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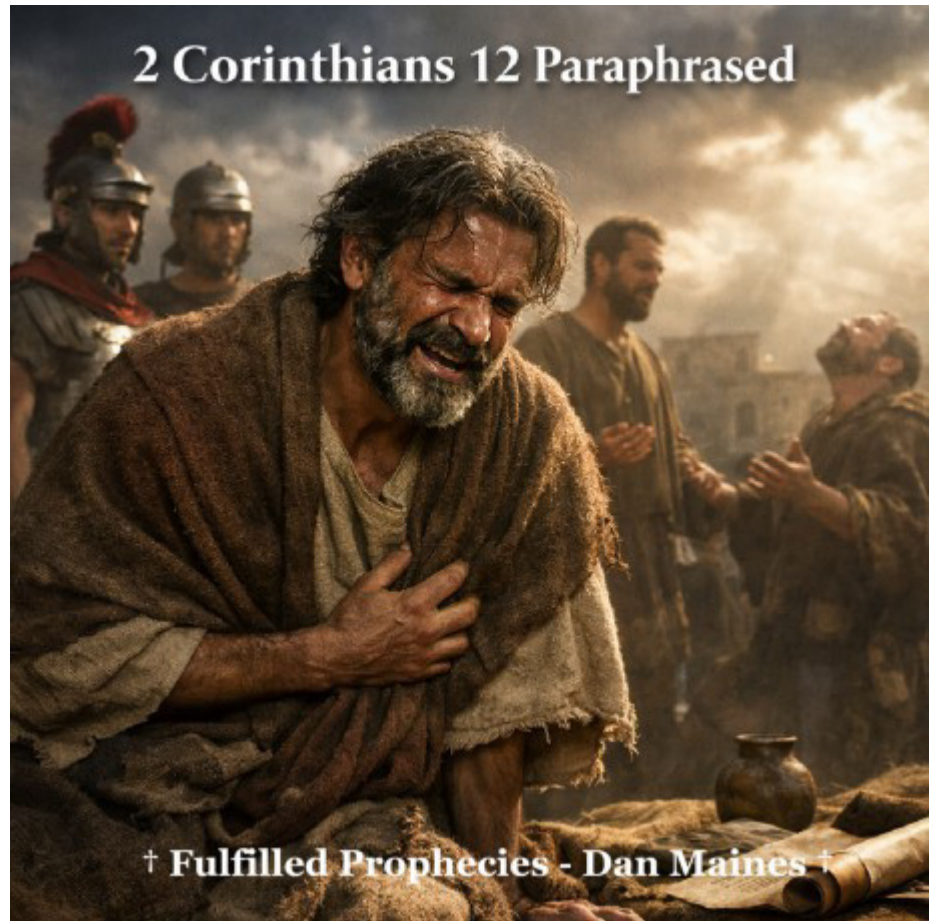
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2 Corinthians 12 Paraphrased



By Dan Maines

2 Corinthians 12 Paraphrased

Introduction

† Paul continues defending his apostleship, but he does it in a way completely opposite from worldly boasting.

† Instead of bragging about power or status, he points to suffering, weakness, and God's grace working through him.

† This chapter shows that God's strength is revealed through human weakness, a theme repeated throughout Paul's ministry (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).

2 Corinthians 12:1

I must go on boasting, though it accomplishes nothing, but I'll speak about visions and revelations the Lord gave.

† Paul reluctantly continues his defense because false teachers were boasting about spiritual experiences.

† His purpose isn't self-glory but to show that God truly revealed things to him as an apostle (Acts 9:15-16).

† The early church understood Paul as a chosen messenger entrusted with revelation.

2 Corinthians 12:2

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it happened in the body or outside the body I don't know, God knows.

† Paul speaks about himself in the third person to avoid sounding prideful.

† The third heaven was understood in Jewish thought as the dwelling place of God (Genesis 28:17).

† This experience shows the depth of revelation Paul received for the church.

2 Corinthians 12:3

And I know that this man was caught up into paradise. Whether in the body or apart from the body I don't know, God knows.

† Paradise was a term used for the place of God's presence and blessing (Luke 23:43).

† Paul's emphasis isn't on the experience itself but on God's authority over it.

† Early Christians often described paradise as the place where God's presence was revealed.

2 Corinthians 12:4

He heard things that cannot be spoken, words that a person isn't allowed to repeat.

† Some revelations were too sacred to repeat publicly.

† This shows Paul's restraint and humility compared to false teachers who exaggerated spiritual experiences.

† God sometimes reveals truths that remain beyond human explanation (Deuteronomy 29:29).

2 Corinthians 12:5

I'll boast about such a man, but I won't boast about myself except in my weaknesses.

† Paul shifts the focus away from supernatural experiences and toward weakness.

† This reverses worldly ideas of strength and success.

† The gospel itself centers on the weakness of the cross becoming the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18).

2 Corinthians 12:6

Even if I did want to boast, I wouldn't be foolish because I'd be speaking the truth, but I hold back so no one will think more of me than what they see or hear from me.

† Paul's concern is that believers judge him by his life and message, not by extraordinary stories.

† True ministry is measured by faithfulness, not spectacle (Galatians 1:10).

† This reveals Paul's humility despite his authority as an apostle.

2 Corinthians 12:7

Because of the greatness of these revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to torment me so I wouldn't become arrogant.

† The thorn kept Paul humble despite extraordinary revelation.

† God allowed the affliction to prevent pride and to strengthen Paul's dependence on Him.

† Suffering often plays a role in shaping faithful servants of God (Romans 5:3-5).

