

BETHEL GOSPEL CHAPEL

Home Bible Study Guide

2 CORINTHIANS

Paul's closing exhortation to the Corinthians was "*Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace.*" As a congregation we want to move in that direction as we work through this letter. We would strongly recommend that you attend one of the Bible study groups. It will be necessary to answer the questions for each chapter before meeting with your group. Discussion and interpretation are important parts of the learning process and you can contribute only as you come prepared. For your spiritual benefit we have also recommended a verse from each chapter for you to memorize.

In introducing this letter, Philip Hughes makes the following comments in his commentary:(1). *"The circumstances which occasioned the writing of this letter may be deduced from a study of its contents. The general situation which lay behind its composition was as follows: Certain false teachers, who claimed to be apostles, had infiltrated the ranks of the Corinthian church, and in promoting their own claims they had gone out of their way to discredit Paul and to call in question the genuineness of his apostleship. This letter, accordingly, was written largely with the purpose of refuting the accusations and insinuations against him with which these intruders had been poisoning the minds of the believers at Corinth. It is a defense by Paul of the integrity of his personal character and apostleship and an exposure of the intruders as impostors - dictated not by self-interest but by the necessity for protecting the church God had founded through him from forces and doctrines which were essentially inimical to the gospel committed to Paul and to the spiritual welfare of those whose lives, through response to that gospel, had been transformed and set free."*

(1) The New International Commentary on the New Testament - Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1962.

STUDY 1

READ: II Corinthians 1:1-22

1. What do you learn about God from the salutation of this letter Verses 1-2?
2. Why is praise offered to God -vs 3?
3. What does Paul mean when he says: "*The sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives.*" - Verse 5?
4. Paul says that his experience is a direct benefit to those in trouble - How? Verses 4-7?
5. Describe in your own words the feelings which Paul had as a result of his experience in Asia - Verses 8-9.
6. What did Paul learn from this experience - Verses 9 -10?
7. What do you learn about prayer from Verse 11?
8. In Verses 12-14 Paul takes a position to which he returns again and again in this letter. List the principles on which he bases his behavior.
9. Paul's failure to come in person to Corinth was being used by his opponents as evidence that he did not have the courage of his convictions. (See also II Corinthians 10:1-2, 9-10; and 13:1-4), How does Paul answer their accusation - Verses 15-19, 23?
10. Explain the meaning of Verse 20.
11. List the things which God has done for us in Christ - Verses 21-22.

Response

12. Of what benefit to you is the information given in Verses 3-11?
13. What changes in your behavior would be necessary before you could write as Paul does in Verses 12-14?
14. What is your response to what God has done for you in Christ - Verses 20-22?

MEMORY VERSE: *Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his spirit in our hearts as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come.* II Corinthians 1:21-22.

For further discussion write down any unresolved questions which you have about the material in this chapter.

STUDY 2

READ: II Corinthians 1:23 - 2:17

1. What is Paul's position in relation to the Christians at Corinth - Verses 23-24?
2. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was in part a response to reports which he had received of their moral and ethical failures. Put in your own words the feelings which moved him to write - Verses 1-4.
3. Having taken into account their response to his instructions regarding discipline in I Corinthians 5, Paul now recommends what action - Verses 5-7?
4. What dangers are anticipated when church discipline is carried to excess - Verses 7-11?
5. Explain the meaning of Verses 11.
6. In the light of II Corinthians 7:5 -7 and 13 -16, why do you think that Paul leaves an opportunity to preach the Gospel and goes to Asia - Verses 12-13?
7. In these circumstances why is he still thankful to God - Verse 14?
8. What do you understand Verses 15 -16 to mean?
9. Paul contrasts his behavior to that of others in Verse 17 - why?

Response

10. What is your attitude to failure in the church?
11. By what steps do we reaffirm our love to those who have failed?

12. In what kind of situations do you lose your peace of mind?

MEMORY VERSE: *But thanks be to God who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him.* II Corinthians 2:14

For further discussion write down any unresolved questions which you have about the material in this study.

