

HEARING THE WORD



NIGEL BARGE

2 Corinthians
Leaders guide

Hearing the Word 2 Corinthians Leader's Guide

Copyright © Nigel Barge and Derek Newton 2009-17

Published by Nigel Barge, Torrance, Glasgow, 2018

ISBN 978-1-912209-66-8

(For use with two matching Workbooks:

ch 1-7 ISBN 978-1-912209-67-5

ch 8-13 ISBN 978-1-912209-69-9

Email: info@hearingtheword.org.uk

Website: <https://hearingtheword.org.uk>

The copyright of this booklet, and of the 'Hearing the Word' tool and study materials, rests with the author, Nigel Barge. Unless otherwise indicated, its contents are licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International Licence](#) (CC BY-NC-ND). Please see the full legal terms there by clicking on 'License'.

Simplified version: Under this licence, you may copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format on the condition that: you credit the author, do not use it for commercial purposes and do not distribute modified versions of the work. When re-using or sharing this work, ensure you make the licence terms clear to others by naming the licence and linking to the licence text. Please seek permission from the copyright holder for uses of this work that are not included in this licence or permitted under UK Copyright Law

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Phil and June Malloch, whose tireless editing, reviewing and pulling together of materials has enabled the *Hearing the Word* resource to be shared with the wider church.

Nigel Barge, April, 2018

Scripture Quotations taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION
Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Hodder and Stoughton Ltd. A member of the Hodder Headline Plc Group. All rights reserved.
"NIV" is a registered trademark of International Bible Society. UK trademark number 1448790

Resources

The *New Bible Dictionary* 3rd edition, published by Inter Varsity Press.

The *New Bible Commentary* 21st century edition, IVP

A one-volume commentary on every book of the Bible,

www.blueletterbible.org

Hearing the Word: A Tool for Bible reading



LOOK – What does it *say*?

- 1) The Text
 - a) What questions does it raise -
Who, What, When, Where, Why, How?
 - b) What surprises you?
- 2) The Context?
 - a) the surrounding text
 - b) the Book of the Bible
 - c) the whole Bible
 - d) the place in the Bible Story



LEARN – What does it *mean*?

- 1) What type of writing is it?
- 2) Answer the questions
- 3) Summarise the passage



LISTEN – What is the *message*?

- 1) Which is the main point?
- 2) Which is the key verse?



LIVE – How should we *respond*?

- 1) What does it show about God,
(Father, Son, Holy Spirit) :
 - a) His nature and character?
 - b) His grace*
 - c) Jesus / his salvation**
- 2) What should I do?

* God's undeserved generosity is evident throughout the Bible, and it is perfectly expressed in Jesus.

** The Bible, from 'the fall' onwards, describes God's plan of salvation through his Son. Thus, *all* the Scriptures speak in some way of Jesus (Luke 24:27).

READING ‘LETTERS’ IN THE BIBLE

In seeking to hear the Word of God throughout the Bible, we need to take into account the *type of literature* in which each part is written. The New Testament (from now on, ‘NT’) contains letters written by five Apostles to various parts of the church of their day. They are part of the Word of God, authoritative for the church then, *and* for the church for all time.

Since 2nd Corinthians is written *as a letter*, in the first instance it must be read as such. We need to take into account that letters are:

- a) *Relational.* A letter is addressed to a particular person or group of people and its contents apply to them. So in the Bible, we must first remember that Paul (or James/Peter/John/Jude) is addressing named individuals or churches, in the first century. It is only once we have grasped what they are saying to *them, then*, that we may generalise as to what God might be saying to *us, now*. The two will *always* be consistent.
- b) *Occasional.* Letters are one side of a ‘conversation’ between two people. They refer to matters in which details of situations and people are assumed to be common knowledge. A third party reading a letter needs to ‘read between the lines’ to work out the other side of the story. We have to understand the situation to which this Bible letter was written, so as to grasp how the writer was addressing *it*. Only then may we ask how God might apply this Word to our own circumstance.
- c) *Dated.* Letters are written at a particular time and place, and within a particular culture. So in the Bible, the letters of the first century are expressed within the habits and traditions of that day. In discerning what God might be saying to us, now, we need to separate any instructions which are ‘time-bound’ from principles that are *timeless*.
- d) *To be read as a whole.* When we open a letter from a friend nowadays, we read the whole thing. We recognise it as a single communication whose contents are all related. So with letters in the Bible: every part must be viewed in the context of the whole letter. Thus, it is best practice to read a Bible letter *right through*, before analysing its parts.

INTRODUCTION TO 2nd CORINTHIANS

The author

No-one doubts 2nd Corinthians (hereafter, ‘2 Cor’) was written by Paul. First known by his Hebrew name, Saul, he became the foremost preacher of the Gospel in the NT. Born in Tarsus (*map, p6*), with the status of free citizen of Rome, he was educated in Jerusalem and spoke four languages. He studied the

Hebrew Scriptures under a well-respected Jewish scholar, Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) and as a young man was violently opposed to Christianity. While on his way to Damascus to imprison Christians, however, Jesus appeared to him, and changed his life dramatically. **Read** his story in Acts 8:1; 9:1-31; or in his own words, Acts 22:4-16 and 26:9-18.

Later, Paul was brought to Antioch in Syria to teach new Christians who, as Gentiles, had no background knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures. The Church there was very keen to spread the gospel to Gentiles; they sent Barnabas and Paul on what is known as Paul's '*first missionary journey*' (**Read** Acts 13, 14, Map p7 top). People chose to follow Jesus in four towns in present-day Turkey: another Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. Later Paul wrote to them (*Galatians*), sent just before the Council of Jerusalem held in AD49.

Paul re-visited those churches by land on his '*second missionary journey*', (Map p6) reporting the Council decisions, continued north-west to Troas where Luke joined the party (Acts 16:8 *cf* 10), crossed by sea to Philippi in Macedonia, proceeded west via Thessalonica and Berea, sailed south to Athens and reached **Corinth** (Acts 18) in the autumn of AD50. He linked up with Aquila and Priscilla, Jews who had been expelled from Rome by Emperor Claudius in AD 49. All three worked as tentmakers. Paul preached only on the Sabbath. Once his helpers, Timothy and Silvanus, arrived (Acts 18:5) bringing financial support for Paul (Philippians 4:14-16), he could preach full time.

He stayed in Corinth 18 months, working first in the synagogue with 'God-fearers' and Jews. Stephanas (1 Cor 16:15), Titius Justus and the synagogue ruler, Crispus (Acts 18:7,8) responded to the gospel then. During the second, longer phase of these 18 months, Paul worked among the Gentiles.

The dates of the visits and letters

It is hard to be precise. The NT contains two letters and reports two visits. In his letters, however, Paul implies *three* visits and *four* letters! After the first visit during Paul's second missionary journey (50-51AD) came the first letter (not before Spring of 52). That may be *one* lost letter (*Corinthians A*) hinted at in 1 Cor 5:9. Paul had left Corinth for Jerusalem via Ephesus. He was back in Ephesus on his third missionary journey when he wrote what we call *1st Corinthians* (*Corinthians B*). He planned to re-visit Corinth shortly thereafter (1 Cor 4:19; Acts 19:21). First he would stay at Ephesus till Pentecost AD55 (1 Cor 16:8; fits Acts 19:13-20,23), travel west then south through Macedonia till autumn, and spend winter in Corinth, AD55/6.

At one point Paul had planned to re-visit Corinth *twice*, by *starting* there, moving north to Macedonia, then south again, hoping the collection for Jerusalem would be ready for him to take to Palestine (2 Cor 1:15f; 1 Cor 16:1-4).

But Paul faced a ‘deadly peril’ in Asia (1 Cor 15:32; 2 Cor 1:8-10). That, and news of trouble in Corinth, forced a change of plan. It looks from clues in 2 Cor as if the impact of the first letter had been worse than the apostle had hoped and Timothy hadn’t handled the situation well enough. This *second visit* – the painful one of 2 Cor 13:2 and 2 Cor 2:1 not recorded in Acts – was indeed difficult. Paul was humiliated. His authority was challenged by at least one person and Paul backed away, probably going via Macedonia.

Paul then wrote them a very severe letter (Corinthians C, *also lost*) mentioned in 2 Cor 2:3,4), shedding many tears as he wrote. He sent Titus to deliver it, saying he loved them but wanted reciprocal love: were they willing both to acknowledge *his* apostolic authority and to discipline the person who had challenged his authority? In low spirits awaiting a reply from Corinth (2 Cor 1:8-10) Paul couldn’t settle down to evangelism. When he realized Titus wasn’t sailing directly from Corinth to Troas but coming overland through Macedonia, Paul set out to meet him there (2 Cor 7:5). Titus brought good news of the Corinthians’ positive response to Paul’s stinging letter.

Paul immediately (7:5; 8:1; 9:2) sent 2 Cor (Corinthians D) ‘probably from Philippi’, explaining that he hadn’t visited them again so as to avoid causing any more pain. He wanted the Corinthians to forgive the offender now that they had shown their love for Paul and respect for his authority. In the better atmosphere, he re-opened the issue of the Jerusalem Collection (2 Cor 8-9) having dropped it after first raising it in 1 Cor 16:1-4. After sending 2 Cor, Paul paid his third and last visit, c AD56 (13:1; Acts 20:2c).

C.K. Barrett thinks 1 Cor and the two parts of 2 Cor (chapters 1-9 and 10-13) were written down in a period of just under 12 months.

Corinth

Geography: Corinth sits at the southern end of a narrow isthmus joining a large peninsula to the rest of Greece. Its site between two harbours, Lechaeum facing west and Cenchreae facing East, joining the Adriatic and Aegean Seas, was highly strategic. Since sailors preferred a land crossing to the long, dangerous voyage round the rocky south coast, the city controlled the transfer of goods between Italy and Asia. The location was equally strategic for spreading the gospel westwards to Europe.

The city: Corinth was rebuilt by Julius Caesar in AD44 as a Roman colony, and populated by poorer Romans. Many were freed slaves, plus Syrians, Egyptians, Jews – a highly pluralistic society. It was the centre of the Aegean slave trade. It hosted the *Isthmian Games* every two years, which brought many visitors and wealth. The official language was Latin.

Culture: Upward social mobility was more feasible than elsewhere. Status, wealth, patronage, marriage and personal connections mattered. The upper class nobility tended to look down on freedmen who were trying to gain honour by other means, *eg* by being patrons of new cults, showing off rhetorical skills, sponsoring a statue. No doubt some were still seeking honour and status *within the church*, hoping for wider recognition. People of political rank or wealth used to offer patronage, but Paul had declined it, causing tension. The mixed backgrounds and social classes triggered rivalry and discord, which Paul then had to deal with, repeatedly.

Pagan Religion: This permeated many aspects of everyday thinking and life, not just in temples but in fields, crossroads, market squares etc. For instance:

- a) **Sacrifices** (of an animal's liver, heart or lungs – the parts humans did not eat) were offered to whichever 'god' might help you get what you wanted, and there were a great many different gods. No single one had priority. You only 'gave' something to a god to extract a benefit – good health, harvest, etc.
- b) **Images** could have different meanings. Some were worshipped as gods, others not: emperor Gaius insisted that sacrifices were made to him as a god, while emperor Tiberias insisted his statues were merely ornamental. Some dead heroes were counted as gods, others as men: Asclepius was at first a hero with links to the underworld, but later was recognised as a god of healing.
- c) **Communal meals** would include a chant, speech or toast to the presiding god, but were a means of social interaction and a chance to gain social or political advancement. If invited by a rich benefactor, one *had* to attend.
- d) **Ritual** was enforced, and followed blindly, with little idea of its meaning.

Purpose of the letter

Paul was absolutely committed to the cause of world mission. His goals were to take the saving knowledge of God to people in darkness (2:14-17), to minister the new covenant so that the Holy Spirit could give life (3:6), to set forth truth plainly (4:2,5) and to convey the message of reconciliation (5:18-21).

His main challenge, seen in both 1st and 2nd Corinthians, was that so many were failing to understand the truths of the gospel and their implications for everyday life. In a growing church, many would have come to faith since his first stay of 18 months. In addition, others had arrived claiming to teach Christianity, while themselves affected by their Jewish or pagan backgrounds and mentality, the so-called false teachers. Paul had to re-tune their minds to the undeserved grace of God, the uniqueness of Christ and so much more.

After he left, the church seemed to fall apart. 1st Corinthians was written to address all manner of problems that arose. However things continued to deteriorate so he wrote an emotional, severe letter (2 Cor 2:3,4) (lost to us).

Sins exposed in *1st Corinthians*

- 1 Factions in leadership (1:10-17)
- 2 Pride in man's abilities (1:18-2:15)
- 3 'Worship' of leaders (4:1-21)
- 4 Disharmony (legal civil disputes (6:1-11)
- 5 Abuse of Christian marriage (7:1-40)
- 6 Dishonouring the Lord's Supper (11:21ff)
- 7 Pride in spiritual gifts (12:1ff)
- 8 Disorder in church meetings (14:26ff)
- 9 Disbelief in resurrection (15:1ff)

Paul's visits to Corinth

| AD | Visit Letter | Action/Event | Scripture ref. |
|--------------|-----------------|--|---|
| 50 | 1 st | Founding of church Stayed 18 months. | Acts 18 |
| Spring of 52 | | Paul left Corinth, <i>via</i> Ephesus, his first, brief visit there, then <i>via</i> Caesarea to Jerusalem, & home to Syrian Antioch | Acts 18:19 Acts 18:22 |
| | A | 1 st letter (lost) 'Stop immorality' | suggested by 1 Cor 5:9 |
| 54/55(?) | B | 2 nd letter, we call: his second time there. | 1 <i>Corinthians</i> , sent from Ephesus, 1 Cor 16:8; Acts 19:1 |
| 55? | 2 nd | Sad, painful visit, <i>not</i> listed in Acts | 1 Cor 4:19; 16:5-8; 2 Cor 1 |
| 55? | C | 3 rd letter 'severe' (lost) | 2 Cor 2:3,4 |
| | D | 4 th letter, we call: 3 months long | 2 <i>Corinthians</i> , sent from Philippi? 2 Cor 12:14; 13:1 Acts 20:2-3 |
| 56/7 | 3 rd | | |

The character of *2nd Corinthians*

Paul was worried to distraction about the church in Corinth (2 Cor 2:12). He had invested so much in more than 18 months with them. (Acts 18:11). This was the 'bridgehead' in mission from Asia to Europe.

After a very anxious wait, he finally received good news from Titus (2 Cor 7:5). Hurriedly and emotionally he pens another letter (2 Corinthians). His state of mind is shown by:

- a) The scrambled nature of the text: He ‘shoots from the hip’! Themes are interwoven and repeated all through the letter: Grace, Gospel, Discipleship, Suffering, Leadership, Communication, Relationships, Perseverance, Dependence, Character, Authenticity, Church Unity, Union with Christ. He explains his movement in ‘fits and starts’ (1:15,16; 1:23; 2:12,13; 7:5-7; 12:8).
- b) The positives and negatives: He has received good news, but not ‘face to face’, so his concerns tumble out, as well as his affirmations.





Study 1

Acts 18:1-16

Obey your Master

Background information

Paul made three missionary journeys in the Gentile (non-Jewish) world:
First Acts 13:4 – 14:21, after which he wrote Galatians, then went to Jerusalem and back for the first Council meeting (AD 49, Acts 15:1-31).
Second journey, Acts 15:40 – 18:22. *Third*, Acts 18:23 -21:26.

