

2 Corinthians – An INTRODUCTION

Background on Corinth:

- a major commercial center of Greece; regional Roman Capital of Greece
- its location determined that it would be prosperous (on Isthmus of Corinth) four mile stretch of land, alternative to treacherous journey around Southern tip of Greece. Small boats dragged on sledges. Was a wealthy boom town
- second only to Rome in terms of known info / reconstruction
- population heterogeneous (Romans, Greeks, Jews). Paul's audience predominantly Gentile Christians.

Paul was in Corinth after Jews had been expelled from Rome (49AD), probably 50-52AD, with the writing of this letter thereafter (53-54AD).

Corinthian Correspondence

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. 1 Cor. 5:9 | The Stern Letter |
| 2. Our 1st Cor. | First Corinthians |
| 3 Alluded to in 2 Cor. 1-2 | The Letter of Much Tears |
| 4. Our 2nd Cor. | Second Corinthians |

The Churches at Corinth

- Met in villas (homes) – maximum of 40-50 people.
- If assumed were 4-5 house churches, would be talking about 200-250 believers in a city of 50,000.
- Indications of Jews in Corinthian churches - 7:18, 9:8, 10 appears Paul assumed enough Jews in the church to interpret to Gentiles when he spoke of Jewish matters.

Influence of Pagan Religions

Asclepion god of physical and emotional healing

- well or sacred spring of healing
- "health resort" place of rest and restoration
- library, garden, gym, baths, public dining
- if felt healed, made plaster cast of body parts for display -- lots of
- breasts and genitals.

Aphrodites goddess of love, beauty, fertility & sea farers.

- located on top of the Acro Corinth (1800 ft above city)
- patron goddess of prostitutes
- temple prostitution
- problem for Paul -- pagan religions made sex outside of marriage
- respectable as part of religious worship.

Hera Argapa goddess of marriage

- temple near marketplace -- agora
- generally where married woman went.
- Probably prayed for husbands to remain reasonably faithful.

Apollo / Oracle of Delphi 50km from Corinth

- a person would bring a question about life to the oracle. An interpreter would take the question to the oracle (always a woman). Ecstatic outbursts, etc. Interpreter then brought back message -- believed to be prophecy. The view of the Corinthians that: Prophecy = Ecstatic Speech + Interpretation may have influenced their view of tongues and prophecy in the church.

The two letters to the Corinthian church that are found in the Bible are very different, with different tones and focuses.

1 Corinthians

Practical

Focuses on the character of the church

Deals w/ ?'s on marriage, freedom, spiritual gifts, and order in the church

Paul instructs in matters of the church's well-being.

Contains advice to help the church combat The pagan influences of the wicked city of of Corinth.

2 Corinthians

Personal

Focuses on Paul as he bares his soul and tells of his love for them.

Deals w/ problems of false teachers, whereby Paul defends his authority & the truth of his message.

Paul give his testimony because he knows that acceptance of his advice is vital to the church's well-being.

Contains testimony to help the church combat the havoc caused by false teachers.

Since Paul's first letter, the Corinthian church had been swayed by false teachers who stirred the people against Paul. They claimed he was fickle, proud, unimpressive in appearance and speech, dishonest, and unqualified as an apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul sent Titus to Corinth to deal with these difficulties, and upon his return, rejoiced to hear of the Corinthian's change of heart. Paul wrote this letter to express his thanksgiving for the repentant majority, and to appeal to the rebellious minority to accept his authority. Throughout this book he defends his conduct, character, and calling as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

