2CORINTHIANS

2Corinthians
Key Verse:

INTRODUCTION TO SECOND CORINTHIANS

The Apostle Paul left Ephesus shortly after writing 1 Corinthians. His life was in grave danger in Ephesus because of an uproar caused by an idol maker whose business had been hurt by the rapid spread of the gospel (Ac 19-20). He made a painful visit to Corinth (2Co 1:23;2:1). It was painful because he dealt uncompromisingly with some practical problems. The Corinthians did not resent his rebuking visit. They repented and wholeheartedly supported Paul's plan to take an offering to Jerusalem. He wrote Romans while in Corinth, and after Jerusalem, planned to go to Rome. 2 Corinthians, written from Macedonia a few months later, is full of love and basic appreciation for the faith and obedience of the Corinthians, although some of the problems he had talked about in 1 Corinthians were still there. This letter follows the visit, and is in response to good news from Corinth brought by Titus. Paul is writing to express his joy at their repentance, and to encourage them to finish what they had started in preparing an offering for the poverty-stricken Christians in Jerusalem. He also defends his apostleship and answers his critics. He will visit them on God's time-table. Meanwhile, he is sending Titus back to them with a brother who is praised by the church (8:16-18), for the purpose of getting the offering the Corinthians had promised.

Paul is like their father. He shares with them his personal pain and struggles, and the comfort of Christ.

THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

Key Verse: 1:9b

1. Christ's overflowing comfort (1-7)

Paul wrote with apostolic authority. Timothy was with him. After greeting them, he praised the God and Father of Jesus, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort. Only those who suffer for Jesus' sake can know the God of comfort. Paul looked at the world through Christ's eyes and shared in Christ's suffering for a lost world. He did not avoid suffering nor did he try to protect his sheep from suffering--rather, he sought and received God's comfort, and he encouraged them to learn patient endurance and receive Christ's overflowing comfort. This is the way to grow in Christ-like character (Ro 5:3-4).

2. That we might rely on God (8-11)

He was almost killed in Asia (Ephesus--Ac 19); but through this Paul learned to rely on God who raises the dead (1Co 15:31-32). He learned resurrection faith, and he learned to trust in God who reveals his strength and gives his comfort to those who depend on him.

Prayer: Lord, help me know the depth of your love and comfort, and share it with others.

One Word: Rely on the God of comfort

CHRIST, THE ETERNAL YES

2 Corinthians 1:12-22

Key Verse: 1:20

1. Plans can change; not the gospel (12-20)

Paul had planned to go to Corinth directly from Ephesus, but he had to change his plans because of the problems in Corinth. His travel plans seemed to be full of vacillation, and his opponents criticized him. He made no excuse, but rather reminded them that the gospel of Jesus is unchanging. Paul may not be able to keep promises sometimes, but all God's promises are fulfilled in Jesus. He is God's eternal "Yes." No matter how many promises God has made, they are all "Yes" in Christ. So we who believe in Jesus say "Amen," --"so be it," through Jesus to the glory of God.

2. The Holy Spirit is his guarantee deposit

God is the one who makes us stand firm in Christ. He does this by giving us the Holy Spirit, who dwells in our hearts by faith. This gift is God's seal of ownership--we belong to him. He guarantees what is to come--and makes a deposit to seal his guarantee.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for keeping your promises. Let your Spirit control our fellowship so that we may live as your people.

One Word: God keeps his promises

REBUKE AND FORGIVE

2 Corinthians 1:23-2:11

Key Verse: 2:4b

1. Real love rebukes sin (1:23-2:4)

There was one in the fellowship who lived in sin. This was why Paul had changed his plans about visiting them. He had written them a prayerful and painful letter, rebuking them for ignoring the problem. It grieved him to cause them pain. But he rebuked them because he loved

them. He was convinced that God would work among them to bring repentance. True repentance brings joy. Those whose love is rooted in God's love must rebuke when rebuking is needed.

2. Now, forgive (5-11)

The Christians in Corinth had obeyed Paul and excluded the sinful brother until he repented. Now was the time to forgive him and restore him to the fellowship. Satan finds opportunities to work among us when we ignore sin in the fellowship of believers. He also works when we do not forgive and help those who repent. We must not hold a grudge or lord it over a repentant sinner.