It was during the second journey that he first visited Corinth.

He had left Silas and Timothy in Berea with instructions to follow as soon as possible (17:5). When they arrived in Corinth with news from Thessalonica (Acts 18:5), Paul immediately wrote 1 Thessalonians (3:1,6ff).

Paul had stayed and worked with Aquilla and Priscilla, probably because they were Jews and shared his tent-making skills. But they had left Rome during Claudius' purge (49/50 BC), so may have already been Christians: the Roman historian Suetonius (69-c130AD – *ie* writing long after Paul's visit) said, 'Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus...'

Gallio, (a Roman senator, brother of Seneca the philosopher, both sons of Seneca the rhetorician), was the proconsul of Achaia. Any ruling he gave would have been followed throughout the regions. The Jewish charge was that Christianity could not be included within Judaism's cover as a '*religio licita* (lawful religion)'. They claimed it was '*religio illicita*' (an illegal religion) and should therefore be banned. Gallio's favourable ruling for Christianity was a precedent in the regions for the next 10 to 12 years and gave it time to 'root' - until Nero's anti-Christian purge following the fire of Rome in 64 AD.

Word list

9 *speak*

Greek *laleo* cf 8:25 Peter and John spoke the Word of God

Bible Connections

2 *Aquila and Priscilla*

Acts 18:26; 1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:3; 2 Tim 4:19

5 *financial support for Paul*

Philippians 4:15;

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 1 *What was it after?*
 Why did Paul leave Athens?
 Why did he go to Corinth?
 Where is Pontus?
- 2 *Why 'a tent maker' – were they not followers of Christ?*
 When did they believe?
- 4 *Why 'Jews and Greeks' – not 'Romans'?*
 Why did Paul at first present Christianity only on the Sabbath?
- 5 *How could Paul now spend his full time preaching?*
- 6 *Why did he shake his clothes?*
 What did he mean by, 'your blood be on your own heads'?
- 9 *Why did the Lord give him a vision?*
- 10 *Why 'many people'?*
- 11 *Why 'for a year and a half'?*
 What is 'the Word of God'?
- 12 *Who was Gallio?*
 What does it mean – 'a united attack'?
- 14 *Why was Gallio not more careful?*
- 17 *Why did they turn on Sosthenes?*

What surprises or confuses you?

- 2 *When did Priscilla and Aquila believe?*

2) The Context

- a) surrounding passage
- 6 *From now on I will go to the Gentiles' cf (9:15; 18:20)*
- b) individual book
- 4 *Persuade (26:26; 28:23)*
- 5 *Burden to no man (2 Cor 11:9; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8)*
- 6 *Shaking the dust (15:31)*
- 8 *Heard, believed and were baptised (16:14,15)*
- 9 *A vision (9:10; 10:3; 16:9; 23:11; 27:23)*
- 10 *The Apostle James beheaded (12:2)*

c) whole Bible

- 1 *Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census (Luke 2:1)*
- 2 *Jerusalem... Judea... ends of the earth (Acts 1:8)*
- 4 *Persuade (2 Cor 5:11)*
Jews and Greeks (1 Cor 1:22)
- 6 *'Forgive them' (Luke 23:34)*
- 9 *Do not be afraid (Luke 2:10)*
- 10 *I am with you (Isaiah 43:5)*
Creation waits for the sons of God to be revealed (Romans 8:19)
- 11 *Word = 'Jesus' (John 1:1,14) in all the Scriptures (Luke 24:27)*
Pilate gave in to pressure from the Jews (Luke 23:24)

d) Bible story

God and humanity have been separated by sin.
God's requirements of the Law have been given but not met.
God's solution is about to happen as He sends His Son, Jesus.

LEARN

1) What type of literature is this? **Narrative**

2) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

- 1 *Paul left Athens after telling the meeting of the Areopagus that God was no longer 'unknown': Jesus had been raised. Only a few people believed. He left the city because he was on a journey.*
Corinth was the next big city.
Pontus is in the north of modern Turkey.
- 2 *'Jews' and 'tent maker' suggests they were not yet believers.*
Aquila and Priscilla may have come to faith during Paul's stay with them.
- 4 *'Jews and Greeks' – they represented the wisdom of the world.*
He had to earn his living, and synagogue was a ready-made audience.
- 5 *Silas and Timothy brought gifts from Philippi and Thessalonica.*
- 6 *He shook his clothes to demonstrate a cutting of a tie.*
By 'your blood be on your own heads,' Paul meant that they were responsible for their own life before God.
- 9 *The Lord gave him a vision as it was a major departure from his travelling plan? Or, to stop him giving up because of the opposition?*

- 10 'Many people' encouraged him to stay for some time.
- 11 'A year and a half' simply records the fact.
- 'The Word of God' = the message of Jesus revealed in the whole Bible
- 12 Gallio was the Roman 'proconsul', the senior official for the city.
- 'united attack' = all the Jews who did not believe in Jesus subscribed.
- 14 Gallio was in complete control – he did not need to be careful.
- 17 They turned on Sosthenes, Crispus' replacement, out of frustration.

3) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

Priscilla & Aquila may have become believers through one of the 3000 converted at Pentecost who had returned to Rome (Acts 2:10,11).

4) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

Paul continued his journey to Corinth where he stayed and shared the gospel in the Jewish synagogue. In general, the leaders rejected his message but the wider population was responsive. In a vision, the Lord assured him that many people were His and would believe; so Paul stayed there for a year and a half. Later, all the Jews made a concerted attempt to incriminate him before the secular authorities, who dismissed their case. So the Jews turned on their new ruler who had misled them.

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

God irresistibly calls His own people to Himself.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? *v 10*

'No-one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.'

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?
 a) His nature and character?

- 1 God uses leaders of nations to fulfil His purposes.
- 10 God is all powerful / able to protect.
God has a people.

b) His grace?

9 *God initiates.*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

11 *God's message is His Word - Jesus is the Word of God.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What does God want me to do?

4 *Use reason and logical persuasion in evangelism.*

5 *Support preachers financially where the opportunity arises, whether in your own church, or sent out from that church.*

10 *Preach the Word throughout the city.*

Expect God to reveal who are His 'people'.

11 *Listen to His command.*

16 *Note - Christianity is the fulfilment of the religion of Judaism.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Study 2

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

Share in the suffering and comfort of God

Background information

After his initial stay of 1½ years (AD 50–52), relationships with Paul soured. The church fell into serious sin, which he tackles in *1 Corinthians*. There is a second, painful visit not recorded in Acts but alluded to (1 Cor 4:19; 16:5-8; 2 Cor 1) in ?55 AD, before he writes *2 Corinthians*, probably later that year.

Paul opens up three themes to which he will return: Restoring fractured relationships; the character of God; and suffering among the Lord's people.

Religious people often assume that God blesses those who do good, by giving them material prosperity and health; so if people are suffering, they 'must' have done wrong to deserve God's 'punishment'. Even in the OT, the book of Job showed this assumption was wrong. Jesus corrected it in Luke 13:1-5. Jesus himself was God's obedient servant - who suffered (Isaiah 53)!

So when the Corinthians heard that Paul had faced enormous suffering, they were tempted to deduce he could not be a true apostle.

From the very start of 2 Cor, Paul confronts the error, by showing that suffering for Christ is a profoundly central part of the Gospel. Without it, Paul would not have experienced the deliverance and comfort of God, or been able to pass on that comfort to the Corinthians.

Word List

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | <i>apostle</i> | Commissioned and sent by Christ himself |
| | <i>Timothy</i> | Young man from Lystra, fellow worker after his conversion during Paul's visit (Acts 14:1-20; 16:1; 1 Tim 1:2; 4:14). |
| | <i>Church</i> | Greek <i>ekklesia</i> , lit 'called-out ones'. Before it meant <i>church</i> , it was an every-day term for any gathering of people. |
| | <i>saints</i> | God reckons all who believe in Christ share his holiness. |
| | <i>Achaia</i> | The southern part of what we now call Greece. |
| 2 | <i>grace, peace</i> | Paul's regular greeting at the beginning of a letter. |
| 3 | <i>comfort</i> | (lit) strength alongside (nine times in 5 verses!) |
| 8 | <i>Asia</i> | The Roman term for what we now call Turkey. |
| | <i>Despaired + sentence of death</i> | the only place Scripture uses these words. |
| 11 | <i>as.. your prayers</i> | conditional force: if you help us by your prayers. |

Bible Connections

| | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| 5 | <i>sufferings of Christ/ alongside the church</i> | Acts 9:5; 22:8; 26:14,15 |
| 8 | <i>hardships in Asia</i> | see 1 Cor 15:32; 2 Cor 11:23-28,32-33 |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 1 *Why 'by the will of God'*
Why mention Timothy and not Titus?
Why does he include 'all the Christians in Achaia'?
- 2 *Why 'grace and peace'?*
Why from 'God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ'
- 3 *Why should God be praised?*
How is He the father of all comfort?
- 4 *How has 'He comforted us in all our troubles'?*
What kind of 'trouble' might others be in?
- 5 *What are the sufferings of Christ?*
How do they 'flow over into our lives'?
- 6 *How is their distress 'for' others comfort and salvation?*
How does their comfort produce in the Corinthians patient endurance of the same suffering?
- 7 *What hope?*
How do they share in their sufferings?
- 8 *Why do they not want the brothers to be uninformed?*
What hardships did they suffer?
What did 'despairing of life' mean?
- 9 *What was 'the sentence of death' they felt.*
Why did he add 'who raises the dead'?
- 10 *What does he mean by, 'He will deliver us'?*
What does he mean by, 'we have set our hope'?
What does he mean by, 'as you help us by your prayers'.
- 11 *Who are the 'many'?*
What was 'the gracious favour' they were granted?

What surprises or confuses you?

Why doesn't he speak of the Holy Spirit in vs 2 ?

2) The Context

- a) individual book
- 3 *Father Son and Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14)*
- 8 *Hardships (affliction) (2:4; 4:7; 7:4; 8:2)*

b) whole Bible

1 *Church in other parts of Achaia: Cenchreae (Rom 16:1)+Athens (Acts 17:34)*

2 *Grace (Eph 2:8,9) & peace with God (Rom 5:1) are Christian hallmarks.*

3 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:3). Comfort – cf the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7).*

4 *‘Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.’ (Hebrews 2:18).*
Comforted in troubles / singing at midnight (Acts 16:25). See below
Adversity - You are mine... I'll be with you (Isaiah 43:1,2).

5 *Sharing the...sufferings of Christ (Rom 8:17; Phil 3:10; 1 Pet 4:13; 5:10)*
Drinking the cup which Christ drinks (Matthew 20:23).
I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions (Colossians 1:24).
Severely flogged / singing hymns (Acts 16:23,25). See above
Grieve but not as those without hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13)

7 *Our sufferings (Rom 5:3; 8:18; 2 Cor 1:8; Eph 3:13; 2 Tim 3:11; 1 Pet 5:9)*

8 *Sharing joy and sufferings 1 Cor 12:26*

9 *Do not wish you to be uninformed (lit without knowledge) cf Rom 11:25; 1 Cor 10:1*

9 *Raises the dead John 5:21; Acts 26:8*
Difficulty in ministry Phil. 1:12-14, 19-26 together with 1 Pet. 4:12-14; 5:6-11
Despair of Jesus Matthew 26:36-38ff; 27:46.

10 *Deliver from the evil one, Matthew 6:13*
You O Lord have delivered my soul from death Psalm 116:8

11 *Gracious favour (gk charisma) – undeserved gift Ephesians 2:8*

c) Bible story

See Study 1.

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

1 *‘By the will of God’ is in contrast to the work of man.*
Titus was in Corinth; Timothy had returned and was accompanying Paul.
Including Christians in Achaia shows that there were other churches.

- 2 'Grace and peace' was a formal greeting.
'God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' because equally divine
- 3 God should be praised because he is God – worthy of it.
Ultimately he alone is the one who can comfort.
- 4 He has comforted us by His presence
'trouble' = opposition, hardship etc.
- 5 The sufferings of Christ are the rejections by man.
they 'flow over into our lives' wherever we are rejected in His name.
- 6 Presenting the Gospel that comforts & saves others is costly.
Their comfort produces in the Corinthians patient endurance of the same suffering, by seeing how God sustains / comforts them.
- 7 Hope that they are secure in Christ.
They share in their sufferings by being exposed to similar tests.
- 8 They informed them as they did not want to trivialise the hardships.
The hardships were physical, mental, and emotional.
'Despairing of life' meant they assumed they would die.
- 9 'The sentence of death' meant that death seemed to be imminent.
He added, 'who raises the dead', to show God's ultimate power.
- 10 'He will deliver us' means he will save us from death.
'We have set our hope on Him' means we trust in Him.
Prayer is part of God's way of working.
- 11 'Many' refers to all those who believe and trust in Jesus and who have sought His gracious favour for them.
the 'gracious favour' was deliverance.

3) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

He doesn't mention the Holy Spirit in (1:2) (unlike in 13:14) because he is going to involve Him in vss 3-7 – the Comforter.

4) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

God Himself has appointed me over all the churches in the region for your good (1-3). It is God (by His Holy Spirit) who comforts us in all our troubles, so that by His power we can comfort each other. That is how He works - we share together in His sufferings and His blessing (3-5).

So either way, God is in control and we are in it with you (6,7)

Know this though: in Asia, we were so utterly crushed that we were sure we were going to die. However, this made us trust in our all-powerful God (8,9). For we believe He has, can and will deliver us from evil, in response to your prayers, by His grace (10).

LISTEN

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Christians who share in the sufferings of Christ will also share in his comfort

- 2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 7**

'Our hope for you is firm because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.'

LIVE

- 1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

- a) His nature and character?

- 1 *God is in ultimate charge – He appoints.*
- 2 *Grace and peace is what we need from Jesus.*
- 3 *God is compassionate.*
- 4 *God comforts us in all our troubles.*

- 7 *God gives us hope of suffering and comfort which will not be shaken.*

- 9 *God's aim is to make us rely on and trust in Him.*

- 10 *God delivers us from evil.*

- b) His grace?

- 2 *Grace is what Jesus **gives** us.*

- c) Jesus and His salvation?

- 5 *The **fellowship** of Jesus' suffering and comfort overflow into our lives.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What does God want me to do?

1 *Rely on God's calling.*

Note - The whole church sits under the Word of God.

5 *Note - Suffering and comfort are linked – two sides of a coin.*

7 Note - Christians inevitably suffer with Christ but are accompanied by His comfort.

8 *Acknowledge that there is hardship in being a Christian.*

9 *In adversity, rely on God.*

Do not 'assume' any earthly future with God.

10 *Trust in Him to deliver.*

11 *Under God, prayer is effective.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Study 3

2 Corinthians 1:12-2:4

Trust in Jesus' grace and be gracious to others

Background information

It is not always easy for new Christians to shed their old habits of thought. In Corinth many were trying to climb the social ladder, from slavery, to freedman, to artisan or trader, hoping to make riches so as to climb into the elite.

Boasting, though endemic in society, is incongruous in the Church, as entirely contrary to the spirit of Christ. Paul often makes fun of boasting in this letter by talking of his *weaknesses* e.g. v13 simplicity of speech, 6:4-5 suffering, etc. That's like a child 'boasting' on sports day, 'I'm *slower* than you'!