SOURCE:
Talk Thru the Bible
Bruce Wilkerson & Ken Boa

Focus	Explanation of Paul's Ministry			Collection for the Saints		Vindication of Paul's Apostleship				
	1:1	2:13	2:14-6:11	7:16	8:1	8:6-8:7	9:15	10:1-10:18	11:1-12:13	12:14-13:14
Divisions	Paul's Explanation of His Change of Plans Paul's Philosophy of Ministry Paul's Exhortations to the Corinthians			Example of the Macedonians	Exhortation to the Corinthians	Paul Answers His Accusers	Paul Defends His Apostleship	Paul Announces His Upcoming Visit		
Topics	Character of Paul			Collection for Saints		Credentials of Paul				
	Ephesus to Macedonia: Change of Itinerary			Macedonia: Preparation for Visit to Corinth		To Corinth: Imminence of Paul's Visit				
Place	Written in Macedonia									
Time	c. A.D. 56									

Paul's Christian life was characterized by unflagging dedication to the cause of Christ in the face of suffering. He had a clear sense of divine calling, a strong love for his converts, an unshakable conviction and authority, and a constant spirit of dependence upon Christ in all that he did.

Romans—This most systematic of all the Epistles traces the story of the gospel from condemnation to justification to sanctification to glorification. It explains God's program for Jews and Gentiles and concludes with practical exhortations for the outworking of righteousness among believers,

First Corinthians—This epistle of correction and reproof firmly handles the problems of factions, immorality, lawsuits, and abuse of the Lord's Supper that were destroying the testimony of the Corinthians. Paul also responds to questions raised by the Corinthians on marriage, meat offered to idols, public worship, and the Resurrection.

Second Corinthians—Paul wrote this very personal letter to defend his apostolic character, call, and credentials in view of a recent rebellion against him that was led by certain false apostles. Paul was comforted by the repentance of the majority but concerned about the unrepentant minority.

Galatians—This polemic epistle refutes the error of legalism that had suddenly ensnared the churches of Galatia. Paul uses a biographical, theological, and moral argument to demonstrate the superiority of grace over law and to magnify the life of liberty over legalism and license.

Ephesians—The first three chapters of Ephesians are one of the most sublime and profound texts in the Bible because they extol the believer's position in Christ. The remaining three chapters exhort believers to maintain a spiritual walk that is based upon their spiritual wealth.

Philippians—In this joyous letter of affection and gratitude for the Philippians Paul speaks of the latest developments in his imprisonment and urges his readers to a lifestyle of unity, humility, and godliness. He also warns them about the error of legalism.

Colossians—This may be the most Christocentric epistle in the New Testament because in it Paul demonstrates the preeminence of Christ in creation, in redemption, and the relationships of life. The Christian is complete in Christ and has no need of other systems of speculation or religious observances.

First Thessalonians -The first three chapters give a summary of Paul's ministry with the Thessalonians. He commends them for their faith and reminds them of his motives and concerns on their behalf. Chapters 4-5 exhort them to purity of life and teaches them about the coming of the Lord,

Second Thessalonians -The Thessalonians were arriving at incorrect conclusions about the day of the Lord and they were becoming anxious about their persecution. Paul explains what must precede this awesome event and exhorts them to remain diligent.

First Timothy—This letter is Paul's leadership manual for his entrusted servant who was put in charge of the work in Ephesus. In it, Paul counsels Timothy on the problems of false teachers, public prayer, the role of women, the requirements for elders and deacons, and miscellaneous duties..

Second Timothy—Paul's last letter is a combat manual which is designed to build up and encourage Timothy to boldness and steadfastness in view of the hardships of the spiritual warfare. Paul knew his earthly course was over and in his last recorded testimony he urges Timothy on.

Titus—Titus was left by Paul in Crete to oversee the work there and appoint elders. This conduct manual lists the requirements for elders and instructs Titus in his duties relative to the various groups in the churches..

Philemon -Onesimus, Philemon's runaway slave, had become a believer under Paul's ministry and now he was being sent back to his master with this letter. In it, Paul appeals to Philemon to forgive Onesimus and to regard him no longer as a slave but as a brother in Christ.

