

STUDY ON THE BOOK OF CORINTHIANS

Second Corinthians – Introduction & Chapter 1

Introduction to the Book of 2nd Corinthians

The apostle Paul wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia around A.D. 55/56. This was approximately a year after he wrote 1 Corinthians and a year before he wrote his letter to the Romans. This is the fourth letter he had written to the Corinthian church (in addition to 1 Corinthians, see the letters mentioned in 1 Cor. 5:9 and 2 Cor. 2:3–4).

Key Themes of 2nd Corinthians

- I. Paul's suffering imitates the cross of Christ. Those who reject him because he suffers are "false apostles" and "servants of Satan" (11:13–15). Paul is a servant of the new covenant (3:6). His ministry and message of the cross mediates the Spirit of the living God and God's righteousness to believers (3:3, 6–9; 5:14–15, 21).
- II. Endurance through difficulty and Christlike behaviour are made possible by the grace of God and are modelled by Paul himself. These qualities are the greatest display of God's presence, power, and glory in this fallen world (1:12–14; 6:14–7:1; 12:7–10; 13:4).
- III. The Spirit transforms believers into the image of God, which is seen in Christ. This new creation is characterized by God's righteousness. Believers therefore embody the new creation of the new covenant by living for the sake of others. This is made possible because believers are reconciled with God through the cross (3:18; 5:15, 17–21).
- IV. Repentance expresses itself in holiness. This is a purity-producing love for God and his church and a unity-creating love for one's neighbour (6:14–7:1; chapters. 8–9).
- V. Christ, as Saviour, is also the universal Judge. He will judge all people according to their deeds. The Spirit transforms those in whom he dwells as a guarantee of the "eternal weight of glory" to come for believers at the resurrection (1:22; 3:18; 5:5, 9–11).

Chapter 1

"From Paul to God's called ones, his church in Corinth. I have been chosen by Jesus Christ to be his apostle according to God's perfect plan. Our brother Timothy joins me in writing to you and all the holy believers throughout the Roman province of Achaia. May undeserved favour and endless peace be yours continually from our Father God and from our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One!" (vv1-2 TPT)

In the introductory verses of this book, Paul focused on these 3 things:

- The customary greetings of his day i.e. who the letter was from and to whom it was addressed.
- Affirmation of his apostleship from our Lord Jesus Christ (affirming his authority).
- Prayer as a form of expressing his heart towards the church in Corinth.

The God of All Comfort

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort." (v3)

The bible called God, the God of All Comfort. He is into comforting us... even at dire times. Paul describes further:

“who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” (v4)

Paul states that one of the reasons God comforts us in all our tribulation is that we can comfort others who are going through trials and tribulation with the same comfort we have received from the Lord. The Passion Translation puts v4 in this way:

“He always comes alongside us to comfort us in every suffering so that we can come alongside those who are in any painful trial. We can bring them this same comfort that God has poured out upon us.” (v4 TPT)

Paul goes on to say:

1. By the fact that we partake of Christ sufferings, we will also partake of comfort through our union with Him (v5)
2. If trouble weigh us down, then even more comfort is released to us by the Lord (v6)

Paul's Trials

“Brothers and sisters, you need to know about the severe trials we experienced while we were in western Turkey. All of the hardships we passed through crushed us beyond our ability to endure, and we were so completely overwhelmed that we were about to give up entirely. It felt like we had a death sentence written upon our hearts, and we still feel it to this day. It has taught us to lose all faith in ourselves and to place all of our trust in the God who raises the dead. He has rescued us from terrifying encounters with death. And now we fasten our hopes on him to continue to deliver us from death yet again, as you labour together with us through prayer. Because there are so many interceding for us, our deliverance will cause even more people to give thanks to God. What a gracious gift of mercy surrounds us because of your prayers!” (vv8-11 TPT)

Paul is a man of faith and a rugged believer and apostle yet, he narrates an experience that was beyond his ability to endure and he had reached the point where he was about to give up entirely. He concludes that he felt they were under a death sentence.

