

Summary of 2 Corinthians 12-13

In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul reluctantly shares a heavenly vision to defend his apostleship, but quickly shifts the focus away from spiritual experiences to weakness. He describes a “thorn in the flesh” given to keep him humble, which he pleaded with the Lord three times to remove. Instead of removal, he received a promise: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Paul embraces this paradox—that God’s strength is most clearly displayed through human frailty. Rather than making life easier, God promises sustaining grace and presence, leading Paul to boast not in power, but in weakness so that Christ’s power may rest on him.

In 2 Corinthians 13, Paul delivers final warnings and prepares for his third visit, urging the church to deal seriously with ongoing sin. He emphasizes accountability and reminds them that Christ’s power operates even through apparent weakness—a theme repeated throughout the letter. The word “weak” appears multiple times, highlighting the contrast between human frailty and divine strength. In verse 5, Paul gives a piercing command: “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves.” The chapter closes with a call to restoration, unity, maturity, and peace, underscoring that authentic faith must be evident in transformed lives.

Summary of Galatians 1-2

In Galatians 1, Paul confronts the churches for quickly turning to “a different gospel,” insisting that there is no other true gospel than the one centered on Christ. He declares that anyone—man or angel—who preaches a contrary message is under God’s curse. Paul defends the divine origin of his apostleship, explaining that his gospel did not come from human authority but through revelation from Jesus Christ. By recounting his dramatic conversion and early ministry, he establishes that the message he preaches is from God alone, not shaped or approved by human leaders.

In Galatians 2, Paul recounts how the apostles in Jerusalem affirmed his gospel to the Gentiles, recognizing that he had been entrusted with the same gospel, just as Peter had been to the Jews. However, Paul later confronts Peter publicly in Antioch when Peter withdrew from eating with Gentile believers out of fear of Jewish critics, creating division in the body of Christ. Paul rebukes this hypocrisy because it compromised the truth of the gospel—that Jews and Gentiles are justified by faith in Christ, not by works of the law. The chapter culminates in the powerful declaration that a person is justified by faith in Jesus Christ, and that believers now live by faith in the Son of God who loved them and gave Himself for them.

Reflection Questions

How does Paul's "thorn in the flesh" in 2 Corinthians 12 reshape our understanding of suffering and unanswered prayer (that is, prayer answered apart from our will...)? What might it look like to truly believe that God's grace is sufficient?

Paul boasts in weakness so that Christ's power may rest on him. What kinds of weaknesses are hardest for you to embrace, and why does God often choose weakness as the stage for His strength?

In 2 Corinthians 13:5, Paul commands believers to "examine yourselves." What does healthy self-examination look like, and how can it be done without falling into either pride or unhealthy doubt?

In Galatians 1, Paul says there is no other gospel. What are some modern distortions of the gospel that subtly add to or subtract from justification by faith alone?

In Galatians 2, Peter's withdrawal from Gentile believers created division. What does this incident teach us about the power of our actions to either protect or undermine gospel unity?