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# Paul's Letters to the Church at Corinth



Trinity Bible Church  
Sunday School  
Winter / Spring 2022

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# PAUL'S LETTERS TO THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

Studies in 1 and 2 Corinthians

*And I, brethren, when I came to you,  
came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom,  
declaring unto you the testimony of God.*

*For I determined not to know any thing among you,  
save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

1 Corinthians 2:1-2

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## Introduction

Corinth was a busy cosmopolitan commercial center in New Testament days. Located on an isthmus between the Ionian and Aegean seas, its main business was the movement of shipping cargo between these two seas. In this way, shippers between Italy and Asia Minor could avoid the longer more difficult southern route around Greece. The marketplace was prominent in the city, as was education in the arts and sciences. In addition, Corinth was the location of a biannual sporting event like the modern Olympic Games. It is not surprising to find that the name “Corinth” means “ornament.” The city was an ornament to “modern” civilization.

A closer look shows another side of the picture. This city of over 600,000 people was a place of great moral depravity. The temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, was located in Corinth. Prostitute priestesses practiced their wicked trade there. The Greek word meaning “to act the Corinthian,” meant “to commit fornication” (*korinthiazomai*). Much like our own nation today, Corinth was a den of iniquity and proud to be so.

Paul visited Corinth on his second missionary journey around A.D. 50 (Acts 18:1-18). He stayed with Aquila and Priscilla and supported himself by working as a tentmaker. He remained for 18 months and established the church.

Some time after his departure, Apollos, who had been trained in the Word by Aquila and Priscilla, came from Ephesus to minister to the church at Corinth. From what Paul says in the first chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, we can assume that Peter ministered there sometime also, although we have no other supporting evidence for this.

While Paul was at Ephesus on his third missionary journey, he became aware of some problems at Corinth and wrote a first letter (see 1 Corinthians 5:9). This letter has not been preserved for us. Later, when members of Chloe’s household visited him in Ephesus, he again heard that there were problems in the church. It was then that Paul wrote a second letter, known to us as the First Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 16:8). The year was approximately A.D. 55.

In this “first” epistle, Paul spoke of his plans to come visit them (1 Corinthians 16:5-6) after passing through Macedonia. However, when he came to Troas, a wider ministry was opened to him in Macedonia (2 Corinthians 2:12-13) and his visit to Corinth was delayed. In Macedonia, he met with many intense afflictions (2 Corinthians 7:5). At some time during this Macedonian ministry, scholars believe that Paul wrote another (third) letter to the church at Corinth, the “sorrowful letter” (2 Corinthians 2:3-4; 7:8).

It was in Macedonia also that Titus came to him with word that there was a revival of spiritual fervor in Corinth. This, along with word that there was serious opposition to him as an apostle, led Paul to write a fourth epistle. This epistle, which we know as the Second Epistle to the Corinthians was probably carried by Titus (2 Corinthians 8:6, 16-24) around A.D. 56 or 57.

In Acts 20:2-3, we read of Paul’s visit to Greece on his third missionary journey. It is probable that he made his long delayed visit to Corinth at this time. There is no word of any of the problems that Paul addressed in his two epistles, so it is probably safe to assume that his admonitions had been well received.

## Introduction (continued)

In 2 Corinthians (2:1; 12:14; 13:1-2), Paul indicates that his coming visit would be his third. The timing of the second visit is not known with certainty. It is likely that he visited briefly from Ephesus, either just before or just after the First Epistle was written. Scripture does not tell us any more about this visit.

The significance of these epistles to this present generation can be seen by noting the similarities between the conditions in Corinth and those of the present day. As in Corinth, this is a day of great economic and intellectual prosperity. It is also a time of incredible moral depravity. At this time of great spiritual need and opportunity, the contemporary church, like that in Corinth, is not speaking with the authority of our Sovereign God. The church seems to have nothing to offer a world under the condemnation of God. It is being influenced by, more than influencing, the sinful world in which it resides.

