

“A HEART OPEN WIDE” A STUDY OF 2nd CORINTHIANS

I INTRODUCTION

First Corinthians receives much attention in our bible studies. In 1 Corinthians the Apostle Paul deals with a wide variety of church problems and doctrinal issues. However 2nd Corinthians is much neglected in our bible study. No where in all the New Testament is the agonizing burden and triumphant spirit of the apostle Paul more apparent than in 2 Corinthians. It is a splendid example of what genuine, true, authentic Christianity is. We should not make the mistake in saying the reason that Paul’s ministry is so different from what ours’ is, is because he was an apostle. If we do, we miss the valuable lessons found in this letter. Obviously there are some differences (shipwreck, stripes, etc...), but too often we ignore his example of what our ministry should be, by saying; “He was an apostle, God will not expect the same from me.” Paul is called a “minister” and a “servant”. These same words are used in reference to Christians’ in general who were simply servants of the Lord (Eph 6:21, Col 1:17, 1 Thess 3:2, 1 Tim 4:6). Until we learn the lessons of Paul’s example found in this letter, and as Christians come to view our lives as a service to perform, we will continue to be people who are “willing to do good” rather than a people who are determined to demonstrate in the world the same ideals Jesus demonstrated on this earth.

Contrary to some opinions, Second Corinthians is also a letter, not filled with despair and bitterness, but through the heartbreak there is always a triumphant joy. Many look at Paul and see an aimless vagabond preacher without a thought about how to get through the next days problem. No matter what happens to him he had deep principles and godly aims while he answers the charges of being an unstable, conniving charlatan (a person pretending to knowledge and ability he lacks).

II. THE CITY OF CORINTH.

Corinth had a population of approximately 500,000 people. It was the largest city in first century Greece, the administration capital of Achaia, and the commercial center of the Mediterranean. It commanded the North/South trade of Greece, and the East/West trade of the Mediterranean. Through all this trade Corinth grew wealthy and worldly and gained a reputation for luxury and excess. Most likely populated with Roman Citizens, Roman freedman, Greeks, and Jews. These people possessed a wild and boisterous spirit - this fact would manifest itself in the Corinthian church. While the church did have some believing Jews, mostly it was made up of former pagan Gentiles (1 Cor. 12:2).

III. THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH.

Paul came to Corinth, alone in A.D. 50-51 after being disappointed in Athens. However, at Corinth the gospel bore much fruit and Christianity began in Achaia (Acts 18:10). Paul spent the next 18 months there. Many of it’s early members were formerly idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, and murderers (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

IV. THE CORINTHIAN CORRESPONDENCE.

The Corinthian church not only shows us the power of the gospel, it also shows how many problems can plague a young church. The following is a brief outline of what happened to Paul after he founded the church there;

A. Paul left Corinth and went to Ephesus. Here he suffers many afflictions;

1. Riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:23, 20:1).
2. Faced many adversaries (1 Cor. 16:9).
3. Fought wild beasts (1 Cor 15:32).
4. Maybe suffers a severe illness (2 Cor 1:10).
5. Suffered 39 strips (2 Cor 11:24ff).
6. "weighed down exceedingly"
- 7 "Despaired even of life" (2 Cor. 1:8).
8. Tremendous anxiety over the churches (2 Cor. 11:28).
9. Thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7).

**** We must know and appreciate all that Paul went through if we are to fully understand 2 Corinthians.**

In Ephesus, Paul heard of problems that arose in Corinth. He writes a letter, now lost to us (1 Cor. 5:9), urging them not to associate with those who returned to the practice of fornication (1 Cor. 5:9). After that, Paul receives information from the house of Chloe that the church was locked in a carnal power struggle and was tearing apart (1 Cor. 1:10-11), peace had turned to partyism. Paul then received a letter from Corinth asking him many questions (1 Cor. 7:1). Paul replies with our book called 1st Corinthians.

First Corinthians was probably carried by Timothy or sent soon after Timothy was dispatched by Paul to Corinth (1 Cor 4:17, 16:10, Acts 19:22). We do not know the results of Timothy's visit, but most agree that it could not have been good.

(We do not know the exact order of the following events).

Some evidence exists that Paul makes a hasty trip to Corinth soon after 1st Corinthians was written. Perhaps he learned that Timothy's trip was not successful. Whatever the details, Paul says clearly in 2 Corinthians that "This is the third time" that he was ready to come to them. (2 Cor 12:14, 13:1) First trip = Established the church. Second trip = Hasty trip in between letters. Third trip = the one he promised to make in 2nd Corinthians.

Paul also says that he had determined not to come to them again "in sorrow" (2 Cor. 2:1). All this suggests a "painful visit" and possibly a disappointing one made after his first stay in Corinth and even after writing 1 Corinthians. It is doubtful that he would call his first visit, where he founded the church, "painful".

Recent commentators have supposed that Paul wrote another letter, after his "painful visit", which is also now lost. This judgment is made necessary, in their opinion, because 1st Corinthians could not have been the letter Paul describes that he wrote "out of much anguish of heart with many tears" (2 Cor. 2:4). Also Paul's change in itinerary had to be communicated to the Corinthians (this was one of the charges made against Paul by his opponents) in some way. If it was not communicated in this "Lost Letter", then when? It is however a moot-point; there is no hard evidence of another lost letter and it does not change the message of 2 Corinthians. (For more information see the section "The Severe Letter" later in the introduction).

This much we know; the time after writing 1 Corinthians was filled with much anxiety for Paul. After writing 1 Corinthians, and before writing 2 Corinthians, Paul dispatched Titus to Corinth to try to bring them to repentance before he came as planned (1 Cor. 16:5-7). During this time, Paul was so gripped with anxiety that he could not bring himself to take advantage of a great opportunity to preach the gospel in Troas. (2 Cor. 2: 12-13). So he left Troas for Macedonia. In Macedonia, Titus caught up with Paul and the wonderful news he brought concerning the Corinthian's repentance unleashed months of pent-up concern which had been building inside of Paul, and he poured a flood of emotion into a letter which we call -- Second Corinthians. This letter was written soon after 1 Corinthians, between AD 55 - 57.

Although the news from Titus was good, it was not unmixed; The majority of the Christians there repented and dealt thoroughly with the problems. But a new problem arose - Judaizers!! The leaders of this revolt were; (1). Arrogant men who sought to rule imperiously over the church (2 Cor. 11:19-20). (2) Boasted of their credentials as from the seed of Abraham (11:22). (3) Preached a perverted gospel (11:4). (4) Attacked Paul as a second rate apostle (12:11ff). (5) They said Paul was weak and vacillating (10:10). (6) They said Paul insulted them by not accepting support from them (11:7), (7) or that Paul was setting them up for a latter kill (12:16-18). (8) And they charged that his failure to come to them was evidence that his promises were empty.

This forces Paul to change the tone of his letter from that of joy, triumph, and encouragement to a full blown defense against his enemies in the last four chapters. This personal defense is clearly distasteful to Paul and he would not have engaged in it had the attack on him not also been an attack against the gospel.

V. WHY DID PAUL WRITE 2nd CORINTHIANS?

This moving letter is a picture of Paul's tenacious hope and confidence, that these Christians who have blundered so badly, and hurt him so painfully, will turn out right (1:7, 7:16). Despite his affection for them; Paul does not gloss over their wrongs. He deals with them in a tough way letting them know they have sinned grievously, they have hurt him and broke his heart. But most importantly, Paul did not give up on them!!!!

What a lesson - No matter what someone does to you, that person is a soul and deserves to be saved. 2nd Corinthians is a classroom for every Christian who has suffered unwarranted abuse. To all who have suffered for Christ's cause Paul says; "Forget about yourself. Serve Christ. Remember others."

1. Respond to some charges raised against him.
2. Explain his change of plans.
3. Defend his ministry.
4. Encourage them to forgive and restore the man who started all the trouble.
5. Encourage the Corinthians to finish the collection they started a year ago.
6. Enforce his authority as an apostle.