STUDY 3

READ: II Corinthians 3:1-18

1. Paul claims that he does not need a letter of recommendation - why - Verses 1-3?
2. What is the source of his confidence - Verses 4-5?
3. Explain the meaning of the statement in Verse 6: "*The letter kills, but the spirit gives life.*"
4. If you are not familiar with the historical basis which Paul uses to contrast the ministry of the Law and the ministry of the Spirit, please read Exodus 34:29-35 before proceeding.
5. What are the contrasts between the old and new covenants - Verses 7-11?
6. What hope makes Paul bold - Verse 12?
7. In these verses Paul uses the veil with which Moses covered his face as a symbol of what - Verses 13-16?
8. When does the meaning of the Old Covenant become understandable - Verses 13-16?
9. How do we recognize the presence of the Spirit - Verse 17?
10. What is the present work of the Spirit in our lives - Verse 18?

Response

11. List the ways in which you can be a letter for Christ.
12. What freedoms do you have as a result of the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life?
13. How do you reflect the Lord's glory?

MEMORY VERSE: *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever increasing glory which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.* II Corinthians 3:18

For further discussion write down any unresolved questions which you have with the material in this chapter.

STUDY 4

READ: II Corinthians 4:1-18

1. Why is Paul not discouraged? To what ministry does he refer in Verse 1?
2. List the methods which he refuses to employ - Verse 2?
3. What kind of behavior does Paul see as essential to his ministry - Verse 2?
4. Why is the gospel veiled in some cases - Verses 3-4?
5. What is the crucial act which leads to our salvation - Verses 5-6?
6. How does Paul demonstrate that this all surpassing power is from God - Verses 7-9?
7. Explain the meaning of verses 10-12.
8. What does Paul believe and why does he speak - Verses 13-15?
9. Why does Paul not lose heart - Verses 16-17?

10. What gives his life its consistency - Verse 18?

Response

11. Identify the activities which are essential if you are to claim that Jesus Christ is Lord?

12. Even though you experience difficulties in your life, in what way is your life different from those who do not know the Lord?

13. How can you personally experience renewal day by day?

MEMORY VERSE: *For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said: "Let the light shine out of darkness" made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. II Corinthians 4:5-6*

For further discussion write down any unresolved questions which you have with the material in this chapter.

STUDY 5

READ: II Corinthians 5:1-21

1. What confidence do we have regarding our body - Verse 1?

2. What does Paul mean in Verses 2-4?

3. Why has God given us His Spirit?

4. What statement in the paragraph (Verses 6-10) the confidence mentioned in Verses 6 and 8?

5. What takes place at the judgement seat of Christ - Verse 10?

6. Paul says he was motivated to persuade men. How and why - Verses 11-12?

7. To what conclusion does Paul come as he considers Christ's love - Verses 14-15?

8. Explain the meaning of verses 16-17.
9. What is the ministry of reconciliation - Verses 18-19?
10. How does God make his appeal through us - Verses 20-21?

Response

11. How do you demonstrate that you are walking by faith, not by sight?
12. Explain what it means to receive what is due us at the Judgement Seat of Christ.
13. What is your responsibility as a person to whom the message of reconciliation has been committed?

MEMORY VERSE: *For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. II Corinthians 5:10*

For further discussion write down any unresolved questions which you have with the material in this chapter.

STUDY 6

READ: II Corinthians 6:1 - 7:1

1. a) Paul, as God's fellow-worker presented the grace of God, how could the Corinthians receive it in vain (to no purpose) - Verse 1?

b) What would be the result of such an action on the part of the Corinthians?

2. List under the appropriate heading the various ways in which Paul, as God's servant commends himself - Verses 3-10.

Experience

Behaviour

Attitudes

3. Why was Paul willing to live this way?
4. What enabled him to be consistent?
5. Why has he written in this way to the Corinthians about his personal life - Verses 11-13?
6. Answer each of the questions which follow the statement: "*Do not be yoked together with unbelievers*" - Verses 12-16

Definition - BELIAL - *a very wicked person*. (New Bible Dictionary)

7. Read the quotations which are used by Paul to support his argument in their original context and write down what you learn about God from each of them. Leviticus 26:1-13; Jeremiah 32:36-41; Ezekiel 37:27; Isaiah 52:1-11; Ezekiel 20:39-44; II Samuel 7:11-15.
8. What should the response be to these promises - 7:1?
9. Explain what it means to "*perfect holiness out of reverence for God*" 7:1.

