

Study of 2 Corinthians

by Dr. Stephen R Zeinner

Introduction: Although I cannot tell you much about heaven, I can tell you about the One who is in heaven. We can talk about Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, and we are to fix our eyes on Him. My, how this epistle has emphasized that! Beholding Him, we will become like Him in many ways. The pilgrim journey through this world will be a great deal easier if we will keep our eyes fixed on Him. The sun won't be so hot, the burden of the day won't be so heavy, the storms of life won't be so fierce if we keep our attention fixed upon the Lord Jesus Christ. J. Vernon McGee (*2 Cor. 12:12* notes)

We might say that *1 Corinthians* reveals the good, bad, and ugly of the church. It reveals gross immorality...the true doctrine of the Resurrection... Spiritual gifts... The Church as one body... True Love... The Lord's Supper... Idolatry... Marriage and Widows... Taking your brother to court... Divisions. Any pastor who has been in the ministry for a few years will have experienced these issues in his church. Remember that the Bible has the answer to all of life's questions. It will be evident that at times you will not have the answer, but before long God will reveal the solution through the Scriptures, this living book called God's Word, the Bible. *2 Corinthians*, reveals the true heart of Paul and reveals the Grace of God to His children. His care, love, patience and protection for the Church of God is presented by writing them and expressing his desire to visit them. He presents himself as a loving shepherd, servant of Christ, giving his all to mature this troubled church.

These two letters expose the ups and downs of a church. Much is said about our giving, suffering and spiritual success. *First Corinthians* reveals the state of this local church and how God deals with them. While in *Second Corinthians* we see the ministry within the church.

He wrote *1 Corinthians* from Ephesus *1 Corinthians 16:8* *But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.* *2 Corinthians* from Philippi, (Macedonia) *Acts 20:6* *And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.*

Corinth:



Author:

Paul; He was also known as Saul of Tarsus (*Acts 9:11*). This relentless enemy of Christians (*Acts 8:3; 22:5, 19; 26:11; Gal 1:13*) would, following his conversion (*Acts 9:3-9*), become the greatest missionary, church planter, soul winner, and theologian in church history, pinning nearly half of the New Testament books!

Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and possibly Hebrews.

Time:

A.D. 55/56 • *2 Corinthians*: 56 A.D., from Macedonia probably Philippi

It is the general opinion that this letter was written about one year after the first. *2 Corinthians 9:2 For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.*

Occasion:

Paul's credentials and actions were questioned and attacked. Their case and complaints were made known to Paul.

1. They accused him of not making up his mind *1:13-18* he writes to refute their slanders.
2. They thought him to be weak and frail *10:1,10*
3. They accused him of walking in the flesh *10:2*
4. They questioned his apostleship *3:1 11:22-23*
5. They questioned his motives concerning the collection *8:20,21*
6. They questioned his courage *10:10,11*
7. They ridiculed his speech *10:10 11:6*
8. They thought him to be proudful by not taking support *11:7-9 12:6*
9. They questioned his suffering saying he suffered too much to be Spirit-filled *1:5*

Paul's suffering as an apostle is thus the very means God uses to reveal his glory.

2 Corinthians 1:4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

2 Corinthians 4:15 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

Key Verse:

2 Corinthians 12:9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Purpose:

1. To defend his apostleship
2. To defend the ministry... warning against false apostles (Judaizers)
11:12-13, 26
3. To equip the saints
4. To coordinate the collection promised a year prior

Keynote:

This letter presents the supremacy of Christ and the Lordship of Jesus. May I say again, that the Bible has the answer to all of our life problems and when Christ is supreme, God is the solution to correct moral, social, church anarchy, and disorder, that will come into the church.

Suffering:

2 Corinthians 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

And the **Power** that was manifested in Paul through his life, ministry and message is described in this book. *2 Corinthians 10:12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.*

Important Events:

It is note worthy that as we try to outline this book we see that it was written without definite arrangement. Many commentators attribute this to the many subjects that come to the mind of Paul as he writes them down in this letter. I must not forget that *2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*: Yes, Paul pinned the words but they are God's Words. *Matthew 4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*

When Paul first came to Corinth he met Aquila & Priscilla *Acts 18:2* and then taught in the synagogue every sabbath, *Acts 18:4*. Like other time, a dispute and riot broke out. Like the many other places, Corinth would be no different. Paul experienced generally a riot, rebellion, or revival.

They were baby Christians, and they were urging Paul to come to them. Apparently Paul wrote them a letter to correct some of the errors that had come into that church. They, in turn, wrote to Paul asking questions that they wanted answered about political issues, religion, domestic problems, heathenism, and morality. Paul answered them and responded to more reports which were brought to him. We do not have that first letter which Paul wrote to them. The letter that followed of the reports brought to him is the letter we know today as *1 Corinthians*. This is the epistle we are about to study. Later on Paul wrote the letter we now call *2 Corinthians*. V McGee

Though we are studying *2 Corinthians* these two books will come into play in our churches today. A missionary and a pastor at times have the same role. The great difference is that the pastor may stay long term and build relationships with many families in his community. While the missionary will build relationships, but his length of time in one place will affect the number of them.

The missionary and pastor will face issues of sin and separation. The effect that Corinth had on the church was real and Paul had to deal with it. Remember that God's Word has the answer to all of our questions. The world is not looking for these answers but only answers that will justify their deeds and vices. This will be a constant battle in our churches as we reach the lost for Christ and disciple them in the Word of God.

