

I OVERVIEW OF II CORINTHIANS

PURPOSES: To affirm Paul's ministry, defend his authority as an apostle, and refute false teachers in Corinth.

AUTHOR: Paul.

DATE: Approximately 55-57 AD from Macedonia.

SETTING: Paul had already written to the Corinthians using strong words to correct and teach. Most of the church responded in the right spirit; but others were denying Paul's authority and questioning his motives.

SPECIAL FEATURE: This is another strong and direct letter focused on addressing specific problems a New Testament Church was facing.

BLUEPRINT: Paul explains his actions (1:1-2:11)

Paul defends his ministry (2:12-7:16)

Paul defends the collection (8:1-9:15)

Paul defends his authority (10:1-13:14)

MEGATHEMES:

Trials	Paul experienced great suffering, persecution, and opposition in his ministry; inclusive of struggling with his "thorn in the flesh". Through it all, Paul affirmed God's faithfulness.
Church Discipline	Paul defends his role in church discipline. Neither immorality nor false teaching could be ignored. The church was to be neither lax nor too severe in administering discipline. The church was to restore the disciplined person when he/she repented.
Hope	To encourage the Corinthians as they faced trials. Paul reminded them that they would receive resurrection bodies in Heaven. He focused them on the future and away from present perils.
Giving	Paul organized a collection of funds for the poor in the Jerusalem church in which many of the Asian churches contributed to. Paul explains and defends his beliefs about giving, and urges the Corinthians to follow through on their previous commitment.
Sound Doctrine	False teachers ("poison in the pews") were challenging Paul's ministry and authority as an apostle. Paul asserts his authority in order to preserve correct Christian doctrine. His sincerity, love for Christ, and his concern for the people were his defense.

II SCRIPTURE

FIND A REASON TO REJOICE (7:5-16)

Paul resumed the story that he left in II Corinthians 2:13, where he said he went to Macedonia to look for Titus. Though Paul had many pressing problems and hardships to face, he still found comfort and joy in the forward progress of the ministry.

(5-7) Paul is encouraged by good news from Corinthian Christians: Paul found joy despite the trials he was facing, and part of that joy was good news from the Corinthian Christians, as they accepted the offer of reconciliation. God wants us to super-abound in joy even in all our tribulations (**James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5**).

Paul's life in ministry was a life of great blessing, as well as, a life of many conflicts and fears. He was constantly in conflict with enemies of the gospel and worldly-minded Christians on the outside, and daily battled with the stress and anxiety of ministry on the inside.

(8-12) The "severe letter" and its impact: This was probably an uninspired letter that Paul wrote in between I Corinthians and II Corinthians to attempt to get the Corinthian Christians back on track after his unplanned visit which only seemed to make things worse. This is the "sorrowful visit" mentioned in II Corinthians 2:1. After this failure, Paul decided to not visit Corinth again in person, but sent Titus with a strong letter of rebuke. Accordingly, Paul was very concerned how the Corinthians would receive the letter, and if it would turn them to Jesus or just anger them. When Titus came back with good news from them, Paul was greatly relieved.

Sorrow versus Repentance: In these verses, Paul makes a clear separation between sorrow and repentance, as one can be sorry for their sin without repenting from it. Sorrow describes a feeling, but repentance describes a 180-degree change in both mind and life. "Sorrow alone accomplishes nothing. Peter was sorry he denied Christ and he repented. Judas was sorry he betrayed Christ but, instead of repenting, he killed himself." (Smith)

Repentance is an essential aspect of the gospel. John the Baptist preached saying Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand! (Matthew 3:2). When Jesus began to preach, He said Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 4:17). When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, he told his listeners to repent (Acts 2:38).

Godly sorrow produces repentance unto salvation means that repentance is not the ground of our salvation, but a necessary condition of it. Repentance is not something we must do before we can come back to God, but describes what coming to God is. You can't turn towards God without turning from what He is against. Thus, godly sorrow produces repentance, a change in both thinking and action and it cannot be measured by feelings or tears, but only by what it produces (James 2:26).