Paul wrote this letter from Ephesus, early on in his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23 – 21:16). He had planned to visit what we call Greece, starting in the south ('Achaia', including Corinth) then north to 'Macedonia' (Philippi etc), and south again via Corinth then taking all their gifts to Jerusalem. Two circumstances forced a change of plan: the troubles mentioned in ch 1 and his desire not to make his next visit as painful as a previous one (2 Cor 1:23). Scholars assume this means a visit by Paul himself; if so, it is not in Acts.

Word List

12 *boast* used 15 times in 2 Cor. - more than in whole of rest of NT.
A 'negative' word (cf 11:21;30; 12:1).
worldly wisdom ie based on intuition, not revelation. God opposing.

14 *the day of the Lord Jesus* when Jesus comes again, as undisputed Lord.

16 *Macedonia* Northern half of what we now call *Greece*. (The present-day Republic of Macedonia is further north again.)

20 *amen* Hebrew 'surely', from a root 'to be firm, steady, trustworthy'

22 *seal of ownership* A seal is mark of authenticity and security
deposit, guarantee A first instalment of what is to come

Bible connections

another visit see 2 Corinthians 13:1,2

14 *day of the Lord* c.f. Philippians 1:6,10; 2:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:1,2

19 *Jews in city of Corinth* see Acts 18:1-17

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

1:12 *Why a boast?*

Why is his conscience invoked?

What does he mean – in holiness and sincerity that are from God?

How might they have acted according to worldly wisdom?

What are the actions of God's grace?

13 *Why might they write what couldn't be understood?*

14 *How will Paul and the Corinthians be able to boast of each other?*

15 *What was he confident of?*

Why 'twice'?

17 *What does he mean 'lightly'?*

What is a worldly manner?

Why does it repeat 'yes' and 'no'?

18 *How is God 'faithful'?*

19 *What does it mean to 'preach the Son of God, Jesus Christ'?*

20 *What does 'yes in Christ' mean?*

How through Jesus is the Amen spoken by us?

21 *How does God make us 'stand firm' in Christ?*

22 *What is to come that the Spirit guarantees*

23 *Why does he call on God as a witness?*

24 *What does he mean 'Lord it over your faith'*

2: 2 *How would he 'grieve' them?*

3 *How could he 'be distressed' by them?*

4 *When had he written to them?*

What surprises or confuses you?

Why, if he was so 'confident' (1:15; 2:3), was he in such distress (2:4)?

2) The Context

a) surrounding passage

2:3 *Confidence (cf 2:13!)*

b) individual book

1:12 *In the world (ie without God, having no hope) (10:3)*

Holiness: Holy Spirit (6:6) holy kiss (13:14) i.e. pertaining to God

Grace – undeserved gift (Ephesians 2:8,9)

2:4 great distress = 'affliction' (KJV) (4:17; 8:2)

c) whole Bible

1:12 Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord (1 Cor 1:31).

Wisdom of the world (1 Corinthians 3:19; Job 5:13; Psalm 94:11).

14 Day of the Lord (only 1 Cor 5:5; 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:12; 2 Pet 3:10)

15 1st plan (one visit, 1 Cor 16:5). Then two planned. Finally one (1:23; 2:1)

21 We are God's workmanship (Ephesians 2:10)

22 His seal (cf Ephesians 1:13,14)

Many promises, eg Genesis 22:18; Isaiah 25:8; Habakkuk 24.

We shall be like him (1 John 3:2)

23 Witness – one who knows / has seen (cf Acts 1:8).

Nothing is hidden (cf Ps 139:1ff).

Spare you / come with a rod (1 Corinthians 4:21).

2:4 We grieve, but not as those without hope (1 Thessalonians 4:1).

d) Bible story

See Study 1.

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

12 The 'boast' may be in response to accusations.

His conscience is a witness against the accusations.

'That are from God' implies they are pure.

Worldly wisdom may imply craftiness & deceit applied for selfish ends.

Actions of God's grace = those responding to God's undeserved favour.

13 If written with worldly wisdom, only 'the wise' could have understood.

14 They will be able to boast that God has been at work in each of them.

15 He is confident to boast in the Lord, in His day, of what He has done in their lives. See also v21,22.

'Twice' showed the favour they had gained with Paul in his 18-mnth stay.

17 'Lightly' means without thought / consideration of God.

A worldly manner implies selfish motives.

He repeats yes and no for emphasis.

18 God is 'faithful' in that He keeps His Word.

19 It means that Jesus is the message.

20 'Yes' in Christ means Jesus is the answer to it.

The Amen is spoken by us when we preach that Jesus is the answer.

21 God makes us 'stand firm' in Christ by enabling us to believe in Him.

22 Heaven will come, when we shall be like Him. The Spirit in us proves it.
 23 He calls God as the ultimate, recognised, impartial judge.
 24 'Lord it over your faith' means make your faith depend on man not God.
2: 2 He would 'grieve' them with a personal confrontation.
 3 He would 'be distressed' by them if they rejected his leadership and continued in their sin.
 4 Between the letters we call 1st and 2nd Corinthians, scholars think he had written another letter in the 'white heat' of confrontation.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

In Christ, it is possible, even when distressed, to rejoice.

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

By God, we are sure we have acted by His grace not from worldly thinking (12). Our letters have been plain, as all will agree when the Lord returns. (13,14). So, seeking God, I planned to visit you twice (15,16) The certainty, though, is not in our plans but God's Word (17,18). That Word, Jesus, fulfils all God's promises to man. This is our message, for His Glory(19,20). In Him, we are held secure by God's Spirit for eternity (21,22). In God, I am irrelevant; it is by your faith in Jesus you are held fast (23,24). So, I avoided confrontation in person and wrote honestly instead, confident that, in time, we would rejoice together. However, it may have grieved you, you broke my heart (2:1-4).

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

God has fulfilled all His promises in Jesus and expects us to receive them all, giving the glory to God.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 20**

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ and so the "Amen" is spoken by us to the Glory of God

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

12 *God is 'holy and sincere'.*

18 *God is faithful to His Word.*

21 *God enables us to stand.*

23 *God 'witnesses' all we say.*

b) His grace?

22 *God graciously guarantees that we are His by His Spirit*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

14 *The Lord Jesus will have a day when all actions will be seen / understood.*

19 *Jesus Christ, Son of God **is** the message .*

20 *Jesus fulfills all God's promises.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What does God want me to do?

12 *Only boast in God.*

16 *Make plans, under God, that you know He is at liberty to change.*

19 *Preach Jesus Christ, Son of God.*

20 *Say "Amen" to the promises of God that Jesus gives us.*

24 *Christian leaders should never 'lord it' over others but rather to enable them to rejoice.*

2:1 *Under God, make decisions.*

3 *Leaders, be careful about how you censure those in your care.*

4 *Leaders, let your people know / see the depth of love you have for them.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Study 4

2 Corinthians 2:5-11

Forgive, as you have been forgiven

Background information

Paul had challenged blatant sin in an earlier letter (1 Cor 5:1-13). By the time of writing, Titus had told Paul of the Corinthians' good response (2 Cor 7:5-16). The call now is to exercise forgiveness and comfort (2 Cor 2:7).

Word list

2:11 *Satan* Greek, Satanas, basically means adversary, accuser; a fallen angel, opposed, but utterly inferior, to God.

Bible connections

6 *Possible situations mentioned in 1st Cor 5:1-5; 6:15-18*

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 5 *By whom, and how, has grief been caused?*
- 6 *What was the punishment?*
Why 'by the majority' (wasn't it unanimous)?
- 7 *Why ought they to forgive him?*
What is excessive sorrow?
Why did they need to reaffirm their love?
- 9 *When and what did Paul write?*
- 10 *What does it mean to forgive in the sight of God?*
Why 'for your sake'?
- 11 *How might Satan outwit us?*
Why might Satan outwit us?
What are his 'schemes'?

What surprises or confuses you?

- 5 *Who was the person who caused the grief?*

2) The Context

- a) surrounding passage
- 5 *Grieve (2:4b)*
- 9 *I wrote as I did (2:4a)*
- b) whole Bible
- 5 *Possible incestuous marriage? (1 Cor 5:1).*
Where one part suffers (sins), all are affected (1 Corinthians 12:26).
- 7 *cf prodigal son (Luke 15:22).*
- 10 *Forgive as the Lord forgave you (Luke 23:34; Colossians 3:13).*
- 11 *Hand this man over to Satan (1 Corinthians 5:5).*
Satan's foothold (Ephesians 4:27).
- c) Bible story

See Study 1.

LEARN

- 1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?
 - 5 *A member of the church has caused grief to other members.*
 - 6 *The punishment in 1 Cor 5 was exclusion from the fellowship.*
The majority' isn't drawing attention to two opinions in Corinth, but rather to the ruling of the church at large, now expressed locally.
 - 7 *You ought to forgive him for his well-being.*
'Excessive sorrow' is continued remorse over sin already forgiven.
 - 8 *They needed to reaffirm their love because it had not been 'apparent'.*
 - 9 *The letter (2:3) was severe, sent between our 1 Cor and 2 Cor.*
 - 10 *It means we pronounce that God has forgiven.*
'For your sake' – our forgiveness of others is linked to God's forgiveness of them?
 - 11 *Satan outwits us by causing us to continue to sorrow over forgiven sin.*
'his schemes' = turning good (repentance) into bad (excessive sorrow).

(Chrysostom: 'Some, Satan destroys through sin, others through the unmeasured sorrow following on repentance for it... conquering us with our own weapons.')

- 2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

He is probably the offender referred to in 1 Corinthians 5.
The explicit mention of Satan here is a continuation from that letter.

It gives the balance – mercy (2 Cor 2) is shown after discipline. (1 Cor 5).

- 3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

Speaking of grief, in love restore the repentant sinner, whom you have obediently exposed and whom God has forgiven (5-9). Don't let Satan get in. (10)

LISTEN

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point?

A Christian's forgiveness of another is always in the sight of how Christ has forgiven them'

- 2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage?

'.. I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake.' (10b)

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

10 God is merciful

b) His grace?

10 Forgive (as Christ has forgiven you)

c) Jesus and His salvation?

10 All forgiveness of God is 'in the sight of / in the name of Jesus

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What does God want me to do?

5 Sin affects the whole Christian body.

6 Punishment is effected by other believers.

8f Affirm forgiveness/love to a repentant one in Christ's name.

10 Forgive in the sight of Christ / as He has forgiven you.

11 Be constantly on your guard for Satan's temptation of unforgiveness to the repentant.

Be constantly aware of how Satan works.

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Study 5

2 Corinthians 2:12 -3:6

Be ‘competent’ through Christ’s victory

Background information

When Paul realised Titus was coming from Corinth *overland*, he was so eager for news that he passed up a God-given opening to preach in Troas (c140 miles north of Ephesus) and sailed to Macedonia (12-13) to meet him on the road ‘Via Egnatia/Ignatia’ which spanned the province.

When a Roman general won a victory, he marched back into his capital city at the head of his army. In the parade were spoils of war, including prisoners. Paul imagines a procession with *Christ* at the head. Where would Christians fit in the parade? Part of the victorious army – or as captive slaves? (14-17)!

The misleading teachers had come to Corinth with letters of recommendation, perhaps from Jerusalem. When Paul contradicted them, one of their tactics was to demand to see *his* letters? (3:1-6) He had told the Galatians how the Jerusalem apostles had divided the workload (Galatians 1:11 – 2:10).

Word List

2:12 *Christ* Jewish Messiah / King (2:14, 15, 17; 3:3, 4)

13 *Titus* Younger colleague of Paul, sent to Corinth to report back.

3:1 *letters of recommendation* from someone ‘important’, to claim validity for one’s self and message.

2 *hearts* Jewish equivalent of ‘mind’ – for thinking and personality.

3 *tablets of stone* God gave Moses the 10 commandments, which were engraved on two slabs of stone.

4-6 *competent* Used 3 times for emphasis (also 2:16).

6 *covenant* Greek *diatheke*, general term for alliance/treaty between two parties; in the past, God had made covenants with Israel, e.g. I will be your God; you will be my people; if you keep my laws, I will provide for you and protect you.

new covenant Jesus made possible a new kind of relationship with God, fulfilling God’s promise made through Jeremiah, 31:31-34.

Bible connections

2:14 *fragrance* see Ezekiel 20:41; Ephesians 5:2; Philippians 4:18

2:17 *peddle* compare Freely you have received, freely give. Matthew 10:8

3:1 *letters* e.g. Acts 18:27, from Aquila & Priscilla, introducing Apollos.

3:3 *tablets of stone* see Exodus 31:18; 32:15-16; 34:1,28; Deut 5:22; 10:4 see also Ezekiel 36:26-27

3:6 *the New Covenant* see Jeremiah 31:31-34; Luke 22:20 etc; Acts 2:14-41.

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

12 When did he go to Troas?

What does the 'Gospel of Christ' mean?

How did he know the Lord had opened the door?

13 Why did he have no peace of mind?

Why did he go on to Macedonia?

14 Who is 'us'?

Why is he thanking God?

Why 'always'?

What kind of 'triumph'?

What does he mean 'everywhere'?

What is 'the fragrance of the knowledge of Him'?

15 Why 'to God'?

What is 'the aroma of Christ'?

3:1 How did they commend themselves before?

2 Why 'written on our hearts'?

3 Why a letter from Christ?

Why not on 'a tablet of stone'?

4 What is their 'confidence'?

5 How does our competence come from God?

6 How have we been made competent?

What does 'of the Spirit' mean?

How does the letter kill but the Spirit give life?

What surprises or confuses you?

Why speak of Jewish things (Christ, covenant etc) to non-Jews?

2) The Context

a) surrounding passage,

2:12 his dealings with the church (1:15,16; 1:23; 2:12,13; 7:5-7; 12:18)!!

b) individual book,

2:12 Gospel of Christ (9:13; 10:14)

13 Titus was sent (12:18) ; news through Titus (2 Cor 7:6)

14 Knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:6)

c) whole bible,

2:12 *Troas to Europe = start of 2nd missionary Journey (Acts 16:8-11)*
Directs a believer's paths (Proverbs 3:5,6)
Open door (1 Cor 16:9; Colossians 4:3)

13 *God works all things together for good (Romans 8:28)*

14 *Victory through Jesus (1 Cor 15:57).*
It is finished (John 19:30).
Mary anointing Jesus with perfume (John 12:3).

17 *Not peddling Word of God for profit (cf Acts 18:3,5).*

3:1 *Letter of recommendation e.g. for Apollos (Acts 18:27).*
Tablets of stone (Ex 31:18).

5 *By the grace of God, I am what I am. (1 Cor 15:10).*
I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13).

6 *New Covenant (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25).*
The letter of the Law kills (Romans 7:9; Galatians 3:10).

d) Bible story

See Study 1.

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

2:12 *He went back to Troas on his third missionary journey (Acts 20:6).*
Gospel of Christ' = good news that Jesus was the promised Jewish king.
As he was seeking to do God's will, he assumed that if a 'door' was opened, the Lord had opened it.

