

Bible Study on the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians

Introduction: This letter was written by Paul in about **55 AD** when Paul was in Macedonia (**2:13; 7:5**). It was addressed to the Church in Corinth and to the Christians throughout the province of Achaia the territory of Greece south of Macedonia (**1:1**). Three matters seem to dominate this letter.

1) Paul made it clear that he intended to make his third visit (**13:1**) to the Church in Corinth. He gave reasons for a change in his itinerary to make one longer visit rather than two shorter ones. This letter was sent to prepare the Corinthian believers for Paul's visit. Paul hoped to find them having done what they could to deal with much sin which was still prevalent in the Church. He did not want to have a painful visit that he had made previously. He warned the believers that he would exercise discipline where necessary. He meant business to come and deal with false teaching that had deceived many of the Corinthian believers. Paul's desire was to come to build up the Church and not to tear it down so the believers could move forward to a greater degree of spiritual maturity.

2) In **2Corinthians chapters 8 & 9** Paul had given encouragement to the Corinthian believers to complete a collection in preparation for his arrival. The collection was to support the needy saints in Jerusalem. The brethren in Macedonia had shown by example sacrificial giving for the Church in Jerusalem (**8:1-6**). Paul had sent Titus with another Christian brother to oversee the collection being completed honourably and to show that Paul was not seeking any financial gain for himself.

3) This letter has shown proof of Paul's ministry as a genuine apostle called of God. There had been many opponents or adversaries that contended against Paul's ministry as an apostle and did not believe his teaching of the word of God could be trusted. Much of **chapters 9 to 13** show vindication of Paul's apostle ship. Paul warned the Corinthian believers of being deceived by false apostles who may appear to have been convincing in their oratory and arguments. He knew that another gospel was being preached leading to another Jesus being presented under the influence of another spirit. He showed by the testimony of his own life of suffering and revelations he had of the Lord Jesus Christ along with the believers in Corinth being the fruit of the ministry. He had proved he was a true apostle who had faithfully given himself continually to see the Corinthian believers grow to know Jesus Christ personally for themselves.

Paul had written a severe letter to the Church before this one which he had done so with much heaviness of heart. However when he was able to meet up with Titus, a faithful Gentile believer working with Paul, he was reassured that many of the Corinthian believers had taken to heart what he had written in that letter (some say 1Corinthians but more likely to be a letter that had been lost). There had been genuine repentance amongst many of the Corinthian believers (**2:3-4; 7:5-16**). Titus had been to Corinth and may well have read out this letter publicly in the churches in Corinth.

In response Paul had produced this letter to bring much encouragement. The letter was deeply personal where we come closer to the heart of Paul than in any other of his writings. His love for the Church in Corinth is so evident in longing to see the Corinthian believers become faithful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Whilst there have been differences of opinion amongst theologians whether this was originally one letter or two put together, the early Church fathers had known this letter in its present form. The author of these notes refers anyone interested to read from commentators about Paul's possible letters to the Corinthians. This issue will not be pursued any further here.

May we all be challenged by this letter which needs careful study. May the message of this letter enable you to seek to live a righteous and holy life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS

