

Notes & Outlines

2 CORINTHIANS

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COMMENT: Shortly after Paul had written 1 Corinthians from Ephesus, where he was in grave danger (2 Corinthians 1:8), he wrote 2 Corinthians from Philippi. Paul was in Ephesus approximately three years. He had sent Titus to Corinth because he could not personally go there at that time. Timothy was with Paul in Ephesus, and these two proceeded to Troas to wait for Titus to bring word from Corinth (2 Corinthians 2:12, 13). When Titus did not come, Paul and Timothy went on to Philippi where Titus brought good news from Corinth (2 Corinthians 7:5-11). Any breach between Paul and the Corinthian church was healed.

This epistle is difficult to outline, as it is less organized than any of

Paul's other letters — but it contains more personal details. In each chapter there is always a minor theme developed (which sometimes seems to take the place of the major theme) and generally expressed in some striking verse. This may explain the seeming difficulty in outlining and organizing this epistle. We will note this as we consider each chapter.

First Corinthians deals with conditions and *corrections* in the church. Second Corinthians deals with conditions of the *ministry* within the church.

I. COMFORT of God, Chapters 1—7

(*Christian living*)

A. Introduction, Chapter 1:1, 2

B. God's comfort for life's plans, Chapter 1:3-24

vv. 3-7 — “Comfort” and “consolation” are used nine times in five verses. Comfort does not imply the sentimental, but rather sustains and helps. It is the same word used for the Holy Spirit — the Comforter. He comes to the side of a child of God to dispel darkness and relieve loneliness.

vv. 8-14 — Paul had experienced the comfort of God through some crisis in Ephesus — probably sickness unto death (v. 9). God comforted Paul so that he could comfort others. This is a great Christian principle.

vv. 15-20 — Paul reveals his desire and plan to come to Corinth, and then his change of plan.

vv. 21-24 — This is the second theme introduced. Paul equates the Holy Spirit with God (v. 21). The Holy Spirit anoints the believer to understand divine truth (1 Corinthians 2:9, 10; 1 John 2:27):

God the Father is true (v. 18).

God the Son is absolute and positive (v. 19).

God the Holy Spirit is dwelling within (v. 22).

(1) The Holy Spirit *confirms* (“establisheth”) the believer (v. 21);

(2) The Holy Spirit *anoints* the believer (v. 21);

(3) The Holy Spirit *seals* the believer (v. 22; Ephesians 4:30);

(4) The Holy Spirit is the earnest — the pledge that there is more to come (v. 22).

C. God's comfort in restoring a sinning saint, Chapter 2

v. 4 — Paul's motive and method in writing.

vv. 5-13 — This is a reference to the sinning saint (1 Corinthians 5) for whom Paul had commanded immediate discipline. The believer had repented, and now Paul urges the church to restore him to fellowship.

Refusal to restore the believer would give Satan an advantage (v. 11). Are we ignorant of his devices?

v. 12 — This is the only report Paul ever made of his ministry in Troas (Acts 20:6-12).

vv. 14-17— Again Paul introduces a second theme, which is very important. How does God always cause us to triumph (v. 14) when so often we feel defeated? The believer is a “sweet savor” (v. 15) to both lost and saved. Our business is to declare the gospel. The responsibility then rests on the hearer. Our responsibility is to give the gospel, not get results. Our care is that we are faithful in declaring the gospel accurately.

D. God’s comfort in the glorious ministry of Christ, Chapter 3

vv. 1-3 — Those who accept the gospel and are converted become, in turn, the gospel to the unsaved.

The gospel is written a chapter a day
By deeds that you do and words that you say.
Men read what you say, whether faithless or true.
Say, what is the gospel according to you?

—*Author unknown*

vv. 6-17 — The ministry of the gospel is more glorious than the ministry of Moses, for the glory of Christ does not pass away. Moses placed a veil over his face because the glory was passing away (v. 13). The veil now is over the hearts of those who follow the Law (vv. 14, 15). “It” (v. 16) means *heart* (see v. 15). Those who are led by the Spirit are not under the Law (v. 17).

v. 18 — Here is another great theme. Only the Spirit of God can develop Christian character. It is something solid that must be developed, like the putting down of a sturdy and stable foundation of a building and the growing of a great tree like an oak or redwood. The word for “changed” is from the Greek *metamorphosis*, which is the same word used in speaking of the transfiguration of Christ. The ultimate goal of humanity is seen in the transfiguration of Christ.

E. God’s comfort in the ministry of suffering for Christ, Chapter 4

vv. 1, 2 — Suffering tests the genuineness of the ministry. Paul pre-

sents a series of contrasts to show that the suffering of the ministry is not the defeat of the ministry.

vv. 3, 4 — There are two secondary themes in this chapter. Satan is the god of this world who tries to blind men at only one point — the gospel. The lost world is like a prison house of sin. There is only one way out. Christ is the way (John 14:6). At this point Satan blinds men.

v. 7 — “Earthen vessels” is the Greek word *ostrakinós* — “clay pitchers,” reminding us of Gideon’s 300 (Judges 7). The vessels must be broken for the light to shine out.

v. 8 — “Troubled” is *pressed for room*. “Not distressed” is *still having room*. “Perplexed” is *unable to find a way out*.

v. 9 — “Persecuted” is *pursued by an enemy*. “Not forsaken” is *not overpowered by the enemy*.

vv. 17, 18 — Suffering in this life is light in weight compared to the eternal weight of glory. Unseen things are real, for they are eternal. Things that are seen are temporary.