Godly sorrow produces, and true repentance shows, the following 7 life changes:

1. **Diligence:** Repentance means to turn around, and it takes diligence to stay turned around. If one gives up easily, they can never walk in repentance, though they may perform acts of repentance;
2. **Clearing of guilt and shame:** Repentance is a clearing of guilt and shame from knowing that we have brought our sin to God and we are now walking in His righteousness;
3. **Indignation:** Repentance makes us indignant at ourselves for our foolishness in sin, fueling the kind of attitude that makes it last;

4. **Fear that we would ever fall into the same sin again:** This isn't the fear of God (**Proverbs 1:7**) as much as a fear of sin, and our own weakness toward it;
5. **Vehement desire:** A repentant heart desires purity and godliness, and doesn't want to sin any more. This is expressed through heartfelt prayer and total dependence on God;
6. **Zeal:** We are hotly motivated towards God and His righteousness, and hotly motivated against sin and impurity. Instead of laziness, we have zeal in our walk with the Lord; and,
7. **Vindication:** We are vindicated as a Christian, even though we have sinned (**Romans 3:23**). The measure of a Christian is not whether or not they sin, but whether or not they repent.

When repentance is marked by the preceding 7 characteristics, we are clear of guilt and sin. The stain of sin is gone (**Isaiah 1:18**), we can feel it, and others can see it.

"Godly sorrow that leads to repentance, therefore, is a sorrow that leads to a change of purpose, of intention, and of action. It is not the sorrow of idle tears; it is not crying by your bedside because once again you have failed; nor is it vain regret, wishing things had never happened, wishing you could live the moments again. No, it is not that. It is a change of purpose and intentions, a change of direction and action." (Redpath)

(13-16) How Titus regards the Corinthian Christians after his visit? Titus' report of his experience in Corinth provided sure evidence that the Corinthian Christians have had a change of mind and have reconciled with Paul. In response, Paul encourages the Corinthians, showing them that he is convinced their repentance was genuine.

Paul is now praising the Corinthian Christians in contrast to the sorrowful letter where there was no praise from him. The difference was in their real repentance.

FOLLOW GOOD EXAMPLES (8:1-15)

The northern part of Greece was called Macedonia, the southern part was called Achaia, and the city of Corinth was in the region of Achaia. Paul writes from Macedonia about the positive example he sees in the churches of that Grecian province. Cities such as Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea were in Macedonia. Paul hoped that the generosity of these churches would encourage the Corinthian believers and motivate them to solve their problems and unite in fellowship.

II Corinthians 8 - Encouragement and Examples in Giving

(1-5) Macedonian Christians are an example of giving: Paul is reporting to the Corinthian Christians the example of the Macedonian Christians, who although in a great trial of affliction, and in deep poverty, still gave generously. Paul was raising money to help the Christians in Jerusalem (**I Corinthians 16:1-4**).

Macedonian poverty is confirmed by secular history. The Romans took most of their wealth when they conquered this former homeland of Alexander the Great.

The widow's giving in **Luke 21:1-4** illustrates the same point. She only gave two mites, a very small amount of money, but she gave all she had, beyond her ability. The same principle of giving was evident in the Macedonian Christians. Moreover, Paul didn't have to beg for money from the Macedonian Christians, instead, they were begging for the privilege of giving.

The Macedonians were such good examples of giving because they first gave themselves to the Lord. In giving, the real issue isn't giving money, but it is the giving ourselves to the Lord (**Romans 12:1**). If we have really given ourselves to the Lord, then the right kind of giving will naturally follow.

(6-8) Paul's tender, wise encouragement in giving: The Corinthian Christians may have intended to give, but all of this was useless unless they did, in fact, complete this grace. Intentions, vows, and resolutions are useless without action (**Ecclesiastes 5:4-5**). It was time for the Corinthian Christians to act, and Titus would help them do this.

Our giving should be like God's giving of grace to us. We should be giving freely and generously because we want to give. When God gives to us out of grace, the motive for His giving is in Him, not based in the one receiving. We should give because the motive of the love and generosity of God is so big in our heart.

Our giving, like God's grace to us, should be offered without expectation of repayment in return. God does not give to us expecting any payback because we are incapable of repaying Him. **The best we can do is to serve Him and love Him in return.**

(9) Our Lord Jesus is an example of giving: Before He added humanity to His deity and walked this earth, Jesus was rich (**John 1:1**). Jesus, the eternal Second Member of the Trinity, God the Son, living in the riches and splendor of heaven, was constantly surrounded by the glory and power and majesty of God. The riches Jesus enjoyed before adding humanity to His deity make any amount of wealth on earth seem poor.