Chapters 1-4

- Q.1)** What can we learn from the greeting Paul has shown to the saints in **1:1-2**? Compare this greeting with those at the beginning of other letters written by Paul.
- Q.2)** Show the way God cares for us in times of tribulation. See **1:3-7**.
- Q.3)** Consider the troubles Paul and team experienced in **1:8-10**.
- Q.4)** Show the importance of prayer in **1:11**.
- Q.5)** Read again **1:2-11**. What benefits do we receive through suffering?
- Q.6)** Show the evidence of Paul's care for the Corinthian believers. Read **1:12-14,23-24; 2:1-4**.
- Q.7)** Why did Paul change his plans regarding another visit to Corinth? Read **1:15-24**.
- Q.8)** What do we know of the promises of God in **1:18-22**? Secondly, what three things has God done in the Corinthian believers, which is applicable to all believers in Jesus Christ.
- Q.9)** Look again carefully at **1:3-11**. Why are we called to suffer? See also **James 1:2-4; 2 Timothy 3:12**.
- Q.10)** Read **2:1-4,12-13**. Why did Paul move on from Troas even though he had an open door there to preach the gospel?
- Q.11)** How did Paul wish the believers in Corinth to treat a Christian who had repented with genuine sorrow in **2:5-11**?
- Q.12)** Read carefully again **2:5-11**. How can we stop Satan from taking advantage of us?
- Q.13)** Why are we able to touch the lives of unbelievers and to see some of them saved through passing on to them the gospel? Read carefully **2:14-3:6**.
- Q.14)** Why was it not necessary for Paul and his team to commend themselves and why they needed no letter of commendation? See **3:1-6**.
- Q.15)** Why is the ministry of the Spirit much more glorious than the ministry known in the Old Testament?
- Q.16)** Why do we have confidence in the gospel of Christ? See **4:1-7**.
- Q.17)** Show the troubles we could face like Paul and team experienced. Why was it worth it to go through these difficulties? Read **4:8-18**.

Chapters 5-7

- Q.1)** What gives us hope even though our present bodies will die? Read **5:1-8**.
- Q.2)** What should we be doing whilst still in this present body? See **5:9-11**. Compare with **Romans 14:9-13** and **1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 9:24-27**.
- Q.3)** Why do we no longer live for ourselves? See **5:12-16**.
- Q.4)** What has changed for all of us who are in Jesus Christ? Read **5:17-21**. There are three important things in these verses that we should know.
- Q.5)** Describe how Paul carried out his ministry in **6:1-10**. Bear in mind his suffering and the Christian graces that show Paul was a faithful servant of God. Is this ministry taking place in your life?
- Q.6)** Show the love Paul had for believers in Corinth in **6:11-13**. What was the problem that many of the Corinthian believers had shown and is this true in the Church today?
- Q.7)** Why is scripture so emphatic about separation from unbelievers? Read carefully **6:14-7:1**.
- Q.8)** Read again **6:14-7:1**. How are we to live in a right relationship with Jesus Christ? See also **Ezra chapters 9 & 10; Nehemiah 9:2; 10:28; 13:1-9, 23-31; Romans 13:14; 2 Peter 3:18**.
- Q.9)** Read carefully **7:2-9, 11-16**. What is known of Paul's deep affection for the Corinthian believers?
- Q.10)** Show the evidence of repentance amongst the Corinthian believers. See **7:6-16**.
- Q.11)** What do we know of Titus' report during his visit to Corinth? See **7:6-7, 13-15**. Show the love that Titus had for the Corinthian believers.

Chapters 8-10

Q.1) What was known of the churches of Macedonia regarding their giving? Read **8:1-5**.

Q.2) How did Paul exhort the Church in Corinth to give? Show any spiritual principles in giving in the text. Read carefully **8:6-15**.

Q.3) What do we know of Titus and the two other brethren in their desire to encourage the Church in Corinth in their giving? See **8:16-24**

Q.4) How did Paul make sure the gift from Corinth was collected honourably?
Read again **8:16-24**.

Q.5) Read carefully **9:1-5** and show the evidence of the Church in Corinth being an example of giving. Why did Paul take precautions to make sure the Corinthian believers were giving honourably?

Q.6) Look carefully at **9:6-15** and consider how God wants us to give. Show what happens to us when we give willingly.

Q.7) Read **10:1-6**. What are we taught about spiritual warfare? See also **Ephesians 6:10-20**.

Q.8) Read carefully **10:7-12**. Show how the false teachers were trying to work to devalue Paul's ministry. Consider the way Paul defends the ministry which he believes God has shown him to carry out.

Q.9) Read **10:13-18**. Can you see how God measures a true spiritual ministry? There are at least three questions you should ask if you wish to be doing God's will. The questions can be seen in the text.

Chapters 11-13

Q.1) Why did Paul show such "godly jealousy" for the believers in Corinth?
Read **11:1-4, 12-15, 19-20**.