VI. CONTRIBUTIONS OF 2 CORINTHIANS TO THE BIBLE:

1. It gives us a few glimpses into the life of Paul of things we would not otherwise know: Hardships not recorded in Acts (11:23-27), Details of his escape from Damascus (11:32-33), His vision of Paradise (12:1-7), His thorn in the flesh (12:7-10).

2. Doctrinal Matters Discussed: Contrast of the Old and New Covenants; Proper View of Suffering for Christ; Ministry of Reconciliation; Importance of Saints Remaining Pure; Instructions about Giving; Exposes the Tricks of Satan; Falling from Grace; Christian Responsibility.

There are several themes in this epistle that deserve special notice at this time;

- TRIALS:** EXPLANATION: Paul experienced great suffering, persecution, and opposition in his ministry. He even struggled with a personal weakness - a “thorn” in the flesh. Through it all, Paul affirmed God’s faithfulness.
- IMPORTANCE: God is faithful. His strength is sufficient for any trial. When trials come, they keep us from pride and teach us dependence on God. He comforts us so we can comfort others.
- CHURCH
DISCIPLINE:** EXPLANATION: Paul defends his role in church discipline. Neither immorality nor false teaching could be ignored. The church was to be neither too lax nor too severe in administering discipline. The church was to restore the corrected person when he or she repented.
- IMPORTANCE: The goal of all discipline in the church should be correction, not vengeance. For churches to be effective, they must confront and solve problems, not ignore them. In everything, we must act in love.
- HOPE:** EXPLANATION: To encourage the Corinthians as they faced trials, Paul reminded them that they would receive new bodies in heaven. This would be a great victory in contrast to their present suffering.
- IMPORTANCE: To know we will receive new bodies offers us hope. No matter what adversity we face, we can keep going. Our faithful service will result in triumph. There is “Light at the end of the tunnel.”
- GIVING:** EXPLANATION: Paul organized a collection of funds for the poor saints at the Jerusalem church. Many of the Asian churches gave money. Paul explains and defends his beliefs about giving, and he urges the Corinthians to follow through on their previous commitment.
- IMPORTANCE: Like the Corinthians, we should follow through on our commitments. Our giving must be generous, sacrificial, well planned, and based on need. Our generosity not only helps those in need but enables them to thank God. Not to mention that “God loves a cheerful giver.”
- SOUND
DOCTRINE:** EXPLANATION: False teachers were challenging Paul’s ministry and authority as an apostle. Paul asserts his authority in order to preserve correct Christian doctrine. His sincerity, his love for Christ, and his concern for the church were his defense.
- IMPORTANCE: We should share Paul’s concern for correct teaching in the church but in so doing, we must share his motivation -- Love for Christ and people.

SECOND CORINTHIANS

OUTLINE

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|------|---|-----------------|
| I. | <u>Removal of Misunderstanding</u> | (1:1 - 2:11) |
| | A. Salutation | (1: 1 - 2) |
| | B. Comfort in Affliction | (1: 3 - 11) |
| | C. Explanation of Recent Conduct | (1: 12 - 2:4) |
| | D. Call to Forgive the Penitent Sinner | (2: 5 - 11) |
| II. | <u>The Apostolic Ministry</u> | (2:12 - 7: 1) |
| | A. Paul's Anxiety at Troas | (2:12 - 13) |
| | B. Thanksgiving for the Triumphal Progress of the Gospel. | (2:14 - 17) |
| | C. The Ministry of the New Covenant | (3: 1 - 18) |
| III. | <u>The Apostolic Ministry (Continued)</u>
<u>The Hardship and Glory of the Gospel Ministry</u> | (4: 1 - 5: 10) |
| | A. The Treasure Entrusted to Paul and his Associates | (4: 1 - 6) |
| | B. "This Treasure in Earthen Vessels" | (4: 7 - 15) |
| | C. Inward Renewal | (4: 16 - 18) |
| | D. The Christian's Hope | (5: 1 - 10) |
| IV. | <u>The Apostolic Ministry (Continued)</u>
<u>The Ministry of Reconciliation</u> | (5: 11 - 7: 16) |
| | A. The Word of Reconciliation | (5: 11 - 19) |
| | B. Plea of the Ambassadors | (5: 20 - 6:10) |
| | C. Pleas for Reciprocation of Paul's Feelings toward the Corinthians. | (6: 11 - 13) |
| | D. Call for Separation | (6: 14 - 7: 1) |
| | E. Renewal of Plea for Reciprocation | (7 : 2 - 4) |
| | F. The Coming of Titus | (7: 5 - 16) |
| V. | <u>The Collection for the Saints</u> | (8: 1 - 9: 15) |
| | A. Grace in Macedonia: How Giving Became a Gift | (8: 1 - 5) |
| | B. Paul's Care for the Corinthians | (8: 6 - 15) |
| | C. Titus and His Companions | (8: 16 - 24) |

- VI. The Collection for the Saints (Continued)
- A. Paul's Glorifying on Behalf of the Corinthians (9: 1 - 5)
 - B. Encouragement to Give (9: 6 - 11)
 - C. Effects of Giving (9: 12 - 15)
- VII. Vindication of Paul's Apostleship Against the Attack of False Teachers. (10:1 -13:14)
- A. The Threat of Vengeance Against Rebellion (10: 1 - 18)
- VIII. "A Little Foolishness": Paul's Glorifying (11:1 -12:13)
- A. The Reason for Glorifying (11: 1 - 15)
 - B. Boasting in Weakness (11: 16 - 33)
 - C. Visions and Revelations (12: 1 - 10)
 - D. Paul's Apostolic Credentials (12: 11 - 13)
- IX. The Coming of Paul (12:14-13:14)
- A. Paul's Third Trip to Corinth.

Second Corinthians is divided into three basic sections:

1. Paul's explanation of his ministry (1:1 - 7:16).
2. Paul's collection for the saints (8:1 - 9:15).
3. Paul's vindication of his Apostleship (10:1 - 13:14).

THE “SEVERE LETTER”

(This is a theory)

1. It is described in 2 Cor. 2:4

2. Its Purpose:

A. It was intended to arouse the church to discipline “the one who did the wrong” (2 Cor. 2:6, 9; 7:12).

1. To spare the Corinthians another “painful visit” (1:23 - 2:4).
2. To demonstrate his affection for the Corinthians. (2:4).
3. To test the Corinthians’ obedience to apostolic authority (2:9).
4. To make them aware of their genuine concern and affection for him (7:12).

3. Its Identification;

A. *Our book of 1st Corinthians.*

1. Similarity between 1 Cor. 5 and 2 Cor. 2:5-11, 7:12.

2. The incestuous man is the “one who did the wrong”, this man’s father is the “one who suffered the wrong”. After being handed over to Satan (disciplined) this man repented. in 2 Cor., 2:7, 8 Paul urges that he be received back into church fellowship.

3. Some Problems;

a. 2 Cor. 2:6, 9 suggests that the “letter of tears” dealt primarily with the wrongdoer and the need for his punishment. This is not true of 1st Corinthians.

b. If these two are the same then the man was committing adultery and not incest. For in 2 Cor. 7:12 the man’s step-father was still alive.

1. Two separate Greek words (moicheia) adultery, (porneia) incest.

B. *A second theory is that this “severe letter” is actually now part of 2nd Corinthians.*

1. Chapters 1 - 9 are Paul’s third letter to Corinth.
2. Chapters 10 - 13 make up all or part of the “severe letter”.
3. There is a direct shift of emphasis between 1 - 9 and 10 - 13.

C. *The third theory is that this “severe letter” is a lost intermediate letter.*

1. Scholars who hold this view say this letter was an intensely personal letter, quite brief, and addressed to specific un-edifying situation.

CHARGES AGAINST PAUL

1. Paul's personal integrity.
2. His Apostleship - not genuine.
3. His word could not be trusted.
4. Pocketed the money intended for needy saints in Jerusalem.
5. Fickle
6. Proud
7. Unimpressive in appearance and speech.
8. Dishonest.
9. Unqualified as an apostle.

EVENTS SURROUNDING THE CORINTHIANS.

