

Reading Through the New Testament

2nd Corinthians



Background to the Letter

- Paul visited the congregation in Corinth at least three times: a.) an 18 month stay when he founded the church during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-8), a brief “painful visit” during the third missionary journey after writing 1st Corinthians (2 Cor. 2:1), a three month stay during the third missionary journey (Acts 20:2-3, 2 Cor. 13:1). He wrote Romans during this last visit.
- It appears Paul wrote four letters to the Corinthians, two of which we do not have (1 Cor. 5:9-11; 2 Cor. 7:8)
- This letter was likely written from Macedonia (2 Cor. 9:2)
- Paul had several purposes in writing this letter. He expressed relief that most of the church responded well to his “severe” letter, delivered by Titus. He urged the church to complete their collection for fellow believers in Jerusalem who were struggling. He informed them that he would be visiting soon.
- There is a “pastoral” tone in the letter. Paul shows deep concern for the believers and churches (2 Cor. 11:28-29)

Basic Outline of the Book:

I. Suffering and Comfort (1:1-11)

II. Change of Plans (1:12-2:13)

III. Genuine Ministry (2:14-7:16)

IV. Gracious Giving (8:1-9:15)

V. Paul's Authority (10:1-13:14)

Notable Passages in 2 Corinthians:

a.) 1:3-5 The “God of all c_____” ministers to us in the midst of our troubles, so that we might in turn minister to others in the midst of their troubles

b.) 4:7-9 We are like “jars of c_____,” God’s power is poured into our frail human bodies so we are “...hard pressed on every side, but not crushed, perplexed but not in despair...”

c.) 5:1-9 “If the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have... an e_____ house in heaven...”

d.) 12:7-10 Paul earnestly prayed about a “thorn in the flesh” that was afflicting him. The Lord answered, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

I. Giving under Grace: (9:1-8)

During Paul’s third missionary journey, the churches took up a special offering to help believers in Judea who were struggling. The Corinthians had previously expressed a desire to give, but their initial enthusiasm fizzled out somewhere along the way. Paul devotes two chapters to encouraging them to fulfill their pledge. These chapters offer several principles that guide believers today in our giving.

- *God's people are to give c_____ , not under compulsion.*

1. One of the differences between giving under grace and giving under the OT Law is that ours is to be a gift offered freely to the Lord. The Israelites were commanded to bring certain tithes and offerings at specified times, and while that was to be an expression of worship, what did it often become? What are wrong motives people sometimes have in presenting their offerings? What are the right motives?

- *God's people are to give g_____.*

2. Look back at 2 Cor. 8:1-5. Paul mentions the example of believers in Philippi who had already made a contribution. What does he say about the attitude in which it was given? Did he expect them to donate anything? Why? They did more than just write a check, what else did they offer? How they remind us of the widow in Luke 21:1-4? It's not the amount, but what, that pleases God?

- *God's people are to give p_____.*

3. Paul didn't want the Corinthians to wait until the last moment, and then toss in the plate whatever happened to be in their pocket that day. He wanted each member to give it careful thought, and decide in their heart what they could give. Does the Lord want us to do the same? Why?

4. How did Paul demonstrate accountability before the churches in the funds he helped collect for this project (2 Cor. 9:18-21)? How does this instruct church leaders today in the handling of finances?

II. The Grace Commission: (5:17-21)

5. The apostle tells us that if we are "in Christ," i.e. if we have entered a relationship with the Lord by faith, we have become a new creation. How was this evidenced in Paul's life? How is it evidenced in ours? What does that tell us about how God sees us today?

6. One aspect of being saved is being "reconciled to God." What does this mean? Who took the initiative to reach out? Who establishes peace between sinful human beings and the holy God?

7. How is our role, in this world, like that of an ambassador?

8. What is the message that we have been commissioned to share with the world?

9. According to verse 21, what lengths did the Lord go through for us to break down the barrier of sin?