While a superficial examination of Paul's two epistles shows him dealing with a variety of seemingly unrelated problems of only historical interest to us, there is a common underlying theme. The church at Corinth valued man too highly and God, His Word, and His Apostles and ministers too lowly. There was a tension between the honor and glory of man and that of God. It is this that Paul is addressing in his two epistles. It is this that makes the message of these epistles critical for our age. For the church to live and speak with authority and to function as a saving force in our world, we must learn well our own impotence in spiritual matters and cast ourselves upon God Who has spoken in His Word by His Apostles. We must not seek our own pleasure, but God's. We must not exalt the creature, but the Creator. We must heed the message of Paul to the Corinthian church.



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## Schedule

January 2	Lesson 1:	A Plea for Unity 1 Corinthians 1
January 9	Lesson 2:	A Spiritual Ministry 1 Corinthians 2-3
January 16	Lesson 3:	Fools for Christ 1 Corinthians 4
January 23	Lesson 4:	Purge Out the Old Leaven 1 Corinthians 5-6
January 30	Lesson 5:	Principles of Marriage 1 Corinthians 7
February 6	Lesson 6:	A Servant to All 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1
February 13	Lesson 7:	Order in the Churches 1 Corinthians 11:2-34
February 20	Lesson 8:	Spiritual Gifts and a More Excellent Way 1 Corinthians 12-13
February 27	Lesson 9:	In Order to Edify 1 Corinthians 14
March 6	Lesson 10:	The Hope of Resurrection 1 Corinthians 15
March 13	Lesson 11:	Final Exhortations 1 Corinthians 16
March 20	Lesson 12:	Blessed be the God of All Comfort 2 Corinthians 1:1-11
March 27	Lesson 13:	The Fragrance of Christ 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:17
April 3	Lesson 14:	A Glorious Ministry in Earthen Vessels 2 Corinthians 3:1-4:15
April 10	Lesson 15:	Ambassadors for Christ 2 Corinthians 4:16-6:10
April 17	Lesson 16:	Perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God 2 Corinthians 6:11-7:16
April 24	Lesson 17:	The Grace of Giving 2 Corinthians 8
May 1	Lesson 18:	A Liberal Ministry 2 Corinthians 9
May 8	Lesson 19:	The Authority of the Apostle 2 Corinthians 10
May 15	Lesson 20:	Ministers, True and False 2 Corinthians 11
May 22	Lesson 21:	Christ's Strength in Paul's Weakness 2 Corinthians 12
May 29	Lesson 22:	Examine Yourselves! 2 Corinthians 13

# Scripture Memorization

## 1 Corinthians 13

- <sup>1</sup> Though I speak with the tongues  
of men and of angels,  
and have not charity,  
I am become *as* sounding brass,  
or a tinkling cymbal.
- <sup>2</sup> And though I have *the gift of* prophecy,  
and understand all mysteries,  
and all knowledge;  
and though I have all faith,  
so that I could remove mountains,  
and have not charity,  
I am nothing.
- <sup>3</sup> And though I bestow all my goods  
to feed *the poor*,  
and though I give my body to be burned,  
and have not charity,  
it profiteth me nothing.
- <sup>4</sup> Charity suffereth long,  
*and* is kind;  
charity envieth not;  
charity vaunteth not itself,  
is not puffed up,
- <sup>5</sup> Doth not behave itself unseemly  
seeketh not her own,  
is not easily provoked,  
thinketh no evil;
- <sup>6</sup> Rejoiceth not in iniquity,  
but rejoiceth in the truth;

## Scripture Memorization (continued)

- 7    Beareth all things,  
      believeth all things,  
      hopeth all things,  
      endureth all things.
- 8    Charity never faileth:  
      but whether *there be* prophecies,  
      they shall fail;  
      whether *there be* tongues,  
      they shall cease;  
      whether *there be* knowledge,  
      it shall vanish away.
- 9    For we know in part,  
      and we prophesy in part.
- 10   But when that which is perfect is come,  
      then that which is in part  
      shall be done away.
- 11   When I was a child,  
      I spake as a child,  
      I understood as a child,  
      I thought as a child:  
      but when I became a man,  
      I put away childish things.
- 12   For now we see through a glass, darkly;  
      but then face to face:  
      now I know in part;  
      but then shall I know  
      even as also I am known.
- 13   And now abideth faith, hope, charity,  
      these three;  
      but the greatest of these  
      *is* charity.