13 *He had no peace of mind because he was humanly worried*
He went to Macedonia as he knew that was how Titus was returning

14 *'Us' means Paul and the others with him who preach Christ.*
He is thankful to God because God was in charge – He leads even when we don't listen.
'Always', since God never fails to achieve his Glory and His peoples' good.
A 'triumph' is an outright victory.
'Everywhere', because God is all-powerful.
This is the opportunity that believers present for others to know God.

15 *'to God', because God can sense the sweetness of Christ in believers.*
In His people, God gives a chance to experience the presence of Jesus.

3:1 *They commended themselves before when no one knew them or Jesus.*

- 2 'Written on our hearts' because they embodied the message.
- 3 'From Christ' for the Christian is the communication of God to others.
'A tablet of stone' impersonal inanimate Law.
- 4 Their 'confidence' is that Christ is their commendation.
- 5 God gives us our competence.
- 6 We have been made competent by grace.
'Of the Spirit' means by God.
The letter kills as it exposes our sin and leads to death; the Spirit graciously reveals Jesus and so gives life.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

He speaks of Jewish things because Christians are 'Jews'.

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

I couldn't settle in Troas where God was at work, out of worry about Titus. So I moved on to Macedonia. (12,13). God remained with us though, as we preached his Gospel – some receiving, others shrinking away (14-16a). Who is able of themselves to do this job?! Some do it to earn payment. We do it by and for God. (16b, 17). We are not saying this to gain letters of approval to give you. God is our witness and you are the proof of our ministry (3:1-4). Our confidence and ability as servants of His New Covenant are not of our doing but entirely a gift of His Spirit (5,6).

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Jesus leads us everywhere in the proclamation of His Gospel.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **2:14**

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.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

2:12 The Lord directs our paths / opens doors for us

17 God sends men to speak for Him

3: 3 God's presence / work is evident in a believer's life.

b) His grace?

3: 5 God gives us competence (though we don't deserve it).

6 The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

c) Jesus and His salvation?

2:14 Jesus is victorious – always and everywhere.

12, 15 Our message is Jesus Christ.

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What does God want me to do?

2:12 Look for doors the Lord has opened.

14 Spread the fragrance of the knowledge of Jesus everywhere.

The key is not where you are, but who you are and what you do.

16 NB: to some, you are fragrance of life, to others the stench of death.

17 Ensure that your motives are sincere when you speak for Christ.

3: 1 Stand by your actions. Let them speak for themselves.

4 Be confident in / before God.

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Study 6

2 Corinthians 3:7-18

Receive life from the Spirit, not death from the Law.

Background information

Possibly Paul's opponents argued that the Law of Moses was supreme. Paul argues that if the *Old* Covenant glory was great – even though the Law was transient and temporary – how much greater the unfading glory of the *New*?

In Exodus 34, Moses' face became radiant after meeting with God. A cursory reading suggests Moses used a veil to cover his face afterwards to hide the *glory*; Paul shows, it was to hide the *fading* of the glory.

He then uses 'veil' as a metaphor to explain why many Jews could hear the OT scriptures but not see that it was all about the Christ.

Note the repetition of words: Ministry, four times in v7-9; Glory / glorious, ten times in v7-11; Veil / unveiled, five times in v13-18.

Word List

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| 7 <i>brought death</i> | Law cannot save, because no-one can keep it perfectly. It can only show us we are sinners, law-breakers who deserve death, Romans 3:21-26. |
| <i>Moses</i> | Leader of Israelites during the escape from Egypt and when God gave the Law (Exodus 20). |
| 17 <i>the Spirit</i> | God, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. |
| 18 <i>reflect</i> | or <i>contemplate</i> |

Bible connections

| | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 7 <i>glory</i> | <i>see Exodus 19:16-19; 33:7-23</i> |
| <i>God engraved the two slabs of stone</i> | <i>see Deuteronomy 5:22</i> |
| 13 <i>Moses' veil</i> | <i>Exodus 34:29-35</i> |
| <i>veiled till minds opened</i> | <i>Luke 24:45-47</i> |
| 18 <i>transformed</i> | <i>see Romans 12:1-2</i> |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 7 *What is the ministry that brought death?*
How did it 'come with Glory'?
- 8 *What is the 'ministry of the Spirit'?*
- 9 *How does the ministry condemn?*
How does the ministry bring 'righteousness'?
- 10 *What is comparative glory?*
What is 'surpassing' glory?
- 12 *What is our hope?*
Bold in what way?
- 13 *Why was Moses not bold?*
Why did Moses cover his fading glory?
- 14 *Who made their minds dull/(hardened)?*
Why are their minds dull when the Old Covenant is read?
- 16 *How do you 'turn to the Lord'?*
How is the veil taken away in Christ?
- 17 *What does 'the Lord is the spirit' mean?*
'Freedom' - what are they free from?
How are our faces unveiled?
How do we behold/contemplate/reflect the Lord's glory?
How are we transformed, and into what?

What surprises or confuses you?

(13, 15, 18) *What is the correlation between Moses' veil, the veil that covers the hearts of readers of the Law, and our unveiled faces?*

2) The Context

a) surrounding passage

7,8,9 *ministry (3:6)*

8 *the Spirit (3:6)*

b) individual book

9 *righteousness of God (5:21)*

c) whole Bible

7 *Glory (John 1:14; 17:5)*

The wages of sin is death; the gift of God is eternal life (Romans 6:23)

9 *There is now no condemnation (Romans 8:1)*

12 *Hope (1 Cor 13:13; Hebrews 11:1)*
Christ is in you the hope of Glory (Colossians 1:27)
Bold (Philemon 8)
Hope sure and steadfast (Hebrews 6:19)
Dull (hardened RSV) (Mark 6:52; 8:17; cf Exodus 7:13, 22; 8:15)

15 *Veiled hearts (Hebrews 5:11, 6:19,20)*

18 *Transformed (Romans 12:2)*
We shall be like him (1 John 3:2)

d) Bible story

See Study 1.

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

7 *The ministry that brought death was the giving of the Law*
It came with Glory in that it was from God

8 *The ‘ministry of the Spirit’ is the implementation of the New Covenant(?)*

9 *The ministry of the Law condemns in that it merely describes a standard that we cannot achieve.*
The ministry of the Spirit brings ‘righteousness’ in that it reveals what God has done for us in Christ.

10 *‘Comparative glory’ refers to the fading glory of the Law whereas the Glory of the Spirit is eternal.*
‘Surpassing’ glory is that which exceeds all other – the Glory of the Spirit

12 *We are hoping for ‘glory’.*
‘Bold’ because they are confident?

13 *Moses was not bold because his glory was fading.*
Moses covered his fading glory because he was self-conscious.

14 *God made their minds dull / hardened.*
When the Old Covenant is read, ie submitted to (?)

16 *You ‘turn to the Lord’ by putting your faith in Him.*
The veil is taken away in Christ as you ‘turn’ to Him.
‘The Lord is the spirit’ means The Holy Spirit is God.

17 *We are freed from sin / its effects (imperfection, death).*
Our faces are unveiled (the penny drops) as we believe and trust in Him.
We behold = we see / appreciate / receive Christ and his glory.
When we believe in /receive Christ, He changes every aspect of our lives!

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

Initially the people feared Moses' face when he came down from Mt Sinai. However then they 'came near to him'. He only put the veil on later, (Ex 34:30, 32,33). The veil was to keep the Israelites from seeing the glory declining. (2 Cor 3:13). In Jesus, the veil that stops us seeing God is removed.

Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

The ministry of the Spirit is much more glorious than the fading glory of Moses (7,8) A condemning, puny and fading glory of the Law is nothing compared to the righteous, surpassing, lasting Glory of the Spirit (9-11)! Therefore, unlike timid Moses who veiled his fading radiance from the Israelites whose minds were hardened as is still the case when the Law is read, we are hopeful and very bold as the Lord removes the veil for those who believe in Him (12-16). The Lord who is the Spirit gives us this freedom of access to God the Father in prayer (17). And so, unveiled, we see God's glory and are being changed by Him into His likeness (18).

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

The Law blinds a person and leads to death, but when that person turns to the Lord, He removes the veil and gives life and freedom.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 16**

But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

8 *The ministry of the Spirit (who is the Lord, v 17) is more glorious than any other.*

17 *The Lord is the Spirit.*

b) His grace?

16 *The Lord, removes the veil of those who turn to Him, letting them 'see' God.*

18 *The Lord transforms believers into His likeness (of character - grace) with ever increasing Glory.*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

14 *Christ removes the veil that prevents us seeing God when we seek to gain access by the Law.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What should I do ?

10 *Seek the glorious ministry of the Spirit rather than that of the Law.*

12 *Let your sight of the ministry of the Spirit make you bold.*

16 *Acknowledge the amazing privilege, the spiritual freedom and transforming power of having the Lord removing your veil.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Study 7

2 Corinthians 4:1 - 18

Belief in amazing grace - the gift of His Spirit!

Background information

Despite opposition, Paul does not lose heart (4:1,16; 5:6). Still countering the false teachers, Paul shows we can't use rhetorical tricks to deceive people into believing truth. Was this a method the false teachers used?

He develops the thought of 'veiled' from ch 3: what blinds people to recognising Christ is actually spiritual opposition by Satan.

The gospel conveys the light of God. Paul uses an analogy that makes perfect sense when we read the story of Gideon in Judges ch 7. Note (v16) *where* they hid their smouldering firebrands till they sprang the ambush: in *clay pots*. The *fragility* of the pots was crucial. Similarly, the vulnerability of believers is a vital part of authenticating our preaching the message of light.

Word List

| | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|--|
| 3 | <i>even if</i> | Despite our most careful preaching. |
| 5 | <i>servants</i> | gk <i>doulos</i> – a slave |
| 7 | <i>jars'</i> | same word God used to Ananias about Saul (Acts 9:15) where it is translated 'vessel' / 'instrument' (gk <i>skeuos</i>). |
| 7-9 | <i>hard pressed...but not...</i> | The pairs of words in Greek sound similar, as in a rhyme. |

Bible connections

| | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|---|
| 4:6 | <i>let light shine</i> | Genesis 1:3; John 1:9 |
| 7 | <i>jars of clay</i> | Judges 7; Acts 9:15 |
| | <i>persecution promised</i> | Matt 10:23; John 15:20b |
| 13 | <i>believed ... spoke</i> | Partial quotation from Psalm 116 v10 'I believed, therefore I said, "I am greatly afflicted"' |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 1 *Why 'therefore'?*
What ministry?
- 2 *What are the 'secret and shameful ways'?*
- 3 *What is the Truth he plainly sets forth?*
In what way are they perishing?
Who caused the veil?
- 4 *How are they blinded?*
- 5 *What would 'preaching themselves' mean?*
- 6 *What does 'make his light shine' mean?*
Why the 'face' of Jesus?
- 7 *What treasure?*
What does his power do?
- 8,9 *What are his repeated contrasts saying?*
- 10 *How is the death of Christ carried in our body?*
- 11 *How is His life revealed in our mortal body?*
- 12 *How is death at work in Paul but life in the Corinthians?*
- 13 *'I have spoken' - What did he say?*
- 14 *What is their faith / confidence in?*
- 15 *What is all for their benefit?*
How is the grace reaching more and more?
- 16 *How are they a) outwardly wasting?*
 b) inwardly being renewed?
- 17 *How are their troubles 'light'?*
What is their eternal glory?
- 18 *What unseen thing do they fix their eyes on?*

What surprises or confuses you?

How is 'life' at work in the Corinthians, but 'death' at work in the writers?

2) The Context

a) surrounding passage

1 *Ministry (3:7,8,9)*

3 *Veiled (3:13-18)*

13 *The Spirit is the Lord (18)*

b) individual book

2 *Deception - same word used in 2 Corinthians 11:3*

3 *Treasure – the Spirit of God (3:17, 18)*

Power to change us (3:18)

c) whole Bible

2 *Human oratory (1 Cor 2:14).*

4 *The god of this age (Satan) (1 Cor 2:11).*

Prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).

Prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2).

Deliver us from the evil one (Matthew 6:13).

Seen Him seen the Father (John 12:45; 14:9).

6 *The glory was present but only widely recognised after His death & resurrection (Luke 24:26).*

Jesus said, 'He who has seen me has seen the Father.' (John 12:45 14:9).

Reveal the Son in me that I may preach Him among the Gentiles.

(Galatians 1:15 16 c.f. Acts 26:15, 16).

7 *Much weakness (1 Cor 2:3).*

The Lord is the stronghold of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid? Ps27:1 .

10 *Carry Jesus' death – his weakness (Isaiah 53; Matthew 27:35).*

11 *Bearing Jesus' name means bearing suffering (1 Cor 4:9; 15:30).*

12 *boldness c.f. the boasting (1 Cor 1:31).*

Power of resurrection but fellowship of sufferings (Philippians 3:10).

13 *I believe even when I am afflicted (Psalm 116:10).*

Faith - sure of what we hope for, certain of what we don't see (Heb 11:1).

14 *Raised with / in Jesus (Romans 8:11).*

17 *Suffer with Jesus that may also share in his glory (Romans 8:17).*

If we endure with Him we will also reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12).

18 *Seeing the invisible (Hebrews 11:27).*

Eyes fixed on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2).

Eyes have not seen what God has prepared for those that love Him (1 Cor 2:9).

d) Bible story

See Study 1.

LEARN

- 1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?
'Therefore' ie because the Lord, the Spirit, is transforming us.
The ministry of the spirit / brings righteousness / forever (7-11).
- 2) *'Secret and shameful ways are human manipulation by oratory.*
- 3) *The Truth he plainly sets forth is preaching Jesus Christ, the Son of God*
'Perishing' is being subject to the ministry of death (2:9).
The 'god of this age' caused the veil (?)
- 4) *'Blinded' means they cannot grasp who Jesus is, let alone receive him.*
- 5) *'Preaching themselves' means making themselves the issue.*
- 6) *'Make his light shine' means that God's light enabled them to see.*
'The face of Jesus' ie understand his identity.
- 7) *Treasure = the Spirit of God.*
His power is able to change us.
- 8,9 *The repeated contrasts pair our weaknesses with God's power.*
- 10) *Carrying the death of Christ in our body is our weakness (cf Isaiah 53; Matt 27:35).*
- 11) *'His life revealed in our mortal body' is His Spirit at work in us.*
- 12) *Life at work in you contrasts the boasting (1 Corinthians 1:31).*
- 13) *He said I believe even when I am afflicted.*
- 14) *Their faith / confidence is in His resurrection.*
- 15) *It is for your benefit that we will be raised with the Lord Jesus.*
Grace reaching more and more as Christ is preached.
- 16) *They are a) outwardly wasting in body*
b) inwardly being renewed in the Spirit.
- 17) *Their troubles are 'light' in that they are temporal*

Their eternal glory is the reward of the life to come

18 *They fix their eyes on the eternal one – Jesus.*

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

Is Paul being sarcastic here – ‘life’ at work in the Corinthians at the expense of ‘death’ in himself and his companions?

3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

We are sustained by the Spirit and so, simply and plainly, we preach the Gospel (1,2). Satan blinds people (3,4). The answer is Jesus, not us (5) and God reveals Himself through Him (6). The Spirit of God lives in us, weak though we are. We are often knocked down, but never knocked out! (7-9). Like Jesus, in our complete weakness, the power of God is shown, unlike you Corinthians, of course (10-12)! Faith in the resurrection sustains us (13,14). This grace is your blessing, to God’s glory (15). So we are encouraged. The struggles of this life are momentary – the eternal is lasting (16-18).