Prayer: Lord, teach me your redeeming love for my brothers and sisters so that Satan might not outwit us.

One Word: To let you know my love

THE AROMA OF CHRIST

2 Corinthians 2:12-17

Key Verse: 2:14

1. The importance of one man (12-13)

Paul found an open door to preach the gospel in Troas, but when he didn't find Titus there, he said good-bye and went on to Macedonia. Training faithful men had top priority in Paul's ministry. Each Christian worker must become the aroma of Christ. Paul sacrificed an opportunity to preach to many for the task of training one.

2. The aroma of Christ (14-17)

A Christian is one who is united with Christ in his suffering and united with him in his triumph. He does not live by his reason or by his feelings, but by the gospel. So he is the aroma of life to those who receive the gospel and are being saved; and he is the smell of death to those who reject the gospel. A Christian who compromises with the world loses his distinctive fragrance. God's servant must have a pure heart and pure motives and he must speak before God.

Prayer: Lord, dwell in me so that I may be the aroma of Christ, and live as your servant.

One Word: The fragrance of Christ

A LETTER FROM CHRIST

2 Corinthians 3:1-6

Key Verse: 3:3

1. You are our letter, written by God (1-3)

God's word is a letter from God to us; also, God's Spirit applies the word to our lives by writing it on our hearts. We then become letters from Christ to the world. The world should see the image of Jesus reflected in our lives. Paul did not have to defend himself as a servant of God; the Christians in Corinth who had been changed by the Spirit of God and the gospel Paul preached were evidence that God was at work in his ministry.

2. Ministers of the new covenant (4-6)

God worked in and through Paul to make him competent as a minister of the new covenant. The new covenant, sealed by Jesus' blood, is God's promise to forgive sinners who repent and believe in Jesus, and his promise to give them his Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God gives believers new birth into the family of God, and into a living hope in the heavenly kingdom.

Prayer: Lord, give me your Spirit; write your word on my heart and in my life.

One Word: A letter written on the heart

GOD'S GLORY REVEALED IN TWO COVENANTS

2 Corinthians 3:7-11

Key Verse: 3:9

1. God's glory in Moses' face (7-8)

When he came down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments (Ex 34:29-35), Moses' face was shining with God's glory so that the people couldn't even look at him. But the glory soon faded away. How much more glorious is the work of the Spirit of God in the life of a believer; the Spirit transforms him more and more into the image of Christ!

2. The ministry that brings righteousness (9-11)

The Law which Moses received from God was a blessing to the people of Israel. God used it to train a slave nation to become a kingdom of priests. But the Law can't make sinners righteous; it only condemns them. The new covenant in Jesus' blood is the foundation of a ministry that brings righteousness. Sinners condemned by the law can come to God through Jesus and be forgiven and, by faith, through God's grace alone, be made righteous.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the new covenant, your promise to cleanse me in the blood of Jesus and make me righteous.

One Word: The glorious new covenant

REAL FREEDOM

2 Corinthians 3:12-18

Key Verse: 3:17

1. The veil that covers the heart (12-15)

When Moses talked with God on the mountain, his face shone with the glory of God. But when he came down and stayed with the people, the glory gradually faded. He put a veil over his face to conceal the fading glory. Paul draws an analogy from this. Those who read the Old Testament and do not know Christ also have a veil over their hearts.

2. Unveiled faces that reflect God's glory (16-18)

Only Christ removes the veil, for he cleanses us of sin and gives us his Spirit. When one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. The Spirit can work freely to transform us into the image of Christ. Instead of fading glory, he gives us ever increasing glory, glory that lasts. It is the Spirit in us who reveals the glory of God.

Prayer: Lord, take the veil away from my mind and heart and fill me with your Spirit. Transform me by your Spirit into the image of Christ.

One Word: Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom

THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE FACE OF CHRIST

2 Corinthians 4:1-6

Key Verse: 4:6

1. Setting forth the truth plainly (1-2)

It is by God's mercy that we have this ministry, so we must not be discouraged. Sometimes we are tempted to compromise with gospel truth to make it easier for people to believe. But Paul was clear. He didn't distort the word of God to make it more palpable. He spoke the truth plainly, in the sight of God. He refused to be discouraged when people rejected the gospel, for he knew that worldliness and unbelief blind men's minds to see the light of the gospel.

