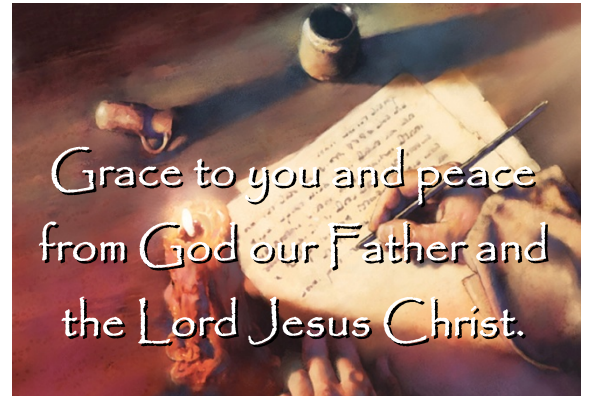


## 47 – 2 Corinthians: Pastor’s Personal Letter to His Church

- This letter is a **touching picture of a pastor’s heart and his weariness, but continued love for his flock**. Paul founded this church on his second missionary journey, and stayed there for 18 months, but Corinth was a tough place for believers. Debauchery and worldly wisdom ruled. Paul kept in touch with this church often. Some speculate that we only have two of perhaps five or more letters he wrote them. Most people believe the order went something like this: First visit to Corinth, first letter to Corinth (*now lost*), second letter to Corinth (1 Corinthians), second visit to Corinth (*which was called “painful” by Paul for reasons we are not completely clear about*), third letter to Corinth (*lost*), fourth letter to Corinth (2 Corinthians), third visit to Corinth. Apparently the lost letters were not intended to be part of God’s Word.



- 2 Corinthians is the **most personal in nature of all his letters**. He bares his soul, professing his love for these people, despite their somewhat fickle behavior toward him. He was mostly concerned about the presence of false teachers, and their potential effect on the immature and gullible Corinthian church.
- These **false teachers may have been Hellenistic Jews, or even Gnostics** (*hard to nail this one down in brief, but essentially believed the body was evil, so they could do whatever they wanted with it- and knowledge was a person’s salvation, way to god. It is a combination of many pagan religious beliefs*) or **Docetics** (*that Jesus did not really have a physical body, it only “seemed” that way to us so there really was no physical crucifixion*). We don’t know the names or teachings of these false teachers, but all false teaching is opposed to the truth.
- This second letter to the church at Corinth was **written from Philippi of Macedonia**. Titus gave Paul an account of how well his first letter was received. Paul was pleased and immediately wrote this next letter. Part of his reason for writing was to excuse his not coming to them as he wished. He also wrote to restore the sinner he had previously condemned. It was time to bring him back into the assembly of believers as he had repented. He also wanted them to finish the collection they were taking for the poor believers. He wrote defending his position as a true apostle, even though he was not one of the original disciples.
- Paul seems physically weak, weary and probably in pain**. His spiritual burdens were greater than before. False teachers were challenging his teaching and his authority. Paul was forced to defend his divine authority. He might be weak, but the God he served certainly was not.

### Highlights

Introduction, God’s Comfort, Christian Living Chapters 1-7	Christian Giving Chapters 8-9	Paul’s Calling as an Apostle Chap 10-13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>God’s comfort in life for us, to others through us (1:3-24)</li> <li>Restoring believing sinners, ch 2</li> <li>Ministry of Jesus, glory of the new covenant, ch 3</li> <li>Suffering, the light of the good news of Jesus, lights the darkness, may be oppressed, but not down, never give up, focus more on things unseen than things seen, ch 4</li> <li>Assurance of resurrection, walk by faith not sight, judgment seat of Christ, reconciliation with God, ch 5</li> <li>Paul’s ministry, God’s comfort in all circumstances, be holy, don’t be unequally yoked, ch 6</li> <li>Paul’s comfort, Corinthian’s repentance, Titus’ joy in them, ch 7</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collection for the saints in Jerusalem</li> <li>Christian giving, 8:1-6</li> <li>Encouragement to give, 8:7-15</li> <li>Discussion of Christian giving, 8:16-9:5</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paul’s authority as an apostle, ch 10</li> <li>Vindication of his apostleship, ch 11</li> <li>Revelation of his apostleship, ch 12</li> <li>Nature and accomplishment of his apostleship, 13:1-10</li> <li>Conclusion 13:11-14</li> </ul>

- Chapters 1-7 are **mostly about Paul's personal ministry to the Corinthians**. Apparently someone had accused him that his teachings were as "suspect" as his promises to visit them. Paul spends a lot of time defending his decisions, and his apostolic authority. His ministry had both spiritual and physical demands that were very heavy at times, but he never quit.
- **The word "troubles"** is *thlipsei* (literally pressures, or distresses) is mentioned nine times in this letter. Sometimes it is translated as "troubles," and other times as "hardships." He also used *thlibo* (a verb meaning distressed and hard pressed, harassed) 3 times. All Christians experience troubles. These troubles are used by God to help us shift from things of this world, to things above, or eternal things compared to short-lived things. Once again, Paul teaches that God is the source of all comfort, and comfort received from God enables us to comfort others. There is a song titled "Through it All" (by the group "Selah") which includes one verse that says: ***"So I thank God for the mountains, and I thank Him for the valleys; I thank Him for the storms He's brought me through, 'cause if I never had a problem, I wouldn't know that He could solve them; I wouldn't know what faith in His Word could do."*** Something to remember!
- An **earthly body is temporary** (he compares it to a "tent" which will eventually be "swallowed up" by life 5:4). The heavenly body is permanent, eternal.
- Paul reminds the Corinthians to once again "be separate" and come out from the world. A Christian is not to be part of the world. We are different (*"peculiar" as the KJV states, according to both Peter and Titus*).
- In chapters 8 and 9 Paul discusses **gracious giving as part of our Christian duty**, especially in regard to taking a collection for the poor believers in Jerusalem. Paul was organizing such a collection, but so far their good intentions had not produced anything, so Paul asked Titus to get to the bottom of it. The Corinthians didn't need to be convinced to take this collection. In fact, their willingness is what kicked the Macedonians into action when Paul told them about the church in Corinth. However, the Macedonians actually DID it. The Corinthians had not so far. They needed to be urged to bring this project to completion. Paul provides a goodly amount of discussion about the grace of giving. Verses 6-8 sum up his message pretty well: ***"But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work."*** This is excellent advice for any people, any time.
- Chapters 10-13 are an appeal for obedience. There was a **real danger that those in this church would leave the truth and follow false teachers**. Paul does his typical circular reasoning series of arguments, even spending a great deal of time on boasting, and how he could boast if he wanted to, but boasting served no purpose. One day everyone will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and no human commendation (self or of others) will be of any value. He talked about the perception of himself to others, having a bite but no bark, so to speak.
- In the last three chapters Paul deals strongly and urgently with an issue that had apparently been causing some of the Corinthians a problem, brought on by outside false teachers – **his authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ**. Paul makes it very clear that although he was not one of the original twelve disciples with eyewitness experience of Jesus, he also "saw" Jesus and had a very dramatic encounter with Him. Paul defends his authority to teach them, and also the authority of the Word of God that he was teaching. It was common practice for teachers to carry letters of recommendation. Paul had no such letter, but he defended his teaching by saying he had been sent by God. He argued that his "letter" was the Corinthians themselves.
- Chapter 12 contains very interesting information, including a note about the **"third heaven"** (during which some people believe Paul was referring to himself), his **"thorn in the flesh"** and God's subsequent assurance of His sufficient grace, ***"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."*** (12:9) He also speaks of his great love for these people, and how he is ready to come to them.