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Our extreme weakness simply demonstrates God’s amazing power to us as we receive the Gospel of the glory of Christ.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 7**

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

1 *God is merciful.*

2 *God sees all things!*

b) His grace?

6 *God makes His light shine in our hearts.*

God's light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is given to us.

7 *God is the all-surpassing power.*

13 *Faith comes from the Spirit*

c) *Jesus and His salvation?*

5 *Jesus Christ is Lord.*

10 *Jesus is revealed in His people in His death and resurrection.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What should I do?

1 *Look at God's mercy to you and be encouraged - 'don't lose heart!'*

2 *Beware being tempted to rely on 'methods' when you share Jesus Christ.*

4 *Recognise that Satan blinds people so they can't believe in Jesus.*

7 *Note - Our weakness and ineptitude well display God's power.*

8/9 *Note - In hardship persevere in Jesus.*

10f *Believers share in the sufferings of Jesus.*

13f *Note - faith in Jesus from His Spirit gives us hope that we will share His resurrection.*

15 *Note - the grace of God in a believer, as it is shared, should reveal God's glory and cause thanksgiving among increasing numbers of people.*

18 *Keep your eyes on Jesus, the eternal hope.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Study 8

2 Corinthians 5:1 - 10

Reasons not to lose heart or give up ministry

Background information

To the dominant cultures of Paul's day, the body was inconsequential and something to be despised. The Greek philosopher Epictetus (AD 50 -135) wrote – '*You are a poor soul burdened with a corpse*'. The Roman philosopher Seneca (4BC - 65 AD) wrote '*I am a higher being and born for higher things than to be the slave of my body which I look upon as a shackle put upon my freedom.*'

Paul's perspective was very different. He saw the body as the precious 'seed' out of which the glorious new body would come (1 Cor 15:35ff).

Word List

- 1 *tent* a temporary shelter made of cloth (Paul was a tent-maker to trade and had worked as such in Corinth (Acts 18:3).
house a permanent building.
- 2 *clothed* metaphor for a new type of body after resurrection.
- 5 *deposit, guaranteeing* first instalment of what is to come
- 6 '*the body*' – repeated in (8,9,10)
- 10 *judgment seat* place where Roman magistrate sat to administer justice

Bible connections

5:10 *judgment seat of Christ* see Matthew 16:27; Revelation 22:12.
see also Jesus' parables in Matt 13:40-42, 49-50; 20:1-16; 21:43; 22:1-14;

LOOK

1) The Text

- 1 *What is the earthly tent?
When will it be destroyed?
What is the building from God?*
- 2 *Why do we groan?
What is our heavenly dwelling?
Why 'naked'?*
- 4 *How would we be unclothed?*
- 5 *For what purpose has God made us?
What is 'to come'?*
- 6 *Why are we confident?
What does 'at home in the body' mean?*
- 8 *Why has he said again that he is confident?*
- 10 *When will we all appear before the judgement seat of Christ?
What will each person receive?*

What surprises or confuses you?

What place does 'grace' have before the judgement seat?

2) The Context

- a) surrounding passage

- 1 *Now: so we fix our eyes not on what is seen but what is unseen (4:18)
Eternal (4:17,18)*
- b) individual book

- 5 *Holy Spirit a deposit guaranteeing... (1:22)*

- c) whole Bible

- 1 *Tent of this body (2 Peter 1:13).
The heavenly body (1 Corinthians 15:42ff).
Building that won't last (Luke 6:48).
Physical training vs godliness (1 Timothy 4:8).*
- 2 *Groan inwardly as we wait ... for the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:23).*
- 5 *Holy Spirit, a deposit guaranteeing (Ephesians 1:14).*
- 6 *Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Luke 12:33,34).*

7 *Live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4; cf Rom 1:17; Gal 2:11; 3:20; Hebrews 11:38).*

9 *Be with the Lord – far better (Philippians 1:23).*

10 *Judgment seat (Romans 14:10).*

Before the twins had done anything ‘good or bad’ (Romans 9:11).

Saved but suffer loss (1 Corinthians 3:15; 9:27).

d) Bible story

See Study 1.

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

1 *The ‘earthly tent’ is his body.*

It is destroyed after death.

The building from God is the heavenly body we assume.

2 *We groan as an expression of the longing for our heavenly dwelling.*

Our heavenly dwelling is the body we will assume in Heaven.

‘Naked’ implies no bodily covering at all.

4 *We would be unclothed by having no body at all.*

5 *God has made us to be clothed with a heavenly body.*

‘To come’ is the adoption of our heavenly bodies.

6 *We are confident because the Spirit guarantees our assumption of our heavenly body.*

‘At home in the body’ means living on earth in a mortal body.

8 *He repeats ‘confident’ to underline that anticipation of eternal life with God in glory is a central aspect of his faith.*

10 *We will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ after we die.*

‘We’ are the Christian church – so it is reward and loss for those saved.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

‘Grace’ has saved all believers and given them life; before the judgment seat, their deeds are sifted and they experience comparative reward.

3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

(Speaking of eternity) – our earthly body will die, but our heavenly body will live forever (1). Our deepest longing is for heaven - though we might not relish the prospect of dying (2-4). God’s design for this has been guaranteed by the gift of

His Spirit (5). So, our faith is in the Lord and ultimately, we would rather be with Him in Heaven (6-8). Therefore, since He will judge us believers, we live to please Him. (9,10).

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Believing in the unseen eternal reality of God, we live by faith in Him rather than what we experience in this world.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? *v 7*

We live by faith not by sight.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

1 God is eternal.

5 God made us for eternal life.

7 Our faith is in God, Himself

b) His grace?

5 We are given his Spirit as a deposit.

c) Jesus and His salvation?

10 Jesus is the judge of the church.

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What should I do?

1 Don't 'build' on earthly soil.

Trust God's work, which will last, (not your own).

2 Look to Heaven with longing.

4 A reluctance to die is not incompatible with a longing for Heaven.

6 Our confidence of our place in Heaven comes through the Holy Spirit.

7 Note - confidence arises from faith in God, not anything 'earthly'.

8 The Christian should be confident – in the Lord!

10 The prospect of judgment should instruct our actions.

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Study 9

2 Corinthians 5:11 - 6:2

Assume the ministry God has given us – Reconciliation

Background information

V 14-21 contain Paul's most comprehensive statement about the death of Christ. Following the reference to judgment in vv 9,10, this section adds more reasons for reaching out to others with the ministry of reconciliation. First written to heal the broken relationships in Corinth, this core passage has become a highlight of the NT and Christian preaching.

The false teachers and their disciples in Corinth *had* been rating people by earthly standards: social status, riches, elaborate rhetoric, 'success', letters of approval. Paul shows a new, Christ-centred way: v 21 is stunningly humbling. Christ takes our sin and its punishment; we get His righteousness!

Word List

| | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 11 | <i>fear</i> | Awe and reverence, aware of impending judgment. |
| 12 | <i>pride</i> | In OT solely <i>negative</i> . In N, <i>positive</i> when relates to others. |
| 14 | <i>love compels</i> <i>one died for all</i> | Same verb used of people 'crowding' Jesus (Luke 8:45). On behalf of, and in place of |
| 17 | <i>in Christ</i> | I.e. a Christian, one sharing in the son-ship of Jesus Christ. |
| | <i>new creation</i> | Transformed from the inside out (Romans 12:1,2) |
| 18 | <i>reconciled</i> | No more hostility between God and an individual sinner |
| 19 | <i>God was reconciling... in Christ</i> | Can be translate, <i>God was in Christ, reconciling</i> |
| 20 | <i>ambassador</i> <i>through us</i> | One who represents a king, speaking with the king's authority. <i>Plural</i> , i.e Paul & Timothy; or all believers? God, having done what was needed (v21) to make reconciliation possible, now trusts mere humans to proclaim it! |
| 21 | <i>him who had no sin i.e. Jesus Christ.</i> | <i>The righteousness of God</i> No human effort at keeping law(s) can make us pure; but when we trust in Jesus, God <i>reckons</i> us pure. |
| 6:2 | <i>now is the day...</i> | Christ's sacrificial death demands a response: now! |

Bible Connections

| | | |
|-------|---|---|
| 5:16b | <i>seeing Christ from worldly point of view</i> | <i>see Saul in Acts 9:1-4</i> |
| 17 | <i>new creation</i> | <i>see Jeremiah 31:33,34; - Ezekiel 36:26,27; 37:1-14</i> |
| 6:2 | <i>'time of favour'</i> | <i>see Isaiah 49:8; Psalm 69:13 Isaiah 55:6</i> |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 11 Who is 'we'?
 - Why do they fear the Lord?
 - What do they try and persuade men of?
 - What is plain to God?
 - Why their 'conscience'?
- 12 When did they try to commend themselves for a first time?
 - How might they take pride in Paul etc.?
 - Who takes pride in 'what is seen'?
- 13 What does 'out of our mind' mean?
- 14 What love of Christ?
 - How does it compel us?
 - Why 'therefore' all died?
- 15 Who 'lives'?
- 16 'So' what?
 - What does it mean 'to regard from a worldly point of view'?
 - When did he regard Christ in this way?
- 17 Why 'therefore'?
 - What does 'in Christ' mean?
 - What's new and old?
- 18 'All this is from God' – all what?
- 19 When was God reconciling the world to himself in Christ?
 - What is the message of reconciliation for, and for whom?
- 20 Why 'therefore'?
 - Why doesn't Christ implore them Himself?
 - When have they already been reconciled to God?
- 21 Why did he tell them this verse: 'God made him....'?
- 6: 1 Why fellow workers and not servants?
 - How have they received God's grace in the first place?
- 2 When is this 'day' / How long will it last?

What surprises or confuses you?

- 16 If 'all this is from God', what can be our responsibility?

2) The Context

a) surrounding passage

10 *We will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.*

b) individual book

11 *Conscience (1:12; 4:2).*

12 *Commend selves again (3:1).*

Pride (7:4; 8:24).

Out of my mind (11:23).

21 *Jesus our righteousness (1:30).*

The ministry that brings righteousness (3:9).

He became poor that we might become rich (8:9).

c) whole Bible

5:11 *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 111:10).*

Persuade (Acts 18:4; 26:28).

12 'Pride' - OT negative: (Job 33:17; Proverbs 11:2; 16:18; Daniel 4:37).

'Pride' - NT positive: (Galatians 6:4) rejoicing in God (Romans 5:2,3,11).

The heart = the mind (Luke 4:45).

13 *Out of our mind = foolishness (1 Cor 1:23-25).*

14 *The love of Christ (John 3:16; 1 John 4:10).*

All died (Romans 6:3,4).

15 *It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me (Galatians 2:20).*

16 'Who are you Lord?' 'I am Jesus' (Acts 9:5)

17 *New creation (Galatians 6:5)*

18 *All this = saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8,9)*

Reconciled (Luke 12:58; 1 Cor 7:11)

6:1 *Receiving grace in vain (1 Cor 3:16)*

Day of salvation (Isaiah 49:8).

2 *Today if you hear his voice (3:7).*

d) Bible story

See Study 1.

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

11 'We' includes at least Paul and Timothy, but arguably also all believers.

They fear the Lord for they know they will give an account to Him.

They try to persuade men that they too will give an account to Jesus.

To God it is plain we are 'jars of clay, carrying His treasure within'.

Their 'conscience' is their mind (?)

12 The Corinthian believers commended themselves for a first time when

Paul was with them (they have not changed).

They 'rejoice' in Paul's weakness but God's surpassing greatness.

Those who take pride in 'what is seen' are impressed with appearances.

13 'out of our mind' means not making human sense (?)

14 The love of Christ is shown in the giving of His life.

'Compels us' to respond to grace; his huge love leaves us no option!

'Therefore' because all who are in Christ have died to sin with Him.

15 Those who are 'in Christ', live.

16 'So' – our first concern is whether or not a person is in Christ.

Paul regarded Christ from a worldly point of view before his conversion.

17 'Therefore' is because we believe that Jesus is the Christ and that we have been fully included in Him.

'In Christ' means joined to him by trusting in him.

'Old' includes looking at people from a worldly point of view. 'New' is looking at people with respect to their relationship to Christ – in or out?

18 All = inclusion in Christ is from God – an act of grace.

19 God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ through Jesus' death.

Message of reconciliation: 'In Christ's death, God counted our sins against Christ, not against us, counting his righteousness to us, so making it possible for those who accept this to be at peace with God.'

20 'Therefore': Since God has committed the message to us, we make known the good news of God's reconciliation as Christ's ambassadors.

Christ doesn't implore them Himself because he has chosen to do it through ambassadors.

They're reconciled to God as they believe in Christ & become a new creation.

21 This climactic verse sums up the reasoning of 5:11-20.

6:1 Paul & Timothy are God's 'fellow workers' for they speak as

‘ambassadors’.

They received God’s grace by believing in Jesus.

2 ‘Day’ means any time in this life, i.e. before the Lord returns.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

‘All this is from God’ (18) is put alongside, ‘We implore you on Christ’s behalf....’ (20). They are not congruent but both are present in Scripture.

3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

God, the judge, who commissioned us to preach, knows what our hearts are like (11). So, support us (12). Preaching Christ might seem nonsense to many but to you it is the truth (13). The message is: Christ died for us that we might live for Him (14,15). Therefore, those in Christ are a brand new work of God in which He has reconciled us to Himself. This is our message: (16-19). Please, for Jesus’ sake, acknowledge God’s gift of righteousness to you, today. (5:20-6:2).

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Please listen - Jesus calls you to be reconciled to God.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 20b**

We implore you on Christ’s behalf to be reconciled to God

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

11 *God is to be feared.*

God knows what we are like – ‘What we are’ is plain to Him.

17 *God works creatively in us to enable us to believe in Jesus.*

18 *God reconciled us to Himself through Jesus.*

God gives us His ministry of reconciliation.

20 *God uses us as His ambassadors.*

God makes His appeal to mankind through his servants.

21 *Jesus was sinless Himself.*

b) His grace?

18 God is sovereign in creating a new person through faith in Christ.

21 Jesus took the sin of humanity on Himself, so we humans could be spared judgment.

c) Jesus and His salvation?

15 Christ died for all.

21 To benefit, individuals need to accept reconciliation in Christ.

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What should I do?

13 Seek God's opinion and approval.

14 Act willingly and gladly, compelled by the love of Christ.

16 We no longer view Christ as just a human being.

20b Heed Jesus' call and receive peace with God.

6:1 It is possible to receive God's grace in vain. Don't!

2 Act on God's Word today.

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Study 10

2 Corinthians 6:3 - 13

Be reconciled to your leaders

Background information

In chapter 6, Paul unashamedly lists the opposition he had faced, because it authenticated the truth of his message. Around the positives in vv 6,7 he lists the troubles and beatings he faced because he spoke the truth (4,5,8-10).

The foundation of Christian ministry is ‘great endurance’ (4) – *gk hupomone* ‘The root of all goods, the mother of piety, the fruit that never withers, a fortress that is never taken, a harbour that knows no storms.... The queen of virtues, the foundation of right actions, peace in war, calm in tempest, security in plots.’