1. Paul arrives at Corinth from Athens (A.D. 50) and establishes the church there. He stays with Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18).
2. Paul leaves Corinth after 18 months (A.D. 52), leaving Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus and going to Caesarea and Antioch.
3. Paul goes to Ephesus and makes this city his center of activity for probably three years (A.D. 52 - 55).
4. Paul writes a letter to Corinth concerning immorality in the church there (1 Cor. 5:9). This letter was written prior to our 1st Corinthians, probably in A.D. 52 or 53.
5. The Corinthians write Paul a letter asking certain questions about marital relations, idol foods, order in worship, etc.... Paul responds with our 1st Corinthians (fall of A.D. 54 or spring of 55).
6. Timothy is sent to Corinth, perhaps carrying 1 Corinthians (1 Cor. 16: 10,11). Around this time, before Timothy arrived, false apostles came to Corinth in an attempt to undermine Paul's work. They succeeded in gaining a large following.
7. Timothy returns to Paul in Ephesus with a bad report of the conditions at Corinth. Paul hastens by ship to Corinth, but his visit is "painful" and unsuccessful (2 Cor. 2: 1). He returns to Ephesus.
 - A. Apparently while there Paul is openly insulted (2 Cor 2:5-8, 10; 7:12).
8. Paul, having told the Corinthians he would go back to Corinth before going to Macedonia, writes a letter in lieu of that visit. This letter was written "with many tears" and "out of much affliction and anguish of heart" (2 Cor. 2"4). This letter was carried to Corinth perhaps by Titus.
9. After the riot in Ephesus , Paul leaves Ephesus for Troas (spring A.D. 55) and suffers his "affliction in Asia". He had arranged with Titus to meet him along a pre-arranged route. Paul hoped to see Titus at Troas, but did not find him there (2 Cor 2: 12, 13). Not finding Titus, Paul went on to Macedonia.
10. Somewhere in Macedonia, Titus returns to Paul with the report that the situation in Corinth is improved. Paul, along with Timothy, sends a letter (our 2nd Corinthians) which is taken by Titus and two brothers. They are to gather the Corinthians collection before Paul himself arrives in Corinth (2 Cor. 8: 16-23; 9:4). Paul was planning a visit shortly (2 Cor. 12:14; 13:1).

PAINFUL VISIT

1. Although Luke does not mention a second visit to Corinth, several passages in 2nd Corinthians indicate more than one visit.
 - A. They show Paul had already been to that city twice - the second visit being “painful”.
 - B. First:
 1. 2 Cor. 12:14, 13: 1, 2 refer to two prior actual visits.
 - B. Second:
 1. 2 Cor. 2:1 and 12:21 indicate that one of the two earlier visits was “painful”.
2. It would be very unlikely that Paul would describe his founding visit as painful.
3. This visit occurred after 1st Corinthians was written and after the “severe letter” was written because Paul was waiting for news from Titus about the outcome of the severe letter.

LESSON ONE

2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-11

The salutation in this epistle is nearly in the same words as in other letters (vs 1-2). Here, the introduction is for thanksgiving for God's consolation. Paul blesses God as the God of all mercy for the consolation which he had experienced. He identifies himself with the Corinthians; representing his affliction as theirs and his consolation also as belonging to them (vs 3-7). He refers to the affliction which came upon him in Asia that it was so severe that he "despaired of life". But through their prayers, God delivered him, and he was assured, would continue to deliver him (vs 8-11).

KEY MESSAGES:

1. Comfort - Comfort - Comfort, all to the praise of God who is the source of all comfort.
2. Christians are to be instruments of comfort.
3. If we are willing to suffer for Christ, then He will comfort us.. Ultimate object- a crown. Ja 1:12
4. There is a need to know about the suffering of others.
5. Pressure was brought on Paul so that he might learn to trust in God.
6. Prayer changes things.

KEY PHRASES:

1. "by the will of God..." - Paul was an apostle, not self-appointed, but God appointed him.
2. "Blessed be God" - Paul was praising God for the present blessings - for what God was accomplishing then and there.
3. "Saints" - (hagios) - one who has been sanctified.
4. "Father of mercies..." - means the originator of...
5. "Tribulation..." (thlipsis),(vs 4) to crush, press, squeeze, constraint, narrowness of room.
6. "helping together" vs 11 (sunupourgeo) - made up of three words, with, under, and work. It pictures laborers working together, under pressure, to get the job done.
7. "despaired even of life..." vs 8 - (exporethenai) - implies the total unavailability of an exit from his oppressive circumstances. His deliverance then had to be from God

APPLICATION:

In spite of all the suffering, affliction, and heartbreak that Paul went through, how was he able to write a letter saturated with encouragement? What was his secret weapon? How did he endure?

1. REMEMBER WHAT GOD IS TO YOU (1:3)
2. REMEMBER WHAT GOD DOES FOR YOU (1:4a, 8-11).
3. REMEMBER WHAT GOD DOES THROUGH YOU (1:4b - 7).

QUESTIONS:

1. When was 2 Corinthians written?
2. Name the three divisions of this book.
3. Why should Christians expect to suffer? (there are three “that we” phrases in vs 4, 9, 11)
4. How does suffering prepare us to comfort others? vs 4.
5. How can we comfort others?
6. How did Paul deal with his sufferings?
7. From what was Paul delivered?
8. What helped Paul in being delivered? vs 11.
9. What did Paul learn from his affliction in Asia?
10. How does God comfort us?
11. What is the purpose of suffering?

LESSON 2
2 CORINTHIANS 1:12 - 2:4

Paul says that his conscience is clear. His conduct, his writings and his life were consistent, sincere, and full of integrity. He did nothing from fleshly wisdom. Apparently he was also accused of writing to them in vague and ambiguous language. Paul says he wrote only those things that they could understand (vs 12-14). He admitted that his initial plans had to be changed, and then (for their own good which he will explain later) he changed his plans again (vs 15-16). On this slight ground, his enemies represented him as saying one thing and meaning another, and that his words and promises could not be trusted. "If his word could not be trusted in small matters, what dependence could be placed on his preaching?" Paul shows that his plans were changed not out of fickleness, deceit, or ulterior motives, and no inconsistency in his preaching, but that, to spare them, he had decided to postpone (not cancel) his trip to Corinth (vs 17 - 24). Paul's argument is that God is faithful and absolutely trustworthy (vs 18), and so is Jesus Christ (vs 19). In fact Jesus Christ is God's "YES" to all the promises He ever made to man (vs 20). It is this God, and this Jesus Christ, that Paul has preached, and it is He who establishes us, seals us (at baptism), and guarantees us salvation. Paul further explains in 2:1-4 that he wanted to give them enough time to comply with the instructions he placed on them in his previous letter. He knew that to visit them again so soon might only bring pain both to them and to himself, for he knew that if he gave them sorrow it would also grieve him. He assures them that his letter was not written to bring them sorrow, but because he loved them. He was also confident that if he was happy they would share in his joy.

KEY PHRASES:

1. "Boast" - Vs. 12 - "Our act of boasting should be understood in this way"
2. Conscience Vs. 12 - (suneideseos) - "Knows with", a knowing of oneself, distinguishes and helps us choose right over wrong.
3. "Holiness and Godly sincerity" - Integrity.
4. "Amen" - Vs. 20 - Hebrew for "it is true". Also the name given to Christ in Rev. 3:14. Christ is God's "Yes" to all the promises He made to man.
5. "Establishes" Vs. 21 - Guarantee of the fulfilling of a contract.
6. "Anoints us" Vs. 21 - Equips us for service to God.
7. "Seals us" Vs. 21 - Marks ownership, proves genuineness and importance.
8. "Guarantee" Vs. 21 - Engagement ring.
9. "not by earthly wisdom" Vs. 12 - Not by the principles of cunning wisdom guided by self interest.
10. "Yes, yes, and no, no" Vs. 17 - An idiom for double talk, insincerity and deception.

APPLICATION:

In verses 1:1-11 Paul dealt with and endured terrible suffering. In 1:12 - 2:4 He endures harsh criticism. How did he endure?

