

THE SECOND
LETTER TO THE

CORINTHIANS

WILLIAM MACDONALD



Developed as a study course by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.

The Second Letter to the Corinthians

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STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians produced the desired effect. For example, the immoral brother was expelled from the fellowship of the local church and showed deep repentance.

In this, his second letter, Paul reveals his anxiety while awaiting a report from Titus concerning developments at Corinth. In the meantime, Paul experiences some of his darkest hours. Trouble appeared on every side. "Without were fightings; within were fears." Paul's detractors made a threefold assault upon him; they attacked his person, his teaching, and his character.

In the midst of all his troubles, Paul discovers not only that the "Father of mercies" was the "God of all comfort," but also that he could prove the all-sufficiency of God's grace in his life.

This study will help you learn that blessing can come out of trials and difficulties.

Lessons You Will Study

| | |
|--|-----|
| 1. God's Help in Trouble (1:1-14) | 1 |
| 2. Paul Changes His Plans (1:15-2:17) | 9 |
| 3. The Old Covenant and the New (3:1-18) | 19 |
| 4. Spiritual Treasure in Earthen Jars (4:1-18) | 29 |
| 5. An Eternal Heavenly Home (5:1-19) | 39 |
| 6. Paul's Service and Sufferings (5:20-6:18) | 51 |
| 7. Titus Brings Paul Good News (7:1-16) | 61 |
| 8. Christian Giving (8:1-24) | 69 |
| 9. God Blesses Generous Givers (9:1-10:12) | 77 |
| 10. Paul Defends His Ministry (10:13-11:20) | 87 |
| 11. Paul's Boasting (11:21-12:10) | 97 |
| 12. Proof of Paul's Apostleship (12:11-13:14) | 107 |

Course Components

This course has two parts: this study course and the exam booklet.

How To Study

This study has twelve chapters, and each chapter has its own exam. Begin by asking God to help you understand the material. Read the chapter through at least twice, once to get a general idea of its contents and then again, slowly, looking up any Bible references given.

Begin studying immediately, or if you are in a group, as soon as the group begins. We suggest that you keep a regular schedule by trying to complete at least one chapter per week.

Exams

In the exam booklet there is one exam for each chapter (exam 1 covers chapter 1 of the course). Do not answer the questions by what you think or have always believed. The questions are designed to find out if you understand the material given in the course.

After you have completed each chapter, review the related exam and see how well you know the answers. If you find that you are having difficulty answering the questions, review the material until you think you can answer the questions.

How Your Exams Are Graded

Your instructor will mark any incorrectly answered questions. You will be referred back to the place in the course where the correct answer is found. After finishing this course with a passing average, you will be awarded a certificate.

If you enrolled in a class, submit your exam papers to the leader or secretary of the class who will send them for the entire group to the Correspondence School.

See the back of the exam booklet for more information on returning the exams for grading.

OUTLINE OF 2 CORINTHIANS

- I. A description of Paul's ministry (chs. 1-7).
 - A. Salutation (1:1, 2).
 - B. Paul's thanksgiving for divine help in his afflictions (1:3-11).
 - C. Explanation of his change in plans (1:12-2:17).
 - D. Paul's credentials—the Corinthians themselves (3:1-3).
 - E. The apostle's qualification for the ministry (3:4-6a).
 - F. The old and new covenants contrasted (3:6b-18).
 - G. The obligation to make the gospel message plain (4:1-6).
 - H. The feeble nature, yet glorious destiny, of the human vessel to which the gospel message has been entrusted (4:7-5:10).
 - I. The apostle's desire to maintain a good conscience in the ministry (5:11-6:2).
 - J. The apostle's behavior in the ministry (6:3-10).
 - K. His appeal for the affection of the Corinthians (6:11-13).
 - L. The appeal for separation from evil (6:14-7:1).
 - M. Paul's strong reasons why the Corinthians should receive him (7:2-4).
 - N. His joy at receiving good news from Corinth through Titus (7:5-16).
- II. Appeal to the Corinthians to send their promised contribution to the needy saints in Jerusalem (chs. 8, 9).
 - A. The splendid example of the Macedonians (8:1-5).
 - B. Appeal to Corinthians to do likewise (8:6-8).
 - C. The example of the Lord Jesus' generosity (8:9).