Chrysostom

Different sections are marked by use of different Greek prepositions:

| | <i>Greek</i> | <i>English</i> |
|------|--------------------|---|
| 4a | <i>en</i> | = ‘in’. (Repeat with nouns till vs7 -‘in power of God’) |
| 7b,8 | <i>dia ... kai</i> | = ‘through ...and’ |
| 9 | <i>ws ... kai</i> | = ‘as ... and’ |
| 10 | <i>ws ... de</i> | = ‘as ... but’ |

Word list

| | | |
|----|------------------------|--|
| 6 | <i>sincere love</i> | Unfeigned / unpretending love |
| 7 | <i>truthful speech</i> | lit. (the) Word of Truth |
| | <i>power of God</i> | Gk <i>dynamis</i> . ‘You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God’ (Matthew 22:29). Gospel ... power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16). Christ, the Power of God (1 Cor 1:24). |
| | <i>righteousness</i> | mentioned 33 times in Paul’s letter to the Romans |
| | <i>right and left</i> | right carries sword, left has shield (Ephesians 6:16,17) |
| 13 | <i>fair exchange</i> | means exact equivalent |
| | <i>as to children</i> | NB., no ‘my’ in Greek |

Bible connections

| | |
|----|---|
| 4 | <i>not the approval of men but of God</i> (1 Thessalonians 2:4) |
| 9b | <i>dying, yet we live on</i> (2 Corinthians 4:11) |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 3 *What kind of a stumbling block is he thinking of?*
What is our ministry?
- 4 *Why should they commend themselves?*
- 6 *Why are these attributes mentioned – in purity, understanding etc?*
Why is the Holy Spirit mentioned in the middle of a section?
- 7 *Why is a truthful speech mentioned with the power of God*
Why in the right hand and the left?
- 9 *How could they be dying and yet live on?*
- 10 *How could they be sorrowful yet always rejoicing*
How could they have nothing yet possess everything?
- 11 *When have they spoken freely to the Corinthians?*
How have they opened their hearts wide?
- 12 *How are they not withholding their affection?*
How have the Corinthians been withholding their affection?
- 13 *Why does he speak to them ‘as to children’?*
How were they to open up their hearts (minds)?

What surprises or confuses you?

It's so complicated, mixed up and hard to follow!

2) The Context

- a) surrounding passage
- 6 *Unfeigned love – Christ’s love compels (5:14)*
- 7 *Righteousness (5:21)*
- b) individual book
- 7 *Righteousness (3:9)*
- c) whole Bible
- 3 *Stumbling block (Matthew 16:23; 1 Corinthians 1:23; 8:9)*
- 4 *If the world hates you it hated me (John 15:18)*
- 6 *In the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:5)*
- 7 *Jesus is Word (John 1:1)*
Jesus is truth (John 14:6)
- 8c *Things-that-are-not to confound things-that-are (1 Corinthians 1:27)*

7 Power of God apparent (*1 Corinthians 2:1-5*)
He guides me in the paths of righteousness (Psalm 23:3b)

9 Mortal danger (*1 Corinthians 15:30*)
Crucified with Christ yet not I who live but Christ in me (Gal 2:20)

10 Always rejoicing (*Philippians 4:4*)
Poor – no silver and gold (Acts 3:6)
Times in want (Philippians 4:12)
Rich – a joint heir with Christ (2 Corinthians 8:17)
The first will be last and the last first (Mark 10:31)

11 'O Corinthians', cf 'You foolish Galatians,' (*Galatians 3:1*)
Hearts swell in God's people to make room for Gentiles (Isaiah 60:5)
Speak lovingly (Philippians 4:8).

d) Bible story

See Study 1.

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

3 *He's thinking of something that would deflect the eyes from Jesus.*
Our ministry is our service of God.

4 *Commend not in the sense of giving approval but of respecting integrity.*

6 *These are gifts of the Holy Spirit (?)*
The Holy Spirit is mentioned there as the source of all Spiritual gifts.

7 *Truthful speech is 'word of truth' - the basis of his service.*
Right hand offensive and the left hand defensive?

9 *Dying with Jesus and yet living in him.*

10 *They could be sorrowful in human experience but joyful in hope in Jesus*
They could have nothing materially but everything spiritually.

11 *From the first contact, they had spoken freely to the Corinthians (?)*
They have shared physical, emotional and spiritual.

12 *Any affection they normally felt had been eclipsed by the confrontation.*
They have been rejecting Paul's authority.

13 *'I have been speaking as to children' to emphasise his authority.*
They were to open their minds to accepting Paul had been sent by God.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?
It is mixed up because Paul is highly emotional and writing hurriedly.

3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

Under God we have done what is right by you (3,4) enduring physically, acting graciously towards others, in the knowledge and love of God (4-7a), with Christian integrity (7b -8b), though not recognised, being completely fulfilled (8c-10). We have always been honest and loving with you; do likewise. (11-13).

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

As God’s weak servants we have been open honest with you; as our children in the faith, reciprocate and receive us wholeheartedly.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 13**

As a fair exchange – I speak to you as children – open wide your hearts.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

4 God appoints His servants.

6 The Holy Spirit is meant to be evident in us in our love for the world.

7 God’s power is ‘dynamite’.

b) His grace?

4f God delights in and uses such ‘losers’!

10 God makes us ‘rich’ through His Gospel.

c) Jesus and His salvation?

6 The Word (Jesus) is the Truth.

13 ‘A fair exchange’ It was the opposite for Jesus –‘God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God’. 2 Corinthians 5:21)

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What should I do?

4b f Note - Being a servant of God does not guarantee an easy life; the opposite!

Note - Our actions should commend God...

...in being prepared to endure physical pain (5)

...in showing the fruit of Spirit (6)

...in declaring the Word and power of God (7a)

...in facing struggles for righteousness' sake (7b-8b)

...in overcoming adversity (8b -9)

...in living the contradiction of Jesus (10)

11 Speak your mind freely, but with grace.

12 Have and express Christian affection to fellow Christians.

13 Hope for and expect reciprocation of affection from fellow believers.

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Study 11

2 Cor 6:14 – 7:1

Deal with stumbling blocks to ministry

Background information

In 6:11-13 Paul asks the Corinthians to open their hearts to him, as he has done to them. That request re-occurs in 7:2. So 6:14 -7:1 at first looks like ‘an aside’, though actually related to the whole letter. He has spoken of relationships with *God* (5:11-6:2) and *leaders* (6:3-6:13). He now ‘breaks in’ to address the matter of right relations between the sexes.

In 6:14 -7:1 Paul refers to situations of great moral crisis. To the Christians, the body was vital and to be resurrected; to the Greek and Roman, the body was sinful and to be ignored. (Hence they had Temple prostitutes). Paul had sought to address aspects of this situation in ch 5 & 7 of 1st Corinthians. He returns to the subject here.

Paul makes 3 OT allusions: One (16b) is from a section in Leviticus 26 promising Israel rewards for obedience when they entered the promised land.

The second (17) is from Isaiah 52:11, preparing the Jews to return from exile in Babylon: ‘Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, *you who carry the vessels of the Lord...*’ *i.e.* items to do with Temple worship being taken back to Jerusalem.

The third (18, 2 Samuel 7:14) recalls a promise made to David ‘and his descendent’ (singular) *i.e.* Jesus. All who believe in Jesus inherit that promise.

Word List

6:14 *Belial* another name for Satan (*Heb = worthlessness*)

6:16 *We are the temple...* In the OT, God chose to make his presence known in the temple. In the NT, the Holy Spirit of Jesus lives in believers, making *all* believers walking temples.

6:18 *Almighty* Greek *pantocrator* = All sovereign

Bible Connections

6:14 *Righteousness* Abraham believed God and he credited it to him as r. (Genesis 15:6)

Wickedness we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. (2 Thessalonians 3:2)

Yoked Deuteronomy 22:10 forbids ploughing with an ox and a donkey. (The ox pushed the donkey backwards.)

15 *Believer* once in 2nd Cor. Thrice in 1st Cor 7:12,13,17 - re marriage.

16b *quoting* Leviticus 26:12; Jeremiah 32:38; Ezekiel 37:27
 17 *quotation* Isaiah 52:11; Ezekiel 20:34,41-42; Revelation 18:4
 18 *quotation* 2 Sam 7:12-16; 1 Chronicles 17:11-14; Isaiah 43:6-7
 7:1 *Dear friends* (Acts 15:25; 1 Peter 2:11; 1 John 2:7; Jude 1:3)

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

14 *What is the context for ‘yoking’ that is being suggested?*
Why is he so stark with ‘wickedness’?
What is the answer to the question about light and darkness?

15 *What does ‘harmony’ mean?*
Why use the word ‘Christ’?
Why use the word ‘Belial’?
What are they believers in?

16 *What is the temple of the living God?*
To whom will God be ‘their God’?

17 *How are they to come out and be separate?*
What is an ‘unclean thing’?

18 *What does being ‘a Father to you’ mean?*
What does ‘Lord Almighty’ mean, cf ‘says the Lord’ in v17?

7:1 *What promises?*
What contaminates the body and spirit?
What does ‘perfecting holiness’ mean?
Why ‘out of reverence for God’?

What surprises or confuses you?

Where did this ‘yoking with unbelievers’ come from?!

2) The Context

a) surrounding passage

14 *open wide your hearts also (13)*
Make room for us in your hearts (7:2)
Righteousness (5:21)

15 *implore you on Christ’s behalf (5:20)*

b) individual book

14 *Blinded the minds of unbelievers (4:4)*

Light shines out of darkness (4:6)

7:1 *God has answered all his many promises with 'yes' in Christ (1:20),*

c) whole Bible

14 *Don't yoke a donkey or an ox (Leviticus 19:19; Deuteronomy 22:10).*

Yoked to Baal (Numbers 25:3; Psalm 106:28).

Don't associate with immoral brothers, NOT the world (1 Cor 5:9).

14 *Christians moved from darkness to light (1 John 1:6).*

15 *For me (the believer) to live is Christ, to die is gain (Philippians 1:21).*

16 *Temple of God (Matthew 26:61; Revelation 11:1).*

You are God's Temple (1 Cor 3:16,17).

Have no other Gods before me (Exodus 20:3).

Temple of God and idols (2 Kings 21:1-9; 23:3ff).

God in you (John 7:38; 14:17; Colossians 1:27).

17 *I will walk among you & be your God & you will be my people (Lev 26:12)*

They will be my people and I will be their God' (Jeremiah 32:38.)

My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God and they will be my people (Ezekiel 37:27).

Depart, depart from me, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing.
(Isaiah 52:11).

I will bring you from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered (Ezekiel 20:24).

I will accept you as a fragrant incense when I bring you out from the nations and countries where you have been scattered (Ezekiel 20:41)

Unclean thing cf (Acts 10:14; 15).

Aliens to the world (1 Peter 2:11).

18 *I will be His Father and he will be My son (2 Samuel 7:14).*

Father (Luke 11:2; Romans 8:15-17; Ephesians 3:14).

7:1 *Purify / cleanse (Titus 2:14; James 4:8; 1 John 1:9).*

Christ Jesus.... Our righteousness and holiness (1 Cor 1:30.)

Reverence for God (Ephesians 5:21; Colossians 3:22).

d) Bible story

See Study 1.

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

14 The context is opening their hearts wide to Paul (Jesus)

‘Wickedness’ and ‘light’ are opposites of righteousness and darkness. So the answer to all five questions is: ‘They have nothing in common!’

15 ‘Harmony’ means – being at one with / in step.

‘Christ’ means the Jewish Messiah

He uses the name ‘Belial’ to stress the worthlessness of the Devil.

They are believers in Jesus.

16 ‘Temple of God’ refers to the physical one in Jerusalem; ‘Temple of the living God’ means every Spirit-filled believer in Christ.

God will be ‘their God’ to believers in Jesus, = the righteous, light (14), (those in)Christ (15), Temple of the Living God (16)

17 They are to come out and be separate by not marrying them or engaging with them, eg in pagan temple worship.

An ‘unclean thing’ is that prohibited by God.

18 A father provides care, protection, provision.

Lord Almighty = all powerful.

7:1 Promises = ‘I will receive you. I will be a father to you’ (6:17,18)

Unbelief and disobedience contaminate the body and spirit(?)

‘Perfecting holiness’ means applying the holiness God gives us to every part of our lives.

‘Reverence for God’ must be the prime motivator.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

‘Yoking with unbelievers’ is Paul’s description of their being still engaged with many aspects of their former pagan lifestyle.

3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

For God’s sake, don’t bind yourself spiritually, to an unbeliever, for you belong to God (14 – 16a). God wants fellowship with us (16b) in an exclusive relationship (17). So, remove sin and devote yourselves wholeheartedly to God (7:1).

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Since God has dedicated Himself to us, let us do likewise to Him, in body, mind and spirit.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage?

7:1 ‘*Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, out of reverence for God.*’

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

14 *God will not tolerate unbelief.*

God sees people in ‘black and white: believer / unbeliever; righteous / wicked; light / darkness; Christ / devil.

16 *God tolerates no competition i.e. idol worship*

God desire fellowship, with us!

17 *God looks for complete separation in our devotion to Him.*

18 *God wills to be our Father.*

God is Almighty.

b) His grace?

7:1 *God gives us His promises before we respond!*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

6:15 *Christ saves us from the devil – completely!*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What should I do?

6:14 *Don’t be spiritually linked to an unbeliever.*

15 *Put Jesus before all others (especially the devil).*

16 *Worship God alone.*

18 *Trust God loves and cares for you as the Father*

7:1 *Since God commits Himself to us with His promises, aim at perfection in your devotion to Him.*

Cleanse yourselves from all that obstruct your walk with the Spirit.

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Study 12 (Series 2 Study 1)

2 Corinthians 7:2-16

Be encouraged by Godly repentance

Background information

Picking up the thought from 6:11-13, Paul again asks the Corinthians to make room for him and his fellow workers in their hearts. This seems to be a plea for a relationship closer than mere acceptance or agreement.

He refers again to a previous letter that had challenged a sinful action in Corinth, sternly rebuking behaviour that they were then condoning. This probably refers to a letter now lost to us, generally called Corinthians C (see introduction, p3-5), or it could refer to 1 Cor 5:1-5.

Word List

| | | |
|------|------------------------------------|--|
| 2 | <i>make room</i> | Same word as <i>gk grasp</i> (Matthew 19:11) |
| 3 | <i>'said before'</i> | May be referring to 6:11-13. |
| 5 | <i>Macedonia</i> | Northern part of what we call Greece today |
| 6 | <i>Titus</i> | Fellow worker coming overland with news from Corinth |
| 8,12 | <i>my letter</i> | See above |
| 10 | <i>Godly sorrow</i> | i.e. deeper than regret at getting caught. |
| | <i>repentance</i> | Total change of inward attitude, leading to changed actions. |
| | <i>worldly sorrow brings death</i> | Mere regret does not save. Until someone sees his/her action as wrong in God's eyes, and turns from it, and trusts that Christ who died for their sins has saved him from its consequences, he will receive the wage his sin has earned for himself: death, eternal separation from God. |
| 11 | <i>lit.</i> | <i>'it worked out in you earnestness, but defence, but vexation, but fear, but eager desire, but zeal, but vengeance'.</i> |

Bible Connections

| | | |
|----|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| 10 | <i>death</i> | <i>see Romans 3:26</i> |
| 13 | <i>encouraged</i> | <i>see 2 Corinthians 2:13</i> |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 2 *What does 'make room' mean?*
Why does Paul deny corrupting, exploiting etc anyone?
- 3 *When did Paul previously say they had such a place in Paul's heart?*
- 4 *What is his great confidence in?*
Why is he 'greatly encouraged'.
What troubles?
- 5 *What were his 'fears within'.*
- 8 *Why did he regret his letter.*
- 9 *How could they have been harmed?*
What is 'Godly sorrow'?
- 10 *How does Godly sorrow leave no regret?*
How does worldly sorrow bring death?
- 11 *How does Godly sorrow produce earnestness, eagerness etc.?*
How have they been proved innocent?
- 12 *What wrong is he referring to?*
Why did he write?
- 13 *What is 'all this'?*
What had they seen in Titus?
- 14 *When had he boasted to Titus about them?*
What might he have boasted about?
- 15 *Why had they received him with much fear and trembling?*
- 16 *Why does he have complete confidence in them?*

What surprises or confuses you?