Response

10. Give some examples of things that you think discredit the ministry of Christians today.
11. If you adopted Paul's attitude to ministry, what changes would have to take place?
12. Come prepared to discuss your thoughts and questions regarding implementing the instructions to not be yoked with unbelievers.

MEMORY VERSE: *Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates the body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.* II Corinthians 7:1

For further discussion write down any unresolved questions which you have with the material in this chapter.

STUDY 7

NOTE: Before proceeding with the study of chapter 7 we would recommend that you familiarize yourself with several of the issues which were creating problems in the church at Corinth by reading the following passages. What is the problem and what is Paul's response? Be as brief as possible. I Corinthians 5:1-13, I Corinthians 6:1-11, I Corinthians 6:12-20, I Corinthians 7:1-16:

READ: II Corinthians 7:2-16

1. List the reasons which Paul gives for being acceptable to these people - Verse 2
2. We think of pride as a sin. Why then does Paul say that he takes great pride in these people - Verses 3-4?
3. Describe in your own words Paul's emotional state when he arrived in Macedonia - Verse 5.
4. What is the result of Paul's reunion with Titus - Verses 6-7?
5. What are the two kinds of sorrow we can experience and why are the results so different - Verses 8-10?
6. Outline in your own words the process of godly sorrow through which these people passed - Verses 11-12.
7. Why was Paul especially delighted to see Titus happy - Verses 13-14?
8. Why was Titus' affection for the Christians at Corinth strengthened - Verses 15-16?

Response

9. Identify some of the ways in which people in the church may be wronged, corrupted and exploited - Verse 2.
10. How do you maintain emotional stability?
11. We generally resent any criticism of our behavior. Can you explain why Paul was able to say: "*You were not harmed in any way by us*" - Verse 9?

MEMORY VERSE: *Make room for us in your hearts. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have exploited no one.* II Corinthians 7:2.

For further discussion write down any unresolved questions which you have with the material in this chapter.

STUDY 8

READ: II Corinthians 8:1-24

1. What was the key to the generosity of the Macedonian churches -. Verses 1-2?
2. Participation in the service to the saints was regarded by these people as a privilege. Why do you think they considered it a privilege - Verses 3-5?
3. What is Paul's concern in Verses 6-7?
4. Why should it not be necessary to command Christians to give - Verses 8-9?
5. On what basis were they to determine what to give - Verses 10-12?
6. Why is the collection being made - Verses 13-15?
7. What are the characteristics of those involved in organizing this, collection - Verses 16-19?
8. List the safeguards which are being used regarding the handling of this money - Verses 19-23.
9. Of what benefit to other churches was the example of this church - Verse 24?

Response

10. List the ways in which this appeal differs from those you receive today.
11. What things do you take into consideration before you give?
12. How would you determine in this business of money if things are right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man?

MEMORY VERSE: *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor so that you through His poverty might become rich. II Corinthians 8:9*

For further discussion write down any unresolved questions which you have with the material in this chapter.

STUDY 9

READ: II Corinthians 9:1-15

1. What is Paul's purpose in boasting to the Macedonians about the generosity of those in Achaia - Verses 1-2? (Achaia was the southern province of Greece where Corinth was located.)
2. What precautions did Paul take and why - Verses 3-5?
3. What principle is at work in giving - Verse 6?
4. With what attitude were the gifts to be made - Verse 7?
5. What encouragement does Paul give the Corinthians to continue their generosity - Verses 8-9
6. Explain the meaning of Verses 10-11.
7. Identify the two things which this service of giving accomplishes - Verses 12
8. Of what is participation in the service of giving a confirmation or proof - Verse 13?
9. What is God's indescribable Gift - Verses 14-15?

Response

10. What impression do you get from this chapter about the attitude of these people to giving?
11. Why do you think constant appeals for money are made today?
12. Did the study of these two chapters on giving alter your own views on giving.

MEMORY VERSE: *Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.* II Corinthians 9:6

For further discussion write down any unresolved questions you have about the material in the chapter.