- D. Further appeal to give as promised (8:10, 11).
 - E. Three principles which should govern Christian giving (8:12-15).
 - F. The three brethren who would precede Paul and prepare the collection (8:16-24).
 - G. Appeal to the Corinthians to justify Paul's boasting of them by collecting a generous offering (9:1-5).
 - H. The rewards of Christian liberality (9:6-15).
- III. Paul's defense of his apostleship (10:1-13:10).
- A. His reply to those who accused him (10:1-12).
 - B. His rule of service—to break up new ground, and not to intrude into someone else's work (10:13-16).
 - C. His supreme goal—the commendation of the Lord (10:17, 18).
 - D. Paul's boasting was forced upon him (11:1-4).
 - E. He mentions his grounds for boasting (11:5-15).
 - F. He further justifies his boasting (11:16-20).
 - G. The apostle continues his boasting (11:22-12:10).
 - H. It should not have been necessary for the apostle to boast (12:11-13).
 - I. The apostle discusses his pending visit to Corinth (12:14-13:2).
 - J. The Corinthians themselves were proof of Paul's apostleship (13:3-6).
 - K. Paul's desire was that they should so behave that he would be able to build them up, and not have to rebuke them (13:7-10).
- IV. Closing exhortation and salutation (13:11-14).

God's Help in Trouble (1:1-1:14)

One reason we love Second Corinthians so greatly is because it is so personal. We seem to get closer to the heart of the apostle here than in any of his other writings. We feel something of the tremendous enthusiasm he had for the work of the Lord. We catch a sense of the dignity of life's greatest calling. We read with silent amazement the catalog of sufferings which he endured. We experience the hot flush of indignation with which he answered his unscrupulous critics. In short, Paul seems to let us into every secret of his soul, and we are forced to agree with Sadler when he said:

“The transparency of the revelation of Paul is to me something unequalled in all sacred literature.”

Paul's first visit to Corinth is recorded in Acts 18. It took place on his second missionary journey, just after he had delivered his memorable Mars Hill address in Athens.

In Corinth, Paul worked as a tentmaker with Aquila and Priscilla, and preached the gospel in the synagogue. Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia to join him in this evangelistic work, which lasted at least eighteen months (Acts 18:11).

When the Jews rejected his preaching, Paul turned to the Gentiles. As souls were saved—both Jews and Gentiles—the Jewish leaders haled the apostle before the proconsul, Gallio. But the latter threw the case out of court as one over which he did not have jurisdiction.

After the trial, Paul stayed in Corinth many days, and then left for Cenckrea, Ephesus, and the long trip back to Caesarea and Antioch.

On his third missionary journey, he returned to Ephesus and stayed there for three years (Acts 20:31). During this stay, a delegation from Corinth visited him, asking Paul's advice on many matters. It was in answer to these queries that the First Letter to the Corinthians was written.

The apostle later became very anxious to find out how the Corinthians had reacted to his letter, especially to the section concerning the discipline of a sinning member. So he left Ephesus for Troas where he hoped to meet Titus, but failing to do so, he crossed over into Macedonia. It was here that Titus came with news, both good and bad. The saints had disciplined the sinning saint—and this discipline had resulted in his spiritual recovery; that was good news. But the Christians had never sent the money to the needy saints at Jerusalem, as they had intended to do; that was not so good. Finally, Titus reported that the false teachers were active at Corinth, undermining the work of the apostle and questioning his authority as a servant of Christ. This was distressing.

These then are the circumstances that called for the Second Letter to the Corinthians, written from Macedonia, possibly about 57 A.D.