Have you been there before where your life hanged on a thread?

Paul took the following lessons from his experience:

1. **Lose Faith in Ourselves and Trust God:** *“It has taught us to lose all faith in ourselves and to place all of our trust in the God who raises the dead...”*
2. **Properly Placed Hope:** *“And now we fasten our hopes on him to continue to deliver us from death yet again”*
3. **Power of Intercession:** *“Because there are so many interceding for us, our deliverance will cause even more people to give thanks to God.”*

What was your takeaways from the trials you have faced?

Integrity

“For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you. For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust you will understand, even to the end (as also you have understood us in part), that we are your boast as you also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.” (vv12-14)

Sometimes, we might sense that people are thinking that there is an motive behind our speech, letter or our intentions. Paul was experiencing the same and was trying to prove the same.

Why do people “read between the lines”?

Paul affirming his integrity said:

“For as God is true to his word, my promise to you was not a fickle “yes” when I meant “no.” Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and he is the one whom Timothy, Silas, and I have preached to you—and he has never been both a “yes” and a “no.” He has always been and always will be for us a resounding “YES!” For all of God’s promises find their “yes” of fulfilment in him. And as his “yes” and our “amen” ascend to God, we bring him glory!” (vv18-20 TPT)

As a child of God and an apostle of the living God, Paul is saying just as God is true to His word, my promise to you is not in doubt. I am not saying a “yes” when I mean “no”. From there, he gave us an interesting revelation of the promise of God in Christ:

“For as many as are the promises of God, in Christ they are [all answered] “Yes.” So, through Him we say our “Amen” to the glory of God.” (v20 AMP)

Our Seal in Christ

“Now it is God who establishes and confirms us [in joint fellowship] with you in Christ, and who has anointed us [empowering us with the gifts of the Spirit]; it is He who has also put His seal on us [that is, He has appropriated us and certified us as His] and has given us the [Holy] Spirit in our hearts as a pledge [like a security deposit to guarantee the fulfilment of His promise of eternal life].” (vv21-22 AMP)

The Greek word for seal is *sphragizō*. God has sealed believers with a seven-fold seal:

- A seal of security, sealed tightly and kept secure in God’s love (Job 14:17),
- A seal of authentication that marks us as God’s very own (John 6:27),
- A seal to certify genuineness (John 3:33),
- A seal of ownership (2 Cor. 1:22),
- A seal of approval (Eph. 1:13-14),
- A seal of righteousness (Rom. 4:11),
- A seal denoting a promise to be fulfilled (2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30).

The mark given by the beast is upon the forehead and hand, but the “seal” of Christ is over our hearts. Jesus, our Bridegroom, invites us to place him over our hearts like a fiery seal of love, the jealous flame of God that burns continually in our hearts (Song. 8:6).

We are born of the Spirit, sealed with the Spirit, indwelt by the Spirit, baptized in the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, made one (unity) in the Spirit, given gifts of the Spirit, and given ministries by the Spirit.

He is a promise, a seal, and a guarantee of receiving our full inheritance. The Greek word for “down payment” is *arrabōn* and is used in Greek culture for “engagement ring.” Notice in vv. 21–22 that the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is involved in bringing all this to pass.

Conclusion: Last Word of Encouragement

“But I call on God as my soul’s witness, that it was to spare you [pain and discouragement] that I did not come again to Corinth— not that we rule [like dictators] over your faith, but rather we work with you for [the increase of] your joy; for in your faith you stand firm [in your strong conviction that Jesus of Nazareth—the Messiah—is the Son of God, through whom we obtain eternal salvation].” (vv23-24 AMP)

Paul was revealing his intent here. He said:

- I did not come to Corinth, so I don't discourage you.
- We are not dictators but for your growth in faith, we are working with you.
- At the end, that you could stand in strong conviction that Jesus is the Son of God.