1. Practice what you preach (1:12-14).
 - a. Have a clear conscience. (12-17)
2. Be strengthened by suffering (1:1-11)
3. Be Confident in Christ (1:18-22)

QUESTIONS:

1. Is our conscience a safe guide? (If you can do a word study, find out how Paul is using this word in vs. 12).
2. How has God answered His promises?
3. What had Paul done to earn this sharp criticism?
4. What were Paul's original plans, and why did he change them?
5. What is the "day of the Lord Jesus" in vs. 14?
6. In verses 13 - 14 is Paul explaining what he meant by "when that which is perfect shall come" in 1 Cor. 13: 10? Explain what Paul is talking about.
7. How do we know that we have salvation (vs. 21-22)?
8. Who really caused the sorrow, Paul with his letter and painful visit, or the sinner?
9. Since we have been guaranteed salvation, do verses 21-22 relieve us of our responsibilities? Explain.
10. How many trips has Paul made to Corinth at this time?

LESSON THREE

2 CORINTHIANS 2:5 - 17

The sorrow caused by the wrong-doer was not just felt by Paul, it hurt the entire church. Paul was satisfied that the man had repented due to the discipline the church exercised on him, and that now he should be restored to their fellowship. He encourages the church to forgive, comfort, and confirm their love toward him (vs 5-10). Otherwise, he warns, Satan could gain an advantage over him and the church (vs 11). Paul then explains that he was so anxious to receive information from Titus that he was unable to take advantage of an opportunity in Troas. Not finding Titus there, he leaves for Macedonia where Titus apparently catches up with him and gives him the wonderful information about the Corinthian church and their obedience (vs 12-13). The apostle then expresses in strong terms his gratitude to God who always leads him into triumph (vs 14-17).

KEY PHRASES:

1. “Confirm” (kuroo) - Validate
2. Majority (pleiones) - can either mean “the many” or “the whole group”. Has been used in other passages to describe the community as a whole (Rom 12:5, and 1 Cor. 10:17).
3. “test” (dokime) - metal tested with fire.
4. Satan and his devices (vs. 11) - His expert methods. He has plans, purposes, and schemes.
5. “I had no relief” - no rest
6. “Triumph in Christ” vs 14 - Paul uses an illustration of a Roman Triumph. After victory the General and his army would be honored with a Roman Triumph. This is a parade of the General, the army, and they displayed the spoils and captives that were taken. Great amounts of incense would be burned. This aroma was sweet and meant victory and honor to the army, but it was repulsive and meant certain death to the prisoners.
7. “What kind of ministry is sufficient for these things?” - (vs 16) What kind of ministry is adequate for such a task? Paul says “Ours is”
8. “Corrupting the word of God” (vs 17) - Perverting and changing the gospel.

APPLICATION:

Paul now gives two more reasons how he endured the sharp criticism.

1. We must have a compassionate heart. How to treat penitent brethren.
2. We must have a conquering faith (vs 12-17).

QUESTIONS:

1. Who really caused the sorrow at Corinth (vs 5)?

2. Who exercised the discipline toward the wrong-doer?

3. Why doesn't church discipline seem to work as well today as it did in this example?

4. After he repented, how was the church to treat this man?

5. How could Satan gain an advantage if they did not confirm their love to him?

6. Despite all the pain and anguish and the unwarranted criticism they caused him, what was Paul's motive behind his actions?

7. In view of the Roman Triumph, explain verse 16a.

8. How is Paul's ministry sufficient (vs 16b - 17)?

9. Explain how some were "peddling" the word of God.

10. How was Paul "testing" the Corinthians (vs. 9)?

LESSON FOUR

2 CORINTHIANS 3: 1 - 18

Although the concluding paragraph in the preceding chapter contained a strong assertion of the integrity of the apostle, Paul says it was not written for self-commendation. Apparently the false teacher(s) had established himself (themselves) at Corinth, neither by the working of miracles, nor by giving the Corinthians spiritual gifts, but by producing letters of recommendation from some brethren in Judea, and by talking in a vaunting manner of his (their) own talents. Paul asks if he needed to prove himself a second time to them as an apostle, or if he needed letters of recommendation, either to them or from them. Paul tells the Corinthians that they are his letters of recommendation which all men could read (vs 2-3). He makes it clear that his sufficiency for his work is not due to himself, but it is from God (vs 4-6). Paul then goes into a lengthy discussion on the superiority of the new covenant over the old. It seems the false teacher had extolled the law of Moses above the gospel of Christ, and assumed to himself great authority on account of his knowledge of that law. Paul makes several contrasts to show the inferiority of the law of Moses to the gospel of Christ (vs 7-11).

In verses 12 - 18 Paul says “We do not have to put a veil over our face as Moses did, our message is clear and plain. Since our hopes for the future of the gospel are so great, we do not need to conceal anything, as Moses did.” Paul makes it clear he was not timid, nor did he deceive anyone in his message. He was open, bold, and frank with his speech.

KEY PHRASES:

1. “written in our hearts” - Their conversion from the wicked practices they were known for is a powerful “letter” or testimony that could be read by all.
2. “Not of the letter... but of the spirit” (vs 6) - Paul contrasts the old and new covenant.
3. “for the letter kills” - the Old Covenant brought the knowledge of sin and death, but did not give life.
4. “Spirit gives life” - (vs. 6) -John 6:63 - “the words that I have spoken unto you are the spirit that gives life.”
5. “Ministration of death” (vs 7) - The Old Covenant was given to produce a sense of guilt and condemnation; it required perfect obedience under the penalty of death. (Gal 3:10, Rom. 7:5, Ezek. 18:20)
6. “Glory which passeth away” - Moses wore a veil to hide the glory fading from his face.
7. “Passing away” -(vs 11) done away with.
8. “There is liberty” (vs 17) - There is liberty in becoming a Christian.
9. “Transformed” - Changed, metamorphosis, changes that occur from within.

KEY MESSAGES:

1. Christ is the giver of life.
2. Christ is the transformer of life.

APPLICATION:

1. Our lives are open letters for the world to read. What does your life say about you?
2. Be open and honest with people. Do not try to trick them into hearing the gospel.
3. We become a “mirror” to reflect the glory of God to the world.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Paul not need a letter to the Corinthians?
2. Is Paul saying letters of commendations should not be used?
3. Did the Old Covenant have glory?
4. Where is the New Testament law written?
5. What were the two purposes for the veil that Moses wore?
6. What is the “hope” that Paul speaks of in vs 12?
7. Can hearts still be veiled today? How?
8. What is Paul contrasting in verse 6, and does this passage deny any Christian duty?
9. What was the purpose of the Old Testament?
10. What contrasts are made between the Old and New Testaments?

LESSON FIVE

2 CORINTHIANS 4: 1 - 18

As Paul had been made a minister of the New Covenant, he acted in such a way as was becoming of such a high commission. He was neither timid nor deceitful. He doubted not the truth, the power, nor the success of the gospel which he preached. Nor did he in any way corrupt or conceal the truth, but he commended himself to every man's conscience (vs 1,2). Why then is the gospel still hidden to some? It can only be explained by the "god of this world" blinding the eyes of men. The ignorance of unbelievers is not because the gospel is obscure, but it is a result of their own lusts and prejudices (vs 3-6).

The treasure of the gospel is in earthen vessels (clay jars). The gospel is God's revelation. It is to do for the world what the creation of light did for the chaotic earth during creation. But we are to have none of the glory of the work. We are nothing. The power is from God. Just as there is no value in the jar, but it is what is inside the jar that is valuable. Paul was so perplexed, persecuted, down-trodden, and exposed to death, that it was evident that a divine power is in control of his preservation and continued efficiency. His continuing to live in spite of the trouble that he faced, is evidence that Jesus lives (7-12).

Paul had the same confidence that David had, and therefore he spoke with equal confidence, that God, who raised Christ from the dead, would also raise him from the dead. Everything that Paul did, and endured, was for the benefit of the church. Therefore he knew that the people of God would give thanks for his preservation and success (vs 13-15).

It is for these reasons, Paul says, that he would not give up ("I faint not"). Even though his outward man perishes, his inward man was being renewed everyday. He knew that his afflictions were only temporary and that they would be succeeded with an eternal weight of glory (vs 16-18).