2. God shined his light into our hearts (3-6)

God who created the universe in the beginning and said, "Let there be light," shined the gospel light into our hearts. His light enables us to see the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, problems come. Thank you for showing me that the problem is not a problem, but how I solve the problem is important. Help me to renounce ungodly and unbiblical ways and speak the truth of your word simply, so that you may do your own work through your word.

One Word: God's light shines in our hearts

A TREASURE IN JARS OF CLAY

2 Corinthians 4:7-12

Key Verse: 4:7

1. Jars of clay (7-9)

God made us from the dust of the ground and breathed into us the breath of life. We are like jars of clay. But when God's Spirit fills us, we are alive and beautiful. God's Spirit gives us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. We cannot boast of any power or virtue in ourselves, but because Jesus dwells within, we are not crushed nor do we despair when we are misunderstood or persecuted or struck down.

2. Always carrying around the death of Jesus (10-12)

Jesus' people love Jesus' cross. It is his death on the cross that sets us free from the power of sin. The Spirit of God applies the blood to our hearts and lives. We die with him daily, so that his life may be revealed in us, and the gospel shared with others.

Prayer: Lord, fill this jar of clay with your own Presence. Help me to love your cross, and die daily to myself.

One Word: The treasure in earthen vessels

WE BELIEVE AND SPEAK

2 Corinthians 4:13-18

Key Verse: 4:18

1. God will raise us with Jesus (13-15)

What do we believe? We believe that God who raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us and in our sheep. He will transform us by his power and complete the work of restoring his image in us. He will bring us into the very presence of God. We also believe that his grace and power is available to anyone who believes, so we share the gospel with others. As God's grace works in more and more people, God is glorified, and we are full of thanksgiving.

2. Therefore we do not lose heart (16-18)

Paul was not free of human problems. His health was sometimes not good. He was misunderstood and persecuted. Some of his sheep and coworkers ran away. But he was not discouraged. Why? Because he kept his eyes fixed on Jesus, and his hope in the kingdom of God.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for working in me and in those with whom I am studying the Bible. Help me to put my hope in Jesus only.

One Word: Don't lose heart

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

Key Verse: 5:10

1. Our heavenly dwelling (1-8)

The destination of our earthly pilgrimage is the heavenly kingdom. We live tent lives in this world, but our eternal home is permanent. It is built by God. God made us to live with him. So we long for home. We long for Jesus. We are clothed with mortal bodies, but someday we will have immortal bodies. We do not need to fear death, for the Resurrected Jesus has defeated death. Death is swallowed up by life. How can we know? First, God has given us a security deposit, a taste of heaven--the Holy Spirit. Second, we know by faith. God promised, so we believe. We walk by faith and not by sight.

2. Our goal, to please God (9-10)

We must make it our goal to please God, for every person, without exception must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive what is due him according to how he lived while in his earthly tent. My hope is in his kingdom, not in the world.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your Spirit. Help me to follow you by faith, and make it my goal to please you in everything.

One Word: My goal--to please Jesus

COMPELLED BY CHRIST'S LOVE

2 Corinthians 5:11-15

Key Verse: 5:14

1. Because we fear God (11-13)

Since we must all appear before Christ's judgment seat, we must live with a holy fear of God. This fear drives all other fears from our hearts. If we fear and love God, we live before him, not before men. Because we fear God, we sometimes do things that look foolish to men. But God's people must not judge by outward appearance, but by what is in the heart. God's servant doesn't expect fellow believers always to understand his actions. But they must know that his motives are not selfish. He is trying to please God and build up God's flock.

2. Because of Christ's love (14-15)

Christ's life poured out for sinful humanity looks like a foolish waste. But because he died for us, we have life. We can no longer live selfish lives. We must live for him who loved us and died for us. Christ's love compels us to share his gospel with the people for whom he died.

Prayer: Lord, you loved me enough to die for me. Your love compels me to repent of my selfishness and live for you and for others.

One Word: Christ's love compels me

NEW CREATURES IN CHRIST

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Key Verse: 5:17

1. A changed viewpoint (6-17)

When we invite Christ into our lives he changes us. Becoming a new creation changes the way we look at others, at ourselves and at Christ.