Almost all Bible scholars see a threefold division in the epistle:

- Chs. 1-7. A personal explanation of Paul's ministry, including further instruction on the restoration of the disciplined brother.
- Chs. 8, 9. An exhortation to follow through on their intended collection for the Jerusalem believers.
- Chs. 10-13. Paul's answer to those who attacked his apostleship.

In the first letter, Paul is seen primarily as a teacher, but in the second he occupies the role of a pastor. If you listen carefully, you will hear the heartbeat of one who really loved the people of God and gave himself for their welfare.

The letter is a difficult one. The meaning of many of the verses is obscure, to say the least. For this there are several explanations:

1. Paul uses a great deal of satire, but it is sometimes difficult to know just when he is doing so.
2. To fully understand some sections, we would have to have further information as to Paul's exact travels, the travels of his companions, and the letters he wrote.
3. The letter is intensely personal, and the words are often the language of the heart. These are not always the easiest to understand.

But the difficulties should not discourage us. Fortunately, they do not affect the basic truths of the epistle, but only the details.

Second Corinthians is a much-loved and much-quoted letter. After you have completed your study of it, you will better understand why.

So let us now embark on this grand adventure, and as we study these “thoughts that breathe and words that burn,” let us do so with a prayer for the illumination of God’s Holy Spirit.

OUTLINE

- I. A description of Paul’s ministry (chs. 1-7).
 - A. Salutation (1:1-2).
 - B. Paul’s thanksgiving for divine help in his afflictions (1:3-11).
 1. Divine encouragement (vv. 3-7).
 2. Divine deliverance (vv. 8-11).
 - C. Explanation of his change in plans (1:12-2:17).
 1. He had always been honest and straightforward (1:12-14).

Paul Conveys His Greetings (1:1-2)

At the outset of the letter, Paul introduces himself as “an apostle of Christ Jesus (RV) by the will of God.” It is important that he should strike this note at the very beginning, because, as we have mentioned in the introduction, there were those in Corinth who raised the question as to whether Paul had ever really been commissioned by the Lord. His answer is that he did not choose the ministry by his own will, neither was he ordained by men, but he had been sent into the work by Christ Jesus through the will of God.

His call to the apostleship took place on the road to Damascus. It was an unforgettable experience in his life, and it was the consciousness of this divine call that sustained the apostle during many bitter hours. Oftentimes when, in the service of Christ, he was pressed beyond measure, he might well have given up and gone home, if he had not had the assurance of a divine call.

The fact that Timothy is mentioned in verse 1 does not mean that he helped to compose the letter. It only signifies that he was with the apostle Paul at the time the letter was written. Beyond this fact, there is a great deal of uncertainty about Timothy’s movements during this period.

The letter is addressed to the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia. The expression “church of God” means that it was an assembly of believers belonging to God. It was not a heathen assembly, or some nonreligious gathering of people, but a company of born-again Christians, called out from the world to belong to the Lord. Doubtless as Paul wrote these words, he remembered how he had first gone to Corinth and preached the gospel there. Men and women steeped in idolatry and sensuality had trusted Jesus Christ as Lord, and had been saved by His marvelous grace. In spite of all the difficulties that had later come into the assembly at Corinth, the heart of the apostle Paul doubtless rejoiced to think of the mighty change which had come into the lives of these dear people.

The letter is addressed not only to the saints in Corinth but to those of all Achaia. Achaia represented the southern part of Greece; whereas Macedonia, of which we shall also be reading in this epistle, was the northern section of that same country.

This is the lovely salutation that we have come to associate with the beloved apostle Paul. When he wishes to describe his greatest desires for the people of God, he does not wish for them material things such as silver and gold. He knows only too well that these can make to themselves wings and fly away. But rather he wishes for them spiritual blessings, such as grace and peace, which include every good thing that can come to a poor sinner on this side of heaven. Denney says that, “Grace is the first and last word of the gospel; and peace—perfect spiritual soundness—is the finished work of Christ in the soul.”

