



For the week of August 14



### **Monday, August 15 — 2 Corinthians 12**

**Chapter Summary:** Paul speaks of himself in the third person to detail a vision he had before telling about his thorn in the flesh. It was given to him as a reminder of God's all sufficient grace. Therefore, Paul boasts about his weaknesses. Paul reiterates his love and concern for the church and details how he has acted among them. He pledges to come again and hopes to find them walking in righteousness.

**Devotional:** With the Olympics going on we are regularly reminded of just how much hard work and effort the athletes put in. "No pain, no gain!" is an apt description of the regimen they follow. Sometimes we choose to undergo painful times as part of our own discipline to make us better. But other times, pain seeks us out. Paul received a thorn in the flesh that caused him great distress. He begged the Lord to remove it to no avail. Instead, Paul was directed to place his trust in the Lord's all sufficient grace. How does trusting in the grace of God help you during painful times? Tell of a time that God provided for you at the moment you needed it most and how it strengthened your faith.

#### **Questions for more thought/discussion:**

- Paul begins a discussion on boasting in Christ. How is this boasting different from worldly boasting? What does Paul "boast" about? What things in your life can you "boast" about in Christ?
- Paul's thorn in the flesh was given to prevent him from being prideful. How is pride tempting to you? What does God do to help you avoid pride?



## Tuesday, August 16 — 2 Corinthians 13

**Chapter Summary:** Paul promises to visit them a third time and pledges to bring judgement on any unrepentant sinners. He urges the Christians to examine themselves and their faith. He encourages them to work together and be unified and restore those who have fallen away. He sends greetings from all his companions and ends the letter.

**Devotional:** A doctor asked his patient, “Why did you wait so long to come and see me?” “I knew you were going to give me bad news,” the man replied. Often times we think that if we can just put off hearing bad news, perhaps it will simply go away. But if the bad news is the truth, then we cannot begin dealing with the problem until we know what the problem is! Paul encourages the Christians to practice self examination of their hearts before he shows up to call them to repentance. Scripture regularly reminds us to humble ourselves which carries the subtle warning, “Before God has to humble you!” Self examination can often reveal issues we need to repent of and improve upon. Why is it better to discover these early? How can you examine your own heart and faith?

### Questions for more thought/discussion:

- What issues might the Corinthians have discovered in their self examination? What issues do you think Christians today might find if they looked closely at their own hearts and their faith?



## Wednesday, August 17 — Galatians 1

**Chapter Summary:** Paul writes to the church at Galatia and immediately scolds them for turning away from the gospel. He reminds them that there is only one gospel, given by Jesus and anything else is heresy. He details how he received the gospel from the Lord and spent time with the apostles before preaching it to the Galatians.

**Devotional:** The difference between the gospel and a feeling in your heart is that the gospel is based on facts. It’s easy today to mistake spirituality for a warm feeling. Paul reminds the Galatians that you can’t change the gospel to suit you. It is the gospel of Jesus and no one else can change it. Anything else that claims to be the gospel is really not a gospel at all. How does our culture today try and twist the gospel away from the truth?

### Questions for more thought/discussion:

- What details about his life does Paul share in this chapter that we don't learn anywhere else in the New Testament?
- What does Paul mean that God separated him from his mother's womb and called him by grace? What is the New Testament teaching on election and calling? How does Paul show us that he had free will even as God was calling him?
- How does Paul's change of heart show the gospel's power?



## Thursday, August 18 — Galatians 2

**Chapter Summary:** Paul continues to remind the Galatians of his personal story while also showing them the supremacy of the gospel. He details a disagreement he had with Peter regarding how Peter treated Jews and Gentiles in the church. Paul explains how it is impossible to return to a Jewish, legalistic form of righteousness once we have become Christians.

**Devotional:** “I'm not sure we want ‘those people’ to come to our church. I'm sure they would be happier at the church down the road.” Such attitude would rarely if ever be expressed openly by any family of God's people! And yet, we must remember that our actions send a message beyond what our words say. Paul confronted Peter because by his actions, he was communicating that some Christians were less important than others. We must never make any group appear to be an outsider in the church when Christ died for ALL people. What are some ways you have felt like an outsider at times? What do people do to make you feel included and part of God's family? How can we make sure to include other people in the same way?

### Questions for more thought/discussion:

- Paul confronted Peter about an issue that was a matter of right and wrong. Does this mean Peter sinned, even after he was an apostle? What does that imply for us today?
- Paul makes it clear that the Lord is no respecter of persons but he also indicates that certain people (the apostles and others) were considered leaders in the church. All of those leaders confirmed that the gospel Paul preached was the same one they were teaching. Why should we check with other teachers about what we believe?



## Friday, August 19 — Galatians 3

**Chapter Summary:** Paul reminds the Galatians that they were saved by the Spirit, not by legalism. So why would they want to go back to legalism, now? Christ was the fulfillment of the law, so the Galatians need to stand firm in the gospel of Christ. To return to legalism would be to nullify the covenant of grace they have received in Christ. The law had a purpose, but it is not the way for Christians to be saved.

**Devotional:** The plan of salvation is one of the most basic teachings of the church. It is all about how we are saved by the blood of Christ, not by our own righteousness. Paul talks to Christians about how they decided they were saved by grace but had to continue in legalism. How does God's grace save us and keep us saved? How does it nullify God's grace if we return to a legalistic system of righteousness?

### Questions for more thought/discussion:

- How do we receive the Spirit by the hearing of faith (v. 2)?
- If we are justified (saved) by faith and grace in the beginning and we continue to be saved by those same things, what is the role of good works in the life of a Christian?
- How are good works different from legalistic righteousness?
- How is Christ the fulfillment of the law? What is the purpose of the law for Christians today?

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