2. Reconciled to God through Christ (18-19a)

The change is not superficial. We were enemies of God, sinners living in rebellion against God. But Christ came and took our sins and died on the cross so that we might be righteous and have peace with God. This is the key to having peace with men.

3. The ministry of reconciliation (19b-21)

God made Jesus who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might have God's peace and be God's righteous people in the world. He made us Christ's ambassadors. That is, he entrusted us with the task of bringing Jesus to the world, and the world to Jesus. This is the ministry of reconciliation. God wants all the world to be reconciled to himself, so that he may restore all things and bless all people.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your peace. Help me to bring others to you by sharing Jesus with them.

One Word: A new creation; an ambassador for Christ

DON'T RECEIVE GOD'S GRACE IN VAIN

2 Corinthians 6:1-13

Key Verse: 6:1

1. Now is the time of God's favor (1-2)

God saved us from useless and meaningless lives so that we might work with him to serve our times. Paul shows us how to live lives that reveal God's grace and extends that grace and salvation to others.

2. Don't be a stumbling block (3-7)

Paul did not seek personal gain from the gospel ministry. He lived a humble, sacrificial life, and endured all manner of hardship. Even when he was suffering he did not close his heart to others; in love and purity, with God's power he taught God's word.

3. Expect to be misunderstood (8-13)

We live in a world that does not understand Jesus' love and/or the sacrificial life. Paul was misunderstood, but he loved anyway. He was sorrowful, yet he rejoiced; poor, yet he made others rich.

Prayer: Lord, forgive me for my selfish, pleasure-seeking life. Help me to be a sacrificial servant of God.

One Word: Now is the time of God's grace

A HOLY PEOPLE

2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

Key Verse: 7:1

1. Do not be yoked with unbelievers (14-16)

A yoke is a piece of wood that fits over the neck of 2 oxen, enabling them to pull a load together. If we deliberately bind ourselves to a person with worldly priorities and values, we cannot please God. If one marries a person whose goals in life are different from his own, the yoke that should make the burden easier makes it unbearably heavy.

2. We are the temple of God (16b-7:1)

We are God's temple, his dwelling place. When God makes his home in our hearts we become his holy people, his children. He does not want us to compromise with idols or with the world or with unbelieving people. Jesus died to make us pure. Let us believe God's promises (16b,18), and keep our hearts and lives pure in him. Through God's promises we participate in his divine nature and escape worldly corruption (2Pe 1:4).

Prayer: Lord, make me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Purify me by Jesus' blood so that I may be a fit place for your Spirit to dwell.

One Word: Live like God's child

GODLY SORROW BRINGS REPENTANCE

2 Corinthians 7:2-16

Key Verse: 7:10

1. We would live or die for you (2-7)

Because of his genuine love for God's people in Corinth, Paul had rebuked them severely about some matter, and he feared that his relationship with them could not stand the strain. He was encouraged by the return of his co-worker and intern shepherd, Titus. Titus reported that those whom Paul had rebuked were genuinely sorry for their sins and had realized that his rebuking came from his love for them. Real love brings the loved one to God.

2. Godly sorrow and worldly sorrow (8-16)

Paul did not regret the hurt and sorrow he had caused, because their sorrow was godly sorrow which led them to repentance. Worldly sorrow is self-pity, and it leads to death. But godly sorrow leads one to examine his life before God and repent. God then gives healing and forgiveness and refreshment of spirit. Their love for Paul became deeper than before.

Prayer: Lord, teach me the godly sorrow that leads to repentance and life.

One Word: Godly sorrow leads to repentance

THE SECRET OF JOYFUL GIVING

2 Corinthians 8:1-7

Key Verse: 8:5

1. The grace God gave the Macedonians (1-4)

Paul wanted the Corinthians to learn from the churches in Macedonia (Philippi and Thessalonica). When Paul told them of his plan to encourage the Gentile churches to send an offering to the suffering believers in Jerusalem, the Macedonian churches gave generously and sacrificially. They eagerly wanted to participate--even though they were suffering from extreme poverty.

2. They first gave themselves to the Lord (5-7)

For these Christians, it was a great privilege to give sacrificially for the saints in Jerusalem. Why? Because they first gave themselves to the Lord, then to God’s servants, according to God’s will. God blessed them with the grace of a generous, giving spirit. So their giving was joyful, not

burdensome. They were not trying to impress anybody. They just loved Jesus and were full of his grace and love, and their sacrificial giving was an expression of this. Paul urges the Corinthian and us to excel in the grace of giving.