KEY PHRASES:

1. "This ministry" - The New Covenant. The kind he described in Chapter three. The kind of ministry that brings life, salvation, and righteousness.
2. "We faint not" - He would not lose heart, no matter what.
3. "Hidden things of shame" - When we became Christians we renounced the sinful practices that bring shame.
4. "Craftiness" Trickery, deceitful practices.
5. "Handling Deceitfully" Tamper with, to beguile.
6. "The god of this world" - Satan.
7. "spirit of faith" (vs 13) - Attitude or outlook of faith.

APPLICATION:

Paul had courage in the face of conflict and he rejoiced in what he has.

1. He had a glorious ministry
2. He had a valuable treasure.
3. He had a confident faith.

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of ministry is Paul talking about (vs 1)?
2. Define Ministry as Paul uses it here.
3. How did Paul keep from “fainting”?
4. If Paul was such a faithful preacher, and the gospel is everything he claimed, why do so many reject it?
5. How do we know we have the “word of God” today?
6. Beginning in verse 13, what are the four reasons Paul was able to endure so many trials?
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
 - D.
7. What does Paul mean by “Outward and Inward man”?
8. How could Paul refer to his afflictions as light?
9. What are the things that are seen, and what is not seen?

2 CORINTHIANS 5: 1 - 21

Having mentioned the reasons for not being discouraged and giving up near the end of chapter four, Paul reminds the Corinthians that our concerns are not to be with the temporal, but with the eternal. Chapter five begins with a continuation of this subject and the eternal home awaiting those who “faint not”.

Paul did not faint in the midst of his sufferings, because he knew that even if his body should be destroyed, he had a home in heaven - not like the present perishable tabernacle (his body) made with hands, but one that was eternal. He looked forward to the things “unseen”, because in his body he groaned (longed) to be at home in his spiritual body. Not that he desired death, but that he wanted to be in heaven more (vs 2-4). This confidence he owed to God (vs 5). Having this knowledge he was always with courage, knowing that as soon as he died, he would be at home with the Lord (vs 6-8). Therefore his great desire was to please God because he knew he and all other men must appear before His judgment seat (vs 9-10).

He says that he acted under a solemn sense of his responsibility to God (vs 11). This is not said to commend himself, but rather to give them the means of vindicating his character (vs 12). Whether his way of speaking of himself was sane or insane, his motive, in doing as he did, was a sincere regard to the glory of God and for the good of His church (vs 13). For it was the love of Christ that prompted Paul to live as he did. Not for himself, but for the one who died for him and rose again (vs 14-15). Therefore, Paul says, he does not judge men by their external condition. It is what a man is spiritually that counts (vs 16-17). This great change is brought on by God who is the author of the scheme of redemption. He reconciled the world to himself through Jesus Christ, and he commissioned Paul and the apostles to proclaim this great truth to all men (vs 18-19). Therefore as an ambassador of God he pleads with all men to accept this offer of reconciliation from God. This was made possible in that He made Christ to be sin for us in order that we might be made the righteousness of God, in Him (vs 20-21).

KEY PHRASES:

1. “We Know” - This is the Christian’s distinctive hope; our souls eternal existence after death with God.
2. “Earthly house...tabernacle” - our bodies are temporary.
3. “We groan” - (vs 4) - Mortal infirmity. Not a complaint by Paul, but a desire to be at home in his spiritual body.
4. “To be clothed upon” - Putting on a new garment to replace the old one.
5. “always of good courage (confident)” -(vs 8) - “No matter what may happen to my body, absolutely nothing can happen to me.”
6. “well pleasing” vs 9 - accepted.
7. “our aim” - we labor to please Him.
8. “That everyone may receive” - to take up, to receive what is one’s due.
9. “Fear of the Lord” - reverence and devotion.

10. “Reconcile” To change enmity to friendship.
11. “Righteousness of God” -(vs 21) - The achievement of God in Christ.

APPLICATION:

1. We have a future hope
2. We should be motivated to serve Him;
 - A. Fear
 - B. Love
 - C. The message of reconciliation
3. How can we be prepared for judgment?
 - A. Clear conscience.
 - B. Do not seek the praise of men.
 - C. Ignore the criticisms of men.

QUESTIONS:

1. How can we “know” we have a spiritual body?
2. Explain “Not to be found naked” in verse 3. (hint: Matt. 22:11)
3. What is the “body of humiliation” in verse 4?
4. Must everyone appear before the judgment seat or just believers?
5. How have “all died” (vs 14)?
6. Explain verse 16.
7. How is one “In Christ” (vs 17)?
8. Based on the answer to number 7, what does “Faith in Christ” mean?
9. Define “Reconciled”.
10. Who are the “Ambassadors” - the Apostles or all Christians?

LESSON SEVEN
2 CORINTHIANS 6: 1 - 7:1

The reason Paul wrote this letter was an overflow of emotion knowing the problems had been solved. Also he had to respond to the false accusations made against him by his opponents. Paul tries to vindicate himself. In 5:12 Paul spoke of himself to give his friends the information they needed to defend him. As you read 2 Corinthians you get the feeling that the Corinthians did not appreciate Paul, and the work he had done. They should have defended him instead of forcing him to defend himself. The Corinthians seem to have boasted of the Judaizers who had invaded the church, and yet the Judaizers had done nothing for them. So Paul reminds them of all he has done for them and what his ministry gave them. His life was governed by the love of Christ, and he acted as His Ambassador. As such he was a fellow worker with God, and he exhorted men not to receive the grace of God in vain (vs. 1-2). To avoid allowing anyone an excuse to blame him or his ministry, he avoided any kind of offense (vs. 3). He proved his sincerity and fidelity as a minister of God, by the patient endurance of all kinds of trials (vs. 4-5). He also used all the tools available to him to help him endure these trials (vs. 6-7). It didn't matter what circumstances he was under, or what people did against him, or thought about him, he proved himself to the Corinthians (vs. 8-10).

He then reveals his heart to them - it is open wide (it has been enlarged). There is enough room for all of them. If there was any lack of appreciation, or love between them, it was their fault and not his (vs. 11-12). He begs them to love him as he loves them (vs 13), and to not allow themselves to be involved in any relationship or alliances with the wicked (vs 13-18).

KEY PHRASES:

1. “receive the Grace of God in vain” - There could be several meanings to this expression. (1) Paul affirms the possibility of falling from grace. In 1 Cor. 15: 2 & 10 Paul uses basically the same expression referring to “holding fast to the gospel” and the fact that he was chosen by God to be an apostle. (2) We are all chosen by God when we became Christians. God chose us all, the saved, the church (not the individual but the plan). Therefore by not accepting the gospel we receive it (hear it) in vain.

2. “Now is the acceptable time” - Now is the golden time to obey the gospel that will never come again.

3. Paul divides his sufferings into three categories;

A. Hindrances - Tribulation, Needs, and Distresses.

B. Violent Opposition - Strips, Imprisonment, and Tumults.

C. Hardships - Labors, Sleeplessness, and Fasting.

4. “Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers...”

Good	There can be no	Evil
Righteousness	Fellowship	Iniquity
Light	Communion	Darkness
Christ	Accord	Belial (Satan)
Believer	Part	Unbeliever
Temple of God	Agreement	Idols

5. "Come ye out" - An act on our part.
6. "Living God" (Vs. 16) - He is not just a god who lives, but the God of life.

APPLICATION:

1. Appreciate Each other (vs 1-10).
2. Set the Right Example.
3. The Fruits of the Spirit can help us endure afflictions.
4. We must separate ourselves from evil.

A. Avoid every kind of evil, Cling to that which is good. We are to avoid all relationships that may endanger our faith.

QUESTIONS:

1. How can we receive the grace of God in vain?
2. Why did Paul not want to give an offense (vs 3)?
3. What is Paul trying to do in verses 1 - 10?
4. Why does Paul list the trials he went through?
5. What is the difference between "Patience" and "Long-suffering"?
6. Be ready to explain verses 11 -13.
7. What does it mean to not be "Unequally Yoked"?
8. What kind of relationships is Paul referring to.
9. What are we to separate from?
10. Think back to ancient Israel, When did they have peace and prosperity? When did they have war and afflictions?