# My Hope is Built on Nothing Less

Edward Mote, 1797-1874

William B. Bradbury, 1816-1868

1. My hope is built on noth-ing less Than Je-sus' blood and right-eous-ness;  
2. When dark-ness veils His love-ly face, I rest on His un - chang-ing grace;  
3. His oath, His cov - e - nant, His blood Sup- port me in the whelm-ing flood;  
4. When He shall come with trum-pet sound, O may I then in Him be found,

I dare not trust the sweet-est frame, But whol-ly lean on Je - sus' name.  
In ev - 'ry high and storm - y gale My an-chor holds with - in the veil.  
When all a - round my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay.  
Dressed in His right-eous - ness a - lone, Fault - less to stand be - fore the throne.

On Christ, the sol - id Rock, I stand - All oth - er ground is

sink - ing sand, All oth - er ground is sink - ing sand.

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It features a treble and bass clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is primarily in the treble clef, while the piano accompaniment is in the bass clef. The lyrics are printed below the vocal line, with some words hyphenated across lines. The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

# 1 Corinthians: Introductory Notes and Outline

Paul had a unique relationship with the Corinthian church. He had brought them the gospel on his second missionary journey. More than just their teacher, he now considered himself their spiritual father (4:15). It was out of his deep concern for their eternal souls that he wrote the First Epistle to Corinth.

The immediate circumstance was an oral report brought by the household of Chloe (1:11) and a letter from the Corinthians themselves (7:1). The former reported the divisions developing in the church, the matter of immorality tolerated in the church, and the practice of Christian brethren settling disputes between themselves by going to secular courts. Paul saw that these issues struck at the very heart of the Gospel message: its origin in them and its objective. The darkness of the heart of the natural man was such that it required a direct intervention by God Himself. To argue over the comparative excellence of the ministers of God detracted from the glory of God without whom the ministers were nothing. The other issues showed a failure to understand the distinctive life that flowed from salvation. It was a life of separation from the evil of the world, realizing that the believer's body is the very dwelling place of God.

The letter from the Corinthian church asked about marriage, eating of meats offered to idols, some matters of public worship, the resurrection, and the collection for the saints. In answering these, Paul showed that the life in the Church was to be conducted with a realization that God had called us into a life where our primary objective was service to Him. Our own personal and natural desires were to be subordinated to God's desire for the edification of His people. It was to be a life lived in anticipation of the final victory over corruption, mortality, and death.

The following is an outline of 1 Corinthians:

- I. Salutation (1:1-9)
- II. Reply to a report from the house of Chloe (1:10-4:21)
  - A. Party Strife (1:10-3:23)
  - B. Defense of Paul's Ministry (4:1-21)
- III. Reply to a report of immorality (5:1-6:20)
  - A. Criticism of Immorality (5:1-13)
  - B. Criticism of Lawsuits (6:1-11)
  - C. Christian Liberty (6:12-20)
- IV. Reply to Questions in Letter (7:1-16:9)
  - A. Marriage (7:1-24)
  - B. Virgins (7:25-40)
  - C. Things Sacrificed to Idols (8:1-11:1)
  - D. Problems of worship (11:2-34)
  - E. Spiritual Gifts (12:1-14:40)
  - F. The Resurrection of the Body (15:1-58)
  - G. The Collection (16:1-9)
- V. Concluding Salutations (16:10-24)

# Lesson 1: A Plea for Unity

## 1 Corinthians 1

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13:1

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

***SUMMARY:** After a word of greeting and acknowledgment of the testimony of Christ in them, Paul addresses the first of several problems in the Corinthian church: divisions and contentions. He reminds them that their standing in Christ was totally due to the power and wisdom of God and in no way based upon either their own merits or the wisdom of their teachers. Forgetting this, they were, by their divisions, exalting the wisdom and power of mere men, when the LORD alone was to receive glory.*

1. In his greeting, how did Paul address the Corinthians?
2. For what did Paul give thanks to God?
3. What plea did Paul make to the Corinthian brethren?
4. What divisions were found in the Corinthian church?
5. What did Paul say about the preaching of the cross?
6. What did Paul say about wisdom and foolishness?
7. What did Paul say about those whom God has called or chosen?
8. Why did God make the choices that He has?
9. Why did Paul conclude that we must glory in God alone?