Paul definitively points to the deity of Jesus as there is no way he could write this verse if Jesus had begun His existence in Mary's womb.

When Jesus added humanity, He never lost His deity, so when He also added poverty, He never lost His riches. Jesus lived His earthly life as a poor man (**Matthew 8:20**). When we contrast the simple life of Jesus with His existence before adding humanity to His deity, we are even more amazed. Poverty always feels worse when one has been rich.

Most amazing of all is **why** Jesus accepted this simple life of poverty. It was for our sakes that Jesus was giving Himself for, accepting a humble life of poverty when He had all power to live as the wealthiest man in all history, doing it for our sakes. This shows us the giving heart of God.

By making Jesus accessible, God shows us the relative importance of material things and rebukes our pride. Because of Jesus' poverty, we can become rich and have a share in Jesus' eternal, heavenly wealth, since He came and had a share in our poverty (**Ephesians 1:3**).

(10-12) Follow through on your previous willingness: The Corinthian Christians, who had money, had previously expressed a desiring and a readiness to give and now it was time for them to do it. God looks for readiness and a willing mind as discriminators of giving; the true marks of a generous heart before God. Thus, true giving is measured by obedience, proportion and need, not by amount.

In giving, many go back to the Old Testament law of the tithe, the giving of ten percent unto the Lord. This is a good principle for giving, and perhaps a broad benchmark, yet the New Testament nowhere specifically commands tithing. However, it certainly does speak of it in a positive light, if it is done with a right heart (Luke 11:42).

The New Testament speaks teaches us that giving should be regular, planned, proportional, and private (**I Corinthians 16:1-4**), and generous, freely given, and cheerful (**II Corinthians 9**).

(13-15) Understand the cause you are giving to: The Corinthian Christians were not giving to make the Jerusalem Christians rich and lazy at their expense. The collection was needed so the Jerusalem Christians could merely survive. It is important to understand what the purpose and use is, before you give. **Make sure that 100% of what you give is being appropriated to move the Kingdom of God forward.**

“I acknowledge indeed that we are not bound to such an equality as would make it wrong for the rich to live more elegantly than the poor; but there must be an equality that nobody starves and nobody hordes his abundance at another’s expense.” (Calvin)

He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack: Paul’s quotation from **Exodus 16:18** illustrates his principle. Everyone gathered what they could, some more and some less; but they all shared what they had gathered.

USE NEEDED CAUTION (8:16-24)

Paul used every safeguard to maintain the integrity of the collection of money for the Jerusalem church. By traveling together there would be no suspicion and the people would know that their gifts were being handled honestly. Paul declared himself publicly accountable.

(16-24) How to receive Titus when he and his companions come for the collection: Paul’s intention is to recommend Titus to them as a trustworthy bearer of their money and wisely avoids any gossip about his role in the collection by sending Titus and his companion to collect it, and accompany Paul in carrying it to Jerusalem.

Paul offers a strong encouragement from the Corinthian Christians to give. He is saying that:

- (1) The churches will also know of it;
- (2) That the offering given will be proof of your love; and,
- (3) That he has been boasting to others about what gives the Corinthian Christians had been.

So he asks them now to come through and give like the givers he has been claiming they are.

EMPLOY BEST PRINCIPLES (9:1-15)

By describing how their own enthusiasm had incited the Macedonians to give, Paul was, in effect, prodding the Corinthians to rekindle their initial enthusiasm for giving.

II Corinthians 9 - How God Wants Us To Give

(1-2) Willingness of the Corinthian Christians to give: The specific ministering Paul has in mind is the financial support of the Jerusalem saints. He has persuaded the Corinthian Christians of the merits associated with giving, showing the example of the Macedonian Christians and Jesus. Now Paul is encouraging them in their **manner of giving**.

(3-5) Paul is sending Titus and the others to pick up the collection: Paul wanted the whole business of the collection completed before he arrived, so there would be nothing even remotely manipulative in his receiving the collection. He was very concerned that giving be a matter of generosity and not a matter of grudging obligation. It has more to do with our attitude in giving than with the amount that we give.