Notice that grace and peace are from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. God our Father is the source, and our Lord Jesus Christ is the channel. Paul does not hesitate to place the Lord Jesus Christ side by side with God our Father, because, as a member of the Trinity, Jesus Christ is equal with God the Father.

Thanksgiving for Divine Encouragement (1:3-7)

From verse 3 through verse 11, the apostle bursts forth into thanksgiving for the comfort that has come to him in the midst of his distress and affliction. Undoubtedly, the comfort was the good news which Titus had brought to him in Macedonia. The apostle then goes on to show that whether he is afflicted or comforted, all turns out for the eventual good of the believers to whom he ministers.

The thanksgiving is addressed to “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (RV). This is the full title of God in the New Testament. No

longer is He addressed as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, or the God of Jacob. Now He is the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. This name, incidentally, implies in it the great truth that the Lord Jesus is both God and Man. God is the *God* of our Lord Jesus Christ; this refers to His relation to Jesus, the Son of Man. But God is also the *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ; this refers to His relationship to Christ, the Son of God.

In addition, God is described as the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. From this we learn that it is from Him that all mercies and comforts flow.

In all Paul's afflictions, he was conscious of God's comforting presence. Here in verse 4 he gives one of the many reasons why God comforts us. It is so that we in turn might be able to comfort others with the very same comfort with which we are comforted by God. As someone has said, "We are not comforted to be comfortable but to be comforters."

To us, the word "comfort" usually means consolation in time of sorrow. But as it is used in the New Testament, it has a wider meaning. It refers to the encouragement and exhortation that come to us from one who is beside us in time of need.

There is a practical lesson in this verse for us all. We should remember when we are comforted that we should seek to pass on this comfort to others. We should not avoid the sick room or the house of death, but rather fly to the side of any who are in need of our encouragement.

Several times in this letter, Paul introduces the idea that the sufferings of Christ are shared by His people in the world today. What does he mean by this? First of all, we know that it cannot refer to Christ's atoning sufferings. These were unique, and no man could share in them. But the Lord Jesus also suffered at the hands of men, and those who seek to follow Him are often called upon to do likewise. It is in this sense that Paul could say that the sufferings of Christ abounded in him (v. 5). He was so like Christ in the world that he received from it the same treatment as did his Master. But there was a very rich compensation for all these sufferings, namely, there was a corresponding share in the consolation which Christ imparts.

In verse 6 Paul could see good emerging alike from his afflictions and his comfort. Both were sanctified by the cross. Both resulted in help for the Corinthians. "Whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer." This means that because Paul himself had been afflicted, his comfort would be especially helpful to the Corinthians as they were called upon to endure the same type of affliction, namely,

persecution. In this way the apostle's affliction worked for the consolation and salvation of the Corinthians. Salvation here refers not to the salvation of their souls but rather to deliverance from their persecutors.

When Samuel Rutherford found himself in the cellar of adversity, as he often did, he began to look around for some of the Lord's "best wines." Perhaps he learned to do this from the example of Paul, for the apostle always sought to trace the rainbow through his tears.

"Or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation." Actually, most translators leave out the word "salvation" in the latter part of this verse. The thought is simply that as the apostle Paul was comforted, so he was able to comfort others. And how true this is! Only those who have gone through deep testings know how to speak a fitting word to others who are called upon to go through the same. A mother who has just lost an only child can best be comforted by another mother who has borne the same heartache. Or, even better, she can best be comforted by the One who gave His only Son.

The apostle now expresses, in verse 7, his confidence that just as the Corinthians had known what it was to suffer on behalf of Christ, so they would experience the comforting help of Christ. Sufferings never come alone for the Christian. They are always followed by the consolation of Christ. We, too, can be confident of this, as the apostle Paul was.