STUDY 10

NOTE: Before proceeding to answer the questions of this study we would recommend that you read the following passages to identify some of the problems which were present in the church at Corinth and what the attitude toward Paul was: I Corinthians 1:10-17; 2:1-9; 3:1-4; 9:1-6; 16:10-11

READ: II Corinthians 10:1-18

1. What criticism is being made of Paul and how does he counter it - Verses 1-3?
2. What power do Paul's "weapons" have and what do they accomplish? (Verses 4-5)
3. Explain Verse 6.
4. To what conclusions do these people come and why are they wrong - Verses 7-11?
5. What is the source of Paul's authority - Verses 7-11?
6. Put the argument of Verse 12 into your own words.
7. What activity does Paul refuse to indulge in Verses 13-15?
8. Despite his criticism of their behavior, what is Paul's real desire for these people - Verses 15-16?
9. What is the point of Verses 17-18?

Response

10. How do you respond to personal criticism?
11. What do you learn from this chapter about self evaluation?

12. What does it mean to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ”?

MEMORY VERSE: *The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of this world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. II Corinthians 10:4-5*

For further discussion write down any unresolved questions which you have with the material in this chapter.

STUDY II

READ: II Corinthians 11:1-33

1. What does Paul consider foolishness - Verses 1 and 4-6? (Verses 2-3 are a parenthesis.)
2. Why is he jealous - Verses 2-3?
3. Why is Paul's behavior being criticized - Verses 7-12?
4. How does he defend himself? (See also I Corinthians 9:1-6)
5. How does Paul describe those who oppose him - Verses 13-15
6. Explain the argument of vs 16-21.
7. What conclusion can be reached about what was being said against Paul on the basis of Verses 21-23? Christ - Verses 23-27.
8. List the experiences which Paul had as a servant of
9. Put yourself in Paul's place and express in your own words Verses 28-29.
10. What proof is offered for the validity of Paul's experience at Damascus - Verses 30-33?

Response

11. Describe the process by which your devotion to Christ can be compromised.

12. In what circumstances in our day would you be responsible to speak as Paul does in Verses 13-15?

13. In what practical way is your concern for the church being expressed?

MEMORY VERSE: *I am jealous for you with a Godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to Him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. II Corinthians 11:2-3*

For further discussion write down any unresolved questions which you have with the material in the chapter.

STUDY 12

READ: II Corinthians 12:1-21

1. Why did Paul not make his own experience the focus of his ministry - Verses 1-6?

NOTE: This letter is believed to have been written in A.D. 57. This would indicate that the experience to which Paul refers took place sometime after he left Jerusalem for Tarsus (Acts 9:26-30) but before he joined Barnabas at Antioch (Acts 11:22-26).

2. What was the source of his thorn in the flesh - Verse 7?

3. What did he learn from the Lord's response to his prayer - Verses 9-10?

4. Why has Paul been making these self-congratulatory comments - Verses 11-13?

5. What is the difference between Paul's behavior and that of his opponents in Corinth - Verse 13?

6. Explain the argument of Verses 14-15.

7. How had Paul and Titus kept themselves free from the charge of exploitation - Verses 16-18?

8. What do you learn about Paul from Verse 19?

9. List the responses which Paul fears there will be to this letter - Verse 20.

10. Explain why Paul would be humbled and grieved by their behavior - Verse 21.

Response

11. On what basis should we evaluate ourselves and others?

12. Of what value is your weakness?

13. Why do situations such as described in Verses 20 and 21 continue to occur in the Christian community and how can they be avoided?

MEMORY VERSE: *But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness". Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on me.*
II Corinthians 12:9

For further discussion write down any unresolved questions which you have with the material in this chapter.

STUDY 13

READ: II Corinthians 13:1-14

1. What procedural safeguard will Paul employ on his return to Corinth - Verse 1?

2. Why is this procedure necessary (See I Corinthians 1:11-12 for an example)

3. What does the expression "I will not spare" mean - Verse 2?

4. In what way is Paul's life similar to Christ's - Verses 3-4?

5. How would you examine and test yourself to see if you were in the faith - Verse 7?

6. Put Verses 6 and 7 into your own words.

7. What kind of behavior did Paul encourage the Corinthian Christians to adopt - Verse 7?

8. What do you think Verse 8 means?

9. Why has Paul written this letter - Verses 9-10?

10. What response is expected - Verses 11-14?

Response

11. How would you suggest a problem within the church fellowship should be resolved?

12. What factors do you think are essential for self-evaluation to be profitable?

13. Does Paul's exhortation to be of one mind mean that you should never disagree with another believer? Explain.

MEMORY VERSE: *Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. II Corinthians 13:11*

For further discussion write down any unresolved questions which you have with the material in this chapter.