- 16 *Why is he so confident?*

2) The Context

- a) surrounding passage
- 2 *Withholding affections (6:12)*
- b) individual book
- 2 *Exploit (12:17,18)*
- 3 *Place in our hearts (3:2)*
- 4 *Take pride in us (5:12)*

5 Troubles (1:4; 1:8; 4:17; 6:4)
 5 Macedonia (1:16; 2:13)
 5 Conflicts without and within (Cf 4:4ff; 6:4ff; 11:23ff)
 7 God comforts the downcast (1:4)
 8 Sorrow (cf 8, 9, 10, 11) severe letter (2:4)
 11 Through Jesus, we became the righteousness of God (5:21)
 15 Fear and trembling (1 Cor 2:3)
 16 Confidence (2:3; 3:4; 8:2)

c) whole Bible

4 He who began a good work in you ...' (Philippians 1:6)
 Troubles, fellowship of His sufferings (Philippians 3:10b)
 6 Comfort (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7)
 8 sorrow (Philippians 2:18)
 10 Godly sorrow (Matthew 26:75; John 21:15ff)
 Worldly sorrow (Matthew 27:5)
 11 Though sin as scarlet ... white as snow (Isaiah 1:19)

d) Bible story

God and humanity have been separated by sin.
 God's requirements of the Law have been given but not met.
 God's solution is about to happen as He sends His Son, Jesus.

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

2 They should respond by opening up to Paul as he had done to them
 People within the church had suggested it.

3 He was not saying this to reprimand the wrongdoer.
 He said they had a place in their hearts in 2 Cor 3:2.

4 His confidence is in the Lord.
 He is 'greatly encouraged' through the coming of Titus with good news.
 His troubles are mentioned in 1:8-10, 4:8-10, & 11:23b-29.

5 His 'fears within' were about them - their response and fate.

8 He regretted his letter before he had heard of its positive effect.

9 They could have been harmed if the letter had provoked more sin.
 'Godly sorrow' leads to repentance.

10 Godly sorrow is vented through repentance.

11 *Worldly sorrow leads to condemnation, thus death
Godly sorrow gives rise to action.*
They were proved ‘innocent’ / forgiven as Christ has taken their sin.

12 *This refers to the sexual immorality dealt with in 1 Cor 5:1ff.
He wrote not simply for those involved in the act itself but for the consequences in the church before God.*

13 *‘All this’ is their repentant response to his whole letter.
They had seen in Titus things like relief, joy, thankfulness etc.*

14 *He boasted to Titus after he left Corinth (Acts 18:18).
He might have boasted about his two years’ with them (Acts 18:11).*

15 *They had received Him thus because they recognised that they had sinned against God and he was God’s messenger.*

16 *He has complete confidence in them because he believes Titus’ good report.*

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

He is so confident because it is in God Himself.

3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

Receive us because we love you (2-4). In Macedonia we were at our wits’ end concerning you, till Titus brought us great news (5-7). I was worried that my letter had hurt you, but rejoiced when I saw how God had used it to bring repentance in your lives (8-10). Look at the proof in your lives (11). So, though the focus of my letter was about an incident, God’s purpose was to reveal your devotion to us. This encouraged us (12,13). Furthermore, we were delighted that Titus was so blessed to see that our enthusiasm over you was right and to enjoy your respect of him. I rejoice! (14-16).

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

God given remorse for sin leads to turning from it and leaves a clear conscience; worldly regret for sin simply leads to death.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 10**

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow bring death.

LIVE

- 1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?
 - a) His nature and character?
6 *God comforts the downcast (who come to Him).*
 - 9 *God purposes sorrow for sin.*
 - 11 *Godly sorrow leads to positive changes in attitude and behaviour*
 - 12 *God shows us our devotion to Him in our reaction to sin.*
- b) His grace?
10 *God gives us sorrow for sin to lead us to repentance and a clear conscience.*
- c) Jesus and His salvation?
4 *Jesus' too knew joy in the face of troubles (Hebrews 12:2)*
Now underline the application of the Main Point
- 2) What should I do?
 - 2 *Accommodate your Christian leaders in your hearts*
 - 4 *Affirm those you lead (also v16).*
 - 5 *Note - Adversity is part of the Christian heritage in this world.*
 - 6 *Don't despair, believer, God will comfort you.*
 - 7 *Listen to and be encouraged by encouragement!*
 - 8 *There is a time for honesty, even though it is painful for all concerned.*
 - 9 *Recognise and welcome Godly sorrow. For sin that leads to turning away from it.*
- 10 *Note sin that is repented for is forgotten by God and should be by us!*
 - 11 *Godly sorrow leads to action that produces 'fruit'.*
 - 13 *Be encouraged by positive signs of God's work in others (13).*
Share in others' encouragement and enthusiasm.
 - 14 *Report enthusiastically / (boast) of what God does in others.*
 - 15 *Receive God's appointed leaders with 'fear and trembling'.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Study 13 (2.2)

2 Corinthians 8: 1-15

Give like Jesus – graciously !

Background information

The church in Jerusalem responded to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost with, among other things, remarkable generosity - Acts 2:42-47; 4:36,37. The poor were fed. Success led to problems of distribution, solved in 6:1-7. But severe famine in the reign of Claudius (AD 41-54) greatly strained the already poor Judean believers. Paul had asked Gentile Christians to send gifts for Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:1-4), keeping a promise made to the apostles when recognising spheres of ministry: 'All they asked was that we continue to remember the poor...' (Galatians 2:9,10) – lasted 10 years (AD 46-57)

The 'Macedonian churches' in the north of modern-day Greece (distinguish Achaia in the south, e.g. Athens and Corinth) included Philippi, whose members had already been giving in support of Paul's ministry (Acts 18:1-5 with Philippians 4:15,16) and Thessalonica, which had faced severe persecution but still exported the gospel widely. (1 Thessalonians 1:6-8, 2:14). The Corinthian church had promised to give, but had apparently not yet done so.

In the Jewish feast of Purim, *everyone*, including the poor man, must find someone poorer and give them a gift.

In the pagan thinking of Corinth, giving (to the gods) was always done to obtain a favour in return. When one became a Christian, however, the transformed mind-set of 5:17 profoundly affected one's attitude to material things.

Word List

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| 1 <i>Macedonia</i> | Northern Greece, not the modern state with that name |
| 4 <i>privilege</i> | Gk <i>charis</i> grace; unconditioned kindness by Macedonians, like God's kindness |
| <i>service</i> | <i>Or ministry</i> |
| 6 <i>Titus</i> | Paul's Gentile co-worker, whom he had sent to Corinth |
| 9 <i>he was rich</i> | i.e. Jesus' unlimited pre-existence. Greek verb is a present participle ' <i>being rich</i> ' |
| <i>became poor</i> | Gk tense aorist - specific finished action i.e. Incarnation |
| 13 <i>equality</i> | Very unusual word – only other use is Philippians 2:6. |

Bible Connections

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 9 <i>Jesus' riches and poverty</i> | <i>see</i> 5:21; Philippians 2:6-11 |
| 12 <i>willingness to share</i> | <i>see</i> Mark 12:42-44 |
| 15 <i>having the right amount</i> | <i>see</i> Exodus 16:18 |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 1 *Why 'and now'?*
- 2 *What was the trial?*
How were they 'in extreme poverty'?
How were they generous?
- 4 *In what service did they plead to share?*
- 5 *What did Paul expect?*
How was this in keeping with 'God's will'?
- 6 *What was Titus' earlier beginning?*
- 7 *How did he know they 'excelled in everything'?*
What is 'this grace of giving'?
- 8 *How could he command them?*
Who would he be comparing their love with?
- 10 *Where was Paul 'last year'?*
How could they 'finish the work ... according to their means'?
- 12 *Who regards their willing gift as 'acceptable'?*
- 13 *What does he mean by 'would be relieved'?*
- 14 *Who are 'they' and 'their' that has a need or plenty?*

What surprises or confuses you?

- 1ff *Why does he encourage giving with reference to Macedonians and not simply to Jesus Himself?*
- 13 *Why equality with fellow believers and not everyone.*

2) The Context

a) surrounding passage

- 9 *He became... that you/we might become... (5:21)*

b) individual book

- 1 *brothers (c.f. 1:8; 11:9) - a form of emphasis*
- 2 *not many of noble birth (1 Corinthians 1:26)*
- 4 *the saints - in all of Achaia (1:1)*
- 6 *will of God (1:1)*

c) whole Bible

- 2 *Giving out of poverty (Luke 21:4)*
Opposition (Acts 16:22ff; 17:5ff; 17:13ff)
- 7 *Giving to brothers (cf Matthew 25:40)*
- 8 *Grace (Ephesians 2:8)*
- 9 *Rich c.f. (John 17:5)*
Though rich became poor (Philippians 2:6ff)
i.e. to take away our sins (1 John 3:5)
- 12 *Widow's mite - her full day's resource (Mark 12:43, 44)*
- 15 *He who gathered much' (Exodus 16:18)*

d) Bible story

See Study 1.

LEARN

- 1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?
- 1 *'And now,' because it is a new section.*
- 2 *The trial was extreme poverty and opposition.*
'In extreme poverty' meant they had no goods / money.
They were generous i.e. they contributed to the needs of others.
- 4 *They pleaded to share in the collection for the Jerusalem church.*
- 5 *Paul had asked them to give just for the needy - but first they gave themselves to the Lord and then for the relief of need.*
It is in keeping with 'God's will', for that is Christian giving. (NB God so loved the world that he gave his Son to die - Jesus gave his life out of love for the Father.)
- 6 *Titus' earlier beginning had been to speak of the need of the Jerusalem church, when he visited prior to reunion with Paul (7:5).*
- 7 *He knew they 'excelled in everything' from his 1½ years with them and from Titus report (7:13ff).*
'This grace of giving' is giving first to God.
- 8 *He could command them as an Apostle.*
He was comparing their love with other churches', in Macedonia.
- 10 *'Last year' was when Paul had been with them and set up the church among them.*
'Finish the work' meant, 'Put your money where your mouth is!'
- 12 *It is acceptable to God.*
- 13 *'Relieved' from the constraints of poverty.*
- 14 *'Their plenty' implies their area of Greece is relatively well off.*

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

Iff He is encouraging them to identify with and follow the example of another like the Macedonians, who are following Jesus's example.

13 It is not possible to have equality with everyone/ the love of Christians one to another is meant to be a witness to the world.

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

Look at the good example of Christian giving by the Macedonian churches (1-5). As with Titus, show your maturity in the exercise of gifts and in Godly giving (6,7). As a test, I am not commanding you. However, give like Jesus (8,9). As you did before, give graciously and sacrificially (10-12). We want equality, sharing what you have together (13-15).

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

The example for Christian giving is the gracious way in which Jesus gave Himself for them.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? *v 9*

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

5 God wills that the focus of our giving should be on Him as we give to others.

12 God finds some of our gifts are acceptable and some unacceptable.

b) His grace?

I God gives His grace to us so that we might be gracious to others

c) Jesus and His salvation?

9 Jesus supremely demonstrates grace in giving Himself for us.

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What should I do?

1 *Address Christians as Christians – i.e ‘brothers and sisters’.*

2 *Make known the grace of God at work among churches.*

Note - For a Christian, poverty and adversity don’t inhibit generosity.

3 *Testify about God’s work in others.*

4 *Note - Christian giving is a ‘privilege’ granted to believers.*

7 *Note - Spiritual gifting, and giving, should go hand in hand.*

8 *Do not command but rather exhort giving.*

Note - Comparison of acts with others is a good measure of God’s work.

9 *Give to others as Christ has given Himself to you – graciously.*

12 *Note - Christian giving should be willing.*

13 *Note - Christians strive for ‘sharing and equality’.*

14 *Note - Christian giving expects reciprocal generosity.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Study 14 (2.3)

2 Corinthians 8:16 – 9:5

Obey God, transparently, for others sake!

Background information

8:16-24: Accounting for cash donated is always important, but doubly so in Christian circles, to prevent any suspicion sullyng the name of Christ. So, to deliver this letter, Paul sends back Titus, along with two other reputable Christians, one elected by the Macedonian churches (he just might be Luke, *see* Acts 16:8-10; note the change from ‘they’ to ‘us’) to supervise the gathering and transmission of the money to the announced destination, the church in Jerusalem for feeding the poor. (Titus may have been the deliverer of ‘1 Corinthians’ and possibly the ‘severe’ letter too.)

We deduce the Corinthians had previously expressed a willingness to give for the poor in Jerusalem, for they had *asked* Paul about the ‘collection’. He had answered them in his earlier letter (1 Cor 16:1-4). They had seemed ‘eagerly willing’ to help, (v11) but had not yet done much about it!

9:1-5 Having boasted to the Corinthian Christians about the generosity of the Macedonian churches in ch 8, Paul now admits to boasting about the Corinthian church in Macedonia! This advance party will let them assemble their promised gifts, justify Paul’s claims and avoid embarrassment all round!

Word List

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| 8:18,22 <i>brother</i> | Semi-technical title for one who works closely with Paul |
| 19 <i>chosen</i> | The verb suggests ‘by a show of hands’. |
| 20 <i>liberal gift</i> | I.e. a sizeable amount |
| 23 <i>representatives</i> | Literally <i>apostles</i> , agents/couriers appointed by Paul <i>an honour to Christ</i> More accurately is ‘messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ’ i.e. churches, not brothers, are Christ’s glory. |
| 9: 1 <i>saints</i> | Believers, I.e. forgiven sinners! |
| 2 <i>Achaia</i> | The southern part of the present-day Greek mainland, including cities of Athens and Corinth |

Bible Connections

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 8:21 <i>doing what is right</i> | <i>see</i> Romans 12:17 |
| 9: 5 <i>gift you had promised</i> | <i>see</i> v2, and 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 16 *What is the concern that they have for Corinth?*
- 17 *What appeal did Titus welcome?*
When is he coming to them?
- 18 *Who is 'the brother'?*
Why does he say all the churches praise him for this service to the Gospel?
- 19 *Which churches chose him?*
Where was the offering being carried to?
- 20 *Where might the criticism come from?*
- 22 *Who is this brother?*
What is his confidence in them?
- 24 *What would be the proof of their love?*
Which churches can see it?
- 9:1 *Why is there no reason to show this?*
Why does Paul say he was 'boasting' about them?
- 3 *What might they be ready for?*
- 4 *Where might they or the Macedonians come?*
- 5 *What was their visit in advance of?*
Why the contrast between a generous gift & one grudgingly given?