1 Corinthians Summary

Transforming "MERE" believers into MIRRORS of Christ / IMMITATORS of Paul

Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly —*mere* infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. ³ You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? ⁴ For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not *mere* human beings? 1 Cor 3:1-4 NIV

Therefore I urge you to *imitate* me. Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. 1 Cor 4:16, 11:1 NIV

Chapter	Verses	Characteristics of MERE believers
1	10	Divisions
2	5	Faith rests on the wisdom of men
3	3	Worldly, jealous, quarreling
4	6-7	Arrogant Pride
5	1-2	Tolerance of the unacceptable / Pride
6	5-6	Poor examples to unbelievers
7	5	Giving Satan opportunity / Lacking self-control
8	1,7	Self-focused, not concerned for brothers & sisters in Christ
9	3	Questioning authority of the leader(s)
10	5-6, 23	Ignoring examples of bad behavior / choices in the past. Seeking their own good & not that of others.
11	16-19	Contentious, divisions, humiliating the less fortunate
12	1-2, 31	Gifts for pride & personal benefit, not the proper attitude
13	11	Still acting like immature children, not adults
14	20	Thinking like children
15	1-2, 12	Vain (useless faith) - Jesus' resurrection did not affect their walk
16	1-2	All talk, but no action

Verses	Characteristics of MIRROR believers
17,31	Proclaim the Gospel - a Crucified, Resurrected Messiah Boast about the Lord
2	Christ & Him Crucified Proclaimed
5-7,10-11	Servants of the Lord, who gets all the credit Wise builders on the foundation of Christ
6-7	Trustworthy faithful servants of Christ
9-11	Careful in associations, making a difference in the world Making choices that further the message of the Gospel
12, 18-20	Flee Immorality to be Temples of the Holy Spirit
10-11	Remain faithful in relationships
9	Sacrifice choices in favor of encouraging others Do all for the sake of the Gospel, reaching out
19-22, 24	Run (live life) to get the prize.
11-14	Learn from example, heed warning, endure temptation Do all for God's glory
25-31	Remember what Jesus has done for you, practice discernment & judge your life by the standard of Christ.
7, 11, 27	Recognizes spiritual gifts received are for the good of the Body of Christ and exercises them for God's glory
4-8	Seek to exhibit the perfect love of Jesus in life
1	Follow way of Jesus' love and proclaim what Jesus has done in their life.
58	Keep the resurrection hope after this life in mind in order to stand firm and abound in the work of the Lord in this life.
13-14	Remain on their guard, standing firm in the faith, courageous and strong, doing everything in love

1 Cor 4:16 "Therefore I exhort you, be *imitators* of me."

		Bible Reference
I	"I" will strive to Love like Jesus	ch 13; 16:14
M	"Mere" Living is no longer an option	3:1-4; book theme
I	"I" will proclaim Jesus in my life by action and word.	9:19-23
T	"Temple" of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I will glorify God with my body	6:19-20
A	"Always Abounding" in the Work of the Lord, knowing that my labor is not in vain	15:58
T	"Temptation" - I will flee from it	10:12-14
O	"Order" in the church body to build up and encourage	14:40
R	"Resurrection" of Jesus - remember & maintain an eternal prespective	ch 15
S	"Spirit / Spiritual Gifts" - the gift(s) we're given are for the common good	12:4-11

DISCUSSION

Why are we comforted? (1:3-7) _____

Why do we go through hardships? (1:9) _____

What does God do in the midst of trials (1:9) _____

What was Paul's boast? (1:12) _____

What does it mean to live in holiness and sincerity? (1:12) _____

What has God done for us? (1:21-22) _____

DISCUSSION

How should we deal gracefully and truthfully with people? (2:1-11) _____

Why is forgiveness so important? _____

How might Satan “outwit” us in this issue Paul was addressing? _____

What did Paul mean for us in this discussion of fragrances? (2:14-17) _____

DISCUSSION

How were the people Paul's "letters"? (3:1-3) _____

Think about the difference between "the letter kills", "but the Spirit gives life"(3:4-6) _____

