2. What does Paul say happened while he was there? Vs. 4**
- 3. Paul admits this was an amazing experience, but what does he say happened because of this experience? Vs. 7**
- 4. How had he tried to handle this new trial? Vs. 8**
- 5. What had he learned because of this trial? Vs. 9**
- 6. Think back to the last really difficult situation you found yourself in, what did you learn about the care and love of God by going through it?**
- 7. What does Paul say he has learned that is of great gain to him? Read also 1 Tim.6:6.**
- 8. Are you feeling misunderstood?**
- 9. Are you feeling weak?**
- 10. Have you been insulted for your stand for Christ?**
- 11. Are you going through some persecution or other calamity or trial? Stand strong in the truth that you know, as Paul did.**
- 12. What is that truth that allowed Paul and us to stand strong?**

These notes are taken from Matthew Henry Commentary.

We do not by nature consider suffering a privilege. Yet when we suffer, if we faithfully represent Christ, our message and example affects us and others for good.

Acts 5:41

*“Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.”* (this is referring to Jesus’ name)

13. What are some ways that our suffering could be used for God's glory?
14. What was the proof of true apostleship Paul reminds them of in verse 12 and in Rom. 15:18-19?
15. Underline the threefold description of the resources used by the true apostles in order to bring the Gentiles to Christ, as listed below, in Romans 15:18-19.

*For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience--by word and deed, 19 by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God--so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ;*

16. What does Paul say to reassure their hearts? Vs 15
17. By reading verse 16 what do you suppose the false apostles had also accused Paul of?
18. Paul defends the integrity of the men he had sent to minister to them. Vss. 17-18 How does he say these men handled themselves while with the Corinthians?
19. Make a list of the things Paul mentions in verse 20 that he fears he may still find when he returns to see them. Are any of these visible in our churches today? What does Paul want them to do before he arrives?
20. Read the three verses below and relate them to all we have seen in this chapter today. What are believers in Christ called to do?

**Ephesians 4:1**

*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,*

**Colossians 1:10**

*so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*

**1 Thessalonians 2:12**

*we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.*

21. What practical steps will you take today in order to walk in this manner?
22. After studying this chapter how has your perspective changed concerning suffering? In what specific way has it changed?
23. How could allowing Christ to be your strength in a time of weakness serve as an example to those you come in contact with?

Let's purpose to follow in obedience our Lord today.