LESSON EIGHT

2 CORINTHIANS 7:2 - 16

In chapter six Paul explains that Christians have a most precious promise and he exhorts the Corinthians to live as those who have this promise. In verses 2 and 3 Paul repeats his desire for them to reciprocate his love. So far as he was concerned there was nothing standing in the way of them being reconciled. He had not injured them, nor was he alienated from them. Instead he had great confidence in them (vs. 4). His apprehensions and anxiety had been greatly removed by the news that Titus brought concerning their feelings for Paul (vs. 5-7). It is true that initially he did regret sending the letter he speaks of here (either 1st Corinthians or a lost “sever letter”), but now he no longer regrets sending it. He found that the sorrow which that letter caused was the sorrow of true repentance. It did not injure them, it was for their good (vs. 8, 9). It was not a worldly sorrow (which is a sorrow caused by the consequences of sin not the sin itself), but true godly sorrow, as was evident from its effects (vs. 10, 12). There the apostle was comforted, and delighted to find how much Titus was gratified by his visit to Corinth. All that Paul told him about the good dispositions of the Corinthians was found to be true.(vs. 13 - 16).

KEY PHRASES:

1. “Open wide your hearts” (vs. 2) - “Make room in your hearts for us.”
2. “You are in our hearts to die together” (vs. 3) - “You are worth dying for”
3. “Godly Sorrow” - Looks to God, and leads to repentance.
4. “Sorrow of the world” - The sorrow brings regret, but not repentance.
5. “Earnest Care” (vs. 11) - Haste, diligence, they did not waste time repenting.
6. “Clearing of yourselves” - They desired to vindicate themselves, to make things right.
7. “What Indignation” - They were angry with themselves when they realized their sin, and that they had put up with it for so long.
8. “What Fear” - Reverence toward God and His holy word.
9. “What Longing” - Titus told Paul the Corinthians “longed” to see him, they long to correct what went wrong, and they longed for a better way.
10. “What Zeal” - Their eager desire to obey God.
11. “What Avenging” - They demonstrated their willingness to punish the evil doer.

APPLICATION:

1. Make sure your motives are pure, and your purpose is to help someone before you admonish.
2. Repentance is something we must all do continually.
3. We must all examine our own repentance - does it bear the “fruit” of repentance?

QUESTIONS:

1. What promises had God given to the Corinthians?
2. Why were the Corinthians to receive Paul?
3. Illustrate the difference between godly and worldly repentance.
4. In verse 3 Paul mentions “death” first and then “life”. Is there a reason he lists them in this order?
5. How can we tell if someone’s repentance is genuine?
6. In verse 7, is Paul concerned with his personal popularity? What is he saying?
7. What is the difference between “regret” and “repentance”?
8. What went through Paul’s mind when he sent the letter?
9. In explaining “godly sorrow” read Psalms 51:1-4. How could David say “Against thee only have I sinned”? What about Uriah, and Bathsheba?
10. Do Christians need to repent?
11. Since Paul is writing to Christians, and he says their sorrow produced repentance “leading to salvation”, what does this say about the “Once saved always saved” doctrine?

LESSON NINE
2 CORINTHIANS 8: 1 - 9: 1 - 5

Paul is going to dedicate the next two chapters to the subject of “Giving”. He begins by setting before the Corinthians the liberality of the churches in Macedonia. They, while suffering great affliction and extreme poverty, had exceeded their ability in the contributions which they made for the saints (vs. 1-3). They did this, not out of compulsion, or obedience to Paul pleading with them. On the contrary, it was they who sought out Paul to receive and take charge of their gift (vs 4). However, liberality to the poor is only part of what they did, they first and foremost devoted themselves to the Lord, (vs. 5). The conduct of the Macedonians led Paul to exhort Titus to encourage the Corinthians to finish the work that they began (vs. 6).

He begs them to add this to all their other graces (vs. 7). This was a matter of advice, not a command (for you cannot command love). But Paul wanted to tell the Corinthians about all the zeal that the Macedonians possessed for this task, and he wanted them to prove their sincerity and love. Compared to what Christ had done for them, they could never do too much (vs 8 - 9). Paul knew that they were willing, for they started this collection over a year ago. But being “willing” is of no value unless “willingness” is translated into action (vs. 10 - 11). Paul was mainly concerned about their disposition, not the amount of contribution they raised (vs. 12). What the apostle wanted was some amount of equality among Christians. Not the leveling of wealth, but supplying the basic needs of others so that no one is in want (vs. 13 - 15).

He thanks God who had gave Titus so much zeal on this subject (vs. 16-17). He tells them that he is going to send three approved, trustworthy men, to make sure the gift is ready before he gets there. Paul always wanted to keep his actions above reproach, so he made sure that he surrounded himself with these faithful men who were well known among the churches. He then encourages the church to prove their love and justify his boasting of them (vs. 18 - 24).

Paul can not emphasis enough the importance of Christian giving, so he re-iterates that he is sending three men ahead of him to bring the collection for the poor to an end. Otherwise, he warns, that when he comes, and Macedonians are with him, if they find them unprepared - it would be a tremendous disgrace to them, and to Paul (9:1 - 4). But they must give cheerfully (vs. 5).

KEY PHRASES:

1. “Imploring us with much urgency” - (vs. 4) - The Macedonians insisted on doing more than Paul thought they ought to.
2. “Fellowship...Ministering” (vs 4) - fellowship is a participation. Ministering was rendering aide or help. Therefore the Macedonians wanted very badly to participate in helping the poor saints.
3. “They gave themselves first to God” (vs 5) - Not first in order of time (that goes without saying), but first in order of importance, i.e.; “above all”.
4. “Not by commandment” (vs. 8) - you can not command love or emotion.
5. “Equality” (vs. 14) - The meeting of the basic needs, not the commonization of wealth.
6. “Avoiding this...” (vs 20) - A nautical term meaning furling sail, i.e.; taking precautions in anticipation of danger.
7. “Readiness” (vs. 9:2) - The contribution was not yet ready, but they were prompt to promise full cooperation.

APPLICATION:

1. Principles of Giving: Voluntary, Proportionate, Systematic, and Above Reproach.
2. Giving Proves Our Love.
3. We MUST have a Genuine Concern for our Brethren.
4. In his letters to the Corinthians, Paul plainly tells us how we are to help needy saints.
5. How can we know we are giving properly:
 - a. When we give in spite of our circumstances (8:1-2).
 - b. When we give enthusiastically (8:3-4).
 - c. When we give as Christ gave (8:5-9).
 - d. When we give willingly (8:10-12).
 - e. When we give by faith (8:13-24).

QUESTIONS:

1. In the United States, does our definition of “Needy” differ from those in Zimbabwe? How?
2. What reasons does Paul give to motivate us to give?
3. Why is giving so important?
4. What are improper motives in giving? What are the rewards of this kind of giving?
5. When Paul brings up the Macedonian’s, is he trying to get a contest going? A rivalry? What is he trying to do then?
6. How were the Macedonian’s able to give so much, given the fact that they were extremely poor?
7. Give one example of “Giving” taught by Jesus.
8. What does Paul mean by “Equality”?
9. Explain Paul's use of Manna to illustrate his point of equality.
10. What was Paul trying to avoid?
11. Explain 8:21.
12. How were the three men “messengers of the churches” and how much authority did they have?
13. Explain 9:1 -
14. What should be our attitude in giving?

LESSON NINE
2 CORINTHIANS 9: 6 - 15

Paul now seems to turn from the specifics of the collection for the saints, to some fundamental principles regarding the manner of giving. It was not only liberality in giving that Paul was emphasizing, but cheerfulness in giving that the Lord required (vs. 6 - 7). God who commanded them to give could and would supply all their needs, and He would increase His grace toward them. They would be richer and better for what they gave (vs. 8 - 10). Paul had in mind two things; One, that the temporal sufferings of the poor saints would be relieved, and Two, but more importantly, that God would be glorified by the gratitude and mutual love between brethren, and that all would increase in righteousness (vs. 10 - 14). What are our gifts to the poor compared to the gift of Christ to us? (vs. 15).