## Lesson 2: A Spiritual Ministry

### 1 Corinthians 2-3

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-2

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

***SUMMARY:** Paul reminds them that his own ministry among them was not a display of human wisdom, but rather showed the power and wisdom of God as he spoke of things that natural men were not able to receive apart from the ministry of the Spirit of God within them. A minister is nothing save one who does only a part of that which God is doing and is himself answerable to God for the faithfulness and truth of that work. Therefore, there is no reason to glory in men.*

1. How did Paul describe his ministry in Corinth?
2. What did Paul say about the wisdom with which he spoke to the Corinthians?
3. How does one come to understand those things which do not naturally enter into his heart?
4. What is the difference between a natural man and a spiritual man?
5. Why does Paul say that the Corinthian believers are carnal?
6. Who is Paul and who is Apollos?
7. How is a minister to do his work of building?
8. What warning does Paul give to those who would do the work of building as a minister of God?
9. Why does Paul conclude that we ought not to glory in men?

## Lesson 3: Fools for Christ

### 1 Corinthians 4

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

***SUMMARY:** Since God Himself will judge His own servants, the judgment of men, either praise or condemnation, is "a very small thing." The Corinthians, rather than praising these men, ought to imitate Paul and the other apostles, who willingly are a "spectacle to the world" and "fools for Christ" in the eyes of men, that they might faithfully and humbly discharge their duty as His servants.*

1. How did Paul want to be considered by men?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What did Paul consider to be his chief responsibility?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Why did Paul consider it "a very small thing" to be judged by the Corinthians or any man, or even by himself?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What did Paul want the Corinthians to learn by what he was saying about Apollos and himself?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Why is there no reason for men to glory in themselves or one another?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. How did God display His apostles?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. How did Paul describe the life of an apostle?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What special relationship did Paul have with the Corinthian church?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Why did Paul send Timothy to them?

## Lesson 4: Purge Out the Old Leaven 1 Corinthians 5-6

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-4

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

***SUMMARY:** In these chapters, Paul is concerned about behavior in the Corinthian church that shows a disregard for righteousness. In no uncertain terms, he tells them what they ought to do about immorality that is being tolerated in the church, and how they ought to settle disputes among brethren. He reminds them that they are God's possession, the temple of the Holy Spirit, and thus have a duty to glorify God by the way that they live in this lifetime.*

1. How had the Corinthian church reacted to this problem?
2. What did Paul tell them to do about this problem?
3. What reasons did Paul give for this advice?
4. What distinctions does Paul make about those with whom believers may associate?
5. What instructions does Paul give concerning disputes among believers?
6. What does Paul remind the Corinthians about their own previous and current condition?
7. What principles does Paul give in 1 Corinthians 6:12-18 that will help us determine what is proper conduct?
9. Why are we obligated to glorify God in our body and in our spirit?

## Lesson 5: Principles of Marriage 1 Corinthians 7

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-5

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

***SUMMARY:** Beginning with this chapter, Paul answers questions raised by the Corinthians in a letter to him. Here, he teaches about marriage. He points out the obligations between a husband and wife that are occasioned by marriage and addresses the overriding obligation to please and serve God whether single or married.*

1. What initial principle does Paul give concerning the relationship between a man and a woman?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What advice does Paul give to the unmarried and widows?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What does Paul command those who are married?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What advice does Paul give to those who are married to an unsaved husband or wife?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What does Paul mean when he refers to the calling in which we have been called of God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What is more important than this calling?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What does Paul tell virgins and unmarried men?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. How does Paul's concern that we please the Lord enter into his counsel about marriage?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. What instructions does Paul give to a widow?

## Lesson 6: A Servant to All 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-6

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

**SUMMARY:** *In these three chapters, Paul shows that a Christian is a servant to all men for the sake of the Gospel. He does not seek his own profit, but the profit of many that they might be saved. He does not focus his efforts on his own rights, but the edification of others. He does not seek some material advantage in this lifetime, but the glory of God and an imperishable crown.*

1. What basic knowledge about the eating of things offered to idols does Paul mention?
2. What warning does Paul give about the eating of things offered to idols?
3. What rights did Paul have as an apostle?
4. How did Paul exercise these rights?
5. How did Paul show himself to be a servant to all, and why did he do so?
6. How does Paul compare his situation with that of an athlete in a race?
7. What lesson is there to learn from the examples taken from the days of Moses?
8. What lesson does Paul make from the communion meal?
9. Since all things are lawful to us, how should we determine what we should do?