Thanksgiving for Divine Deliverance (1:8-11)

Having spoken in general terms of affliction and comfort, Paul now mentions more specifically a severe testing through which he had recently gone. He does not want the Corinthian brethren to be ignorant of the affliction which befell him in Asia. (Asia here does not mean the continent, but rather a province in the western section of what is now Asia Minor.) Just what was the affliction to which the apostle refers here? Bible students are not agreed on the answer. Perhaps most of them believe that it refers to the dangerous riot which took place in Ephesus, as recorded in Acts 19:23-41. Others suggest that it was a deadly sickness, and still others think that it might refer to disheartening news from Corinth. Fortunately for us, the value and enjoyment of such a passage does not depend on our knowing the exact details.

What we can know is that the trouble was so serious that the apostle Paul was weighed down greatly, beyond the ordinary, natural powers of endurance. It was so serious that he despaired of life itself.

Phillips' helpful rendering of this verse is as follows: "At that time we were completely overwhelmed; the burden was more than we could bear; in fact we told ourselves that this was the end."

The apostle's outlook was so grim (v. 9) that he had the feelings of a man sentenced to death. If someone had asked him, "Is it going to be life or death?" he would have had to answer, "Death."

God allowed His servant to be brought to this place of extremity in order that he would not trust in himself but in the God who raises the dead. "The God who raiseth the dead" is here used doubtlessly as a synonym for the omnipotent God. One who can raise the dead is the only hope of a man who is doomed to die, as the apostle considered himself to be.

In verse 10 of the King James Version it appears that Paul is speaking of deliverance in its three tenses: past, present, and future. But actually most other versions of the Bible disagree. The American Standard Version, for instance, reads: "Who delivered us out of so great a death, and will deliver: on whom we have set our hope that he will also still deliver us." In this case Paul speaks of deliverance once in the past tense and twice in the future. This is one of the many cases where the more correct translation is not necessarily the easier to understand. At any rate, the overall teaching of the verse is clear. First, the Lord delivered Paul out of so great a death. If the riot in Ephesus is in view, then Paul refers to the way in which it stopped suddenly and he escaped (Acts 20:1). The apostle knows that the same God who delivered him in the past is able to deliver him day by day, and will continue to deliver him until that final, grand moment when he will be completely released from the tribulations and persecutions of this world.

In verse 11 Paul generously assumes that the Corinthian Christians had been praying for him while he was going through this time of deep testing. The fact of the matter is that many of the believers had become critical of the great apostle, and there could have been a serious question whether they were remembering him before the throne of grace at all. However, he is willing to give them the benefit of the doubt.

The expression "the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons" refers to the gift of Paul's deliverance which was brought about through the prayers of many persons. He sees his escape as a direct result of the intercession of the saints. He says that because many had prayed, many can now give thanks because their prayers were answered.

Paul's Honesty in His Dealings with the Corinthians (1:12-14)

In verses 12 through 14, Paul is reminding the Corinthians that he has always been straightforward in his dealings with them. In this he will glory, and his conscience bears witness to its truthfulness. His boast is that in simplicity and godly sincerity he behaved toward all men and especially toward the saints in Corinth. Simplicity here really means holiness. It is the opposite of duplicity. His life was both pure and candid. There was no pretense or sham. Neither did he rely on worldly wisdom. Rather by the undeserved ability which God gave him, he acted openly before all.

When he says, "And more abundantly to you-ward," it is quite possible that he is referring particularly to the matter which he will shortly discuss, namely, his change in plans. Some of his critics had raised the cry that because he had not come to Corinth, as originally promised, he was really not sincere and honest. But Paul protests! There was no trickery or underhanded dealings in any of his relations with the Corinthians. He was completely frank and aboveboard with them.

Verse 13 is rather difficult to understand. Perhaps what Paul is saying is that in writing to them, he had stated exactly what he meant. There was no need for them to try to read between the lines. Everything was clear on the surface. He meant exactly what they read.

Not only so, but he meant what they even acknowledged, that is, what they knew as a matter of fact. And he hoped that they would continue to acknowledge this unto the end. In other words, he hoped that they would always acknowledge his authority and sincerity, as well as the honesty of all his dealings with them.