Is it wrong to be bold? What gives us boldness? (3:12) _____

What role does the Spirit play in our walk? _____

DISCUSSION

Whose ministry is this? (4:1) _____

How does this shape our thought /actions in this ministry? (4:2-6) _____

Who is this life and ministry about? _____

What does the message of grace produce? (4:15) _____

How should these shape our lives and ministry? (4:16-18) _____

DISCUSSION

Explain verse 1, any significance we should take away from our bodies being described as a tent? _____

What purpose? (see v.5) _____

Explain Paul's confidence and thoughts on this life and the life to come in your words. (5:6-10) _____

What is the conviction and heart of a believer? (5:14-15) _____

What is true of a believer? (5:17) _____

What roles do we now play? What is our commission? (5:18-21) _____

DISCUSSION

What would it mean to receive God's grace in vain? (v.1) _____

What was Paul willing to do for and sacrifice for the gospel so not to be a stumbling block to others?(6:3-10)

Any challenges for us? _____

How should we seek to apply these teachings and still be missional and evangelistic? (6:14-18) _____

DISCUSSION

How do we “perfect holiness out of reverence for God”? (7:1) _____

Talk about, think about differences between godly and worldly sorrow. (7:8-12) _____

Think about Titus’ role in this chapter. How might it apply to us today? _____

Note how Paul talked about the church in this chapter, how might that have helped them? _____

2 Corinthians Ch 8 – “Giving Guidance – Part 1”

REFLECT (on the Text / Re-Read)

Key Word (s) / Thought (s) _____

Key Verse / Why? _____

Questions _____

EXPLORE (note thoughts, observations, insight gained, etc., in this chapter)

APPLICATION (knowing / understanding this should result in...)

NEWER APPRECIATION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST _____

DISCUSSION (what can we learn / observe together)

Giving is _____

v1 _____

v6 _____

v7 _____

v9 _____

Follow the Example of the Macedonians (Northern region of Greece):

Philippi (Phil 4:13-19) _____

Berea (Acts 17:10-11) _____

Thessalonica (1 Thes 2:13-14) _____

v7 Abound In ... (Express in your own words as you think about 1 Cor (e.g., ch 13-14) and previous chapters of 2 Cor.

Faith _____

Utterance _____

Knowledge _____

Earnestness _____

Love _____

This Gracious Work also _____

v8 Motivation for Giving _____

v9 A Great Example to Follow _____

v10-12 Intentions _____

v13-15 Desired Outcome _____

v13-23 Assurances Provided of Good Stewardship _____

v24 Proof _____

2 Corinthians Ch 9 – “Giving Guidance – Part 2”

REFLECT (on the Text / Re-Read)

Key Word (s) / Thought (s) _____

Key Verse / Why? _____

Questions _____

EXPLORE (note thoughts, observations, insight gained, etc., in this chapter)

APPLICATION (knowing / understanding this should result in...)

NEWER APPRECIATION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST _____

DISCUSSION (what can we learn / observe together)

v1-4 "Macedonian" Peer Pressure (Achaia – Southern Region of Greece where Corinth was located):

v5 Previously Promised / Not Affected by Covetousness / Letting Go

More to consider on coveting:

Ex 20:17 _____

1 Tim 6:6-11 _____

James 2:15-18 _____

Guiding Principles for Giving:

v6 _____

v7 _____

See also Deut 16:17 _____

v8, 10-11 _____

See Psalm 112 _____

v12-14 The Ripple Effect _____

v15 _____

Someone once told me the pastor of the church they formerly attended would say at the offering time... "And Lord, Bless Those Who Cannot Give." Reflect on the guidance you've seen in the 2 Cor ch 8-9 and evaluate the pastor's prayer.

2 Corinthians Ch 10 – Paul’s Authority

REFLECT (on the Text / Re-Read)

Key Word (s) / Thought (s) _____

Key Verse / Why? _____

Questions _____

EXPLORE (note thoughts, observations, insight gained, etc., in this chapter)

APPLICATION (knowing / understanding this should result in...)