## Lesson 7: Order in the Churches

### 1 Corinthians 11:2-34

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

**SUMMARY:** *Paul now turns to instruct them about their conduct together in the church, with special attention paid to the conduct of women in the church and to the observance of the Lord's Supper.*

1. What order of authority is given?
2. What difference should there be between men and women when they pray or prophesy?
3. Why is there a difference between men and women when they pray or prophesy?
4. What does Paul say about long hair in men and women?
5. What does Paul say about divisions and heresies (factions)?
6. How was the conduct of the Corinthians shameful at the Lord's Supper?
7. What had Paul received from the Lord and delivered to the Corinthians about the bread and the cup?
8. What happens when the bread and cup are taken unworthily?
9. How is this unworthy participation at the Lord's Supper to be avoided?

## Lesson 8: Spiritual Gifts and a More Excellent Way 1 Corinthians 12-13

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-8

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

***SUMMARY:** Each individual who confesses Jesus as his Lord is uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit for the profit of the other members of the body of Christ, the Church. The exercise of these gifts by each individual member of the Church is necessary for the proper functioning of the whole. Yet, despite the extreme importance of these spiritual gifts in the Church, the manifestation of the love of God one to another is "a more excellent way."*

1. What do we learn by what one says about Jesus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What are the diversities (differences) in the Church of Christ, and what is the same?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Why does the Spirit give gifts in the Church, and how are they distributed?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What is the similarity between Christ and a body?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Why has God composed the body of Christ as He has?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What positions did God appoint in the Church?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What spiritual gifts are said to be without value apart from love?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What are the characteristics of love?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. How did Paul describe his experience now (at this time)?

## Lesson 9: In Order to Edify 1 Corinthians 14

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-9

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

***SUMMARY:** Spiritual gifts are desirable, but should only be used for edification. To teach this lesson, Paul uses the gifts of speaking in tongues and prophesying. He shows when they should be used or not used, and lays out specific guidelines for their orderly use. Used in this way, the gifts will promote peace, not confusion, in the churches.*

1. What is the basic difference between speaking in tongues and prophesying?
2. What point is Paul making when he speaks of musical instruments?
3. Why should the Corinthians desire spiritual gifts?
4. What did Paul say about his own gift of speaking in tongues?
5. What is true about tongues as a sign?
6. What different results do the gifts of speaking in tongues and prophecy have upon unbelievers?
7. What rules are given for speaking in tongues?
8. What specific instructions does Paul give to women?
9. What final instructions does Paul give concerning these two gifts, prophecy, and tongues?

## Lesson 10: The Hope of Resurrection

### 1 Corinthians 15

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-10

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

***SUMMARY:** The fact of Christ's resurrection is foundational to the Christian faith. Since Christ has been raised from the dead, all those who are His can look forward with certainty to their own resurrection in the incorruptible likeness of Christ's resurrection body. The believer looks forward to the final putting away of death in a moment at the last trump. This hope is the basis for steadfastness in the work of the Lord in this lifetime.*

1. What report had Paul delivered to the Corinthians?
2. What would it mean if there were no resurrection of the dead?
3. What does it mean that Christ is the firstfruits of the dead?
4. What happens when the end comes?
5. How would Paul's own personal behavior have changed if he did not believe in the resurrection?
6. How does Paul use the sowing of seed to teach about the resurrection body?
7. What does Paul tell us about the resurrection body?
8. What will happen at "the last trump"?
9. How should the truth of the defeat of death and our resurrection affect us?

## Lesson 11: Final Exhortations 1 Corinthians 16

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-11

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

***SUMMARY:** In this last chapter, Paul speaks of the collection for the saints in Jerusalem and his own personal travel plans, including his intent to visit Corinth. He concludes with an exhortation to perseverance and love, final greetings, an anathema, and then a word of blessing.*

1. What does Paul tell the Corinthians about the collection for the saints?
2. What does Paul say about the delivery of this gift?
3. What plans did Paul have for travel?
4. How are the Corinthians to treat Timothy?
5. What does Paul say about Apollos?
6. What exhortations concerning their Christian conduct does Paul give?
7. What does Paul say about the household of Stephanas?
8. Why was Paul glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus?
9. What desires are expressed in the last three verses of this letter?