Verse 14 explains more fully what Paul has just said in the preceding one. "As also ye have acknowledged us in part." The assembly in Corinth was not unanimous in acknowledging Paul's apostolic authority, but some of the members had done so consistently, and it is to them that he refers here. The faithful ones had been loyal in standing by Paul, remembering that it was he who had pointed them to the Lord Jesus Christ. He was their father in the faith. In this sense, they were his rejoicing. And they would continue to be his crown of rejoicing until the day of the Lord Jesus. Here the apostle repeats one of his favorite themes. When he stands before the judgment seat of Christ, what will really count for him? Not fame, fortune, or pleasure, but the souls who have been saved through his ministry. These would be his joy and crown of rejoicing.

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EXAM BOOKLET
AK '04 (1 UNIT)

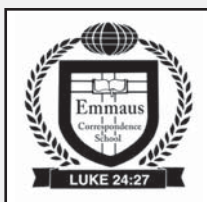
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COURSE GRADE: _____

INSTRUCTOR



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A NOTE ON THE EXAMS

The exams are designed to check your knowledge of the course material and the Scriptures. After you have studied a chapter, review the exam questions for that lesson. If you have difficulty in answering the questions, re-read the material. If questions contain a Scripture reference, you may use your Bible to help you answer them. If your instructor has provided a single page Answer Sheet, record your answer on that sheet. This exam contains the following types of questions:

MULTIPLE CHOICE

You will be asked to write in the letter of the correct answer at the space on the right. Here is an example:

The color of grass is

- A. blue C. yellow
B. green D. orange

 B

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Questions headed this way are designed to help you express your ideas and feelings. You may freely state your own opinions in answer to such questions.

RETURNING THE EXAM

See the back of this exam booklet for instructions on returning your exam for grading.

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CHAPTER 1 EXAM

GOD'S HELP IN TROUBLE

EXAM GRADE

Before starting this exam, write your name and address on the front of this Exam Booklet.

Directions: Read each question carefully and write the letter of the correct answer in the blank space on the right. Use the separate answer sheet if provided.

1. 2 Corinthians is
A. a very impersonal letter
B. largely taken up with doctrine about the Church
C. a revelation of the heart and feelings of Paul
D. not one of the best-liked epistles _____
2. News of conditions in Corinth was brought to Paul by
A. Titus C. Luke
B. Timothy D. Silas _____
3. The first seven chapters of the epistle deal with
A. a collection for Jewish saints
B. Paul's answer to those who attacked his apostleship
C. an explanation of Paul's ministry
D. teaching about the resurrection _____
4. The full title of God in the New Testament is
A. the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
B. the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
C. the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort
D. the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ _____
5. God comforts us in affliction so that we may
A. be comfortable
B. not give up in despair
C. pass on this comfort to others
D. never be sad again _____

6. For the Christian, sufferings and afflictions always
- A. must be endured without help
 - B. are followed by the consolation of Christ
 - C. are a bitter experience, bringing no good results
 - D. are an unusual experience
- _____
7. Paul's severe trial in Asia
- A. was without question the riot in Ephesus
 - B. didn't discourage the apostle
 - C. was a deadly sickness
 - D. was given so that he would not trust in himself but in God
- _____
8. When Paul speaks of deliverance in verse 10, he means
- A. deliverance from the wrath of God
 - B. only his rescue from the riot in Ephesus
 - C. both past and future deliverance from danger by God
 - D. release from this life's problems by dying and going to heaven
- _____
9. Paul says that the prayers of many in Corinth
- A. had resulted in his deliverance from death
 - B. had brought no results in his ministry
 - C. would not be needed by him any more
 - D. had not been answered
- _____
10. Paul states that, in dealing with the Corinthians, his conduct had been governed by
- A. worldly wisdom
 - B. their attitudes toward him
 - C. devout and godly sincerity
 - D. whatever seemed to be right at the moment
- _____

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Have you had an experience of the comfort of God that you have been able to pass on to others?