Prayer: Lord, give me the grace of sacrificial giving. I want to give myself to you and to your people, so that I can learn the grace of sacrificial giving.

One Word: First give yourself to the Lord

JESUS BECAME POOR TO MAKE US RICH

2 Corinthians 8:8-15

Key Verse: 8:9

1. Think about Jesus (8-9)

When we remember Jesus, our sacrifices look small. Jesus gave up the glory, power and privilege of heaven to come and live among men. He was born in a manger; he had no house or car or computer. He served others: He touched and healed lepers; he cast out demons; he forgave prostitutes and tax collectors and endured criticism from "good" people. He died in agony as a criminal on a Roman cross to give us the spiritual riches of forgiveness of sin, peace with God, eternal life and the kingdom of heaven.

2. Think about others (10-15)

The believers in Jerusalem were poor and persecuted. At first, the Corinthians had been eager to help; but their enthusiasm had flagged. Paul encouraged them to overcome selfishness and finish what they had started. Giving should be done with a willing heart. There should be equality--no one should have too much and no one too little.

Prayer: Lord, help me to follow Jesus. Help me to think of others before myself. Help me to give and serve with a willing heart.

One Word: You know the grace of our Lord

WE TAKE PAINS TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT

2 Corinthians 8:16-24

Key Verse: 8:21

1. Titus (16-17)

Paul was sending Titus to Corinth. Titus was a young shepherd trained by Paul. He was no longer an intern shepherd; he was Paul's co-worker. He fully understood the importance of

bringing this offering from the Gentile believers to the home church in Jerusalem, and he was eager that the believers in Corinth participate for the sake of their own spiritual growth and blessing. He had been involved in this work from the beginning. (6,10)

2. To do right in the eyes of God and men (18-24)

Paul was careful in dealing with money. He sought to honor God and encourage fellow believers. Each participating church chose men to accompany Paul on his journey to Jerusalem. They would deliver the gift and report on God's work among the Gentiles. These men were the fruit of world mission. They were an honor to Christ. Paul was sending a highly respected co-worker to Corinth with Titus. Perhaps he was Luke or possibly Barnabas--the man who taught Paul the principle of giving (Ac 11:25-30).

Prayer: Lord, help me to use money in a way that honors Christ and builds up people.

One Word: Honor Christ in the use of money

BE READY

2 Corinthians 9:1-5

Key Verse: 9:5b

1. I know your eagerness to give (1-2)

The Christians in Corinth were among the first to declare their eagerness to help the suffering believers in Jerusalem. Their enthusiasm had stirred the Macedonian churches to action. Then Paul learned of an ongoing sin problem among the believers, and he had rebuked them severely for their failure to discipline the person involved. Now, they had repented and had been forgiven. Paul wanted to see them completely restored. Their attitude toward giving was the best measure of their spiritual health.

2. A generous gift, not a grudging one (3-5)

They had begun with joy, and had pledged to give a generous gift. Now the time had come for them to make good their promise. Paul was sending Titus and another brother to encourage them so that when he came they would be spiritually prepared to give what they had promised. Paul reminded them of their influence on other churches. He was not above using a little healthy competition to encourage giving.

Prayer: Lord, help me to give sacrificially and joyfully, not grudgingly.

One Word: Be ready to give

GOD GIVES ABUNDANTLY

2 Corinthians 9:6-11

Key Verse: 9:8

1. Sow generously (6)

Giving is like sowing seed. If we sow generously, we will reap a large harvest. If we give with a grudging heart because we feel compelled to do so by the pressure of others, then God is not pleased, and the harvest will be small.

2. God is able (7-11)

There is another reason for giving with a glad and generous heart. God loves a cheerful giver, and God is the source of all blessings. Just as he supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, he promises to increase our ability to give and enlarge our harvest of righteousness. He makes us rich in every way--not so that we can pursue selfish pleasure, but so that we can give generously to others. When we give generously and joyfully because we love God, then others will praise and thank God, and God will be glorified.

Prayer: Lord, increase my faith so that I can be a generous and sacrificial giver, and please you.