## 2 Corinthians: Introductory Notes and Outline

Paul's Second Epistle to Corinth was written with mixed emotions after Titus brought a report from Corinth while Paul was ministering in Macedonia. The Corinthians had largely received his admonitions and instructions. He expresses his joy at the report of a restoration of God's gracious work in the Corinthian church and encourages their gift to the saints as an evidence of this work.

Unfortunately, the report from Corinth had a dark side. There were those among the church that were slanderously critical of Paul and his apostleship. Paul correctly saw that this was not merely a personal attack, but an attack upon the Christian ministry itself. It was designed to turn the Corinthian church away from the true Gospel to "a different gospel" (11:3-4).

Paul's deep concern for the Corinthian church is seen as he responds to this problem in a very personal manner. His recent sufferings on his second missionary journey serve as the backdrop to this epistle. He had learned in these recent experiences of the comfort of God. It is this truth that enables him to confront the opposition in Corinth. To Paul, this was yet another opportunity to experience the comfort of God in affliction.

Paul's approach in this epistle is twofold. In the first 7 chapters, he describes the true Christian ministry. It is a glorious ministry. The glory however is not in the minister, but in God who works effectively through ministers, ungloriously called "earthen vessels." The minister is called to lead a life of affliction and tribulation. It is the message that is pre-eminent, not the messenger. Paul, the minister, was content to be an ambassador of Christ, pleading with men to be reconciled to God. His behavior toward the Corinthians, in "simplicity and godly sincerity" was intended to serve God's purpose, that they might be the people of God in all holy conduct.

In the latter part of the epistle, Paul speaks of his own authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ. Apostleship was granted for the edification of the Church. Therefore, those who attacked his apostleship were attacking God's provision for the edification of the Church. Paul exposes his detractors as ministers of Satan, seeking only their own glory. In contrast, a true apostle takes pleasure in his infirmities that the power of Christ might be seen in him.

The following is an outline of 2 Corinthians:

- I. Salutation (1:1-11)
- II. The Apostle's Ministry (1:12-7:16)
  - A. His Plans (1:12-2:17)
  - B. The Character of the Ministry (3:1-7:16)
- III. The Collection for the Saints (8:1-9:15)
  - A. The Macedonian Example (8:1-6)
  - B. Exhortation to the Corinthians (8:7-9:15)
- IV. Paul's Defense of his Apostleship (10:1-13:10)
  - A. A Defense (10)
  - B. A Denunciation of Opponents (11:1-12:13)
  - C. A Proposed Visit (12:14-13:10)
- V. Conclusion (13:11-14)

## Lesson 12: Blessed be the God of All Comfort 2 Corinthians 1:1-11

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-12

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

***SUMMARY:** As Paul begins this letter in which he will have to defend himself against false charges and also very sternly rebuke those who oppose his ministry, he affirms his steadfast trust in God. He is confident that the afflictions he is called upon to bear will result in a wider experience of the consolation that is in Christ.*

1. How does Paul identify himself to the Corinthians?
2. What is Paul's greeting?
3. When Paul blesses God, how does he describe Him?
4. What testimony did Paul give concerning his tribulation?
5. What benefit for the Corinthians did Paul expect to arise from his experience?
6. What did Paul say about his hope for the Corinthians?
7. What experience did Paul have in Asia?
8. What did Paul learn from this experience?
9. How was the larger community of believers involved in Paul's experience?

## Lesson 13: The Fragrance of Christ 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:17

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

***SUMMARY:** Paul assures the Corinthian church that his conduct toward them has always been, by the grace of God, in simplicity and godly sincerity. His plans to come to them were made with their best interests in mind and as an expression of his love for them. He was guided by the leading of God in his plans because he knew that in this way, the fragrance of Christ would be spread abroad through him.*

1. How did Paul conduct himself in the world?
2. What did Paul tell the Corinthians of his plans to come to them?
3. What does Paul say about the promises of God?
4. Why did Paul determine that he would not come to Corinth?
5. What did Paul say about the letter he wrote to the Corinthians?
6. What concern did Paul express about the man in the Corinthian church that had been punished?
7. Why did Paul go to Macedonia?
8. What does Paul teach about the fragrance of Christ?
9. How was Paul's ministry different from others?