F. God’s comfort in the ministry of martyrdom for Christ, Chapter 5

v. 1 — Physical death means the departure from the body, labeled a tent (“tabernacle”) by Paul.

vv. 2-5 — These bodies are suffering bodies and temporary.

vv. 6-8 — Death means to leave these fragile bodies and go home to be with the Lord.

vv. 9-13 — Believers appear before the judgment seat (*bema*) of Christ to see if they receive a reward or not. The works of believers are judged.

vv. 14-21 — The secondary subject seems to be the major subject in this chapter. The theme is reconciliation. Believers are joined to the glorified Christ at God’s right hand (vv. 14-17). They are there because of Christ’s work of reconciliation. God is reconciled by what Christ has done. We can do nothing to reconcile God, for He is already reconciled to us in Christ. The message of the gospel is not asking us to do something to reconcile God, but to accept God’s message and method of reconciliation (vv. 20, 21).

G. God’s comfort in all circumstances of the ministry of Christ, Chapter 6

vv. 4-7 — Paul lists nineteen trying experiences of the ministry.

vv. 8-10 — He lists nine contrasts which cover the total life.

vv. 11-18 — The minor theme here is a personal appeal of Paul. He calls upon the Corinthian Christians to make a clean break with idolatry.

H. God's comfort in the heart of Paul, Chapter 7

Paul refers to his personal relationship to the Corinthian Christians. He refers to the comfort of God again (vv. 4, 6, 7, 13).

v. 10 — This is God's definition of repentance. It means a change of mind. In turning to Christ by faith, sinners turn from their sin. This is repentance for salvation (the secondary theme).

II. COLLECTION for poor saints at Jerusalem, Chapters 8, 9 (*Christian giving*)

A. Example of Christian giving, Chapter 8:1-6

Giving is a grace. God wants the person before He asks for his gift. The Macedonian Christians first gave themselves (v. 5).

B. Exhortation to Christian giving, Chapter 8:7-15

These are *principles* for Christian giving — not rules. The tithe is not demanded. Giving is a grace (vv. 7, 8). Christ gave all — not a tenth (v. 9).

C. Explanation of Christian giving, Chapters 8:16 — 9:5

- (1) They were to give to a specific cause — poor saints in Jerusalem;
- (2) They were to give to reputable messengers — Titus and those with him;
- (3) They were to give in reality and not merely promise.

D. Encouragement to Christian giving, Chapter 9:6-15

v. 6 — Give generously.

v. 7 — Do not give grudgingly; give hilariously!

v. 8 — God gives the grace to give.

vv. 9-11 — Give bountifully, probably more than a tithe.

vv. 12-14 — Give according to the need.

v. 15 — We can never out-give God.

III. CALLING of the apostle Paul, Chapters 10 — 13 (*Christian guarding*)

A. Authentication of Paul's apostleship, Chapter 10

v. 3 — Our warfare is spiritual. We don't measure success by num-

bers, money, or outward growth.

v. 4 — Our weapons are secret, so secret that they are not mentioned here. They are mighty. The Word of God is the hush-hush weapon. The Holy Spirit is the General. Prayer is the ammunition.

v. 5 — The warriors are successful, not victorious. The victory is Christ's, and we enter into it (2:14).

B. Vindication of Paul's apostleship, Chapter 11

(Very personal)

v. 9 — Paul pays his own way.

vv. 13-15 — This is the secondary subject. Ministers of Satan are attractive and winsome. They teach false doctrine for material benefit.

vv. 16-33 — Paul's life vindicates his ministry.

C. Revelation of Paul's apostleship, Chapter 12

vv. 1-3 — This is Paul's experience (see v. 7). He was stoned to death at Lystra (see Acts 14:19). Paul was caught up into the presence of God.

1st heaven — where are the "birds of heaven."

2nd heaven — where are the "stars of heaven."

3rd heaven — where is the abode of God.

v. 7 — God put a zipper on the mouth of Paul. He was given a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble.

v. 10 — The man who went to heaven and returned is going to Corinth for the third time in weakness — also in dread (v. 20). This is the subsidiary subject.

D. Execution of Paul's apostleship, Chapter 13:1-10

Paul is going to Corinth for the third time to exercise his office as an apostle. They will see the proof of his apostleship through the power of Christ working in Paul's weakness (vv. 3, 4). Believers should take a regular inventory to see if they are in the faith (v. 5). We should declare the Word of God, not defend it (v. 8 — this is a great verse for today).

E. Conclusion of Paul's apostleship, Chapter 13:11-14

Paul returns where he began — to the comfort of God.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

- Gromacki, Robert G. *Stand Firm in the Faith*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978.
- Hodge, Charles. *An Exposition of First and Second Corinthians*. Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1869. (For advanced students.)
- Hughes, Philip E. *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962. (A comprehensive study.)
- Ironside, H. A. *Addresses on Second Corinthians*. Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1939. (A fine survey.)
- Kelly, William. *Notes on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. Addison, Illinois: Bible Truth Publishers, 1882.
- Kent, Homer A., Jr. *The Epistle of Second Corinthians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1981. (Excellent.)
- Luck, G. Coleman. *Second Corinthians*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1960. (Good survey.)
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- Moule, Handley C. G. *The Epistle of Second Corinthians*. Fort Washington, Pennsylvania: Christian Literature Crusade, n.d.
- Robertson, A. T. *The Glory of the Ministry*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1911. (Deals with 2 Corinthians 2:12 — 6:10 and should be read by every Christian worker.)
- Tasker, R. V. G. *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958.

These notes, prepared by J. Vernon McGee, are for the purpose of giving assistance to the listeners of the THRU THE BIBLE RADIO program. They are to be used with the Bible and will be more meaningful as you look up all the Scripture references. Due to the necessary brevity of both notes and broadcasts, a list of recommended books is included for those wanting a more detailed study. These books may be obtained from a Christian library or bookstore or ordered from the publishers.



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