2 Corinthians 12:8

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to remove it from me.

† Paul earnestly asked God for relief from this suffering.

† His repeated prayer shows that faithful believers still struggle

with hardship.

† Even apostles experienced unanswered requests when God's greater purpose was at work.

2 Corinthians 12:9

But He said to me, My grace is enough for you, because My power is made perfect in weakness. So I'll gladly boast about my weaknesses so Christ's power may rest on me.

† God's grace becomes most visible when human strength fails.

† The weakness Paul endured became a stage for God's power.

† This principle explains much of the suffering endured by early Christians.

2 Corinthians 12:10

Therefore I'm content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties for Christ's sake, because when I'm weak then I'm strong.

† Paul learned that suffering for Christ isn't defeat but participation in God's work.

† Weakness becomes the place where divine strength appears.

† This mindset transformed how the early church viewed persecution.

2 Corinthians 12:11

I've become foolish in boasting. You forced me into it. I should have been commended by you, because I'm not inferior to those so called super apostles even though I'm nothing.

† Paul refers sarcastically to false teachers who claimed greater authority.

† The Corinthians should have defended the apostle who founded their church.

† Paul reminds them that genuine authority comes from God's calling, not personal promotion.

2 Corinthians 12:12

The true signs of an apostle were performed among you with

great perseverance, signs, wonders, and miracles.

† Apostolic authority was confirmed by miracles and endurance.

† These signs validated Paul's message and ministry.

† The early church recognized such works as evidence of divine authority.

2 Corinthians 12:13

How were you treated worse than the other churches, except that I didn't burden you financially? Forgive me for this wrong.

† Paul ironically apologizes for not taking money from them.

† His refusal to burden them financially was meant to protect the gospel's credibility.

† False teachers often exploited believers financially.

2 Corinthians 12:14

Now I'm ready to visit you for the third time, and I won't be a burden to you because I'm not seeking what belongs to you but you yourselves. Children shouldn't store up for their parents, parents should store up for their children.

† Paul's concern is the spiritual well being of the believers, not financial gain.

† His pastoral care reflects the heart of a spiritual father.

† The relationship between Paul and the church was deeply personal.

2 Corinthians 12:15

I'll gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more, will I be loved less?

† Paul's devotion to the church is sacrificial.

† Ministry often involves loving people who don't always return that love.

† This reflects Christ's own sacrificial love for His people (John 15:13).

2 Corinthians 12:16

But even if I wasn't a burden to you, some say I was crafty and took advantage of you by deception.

- † False accusations were being spread about Paul.
- † Opponents tried to discredit him to gain influence.
- † This tactic has appeared throughout church history.

2 Corinthians 12:17

Did I exploit you through anyone I sent to you?

- † Paul challenges the accusations directly.
- † His associates also served with integrity.
- † The integrity of his ministry team confirmed his sincerity.

2 Corinthians 12:18

I urged Titus to visit you and sent another brother with him. Did Titus exploit you? Didn't we walk in the same spirit and follow the same steps?

- † Titus served the church faithfully without taking advantage of anyone.
- † Paul's coworkers followed the same standards of honesty.
- † The unity of their conduct demonstrated genuine ministry.

2 Corinthians 12:19

Have you been thinking all along that we've been defending ourselves to you? We're speaking in Christ before God, and everything we do is for your strengthening.

- † Paul's goal wasn't self defense but building up the church.
- † His words were spoken with accountability before God.
- † True spiritual leadership always seeks the good of the believers.

2 Corinthians 12:20

I'm afraid that when I come I may not find you as I wish, and you may not find me as you wish. I fear there may be strife, jealousy, anger, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorder.

- † Paul was concerned about ongoing division within the church.
- † These sins destroy unity and weaken the body of Christ.
- † Church discipline sometimes became necessary to restore

order.

2 Corinthians 12:21

I'm afraid that when I come again my God may humble me before you and I'll mourn for many who previously sinned and haven't repented of impurity, sexual immorality, and reckless behavior they practiced.

† Paul's sorrow would come from seeing believers refuse to repent.

† Persistent sin harms the entire church community.

† Repentance was necessary for restoration and spiritual health.

Historical References

† Irenaeus explained that Paul's suffering proved the authenticity of his apostleship rather than diminishing it.

† Clement of Alexandria wrote that Paul's humility demonstrated the character required of Christian leaders.

† Eusebius recorded that early Christians saw Paul's endurance in weakness as evidence of divine strength at work.

How It Applies To Us Today

† God's strength still works through human weakness, not through human pride.

† Believers shouldn't measure faithfulness by worldly success or recognition.

† Suffering and hardship often shape deeper faith and dependence on God.

† True leadership in the church is marked by humility, sacrifice, and care for others.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Why did Paul talk about visions and revelations?

A: To show that God truly revealed things to him as an apostle (Acts 9:15-16).

Q: What was the thorn in the flesh?

A: Scripture doesn't identify it specifically, but it served to keep Paul humble and dependent on God's grace (Galatians 4:13-15).

Q: Why didn't God remove Paul's suffering?

A: Because God's power is displayed through weakness (1 Corinthians 1:27).

Q: What does it mean that grace is sufficient?

A: God's sustaining favor provides strength even when circumstances remain difficult (Hebrews 4:16).

Q: Why did Paul refuse financial support from Corinth?

A: To prevent accusations that he was preaching for profit (1 Corinthians 9:12).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† 2 Corinthians 12

† Irenaeus, Against Heresies

† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History

† Clement of Alexandria, Stromata

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