## Lesson 14: A Glorious Ministry in Earthen Vessels 2 Corinthians 3:1-4:15

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

***SUMMARY:** Paul's ministry was a glorious ministry, and the Corinthians themselves were the testimony of its splendor. As Paul displayed the truth of Jesus Christ in his life and preaching, the Spirit of the living God was at work, transforming both Paul and the Corinthians into the glorious image of Jesus Christ. It is a testimony to the power of God that this ministry, which overcomes the blinding power of Satan, is committed to mere humans.*

1. What is Paul's letter of recommendation as a minister of the Gospel?
2. To whom did Paul credit the success of his ministry?
3. How does Paul describe the old covenant?
4. How does the new covenant excel the old covenant in glory?
5. What does the Spirit of the Lord do in the new covenant?
6. How did this truth about the glory of the ministry of the Spirit affect the way Paul acted as a minister?
7. How can the veil by which Satan blinds men to the Gospel be overcome?
8. Why does God commit such a glorious ministry to mere men (earthen vessels)?
9. Why was Paul not discouraged in the face of his severe suffering as a minister?

## Lesson 15: Ambassadors for Christ 2 Corinthians 4:16-6:10

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

***SUMMARY:** Paul considered his afflictions as a minister to be light, in view of the eternal glory to come. While he was certain of his own eternal glory, he was also certain of the terror of the Lord. Therefore, he determined to please God and offend no man as he earnestly fulfilled his duty as an ambassador for Christ, pleading with men to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.*

1. What did Paul say about his affliction?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What did Paul groan about?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What was Paul confident about?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What did Paul mean by "the terror of the Lord"?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What did Paul say about the death of Christ?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What is the ministry of reconciliation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What does it mean to be an ambassador for Christ?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. As a worker with Christ, what plea did Paul make?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. What attitude did Paul have toward the ministry?

## Lesson 16: Perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God 2 Corinthians 6:11-7:16

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

***SUMMARY:** Paul's great burden for the Corinthians was that they be separate from all evil of the flesh and spirit and seek holiness in the fear of God. It was this concern that led him to be bold to rebuke them by his letter. He now rejoiced to hear that they had responded with godly repentance. This was God's way of comforting him in all of his afflictions.*

1. What does Paul say about the relationship between believers and unbelievers?
2. What contrasts exist between a believer and an unbeliever?
3. What obligation arises from the fact that we are the temple of the living God?
4. Since we have the promises of God, what ought we to do?
5. What did Paul say about his behavior toward the Corinthians?
6. How had God comforted Paul?
7. Why did Paul not regret his letter to the Corinthian church?
8. What is the difference between godly sorrow and the sorrow of the world?
9. What effect had the Corinthian church had upon Titus?

## Lesson 17: The Grace of Giving 2 Corinthians 8

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

**SUMMARY:** *Paul exhorts the Corinthians to complete their year-old commitment to collect a gift for the saints. His desire is that the grace of giving be found in them in abundance. By way of encouragement, he tells of the remarkable example of the Macedonian churches, and supremely, the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, who became poor that they might be spiritually enriched. He asks that they receive the delegation led by Titus who will receive and carefully administer this gift.*

1. What was the condition of the churches of Macedonia?
2. How did the Macedonians show the grace of giving?
3. What task was committed to Titus?
4. What is "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ"?
5. What did Paul consider to be an acceptable manner of completing the collection started the previous year?
6. What does Paul mean when he speaks of equality?
7. Why was Paul thankful to God?
8. What was Paul's concern in the administration of this gift?
9. What did Paul say about Titus and those sent with him?