KEY PHRASES:

1. “sows bountifully” (vs. 6) - Giving is not a loss, but is like a farmer who sows seeds and expects a harvest.
2. “the proof of this ministry” - Giving is a divine test of Christianity.
3. “them” -(vs. 13) - those for whom the contribution was collected - Saints at Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16).
“all” (vs. 13) - all Christians everywhere. ‘all’ means - “with reference to the above.”
4. “Unspeakable gift” (vs. 15) - the gift of Christ himself.
5. “God loves a cheerful giver” (vs. 7) - It means what it says! And we all want God to Love us Right?
6. Vs 9 - Giving in a real sense is an expression of righteousness.

APPLICATION:

1. Giving will Bless You (vs. 6 - 11)
 - a. We reap in measure as we sow (vs. 6).
 - b. We reap as we sow with the right motives (vs. 7).
 - c. Generous Giving is no Hazard (vs. 8).
 - d. We Share in His righteousness (vs. 9).
 - e. You are enriched (vs. 11).
2. Your Giving will Meet Needs (vs 12)
3. Your Giving will Glorify God (vs. 13).
4. Your Giving will Unite God’s People (vs. 14-15).

LESSON TEN - 2 CORINTHIANS 10: 1 - 18

Most of what has been said to this point in this epistle had been directed to those at Corinth who acknowledged Paul's Apostleship, trusted him, and followed his instructions. However in the last four chapters, he mostly addresses his opposition in the church, the false teachers and their followers. Paul will now directly answer several charges brought against him by his opponents. He admits that he is a meek and gentle man, as Christ was, and yes even insignificant (for all the glory belongs to Christ). However, he did possess authority given to him by the Lord and they would do well not to make him use it! He cautions them not to rely too much on his forbearance. He had no desire to use this authority that Christ had given to him, but he would, if necessary, in order to bring down all the opposition. He would then give them fair warning and enough time to repent before he came and had to punish their disobedience (vs. 1 - 6). They should not judge by appearances, or elevate themselves by comparing themselves to one another; for whatever they had, he had in larger measure (vs. 7-8). He had no intention of frightening them in his letters - which his opponents said were written in a tone he would not dare assume when present - for they would find that, when the occasion called for it, he could be just as bold when present as when he was absent (vs. 9 - 11). They were subject to his apostolic authority. He could in fact exercise the powers of his office over the churches which he had himself founded. He did not interfere with the other apostles where they preached, or undertake the special oversight of churches founded by others. Macedonia and Achaia were within the sphere of his operations, and he hoped to preach the gospel far beyond those limits in regions where it had never been heard (vs. 12 - 16). His confidence was not self-confidence, but confidence in God. His self-commendation amounted to nothing, unless the Lord commended him. Paul constantly felt that in himself he could do nothing, but in the Lord he could do all things (vs. 17-18).

KEY PHRASES:

1. "Paul" - means 'little'. Interesting use of his own name to emphasize he is nothing, Christ is everything.
2. "Some" - the false teachers.
3. "We Walk in the Flesh" - We are human, and we walk on this earth.
4. "Strongholds" - Fortresses.
5. "Weapons" - 1 Thess 5:8, Eph 6:11-16, Sound scriptural reasoning, teaching, and proper motives.
 - a. "Weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh" - we do not rely on physical strength, or fleshly strategy (deceit, correction, social pressure, flattery (2 Pet. 2:18), excellency of speech (1 Cor 2:1), compromising the truth (2 Cor 2:17), convert activities, lying, etc...)
6. "Mighty in God" - Paul had enough fire power and ammunition to destroy these strongholds.
7. "Arguments" Vs 5 - Imaginations, opinions, speculations, reasonings opposed to God's truth.
8. "Your obedience would be made full" (vs. 6) - When the 'some' repented then they would be complete
9. "Do you look at things according to their outward appearance?" (vs. 7) - Look at what is obvious, do not be carried away by appearances.
10. "Measure" (vs. 13) - measuring rod, a standard.

APPLICATION:

1. Paul lived with Christ as his example; meekness and gentleness.
2. Christ should always get the glory.
3. We are at war (spiritually) and we should not only have our spiritual weapons ready, but also know how to use them.
4. Do not judge someone by their outward appearance.
5. Always use Christ and His word as your standard of comparison.
6. Ask your self three questions to see if your ministry is by the will of God;
 - a. Am I where God wants me to be? (vs 13 -14).
 - b. Is God glorified in my ministry (vs. 15-17).
 - c. Will the Lord commend my work (vs. 18).

QUESTIONS:

1. List some of the weapons that Paul used.
2. What are the “high things” in verse 5? Are there people like this today? Explain.
3. What is it that will cast down these things?
4. How were they judging the qualifications of their teachers (and don’t say ‘by appearance’)?
5. What is Paul saying in verse 8?
6. To what should we measure ourselves?
7. What does Paul mean in verse 15b “as your faith increased, that we shall be enlarged”?
8. What is the Lord’s rule of boasting (Jer. 9:23-24), and who lived by this rule?
9. Who is approved and how (vs. 17)?

2 CORINTHIANS 11: 1 - 33

(It is important to remember that, beginning in chapter 10, Paul is addressing the false teachers and those who follow these enemies of Christ and Paul. The majority of the Corinthians accepted Paul and trust him. They have repented of their sins, and they now long to see Paul again to prove their love. There remained a minority however that still challenged Paul's authority. It is this group that Paul addresses). The Corinthians are in danger of being turned away from Christ by having their confidence in Paul undermined by the misrepresentations of his enemies. It is therefore necessary for him boast of himself, and all that he has been through, to re-establish his claim that he had authority over them, and to show his superiority over these "false-apostles". Yet Paul finds this is very hard thing for him to do. He will humbly apologize for his boasting and ask that they "bear with him" while he does so (v 1). He wants them to know that his boasting is done out of the purest of motives; love for them and anxiety for their welfare. He is afraid that they will be "unfaithful" to Christ their husband, and his desire is that they will remain pure for Him (vs. 2). His anxiety is justified by the readiness of the Corinthians to put up with and listen to these false teachers. He will now boast to show that he is not at all behind these "super-apostles" who had deceived them (vs. 5). They may be more gifted speakers, but in knowledge and in every thing that really pertained to the apostolic office, he was far superior to them (vs. 6). His refusal to be supported by them while he worked among them should not have been an offense to them, and of all things this ought to prove his sincerity, not disprove his Apostleship (vs. 7-9). He refused to accept any support from the Corinthians, not because he did not love them, but because he wanted to cut off all opportunity to question his sincerity. And he challenged his enemies to live as he did, which he knew they would not do (vs. 10-12). These false teachers claimed to be apostles, even though they had no more right to this office than Satan had to be regarded as and "angel of light" (vs. 13 - 15).

Beginning in verse 16, Paul will now boast - not like you and I might boast of our accomplishments, our skills, our expertise, but in his weaknesses. He seems to be saying "Since boasting among you seems to be the 'in thing to do', allow me to boast a little." But Paul boasts in all the suffering and afflictions that he has endured for their sakes and for the sake of the gospel. His language is very strong and, at times, sarcastic, as he attacks the so-called qualifications of these "super-apostles". Paul argues the proof of his Apostleship from the standpoint of pedigree (vs 22), persecution (vs. 23-25a), peril (vs. 25b - 27), and pressure (vs. 28-33). In short the branded body of Paul was proof of his Apostleship. His critics had not one scar on their bodies. In all things however, Paul makes it clear that it was not his skill, talent, strength, or courage that saw him through all these afflictions. Christ deserves the glory! And the Corinthians ought to know that only a man under the direction from God, and controlled by His providence could have endured what he has gone through.

KEY PHRASES:

1. "Bear with me" (vs. 1) - It is necessary that Paul tell the truth about his work to defend himself against his enemies.
2. "Betrothed" (vs. 2) - Actually part of the marriage itself, and just as binding.
3. "Jealous" (vs. 2) - Zealous.
4. "Simplicity" (vs. 3) - Singleness, Single-Hearted Devotion.
5. "Chiefest Apostles" (vs. 5) - These false apostles that invaded Corinth.

6. “Robbed other churches” (vs. 8) - Paul did not take support from Corinth, he accepted money from other churches to support him while at Corinth.

7. “Transforming themselves” (vs 13) - Disguise, masquerade.