One Word: God loves a cheerful giver

GOD'S INDESCRIBABLE GIFT

2 Corinthians 9:12-15

Key Verse: 9:15

1. God is praised by generous giving (12-14)

Our purpose in giving is not only to help those in need; it is to glorify God. Our giving is an expression of our thanks to God for his surpassing grace. When we give, we want others to praise and thank God--we should not expect them to heap praise on us. When we live obedient and sacrificial lives, consistent with the gospel we confess, then God is pleased and honored. We must praise God with our lives as well as with our lips.

2. God's indescribable Gift (15)

God loved this sin-sick world so much that he gave his Son to die for us. Whatever we give to others is small compared with God's gift and grace to us. When we remember God's indescribable gift to us, we can give to others generously, sacrificially and joyfully, with hearts full of thanksgiving.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your indescribable gift. Help me to give to others with a joyful and thankful heart.

One Word: Thanks be to God

EVERY THOUGHT CAPTIVE TO CHRIST

2 Corinthians 10:1-11

Key Verse: 10:5b

1. Making our thoughts obedient to Christ (1-6)

Paul was fighting a war with the devil. He did not use worldly weapons. We, like Paul, must not follow the standards of the world--even though we live in the world. Our battle with sin begins in our own inner thought life. The devil tries to undermine the Christian faith with worldly knowledge and ideas that are opposed to the knowledge of God. We, like Paul, must take every idea and thought captive and make it obedient to Christ.

2. Spiritual authority (7-11)

Paul was the same, whether present or absent. He belonged to Christ, so he stood on God's side. This was the source of his authority. He challenged sin and called God's people to repent. He used his spiritual authority to build up believers, not to tear them down.

Prayer: Lord, come into my heart and be the Lord of my thought world and the Ruler of every part of my life. Help me to use whatever gifts you give me to build up your church.

One Word: Every thought captive to Christ

ONE COMMENDED BY THE LORD

2 Corinthians 10:12-18

Key Verse: 10:17

1. Don't measure by human standards (12-15a)

Paul had planted the gospel in Corinth. The believers there were his spiritual children, so he was concerned when someone began to sow seeds of doubt about him among them. He did not measure his work by human standards but sought God's approval. To Paul, boasting meant acknowledging God's work in himself and, through him, in his sheep. He did not criticize the work of others, but sought to build up, not tear down faith. He did his best to plant the seeds of the gospel in the field God had given him.

2. Paul's hope (15b-18)

His hope was that they might grow in faith, and that he might pioneer regions beyond them. Paul was a missionary; he wanted to go on to other unreached areas. He wanted the Corinthians to

share with him in the world mission task. God is the one who can make gospel seed grow and produce fruit, so we should boast only in the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, there are many people who criticize others but do nothing about reaching the lost. Help me to grow in faith and share in world mission.

One Word: One whom the Lord commends

A PURE VIRGIN BRIDE TO CHRIST

2 Corinthians 11:1-6

Key Verse: 11:2

1. A match-maker for Jesus (1-2)

God's people in the Old Testament are sometimes referred to as God's Bride (Isa 54:5). In the New Testament, the Church is called the Bride of Christ. A pure virgin means one who is wholly committed in heart, mind and body to her husband, Jesus. Who is pure? Jesus shed his blood to cleanse us from sin and make us pure. Paul was a match-maker to bring people to Jesus. We are united with Jesus in his death and resurrection. We are saved by him alone. We need no other gospel, nor do we need Jesus plus anything else. There is one gospel; I have one heart and one Savior.

2. Paul's godly jealousy (3-6; 2a)

Paul knew that the devil is very smart, and young Christians are vulnerable. They can be led astray if someone speaks with eloquent and moving words, suggesting that believers need something more than the simple gospel of Jesus to be saved. We need only to receive Jesus into our hearts as Savior and Lord, and love him and trust him. (Jn 1:12,13)

Prayer: Lord, give me a pure heart to love and trust my true husband Jesus.

One Word: Only Jesus

SATAN'S MASQUERADE

2 Corinthians 11:7-15

Key Verse: 11:14

1. God knows I love you (7-11)

When he pioneered the church in Corinth, Paul had supported himself by working as a tentmaker. His living expenses were supplemented by gifts from other churches. The believers in Corinth were not rich or educated. They were not wise or influential by human standards. Many

came from low and despised occupations (1Co 1:26-28). But Paul gave them his heart and saw a mighty work of God among them.