## Lesson 18: A Liberal Ministry 2 Corinthians 9

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

***SUMMARY:** Although Paul is confident of their willingness to minister to the saints by their generous gift, he sends a delegation of brethren ahead of him to make sure that the Corinthians have completed their promised offering. Their gift is a reflection of God's enrichment of them through His "unspeakable gift." Therefore, their abundant ministry of giving to the saints in need is proof of God's ministry in them and results in thanksgiving and glory to God.*

1. What made Paul think that it was superfluous to write to the Corinthians?
2. Why did Paul send the brethren to Corinth?
3. With what attitude were the Corinthians to make ready their gift?
4. What principle did Paul teach about sowing and reaping?
5. How should one determine his giving?
6. How is it possible to be "cheerful givers"?
7. What does Paul desire God to do for the Corinthians?
8. What benefit does Paul see from their giving?
9. Why did Paul give thanks to God?

## Lesson 19: The Authority of the Apostle 2 Corinthians 10

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

***SUMMARY:** Paul now deals with those in the Corinthian church who were critical of his authority as an apostle. This authority was given to him for edification in the church. Paul boldly rebukes those who would seek to deny this authority. Their criticisms show that they are thinking naturally, not spiritually. They seek not the benefit of the church, but their own glory. Paul, on the other hand, glories only in God and seeks His approval.*

1. How did Paul describe his ways of dealing with the Corinthians?
2. What difference is there between Paul and his enemies in what they thought of Paul's "walk"?
3. What was Paul's warfare?
4. Where did Paul get his authority, and why was it given to him?
5. What did Paul's enemies say about him?
6. How did Paul's enemies show themselves to lack wisdom?
7. How had Paul come to Corinth?
8. What hope did Paul have in his ministry at Corinth?
9. Why should we only "glory in the Lord"?

## Lesson 20: Ministers, True and False 2 Corinthians 11

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

***SUMMARY:** Paul expresses his deep concern that the Corinthians not be deceived by false apostles. These follow Satan's example and transform themselves into ministers of light to turn the minds of men away from "the simplicity that is in Christ." Although it is offensive to Paul to direct attention to himself, he reluctantly does so that the Corinthians may see that the testimony of his life and ministry commend him as a true minister of righteousness.*

1. How does Paul describe his concern for the Corinthian church?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What fears did Paul have concerning this church?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How had Paul conducted himself when he ministered among the Corinthians?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Why did Paul say he would continue to act in the same manner?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What does Paul say about false apostles?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Why did Paul boast and speak foolishly?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What experiences did Paul describe to show that he was a minister of Christ?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Besides these experiences, what daily burden did Paul bear?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Why did Paul tell of his experience in Damascus?

## Lesson 21: Christ's Strength in Paul's Weakness 2 Corinthians 12

**MEMORY:** 1 Corinthians 13

**HYMN:** "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

***SUMMARY:** Paul resolved only to boast in his infirmities. He had learned to take pleasure in these infirmities because it was through them that he learned of the sufficiency of God's grace. It was in his own weakness that the strength of Christ would be manifest. And now, although he feared the humbling experience of finding them in sin and unrepentant, he resolved to visit the Corinthians again. He was willing to be spent for the edification of their souls.*

1. What happened to the "man in Christ" fourteen years earlier?
2. Why did Paul determine to forbear boasting except in his infirmities?
3. What does Paul tell us about his "thorn in the flesh"?
4. How did the Lord answer Paul's request to have the "thorn in the flesh" removed?
5. What did Paul learn from this experience?
6. What did Paul say about his apostleship?
7. Why was Paul coming to Corinth for this third visit?
8. What objective did Paul, Titus, and the other brother have in everything that they did?
9. What fears did Paul have about his visit to Corinth?



## Lesson 22: Examine Yourselves! 2 Corinthians 13

MEMORY: 1 Corinthians 13

HYMN: "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

**SUMMARY:** *In anticipation of his third visit, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to examine themselves to see if they are in the faith or not. His prayer to God was not for his own honor, but for the perfection of the Corinthians. He was writing now in the hope that he would not have to be so sharp in his visit with them. He calls them to unity and closes by commending them to the grace, love, and fellowship of the Triune God.*

1. How did Paul show that he really intended to come to them?
2. What warning did Paul give about his coming?
3. What do we learn about weakness and strength from the life of Christ?
4. What did Paul call upon the Corinthians to do?
5. What was Paul's prayer for the Corinthians?
6. What was Paul's own testimony?
7. Why did Paul write this letter?
8. What were Paul's concluding instructions to the Corinthians?
9. How does Paul invoke the Trinity in his benediction?