“When God gives grace, He does not reluctantly open a little finger and maintain a clenched fist full of gifts. I would tell you today that God’s hands are nail-pierced hands and they are wide open. This fountain of grace is always pouring itself out with no limitation on heaven’s side at all.” (Redpath)

(6) Our giving should be bountiful, if we would be rewarded bountifully: Just as the sower gives the seed in anticipation of a future harvest, we should give with the same heart. If we give to God, He promises to give to us materially (**Philippians 4:15-19**).

People may hesitate to give generously to God because they worry about having enough money left over to meet their household needs. This thinking flies in the face of living in “God’s Economy”. What do we reap when we give? We reap blessings that are material and spiritual; greater than we can ever imagine.

Spiritually, we can trust that God will reward the giving heart both now and in eternity. Jesus spoke of this in **Matthew 19:29**. We should never be afraid of giving God too much, as spiritually or materially, it is impossible to out-give God.

(7) Giving should come from a right heart: Every Christian should be a giver and it is very important that all give with the right kind of heart.

Giving should be motivated by the purposes of our own heart. It should never be coerced or manipulated. We should give because we want to give, because God has put it in our own heart to give. Jesus said it simply: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21).

God does not want our giving to be grudging or of necessity. This is more the spirit behind taxation, not Biblical giving. Instead of giving in a grudging way or out of necessity, God wants us to give cheerfully and happily (**Proverbs 22:9**), because that is how God Himself gives.

Not all giving is cheerful giving. “Many gifts are thus given sorrowfully, where the giver is induced to give by a regard to public opinion, or by stress of conscience.” (Hodge) In Acts 5:1-11, Ananias and Sapphira stand as examples of giving for the wrong reasons, not out of a cheerful heart.

8/22/10

RELATIONSHIPS: THE LONG-DISTANCE FACTOR

8/22/10

(8-9) Right kind of giving is always blessed: As we give, we must be persuaded that God is able to reward our giving. Just as God is able to make the sowing of seed abound to a great harvest, so God is able to bless our giving.

Jesus taught that even the smallest gift, if given with the right heart, would not go unrewarded. "And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward" (Matthew 10:42).

Therefore, in rewarding our giving, God does it with all grace:

- **Materially:** God may bless our giving by promotions with better pay, unexpected gifts of money, or by making things last so we don't suffer the cost of replacing them; and,
- **Spiritually:** God may bless our giving by freeing our hearts from the tyranny of greed and materialism, or by giving us a sense of blessing and happiness, contentment in all things (**Philippians 4:11**), or by storing up rich reward in heaven.

May have an abundance for every good work: God blesses us, materially and spiritually, so that we will have an abundance for every good work. We are blessed so that we can be a blessing to others. God wants us to be channels of blessing, not reservoirs of blessing.

(10-11) Paul prays for blessing for the giving Corinthian Christians: Paul recognizes God as the great supplier for whatever we have to give has been first given to us by God. Paul prays that God would supply resources to the Corinthian Christians so they may give, and at the same time multiply what they have given. Paul prayed that the Corinthian Christians would be enriched by their giving, both materially and spiritually.

The giving of the Corinthian Christians, represented by the seed you have sown, will give a harvest, the fruits of your righteousness. Paul prays that God would increase these fruits coming from their giving.

(12-14) Benefits of the giving from the Corinthian Christians: There are 3 benefits, as follows:

- Their gifts were giving people a reason to thank God.
- Their giving was evidence of God's work in them. When those in need received the gift, they would glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing. They would also glorify God as they understood the gift meant the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and it meant the Corinthian Christians had hearts of liberal sharing.
- Their giving would prompt the Jerusalem Christians to pray for them. Paul expected that the Jerusalem Christians would pray for the Corinthian Christians.

(15) Praise to God for the greatest gift: His indescribable gift is both the gift of salvation and the gift of Jesus Christ, since salvation is given to us in Jesus Christ. We do not earn it, but receive Jesus exactly as we would receive a gift. If we earn it, it is not a gift (**Ephesians 2:8-10**).

Paul wants to leave the discussion of giving by reminding us again that God is the greatest giver. He gives the gift beyond description: For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).