2. Beware of false apostles (12-15)

After he left, some teachers (perhaps Jews who insisted on circumcision) came who undermined their faith in the simple gospel of Jesus. These teachers were eloquent and persuasive. But Paul warned that even Satan comes masquerading as an angel of light. So Jesus' people must not be deceived by things that sound good or logical. We must test everything against the simple truth of the Bible. People who lead God's children astray must answer to God.

Prayer: Lord, guard my heart with your word and Spirit so that I may not be led astray.

One Word: Don't listen to Satan

I BOAST OF MY WEAKNESS

2 Corinthians 11:16-33

Key Verse: 11:30

1. Worldly boasting (16-22)

The men who tried to discredit Paul's ministry were evidently able men from a human point of view. They were scholars with impeccable Jewish backgrounds. Some people think that because of their human background or human ability they can be spiritual leaders. Paul had a human background that would equal anyone's. But this was not what he boasted about.

2. Boasting about his weakness (23-33)

Paul's life as a pioneer missionary would make a movie more exciting than most of the adventure stories around. He described some experiences that most men would have preferred to forget--being beaten and put in jail, being hungry, cold and naked. He boasted about the dangers he faced for Christ's sake, and about the inner suffering he had experienced as he prayed for all the churches. Real spiritual leadership grows in this kind of soil.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to rejoice in suffering for Jesus' sake.

One Word: Be a fool for Jesus

MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT

2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Key Verse: 12:9

1. Paul's vision (1-6)

Paul had a wonderful vision of heaven, but he did not boast about such spiritual experiences. He did not talk about these things because he did not want people to regard him as God's servant because of his dreams and visions. His life rested on God's grace.

2. A thorn in the flesh (7-10)

We don't know exactly what kind of physical problem troubled Paul. He called it a thorn in the flesh and a messenger from Satan given to torment God's servant. He had seen God answer many prayers for others to be healed, but even though he pleaded three times with the Lord in prayer that God take away his "thorn," God said "No." God's power is made perfect in our weakness. When we are weak and helpless, we depend on God; he works through our weaknesses to display his power. He wants his servants to be humble and to depend on him.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your sufficient grace. Display your mighty power through my weaknesses, for your glory.

One Word: God's grace is sufficient

NOT YOUR POSSESSIONS, BUT YOU

2 Corinthians 12:11-21

Key Verse: 12:14b

1. I want you, not your possessions (11-18)

Paul did not want material benefit from the Corinthian Christians--he wanted their hearts. He was their spiritual father. When he had first lived and worked in Corinth, he had earned his own way as a tentmaker. He still did not want to burden them. He was planning to visit them for the third time, but he made it clear that he did not expect them to support him materially. He loved them like his own children, and was ready to spend everything for them--and even to expend himself for them. He wanted to give to them rather than to receive from them.

2. It is for your strengthening (19-21)

Paul was planning to visit them. He had defended his ministry and had rebuked them in his letter for their spiritual benefit. He hopes that when he meets them face to face, they will have solved their sin problems before God. If they have not repented of the immorality in their midst, Paul will be grieved.

Prayer: Lord, help me to put people ahead of material things and try to strengthen your people in every circumstance.

One Word: Unselfish love

CHRIST'S WEAKNESS AND POWER

2 Corinthians 13:1-14

Key Verse: 13:4

1. The source and use of authority (1-4)

Paul was their shepherd. His authority came from Christ. He used this authority to build up God's people, not to tear them down (10b). Paul was planning to visit them for the third time. He would rebuke those who had not repented. Although Christ was crucified in weakness, he was raised in power. It is this powerful Jesus who is at work among his people. When we repent of our sins, we are weak in him; when we receive his forgiveness and his Spirit, we become strong in God's power.

2. Examine yourselves (5-14)

Each of us must examine himself to see if he is in the faith. We are in the faith when Jesus is in us and we are in him. We are in the faith when we love truth and act according to it. We are in the faith when we repent of our sins and accept God's forgiveness. Paul urges them to aim for perfection and be of one mind.

Prayer: Lord, help me to live by the power of the gospel, not by my human ability.

One Word: You are strong when you are weak