NEWER APPRECIATION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST _____

DISCUSSION (what can we learn / observe together)

In the chapter Paul begins defending his authority as an Apostle of Jesus. Look for Principles to Apply for living in Christ and Sharing His Good News:

v1 _____

v3-4 _____

v5 _____

What thought(s) should you take captive? _____

v10 _____

v12 _____

v13-16 _____

v17 _____

v18 _____

DISCUSSION (what can we learn / observe together)

v2 Paul's Desire for them _____

Paul's Concern for them

v3-4 _____

v12-15 _____

Criticism of Paul by the Corinthians v6-10

Paul's Criticism of the Corinthians v16-21

Paul's Credentials

v22 Birthright _____

v23-27 Suffering Servant of Christ _____

(How do we reconcile this with the claims of the "Health, Wealth and Prosperity" Gospel?)

v28 And if the above wasn't enough, there was also _____

v30 His Summary _____

(To be elaborated on in chapter 12)

2 Corinthians Ch 12 – Strength Thru Weakness

REFLECT (on the Text / Re-Read)

Key Word (s) / Thought (s) _____

Key Verse / Why? _____

Questions _____

EXPLORE (note thoughts, observations, insight gained, etc., in this chapter)

APPLICATION (knowing / understanding this should result in...)

NEWER APPRECIATION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST _____

DISCUSSION (what can we learn / observe together)

v1-4 Further Credentials _____

v5-6 Proper Boasting _____

v7-8 An Antidote for Boasting _____

v9-10 God's Greater Purpose _____

Have you found this true in your life as well? _____

The Heart of a True Apostle

v12 _____

v14-15 _____

v17-18 _____

v19 _____

v20-21 _____

2 Corinthians Ch 13 – Final Encouragement & Challenges

REFLECT (on the Text / Re-Read)

Key Word (s) / Thought (s) _____

Key Verse / Why? _____

Questions _____

EXPLORE (note thoughts, observations, insight gained, etc., in this chapter)

APPLICATION (knowing / understanding this should result in...)

NEWER APPRECIATION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST _____

DISCUSSION (what can we learn / observe together)

v4 _____

v5 _____

v9 _____

v10 _____

v11 _____

2 Corinthians Ch 13 – Book Review

REFLECT (note your keyword / thought / theme from each chapter)

Ch1 _____

Ch2 _____

Ch3 _____

Ch4 _____

Ch5 _____

Ch6 _____

Ch7 _____

Ch8 _____

Ch9 _____

Ch10 _____

Ch11 _____

Ch12 _____

Ch13 _____

Based on the above observations, note Common Themes / Problems / Concerns found in this Letter

Any Bible Verse from this Letter to take with you _____

Personal Life APPLICATION Challenges from this letter (knowing / understanding this should result in...)

2 Cor 1:12 "For our proud CONFIDENCE is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you." (Confidence also used 9 other times in the Letter)

		Bible Reference
C	"Comfort" in Christ	ch 1 & other
O	"Obedience"	9:13
N	"Not to Lose Heart"	ch 4, esp v1 & 16
F	"Faith not sight is how we Walk"	5:6-10
I	I am strong [thru Christ] when I am weak [myself]"	12:9-10
D	"Delivered" from / over to death	1:10; 4:11
E	"Encourage" each other. Live in Harmony and peace.	13:11 (see also ch7)
N	A "New" Creation with the Word & Ministry of Reconciliation	5:17-21
C	"Captivate" Thoughts in Obedience to Christ	10:5
E	"Examine" Yourselves	13:5

2 Corinthians - The Enemy who instills "anti" confidence

		Bible Reference
S	"Scheming Serpent"	2:11 & 11:3
A	Assistants "Appear as Apostles" of Christ - <i>Disguised</i>	11:13,15
T	"Tormenting Tool" of God to keep us from becoming Proud	12:7
A	"Appears as Angel" of Light - <i>Disguised</i>	11:14
N	"Never" what he appears to be (Disguised) and "Never" will win if we rely on God ("... we thought we would Never live through it... we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God...)	1:7-9