The spiritualities are far more important than the carnalities. I think we need to realize that over nineteen hundred years ago the church in Corinth was beset with problems. They had lost sight of the main objective, and they had gotten away from the person of Christ. As a consequence, they were overwhelmed with these problems.

"Our contemporary church is likewise beset with problems. It is almost shocking to discover that the problems of the church today are the same as they were in Corinth over nineteen hundred years ago. I believe that the real problem today is that we have lost sight of the centrality of Christ crucified. We have lost sight of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. That was the problem then, and it is still the problem now. Our study of this epistle should be a relevant and pertinent study for us." J. Vernon McGee

Remember that, *2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

2 Corinthians is Paul's follow-up to this church. Deals with suffering, comfort, sin and restoration, love of Christ and for others, and Church discipline.

Knowing this as we go through the book of *2 Corinthians* we will find chapters full of every day helps for the pastor as he deals with the many church problems. Also, for the everyday Christian those things to avoid and those things to embrace.

2 Corinthians at a Glance

“This book emphasizes those spiritual characteristics so vital for a successful and victorious Christian ministry, as practiced by Paul himself. Special consideration is given to the ministry of suffering. The apostle concludes this epistle with a defense of his apostleship which was being denied by the Jewish legalizers.” Willmington’s Bible at a Glance

“A must reading for the ministry: the most intimate account ever written of the duties and demands, joys and sorrows, trials and triumphs, pain and privileges involved in the work of God.” Willmington’s Bible at a Glance

Chapters 1-7 We find God’s Comfort in...

1. life’s plans
2. restoration of a fallen church member
3. In the ministry
4. In suffering for Christ
5. In dying for Christ
6. In all circumstances of the ministry of Christ
7. the life of Paul

Chapters 8,9 Christian Giving

8. example of Christian giving
9. the collection

Chapters 10-13 Paul’s Apostleship

10. Paul’s authentication of his apostleship
11. Paul’s vindication of his apostleship
12. Paul’s revelation of his apostleship
13. Paul’s conclusion and warning of his apostleship

Outline of 2 Corinthians:

Chapters

1. Paul's **Salutation** 1-2 ... **Sheltered** by God (comfort) 3-7 ... **Suffering** Saints and Despair 8-11... **Schedule** change for Paul 12-24
2. Paul's **Heart** and Tears 1-5 ... The **Hindrance** of unforgiveness 5-13 ... The **Highlight** (triumph) of the gospel message 14-17
3. Paul's **Accreditations** 1-5... God's **Absolutes** (law and grace) 6-18
4. True **Ministry** 1 ... True **Minister** 2 ... True **Message** 3-18
5. Paul's **Hope** and **House** 1-9... Pauls **Honors** and dishonors 10 ... Paul's **Help** in the reconciliation process ... 11-21
6. To the believer a Message of **Neglect** is given 1-13 ... To the believer a **Notice** of separation is given... 14-18
7. **Perfect Holiness**, Promises, Cleansing, in the Fear of God 1 ... **Pleas** for understanding 2-4 ... **Preach** the truth 5-12 ... **Partner** in Truth... Titus 13-16
8. **Illustration** (example) of Christian Giving 1-6... **Inspiration** (exhortation) of Christian Giving 7-15 ... **Instructions** (explanation) of sacrificial giving 8;16-9:5... **Involvement** (encouragement) in Christian giving 9:6-15
9. The **Collection** 1-5 ... The **Cheerful** giver 6-12 The **Crown** (reward) of Christ 13-15
10. Paul **Appeals** to them 1-2 ... Paul **Assures** them 3-6 ... Paul's **Appearance** (he cautions them) 7 ... Paul **Advises** them 8-12 ... Paul warns them not to boast about human **Abilities** 13-14 ... Paul's **Aim** 15-18
11. Paul's **Deposition** (to examine under oath, to give sworn testimony) of the subject of his authority 11:1-4... Paul was not **Disqualified** 5-6 ... Paul **Deprived** himself (servant worthy of wages) 7-9 ... Paul **Declares** his motive 10-20 ... Paul **Describes** his credentials 21-33 ...
12. Paul's **Evidence** 1-10 ... Paul's **Experience** 11-13 ... Paul's **Edifying** 14-19 ... Paul's no **Excuses** policy 20-21
13. **Enemies** of Paul are warned; 1-4 ... **Examination** by Paul; yourselves 5-6 ... **Earnest prayer** of Paul; 7-10 ... **Ending** greetings of Paul; 11-14

Key Individuals

1. **Paul**; writer of *2 Corinthians* and pinned at least 12 other NT books. He was a church planter, evangelist, missionary, and perhaps the greatest of all the apostles.
2. **Moses**; Paul mentions him in the contrast between the Law which no one could keep and grace and its eternal glory.
3. **Titus**; Paul's associate minister, sent to help solve some of the problems in the Corinthian church.

Key Words

1. **Reconciliation**; Christ reconciles the world to Himself and the church mimics reconciliation and restoration in the body of Christ.
2. **Forgive**; As Christ offers forgiveness, the church models this by forging the repentant sinner.
3. **Gift**; Generosity; God is generous to us in that we are saved through the priceless gift of Jesus Christ; likewise, our generosity expresses our appreciation of God's greatest gift.
4. **Joy**; There is much joy in heaven when one sinner repents; every new believer brings us joy of the ministry of Christ working through us.
5. **Atonement**; Christ is the substitutionary atoning sacrifice for the sins of humanity (*2 Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Isaiah 53*)