8. “Not after the Lord” (vs 17) - These words are still inspired, but as he boasts he is being unlike the Lord. In normal circumstances self praise in not becoming a Christian, but these circumstances are not normal.

APPLICATION:

1. What is your level of devotion and commitment to God? Be prepared to discuss what God requires of us in the area of commitment.

2. The example of the Bereans (Acts 17:11) should ever be part of our lives so that we can avoid what happened to the Corinthians. They failed to test these “ministers of righteousness”.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Paul “Boast”?

2. What role did Paul play in the “betrothal”?

3. Explain the difference between “betrothal” and “marriage” and when do these things occur for the Christian?

4. Explain Paul’s illustration of “Eve” in verse 3.

5. How does Satan trick us today?

6. Who are the “Chiefest apostles” in verse 5?

7. Was Paul not a good speaker (vs. 6)?

8. Explain why Paul describes his escape from Damascus? How does this fit in the context?

LESSON TWELVE -2 CORINTHIANS 12: 1 - 21

Positioned between his escape from Damascus and tremendous persecution and his humbling “thorn in the flesh” Paul recounts his revelations and visions. He would not refer to what he had done, but what God had done. He had been count up in the “third heaven” and received communications and revelations which he was not permitted to make known. This was the climax of all the evidence he had given thus far as to prove his Apostleship (vs. 1-6). With this extraordinary proof of divine favor from God, Paul was given a “thorn in the flesh”. Even though he asked three times that the Lord remove this pain from him, it would not be taken away. This was given to him to keep him truly humble. Instead of taking it away, he was told that God’s grace was sufficient, and for this Paul rejoiced (vs. 7-10). This reference to his personal experiences was very painful to him. He had been forced to speak of himself as he had done; for his external evidence should have been enough to convince them that he was an immediate messenger of Christ (vs. 11-12). They themselves were proof that he truly was an apostle. They were not at all inferior to other churches founded by other apostles. If they were inferior at all it was because he refused to take money from them. This he could not help. He was determined to continue on this same course - that he would not receive anything from their hands (vs. 13-18). All this was of little account in the final analysis however. It matter very little what they thought of him. God is the only competent and final judge. His fear was that when he reached Corinth he would be forced to appear as a judge, that if he did not find them how they should be (pure and holy) then he would have to assume the role of the reprover (vs.. 19-21).

KEY PHRASES:

1. “*Not Expedient*” - There is nothing to be gained by it.
2. “*Visions and Revelations*” - Visions are seen, revelations are heard.
3. “*Third heaven*” - The Jews believed in three heavens;
 - The air or atmosphere (Gen 2::1,19).
 - The firmament containing the sun, moon, and stars (Dt. 18:3, Matt. 24:29).
 - God’s dwelling place (Matt 5:12, 16, 45, 48).
4. “*Paradise*” - Persian for “walled garden” belonging to the king of Persia.
5. “*Thorn*” - Can be translated ‘cross’. A stake on which victims were impaled.
6. “*Buffet*” - To beat, to strike with a fist.
7. “*My grace is sufficient for thee*” - Paul was given no explanations, only a promise.
8. “*Power made perfect in weakness*” - God’s power works wonders when we are incapable.
9. “*Signs, wonders, and mighty deeds*” - Not three classes of miracles but three characteristics of genuine miracles.
10. “*The third time*” - (1) The founding trip, (2) The “Painful visit”, (3) The upcoming visit.

OUTLINE:

1. Paul had three experiences from God (1-10).
 - Glory - God honored him (1-6).
 - Goodness - God humbled him (7-8).
 - Grace - God helped him (9-10).
2. Paul shames them
 - For their lack of appreciation, or commendation (11-18).
 - For their lack of consecration (19-21).

APPLICATION:

1. How do you view suffering?
2. Satan buffets us to get us discouraged so that we will give up. God buffets us to strengthen us, humble us, and so that we will trust in Him.
3. If Christ and His cause is truly our highest goal, how could we not glory in that which advances His cause; even if it means our suffering.
4. To “bear our cross” not only leads us “home” but it also leads us towards pain and death.

QUESTIONS:

1. Define (on a separate sheet of paper) the following; strife, jealousy, wrath’s, factions, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults, uncleanness, fornication’s, lasciviousness.
2. What caused Paul to go from asking God to remove the thorn, to praising for it?
3. What is the “thorn in the flesh” (remember the context)?
4. Does Paul tell us what it was in verse 10 (Therefore....)?
5. Why does Paul change from the first person, in chapter 11, to the third person, in chapter 12:2-4, and then back to the first person in 12:6?
6. Why was Paul not permitted to tell what happened in Paradise?
7. Who was the source of Paul’s suffering (vs 7)?
8. What does it mean “My grace is sufficient for thee”?
9. Does verse 14 say that children do not have to take care of their children? Explain.
10. If not accepting money was such a problem in Corinth, why did Paul not change his mind and accept some support from them?

LESSON THIRTEEN
2 CORINTHIANS 13: 1 - 14

The false teachers had accused Paul of being “bold by letters when absent, but humble and meek when present “ (10:10). Evidently they considered Paul to be bluffing when he hinted at threats of punishing the impenitent. In this chapter Paul reminds them that he is coming to them again and that those whose guilt can be established by witlessness will not be spared!! He will exercise his apostolic authority in punishing the offenders (vs. 1-2). If they wanted proof, Paul was going to give it to them. Although weak in himself, he had power given to him by Christ. Just as Christ appeared weak when crucified, He showed divine power when raised from the dead. So also Paul in one sense is weak, and in another sense is full of power (vs. 3-4). To avoid this punishment, Paul encourages them to examine and test themselves to prove that Christ lived in them. He says “you should know this, unless you are disqualified (a reprobate) (vs. 5).

Paul trusted that they would acknowledge him as an apostle, and that he sought to do them good (vs. 6-7). Paul’s prayer for the Corinthians was that [a] They would do no evil. It wasn’t really important whether Paul appeared to succeed or fail, but that they would do what is right. This power was given to him, and could be exercised only for the truth. (vs. 8). [b] Paul prayed that they would be perfected, or complete, meaning restored (vs.9) [c] Paul prayed that they would understand his purpose in writing to them; he did not want to deal sharply with them, but he would because the authority was given to him to build them up, not to cast them down (vs. 10).

Paul then concludes this wonderful letter by encouraging them to become complete, to be of good comfort, and to live in peace. If they did this then God will be with them. What a tremendous encouragement for us. Amen.

KEY PHRASES:

1. “Every word will be established” - Either the charges against Paul will be cleared, or the charges against the false teachers will be proved by at least two or three witnesses. Most likely Paul means the latter.
2. “We are also weak in Him, but shall live with Him by the power of God...” - Just as Christ appeared weak when crucified, Paul will not put aside his weaknesses of his patience, and forbearance and will exercise his power and authority toward them.
3. “Christ is in you...” - (vs. 5) - Despite their sins (of some) Christ was still with the Corinthian church, unless the entire church had become disqualified.
4. “In the faith...” (vs. 5) - Not referring to that faith prompts one to become a Christian, but the faith of a Christian.
5. “No that we should appear approved...” - What Paul wanted was that everyone would repent. If this were to happen, Paul’s honor would not be dramatically demonstrated, but he would come to them once again as his kind, patient, tolerant self.
6. “...but for the truth” - Paul would only exercise his authority (miraculous power) for the truth. Miracles were not to impress, they were to heal, they were to be used for the purpose of confirming the truth.
7. “Complete” - perfection, restored.

APPLICATION:

1. No accusation against anyone should be accepted based on the word of only one person .
2. We need to constantly examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith.
3. Church discipline should never be looked forward to, but at the same time it can not be ignored.
4. Properly exercised church discipline actually builds the body up.

QUESTIONS:

1. In verse 11 when Paul says “be of one mind” does he say we should all agree on everything? What does he mean?
2. Does Paul believe in a three person God Head? What verse shows how Paul believes?
3. What does Paul mean in verse 7 when he says “though we may seem disqualified”?
4. When Paul tells the Corinthians to examine themselves to see if they are “in the faith”, what does he mean?