Q.2) What was known of Paul's apostolic ministry in **11:1-21**? See also **1Corinthians 9:1-23**. How did Paul's way of life differ from that of the false apostles?

Q.3) List the ways Paul suffered in serving Jesus Christ. Read **11:22-33**. Why did Paul share these experiences?

Q.4) What were the revelations Paul had of the Lord and why did Paul think it was necessary to boast of his experiences? Read **12:1-10**.

Q.5) Read carefully again **12:1-10**. What should be our attitude in dealing with physical weaknesses in view of how Paul responded to his physical weaknesses? Consider what was known as the "thorn in the flesh." What did Paul learn in times of trial? Are we learning to understand trial?

Q.6) Show Paul's justification of being an apostle in **12:11-13**.

Q.7) Show how Paul, Titus and another brother were ministering to the Corinthian believers in **12:14-21**. What did Paul seem to fear most?

Q.8) In this final chapter what is the attitude Paul had towards sin in the Church? If he was present in Corinth how would he have dealt with such sin? Read **13:1-10**.

Q.9) What can we learn from the final exhortations and blessings Paul has written to the Church in Corinth in **13:11-14**?

Q.10) Consider carefully if time allows the final benediction in **13:14**. Is it true to say there is One God but three persons where there is a perfect Tri-unity or Trinity? It is helpful to read **Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19**.

Miscellaneous Questions

The following questions encourage extensive study for the bible student who is prepared to spend time. That does not mean to say a house group should avoid these questions. Each question can be used and discussed in group study. Some preparation beforehand is encouraged to help answer the questions and contribute to what could be a healthy discussion. Some scriptures are given to help answer the questions, but not exhaustive for other references missed out should be included where necessary. The spaces between the questions can be used to make short notes and/or add anymore biblical references.

- Q.1)** Read through this letter and consider what is known of who God is. The following references are helpful: **1:3-7, 20-22; 2:14; 3:17-18; 4:14, 5:17-21; 9:7; 11:31; 12:1-10; 13:14.**
- Q.2)** Make a list of the key words in this letter that help us to understand the message from this letter e.g. comfort, consolation, gospel, suffering.
- Q.3)** What does this letter teach us on suffering as seen in the sufferings of Paul. It is helpful to read **1:3-11; 2:1-11; 4:8-12; 6:4-10; 11:23-28.**
- Q.4)** Show the evidence of spiritual progress in the church in Corinth. See **2:1-17; 7:6-16.**
- Q.5)** Show how Paul really loved the Corinthian believers. See **1:23-24; 2:1-4; 6:11-13; 7:2-16; 11:1-12; 12:14-21.**
- Q.6)** What is known of Titus who contributed much to the work done in the Church in Corinth? It is helpful to read **2:13; 7:6-16; 8:16-24.**
- Q.7)** Consider any prophecies in this letter which are still to be fulfilled. Read **1:14; 5:1-10.**
- Q.8)** What do we know of Paul's personal life from this letter? See **2:1-4, 12-13; 7:5-16; 11:1-33; 12:1-10.**
- Q.9)** What can we learn from Paul regarding church discipline? See **2:1-11; 6:14-7:1; 7:2-16; 12:1-21; 13:1-10.** Why is church discipline needed?
- Q.10)** Show the sound teaching that Paul has brought out in this letter. See **1:19-22; 3:1-18; 5:10, 17-21; 6:14-18; 7:1, 10; 9:6-8; 10:3-6.**
- Q.11)** What is taught on giving especially in **chapters 8 & 9?**
- Q.12)** Show the evidence of false teachers in this letter. Can you find out what they were teaching? See **11:1-4, 12-15.**
- Q.13)** Show how Paul proved his calling as an apostle and how he dealt with the false teachers who tried to convince many of the Corinthian believers that Paul was an inferior apostle. Read carefully through **Chapters 10-13.**

Bibliography

The list of resources available will be helpful in studying **2Corinthians**. The author may not necessarily agree with the views of the writers of the reading material.

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