

*From the Garden to Glory*

# Second Corinthians

**Author:** Paul the Apostle

**Written to:** The Church in Corinth

**Timeline:** c. 57 A.D. written from Macedonia probably the city of Philippi, near the end of Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 20:1-2)

**Theme:** Paul's Vindication of His Apostleship

**Purpose of writing:** It seems that when the church in Corinth received Paul's first letter, those who were against him became more vocal. This caused Paul to defend his position as an apostle and to testify of the ministry God had given him.

## **Introduction:**

Paul's second letter to the Corinthians was the most personal and intimate letter he wrote. Paul seemed to bare his heart and soul to a group of people whom he loved deeply despite their fickle care for him. Paul shared his personal experiences in ministry and proved his commitment to Christ. He defended his ministry and position and reasserted his authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

As we begin our study of the book of 2 Corinthians consider the following questions and write your responses:

1. Paul gave more of his personal history in this letter than in any of his other epistles. How does knowing a person's history influence the way you listen to their instruction?
2. In this epistle Paul revealed his self-sacrificing love and courage. In what situations or areas of your life has the Lord called *you* to be especially self-sacrificing and/or courageous?

3. In 1:1 Paul called himself *an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God*. He wanted his readers to know that he was divinely appointed to the position of apostle and that his message was not his own but was from the Lord. To what position has the Lord divinely called you? How do you fulfill this call today? What message has He directed you to deliver?

## **Christ Our Comfort**

Read 2 Corinthians 1:1-2:17

1. Read 1:3-4. How is the Lord described in verse 3? Meditate on the words of the psalmist below, and then answer the questions that follow.

Psalm 94:17 - Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul would soon have settled in silence. If I say, "My foot slips," Your mercy, O Lord, will hold me up. In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul.

- How has the Lord comforted you?
  
  - How have you been able to comfort others as a result of His comfort?
2. As you read in the previous question, Paul portrayed the Lord as a merciful comforter. Read 1:21-22. How do each of the following bring you comfort?
- being established with Christ
  
  - being anointed by God
  
  - being sealed by the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of your eternal inheritance

3. Paul spoke of the fragrance of Christ in 2:14-16. Describe the fragrance of Christ. Who has *diffused the fragrance of Christ* to you? How did they do so? Where and to whom has the Lord called you to *diffuse the fragrance of Christ* this week?

## **Transformed Through Christ**

Read 2 Corinthians 3:1-4:18

1. Look up the word *sufficient* in a dictionary and write the definition. Read and meditate on 3:4-6. As you have walked with the Lord, how has He taught you that you are not sufficient in *yourself* but that your sufficiency is *from God*?
2. Write out 3:18. In what specific area has the Lord been transforming *you* into the image of Christ recently?
3. Read 4:16-18 from The Amplified Bible and note how Paul's words to the Corinthians are an encouragement or exhortation to you today.

Therefore do not become discouraged (utterly spiritless, exhausted, and wearied out through fear). Though our outer man is [progressively] decaying *and* wasting away, yet our inner self is being [progressively] renewed day after day. For our light, momentary affliction (this slight distress of the passing hour) is ever more and more abundantly preparing *and* producing *and* achieving for us an everlasting weight of glory [beyond all measure, excessively surpassing all comparisons and all calculations, a vast and transcendent glory and blessedness never to cease!] Since we consider *and* look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are visible are temporal (brief and fleeting), but the things that are invisible are deathless *and* everlasting.

## **New Creation in Christ**

Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-6:18

1. Read 5:1-8, concentrating on verses 7-8. How do you *walk by faith, not by sight* as you wait to see the Lord face to face?
2. 2 Corinthians 5:17 is a familiar verse to many of us. Take time today to praise and thank the Lord for making you a *new creature* in Christ. Ask Him to reveal any *old things* that you still may be holding on to. Make a note of anything He reveals and by the power of the Holy Spirit, release the *old things* to Him and walk in the newness of life that He has for you.
3. In 6:11-7:1 Paul called the Corinthians to holiness, to be separate or set apart *from* the world and *to* the Lord. *From* what or whom is He calling you to separate yourself today? In what way is He calling you to be set apart *to* Him?

## **The Heart of Paul**

Read 2 Corinthians 7:1-8:15

1. Look at 7:8-12. How has godly sorrow led to repentance in your life?
2. In 7:13 Paul said that Titus was joyful because his spirit had been refreshed by the Corinthians. What causes joyful refreshment in your life?
3. Look at 8:8-15 concentrating on verse 15. How has the truth of verse 15 been borne out in your own life?

## **Christian Giving**

Read 2 Corinthians 8:16-9:15

1. Look at 8:16. For whom has the Lord put an *earnest care* in your heart? How have you expressed this care?
2. Read 9:1-7. In verse 7 Paul exhorted the Corinthians saying *God loves a cheerful giver*; he contrasted the cheerful giver with the one who gives *grudgingly*. Look up the words *cheerful* and *grudgingly* in a dictionary and write the definitions. Which describes your heart when giving?
3. Write out 9:8 circling the words *all*, *always* and *every*. How has this been true in your life?

## **Strength in Suffering**

Read 2 Corinthians 10:1-11:33

1. Much of the warfare that we experience as women comes from attacks on our minds. What do you learn from 10:3-6 about the weapons of warfare which are available to you as a child of God?
2. Look at 11:2. Look up the word *jealous* in a dictionary and write the definition. In what ways does *godly jealousy* differ from fleshly or human jealousy?
3. Read 11:22-33. What does it mean when Paul said, *If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity*? How do you do this?

## **God's Strength in Weakness**

Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-13:14

1. Read 12:7-10 concentrating on verse 9. How has the Lord's grace been sufficient for you? How has your weakness been made strong in the Lord's strength?
  
2. What do you learn about Paul's heart from 12:11-21?
  
3. Read Paul's closing in 13:11. How or with whom can you do each of these?
  - become complete
  
  - be of good comfort
  
  - be of one mind
  
  - live in peace

## **Summary**

As you conclude your study of the book of 2 Corinthians consider the following questions and write your answers:

1. What is the most significant thing that you have learned from your study about the Lord, His character, or His attributes? How does this encourage you? Take a few moments to thank and praise the Lord for the things that you learned about Him.

2. What is the most important lesson or new insight that you have learned from your study of this book? How can you apply this lesson in your life this week?