

A warm, dimly lit scene showing a person's hands writing in an open book. A lit candle in a dark holder is visible on the right, casting a soft glow. The background is dark and out of focus.

2 Corinthians: A Defense of Genuine Ministry and Authority

Lesson: Heavenly Visions, Earthly Struggles

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Heavenly Visions, Earthly Struggles – 2 Corin. 12:1-10

Theme: God's power is perfected in our limitations

I. Paul's Vision & Revelations. (1-6)

A. A Cautious Boasting. (1)

To dwell on our own excellence and our triumphs is dangerous because it causes us to turn our attention from God's power to bask in our own glory...Boasting only strokes the sinful desire to create a circle of admirers rather than disciples for Christ.

David Garland

Romans 15:15-18

¹⁵ But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, ¹⁶ to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

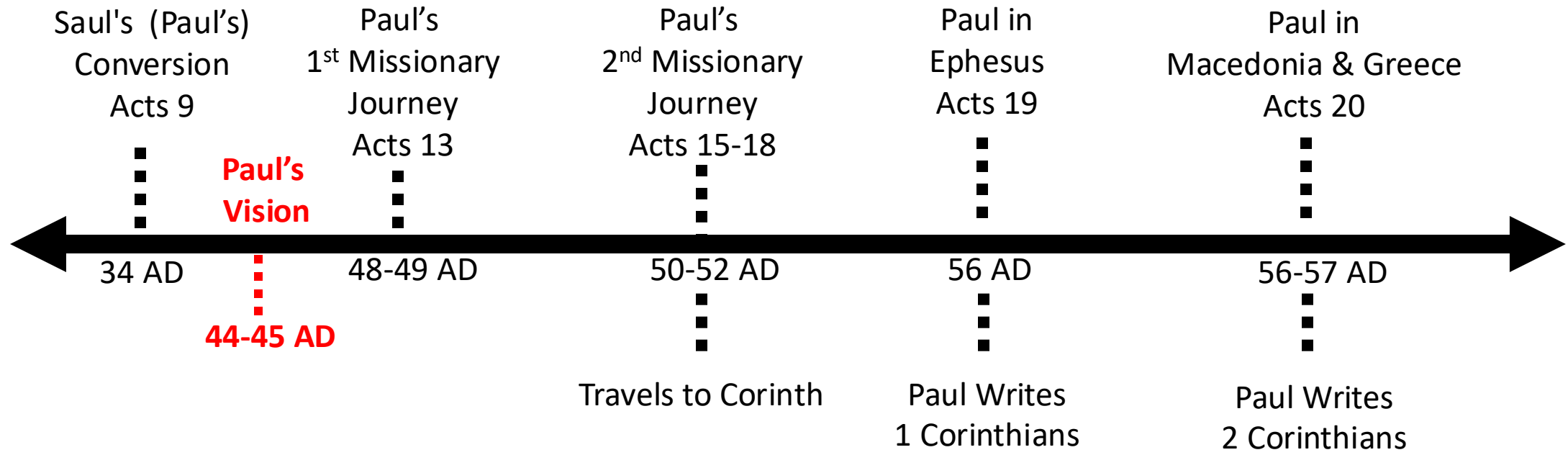
Romans 15:15-18

¹⁷ Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. ¹⁸ For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed,

I. Paul's Vision & Revelations. (1-6)

A. A Cautious Boasting. (1)

B. A Privileged Encounter. (2-4)



Acts 9:15-16

¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; ¹⁶ for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.”

Implications:

- 1. Theological Implication: God's Revelation Transcends Human Expression.**

Deuteronomy 29:29

The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

Implications:

2. Personal Implication: Humility in Spiritual Experiences

Philippians 2:12-13

¹² So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Implications:

3. Soteriological Implication: (The Doctrine of Salvation) God's Word Over Experience

1 Peter 1:23-25

²³ for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴ For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, ²⁵ BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER."

II. Paul's Exaltation in Weakness. (5-10)

A. A Humble Response. (5-6)

1 John 2:3-5

³ By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; ⁵ but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:

II. Paul's Exaltation in Weakness. (5-10)

A. A Humble Response. (5-6)

B. A Thorny Blessing. (7-9a)

When God declared to Paul in answer to his prayer, “My grace is sufficient” He affirmed the total sufficiency of His grace for every need in life – to believe the gospel; to understand and apply the Word to all the issues of life; to overcome sin and temptation; to endure suffering, disappointment, and pain; to obey God; to serve Him effectively; and worship Him. God’s grace was sufficient for the deepest pain Paul (or any other believer) could ever experience.

John MacArthur

II. Paul's Exaltation in Weakness. (5-10)

A. A Humble Response. (5-6)

B. A Thorny Blessing. (7-9a)

C. A Weakness Embraced (9b-10)

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Application:

1. Embrace weakness as an opportunity to increase your faith.

2 Corinthians 4:7-11

⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; ⁸ we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. ¹¹ For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

Application:

2. Encourage others through shared struggles.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵ For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.