What surprises or confuses you?

Why is Paul so 'persuasive'? Why not simply leave it with God?

2) The Context

a) surrounding passage

16,17 *Titus earlier had 'made a beginning'. (8:6)*

19 *They gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us. (8:5)*

b) individual book

9:3 *boasting (7:14,15)*

c) whole Bible

20 *c.f. cunning as serpents, innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16)*

24 *I believe, help my unbelief! (Mark 9:24)*

Press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me

heavenwards in Christ Jesus (*Philippians 3:14*)

9:1 No need... since he has already told them in *1 Corinthians 16:1-4*.
He is affirming their faith (*1 Thessalonians 4:1,2*)

5 God gave His son in love (*John 3:16*)

d) Bible story

See Study 1.

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

16 The 'angst' that meant he couldn't settle till he knew they were all right.

17 The appeal was for aid for the famine-struck church in Judea.
He is coming soon, ahead of Paul, to start gathering the offering.

18 'The brother' is traditionally Luke but it is not known for sure.
He says this to show that he is universally commended.

19 The churches of Macedonia chose him?
The offering was being carried to Jerusalem.

20 The criticism might come from opposition in the church esp Corinth

22 The identity of this brother is unknown.
His confidence in them is that their faith in Jesus is real (?)

24 The proof of their love would be to welcome them in Jesus name.
The churches in Macedonia can see it(?)

9:1 There was no reason (he would say) because they know about the need of the Judean church and are motivated to help.
Paul says he was 'boasting' about their willingness to give.

3 They might be ready to give.

4 The Macedonians were travelling with Paul.

5 The visit was in advance of Paul's trip to Jerusalem via Corinth
The contrast is between an eager, willing gift, and a reluctant one.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

Paul is a bit 'over the top'! He is venting worry he expressed in 2 Cor 2:13.

3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

Through God, Titus shares our love for you but is coming on his own initiative. (16,17) We are sending with him a brother who was praised by all the churches and chosen by them to accompany our offering so that all is ‘above board’ (18-21). With him is a brother who has great confidence in you. (22) With Titus, we are all together for the Lord, so receive them well (23). I know your Christian generosity. (9:1,2) So be ready for the brothers we are sending to you (3). Don’t let us down. Welcome our advance party (4,5).

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Handle all gifts with integrity before God, and with enough human witnesses to exclude embezzlement, or any suspicion of it.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 21**

For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

16 God is worthy of our thanksgiving for all good things.

19 The Lord is to be honoured first of all.

21 The Lord expects things to be done right in His eyes

b) His grace?

16 God put into our hearts ‘love’ for others.

c) Jesus and His salvation?

18 To serve His ‘Good News’ is to serve Jesus.

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What should I do?

16 *Thank God!*

Ask God to give me love for other people.

18 *Deploy Christian brothers wisely.*

Note the importance if possible of co-operation rather than imposition in Christian management.

19 *Involve Christians in choosing their representatives.*

21 *Be careful to do things aright not only in the eyes of God but in the eyes of others too.*

Justice must be done, and be seen to be done, in Kingdom work.

22 *Zeal and confidence are necessary qualities for Christian service.*

24 *Show your love visibly to others.*

9:1 *Be circumspect.*

2 *Accentuate the good when you correct others.*

3 *Have faith in others, and tell them so.*

4 *Let that faith be put to the test.*

5 *Have faith, but also exercise prudence.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Study 15 (2.4)

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Be generous and give God the glory

In an agricultural economy, everyone knows the more seed-corn you sow, the more chance you have of reaping a big crop for yourself. But here the words are used metaphorically: giving is a form of sowing. The more a Christian *gives*, the greater the overall benefit – to the recipient, and to the glory of God.

One key element in Christian giving is that it is voluntary, v7. The NT church never specified a membership fee like the OT flat-rate Temple tax. God is much more interested in the spirit of giving than in the actual cash value. Treasurers can count the latter; only God knows the attitude behind the gift.

In Old and New Testaments, ‘giving’ is our response to what God provides. It is also the right thing to do; the Psalm Paul quotes is about a righteous man, whose giving to the poor spreads righteousness. *Rich in every way* v11 can include material provision, but mainly means, rich in *grace*, like God.

So how much should a Christian give? The NT provides *principles* of giving, rooted in the OT, like giving in proportion to income, but unlike the OT ‘tithe’/tenth, never states *what* proportion. Individuals are free to choose how much to give, responding to God’s grace to us. There is no compulsion v7. *As the Lord has prospered you* (1 Corinthians 16:2, AV) can mean: the greater your income, the higher the *percentage* given can be. You choose.

Word List

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 7 <i>cheerful</i> | Gk word gives English <i>hilarious</i> : give exuberantly! |
| 8 <i>grace</i> | When love overflows in generosity. Sinners do not deserve God’s love; he <i>wants</i> to love us. |
| 11 <i>rich in every way</i> | Spiritual fruitfulness |
| 15 <i>indescribable</i> | Uniquely used word in Scripture |

Bible Connections

| | |
|---|---|
| 6 <i>proportionate to income</i> | <i>see 1 Corinthians 16:2,</i> |
| <i>sowing and reaping</i> | <i>see Mark 4:4-10</i> |
| 9 <i>scattered abroad . . .</i> | <i>see Psalm 112:9</i> |
| 10 <i>providence of God</i> | <i>see Abraham: Genesis 22:8,14</i> |
| 11 <i>spiritual fruitfulness</i> | <i>see Ephesians 1:7-8; Colossians 2:2</i> |
| 12 <i>caring support of other Christians</i> | <i>see Galatians 6:10</i> |
| <i>work to support self...and the poor</i> | <i>see Ephesians 4:28</i> |
| <i>more blessed to give...</i> | <i>see Acts 20:35</i> |
| <i>christian giving also to support preachers & missionaries:</i> | <i>see Gal 6:6; 1 Cor 9:11-14; 1 Tim 5:17-18; Phil 1:5; 4:14-18</i> |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

9:6 *Why 'remember this'?*

What does 'sow sparingly' mean?

7 *Why only men?*

What does 'in his heart' mean?

What is a cheerful giver?

8 *How will 'grace abound at all times'?*

What are good works?

9 *Why was this quotation included? What does it underline?*

10 *Who supplies the seed?*

Why does it include the making of bread as food?

What is our harvest of righteousness?

11 *How will we be rich?*

To whom may we be generous?

How will our generosity result in thanksgiving to God?

12 *What is the service and how does it overflow in thanksgiving to God?*

13 *To whom have they proved themselves?*

Why your confession of Christ?

14 *Whose prayers?*

What is the surpassing grace?

15 *What is God's indescribable gift (singular)?*

What surprises or confuses you?

8 *Do Christians at all times get all they need?*

2) The Context

a) surrounding passage,

7 *Each man should give, to assemble the promised generous gift (9:5)*

12 *Thanksgiving to God (8:16)*

b) individual book,

9 *That we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 15:21)*

14 *'Surpassing' glory (3:10); power (4:7)*

- c) whole Bible,
- 6 *Give and it will be given to you (Luke 6:38)*
- 8 *Good work (Philippians 1:6; Colossians 1:10; 2 Timothy 3:17)*
Widow's gifts (Luke 21:2)
- 12 *Needs of God's people (Matthew 25:40)*
- 13 *See your good deeds and give thanks to your father in heaven (Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12)*
In your heart you believe and are justified and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved (Romans 10:10)

e) Bible story

See *Study 1.*

LEARN

- 1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?
- 9:6 *Remember this because it is very important*
'Sow sparingly' means being stingy.
- 7 *Only men, because they were in control of money.*
'In his heart' (to the Jewish mind) means 'carefully thought out'.
A cheerful giver is someone who enjoys giving.
- 8 *God's grace will abound the more you know Him.*
Good works include gifts to other people.
- 9 *It was quoted to show God promises to make his grace / gifts abound.*
- 10 *God supplies the seed.*
Includes the making of bread as food to show that all good gifts come from God – even those which involve man. Also, yeast makes dough 'rise'. Our harvest of righteousness is that which we receive for being right-eous. Besides, good actions (like giving) prompt others to give in turn.
- 11 *'You will be rich' means God will provide so we can be generous.*
We may be generous to 'the poor'.
God is credited with our generosity and all good gifts.
- 12 *The service is the giving to the church in Judea.*
It overflows in thanksgiving to God as he is seen as 'the mover'.
- 13 *Proved themselves to themselves, to others, and to God.*
The confession of Christ is the outer sign of the inner belief.
- 14 *The beneficiaries of the gift / the church of Jerusalem.*
The surpassing grace is the generosity that they will in turn show(!)
- 15 *Jesus is God's indescribable gift.*

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

8 God is all-sufficient in Himself cf 'God is sufficient' – El Shaddai (Gen 17:1).

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

Give cheerfully and graciously and God will ensure you, 'the poor', have all that you need and much more to share with others (6-9).

God, the giver of all good things, will ensure you are 'rich' so that your good deeds will result in people thanking God (10-12).

This gift for the hard-pressed church in Jerusalem is resulting in much thanks to God. For this reason, you bring glory to God for your trust in Him and your resulting generosity to others. They'll pray for you, thanking God for His grace, supremely shown in his gift to us of Jesus (12-15).

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

God always graciously equips us to give Him glory through our generosity to others.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 8**

'God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work'

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

7 God is affected by our behaviour.

8 God equips Christians to be generous to others.

9 God's gifts are for the 'poor'.

10 God gives all we need.

11 God should be thanked for all things, including our generosity.

b) His grace?

14 God gives all things, surpassingly, graciously.

c) Jesus and His salvation?

13 *The Gospel of Christ is our confession.*

15 *Jesus is the indescribable gift of God.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What should I do?

6 *Sow generously; expect (in God's time and way) to reap generously.*

7 *Give carefully, thoughtfully, willingly, 'cheerfully'!*

8 *Be generous in all your ways with the grace God gives you.*

10 *Credit God with everything!*

11 *Be generous on every occasion.*

12 *Show your love for God in your service of others.*

13 *Show your confession of Christ through your obedience to Him / your generosity with others.*

14 *Pray for those through whom God expresses His grace.*

15 *In all things, at all times, in all ways – give thanks to God for Jesus.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Study 16 (2.5)

2 Corinthians 10:1-18

Christians, lead confidently and humbly!

Background information

The NIV puts quotation marks around ‘timid’ and ‘bold’ in v1. Such marks do not exist in the original NT Greek, but the translators realised from v10 that Paul is quoting the allegations of his critics in Corinth.

See Introduction (*foot of page 4*) about false teachers. Paul has to defend himself to the Corinthian church as a whole against his critics by pointing to what God had done through him among them. He is careful not to claim credit for himself, and especially not to claim any for geographical areas where others had worked. He also has to defend his ministry without descending to the devices used by the false teachers v3,4. His authority, given by God, is for building up Christians in Corinth, not pulling them down, v8. Ultimately a preacher’s real approval-rating comes not from any human audience, but from God.

Word List

13,15 *limits/field* Same Greek word *kanon* originally applied to a specified area in which local communities were obliged to supply transport for Roman officials passing through.

16 *regions beyond* Corinth was the gateway to Italy and rest of Europe.

Bible Connections

- 1 *meekness & gentleness of Christ* *see* Matthew 11:29
- 2 *How should Paul come to them?* *see* 1 Corinthians 4:21
- attitude to world’s standards* *see* Romans 12:2
- Paul’s ‘weapons’* *see* 6:3-13; Ephesians 6:10-18
- 7 *How should we judge?* *see* John 7:24
- 8 *Paul’s authority from God* *see* Acts 9:1-30
- 13 *the scope of Paul’s ministry* *see* Galatians 2:7-9
- 17 *If we must boast, how to do it?* *see* Jeremiah 9:23-24; Psalm 34:2. Paul had already quoted this in 1 Cor 1:31.

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 1 *Why meek and gentle appeal?*
Why does he say 'timid' when face to face and 'bold' when away?
- 2 *Why did he say 'beg'?*
What are the standards of the world?
- 3 *How does the world wage war?*
What kind of weapons does the world have?
- 4 *What kind of weapons will destroy Spiritual strongholds?*
How do they demolish arguments?
What does it mean to make every thought 'captive to Christ'?
- 5 *What does 'every pretension' mean?*
- 6 *When will their obedience be complete?*
How will they punish acts of disobedience?
- 7 *What does 'on the surface of things' mean?*
Why should 'belonging to Christ' be an issue?
- 8 *Why would he not be ashamed of 'boasting'?*
- 12 *Who are commending themselves?*
Who else might they compare themselves with?
- 13 *What are our 'proper limits'?*
- 15 *What work was done by others?*
How does he know their faith will continue to grow?
- 16 *What regions are beyond them?*
- 17 *Why does he repeat 'Let Him who boasts, boast in the Lord'?*
- 18 *To whom do they want to commend themselves?*

What surprises or confuses you?

Why, if the repentance of the Corinthians is so complete (7:6), does he rehearse his conflict with some within the church?

2) The Context

- a) surrounding passage
- 5 *..praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the Gospel of Christ'. (2 Corinthians 9:13)*
- b) individual book

1,10 *Timid when present, bold when away.*

7 Confident (1:15; 5:6,8; 9:4; 11:17)
17 Let him who boasts boast in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:31)

c) whole Bible

1 The meek will inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5).
Not given a spirit of timidity (2 Timothy 1:7).
3 Our struggle is not against flesh and blood (human beings) but against
 principalities and powers (Ephesians 6:12).
5 Knowledge of God (Romans 1:28; 11:33; Colossians 1:10; 2 Peter 1:2).
 The earth is the Lord's and everything in it (Psalm 24:1).
 The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad ((Psalm 97:1).
7 Belong to Christ (Romans 8:9; Galatians 3:29; 5:24).
 Outward appearances versus the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).
8 All authority belongs to the Lord (Matthew 28:18).
12 Wise (1 Corinthians 1:19,20,26,27; 2:4; 3:10,18,19,20; 6:5).

d) Bible story

See Study 1.

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

1 Meek and gentle appeal because Paul wants them to respond willingly
 It says, 'timid' etc because that was the accusation levelled against him.

2 He says 'beg' because he wanted them to respond willingly
 The world's standards are: 'Might and force reign. Be bossy.'

3 The world wages war with military might.
 The world has weapons of death and destruction.

4 The Spiritual weapon is the sword of the Spirit / the Word of God.
 They demolish arguments with the Word of God.
 'Submit every thought,' means making Christ Lord of all our thinking.

5 'Every pretension' = all that 'poses' as the ultimate / God's authority.

6 Their obedience would be complete when they recognise Paul's authority.
 They will punish acts of disobedience within the discipline of the church.

7 'On the surface of things' means looking only at outward appearances.
 'Belonging to Christ' is a single state – either / or!

8 'Boasting' / speaking enthusiastically of his authority is not wrong.

12 Other leaders in Corinth are commending themselves (?)
 They might compare themselves with Christ.

13 Our 'proper limits' are what we have graciously received from Christ.

- 15 'Work done by others' = where other preachers have shared the Gospel.
He knows their faith will continue to grow because real faith grows!
- 16 Regions beyond them = Europe.
- 17 He repeats the Jeremiah quotation because it is of the essence!
- 18 They commend themselves to the church.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

He wants them to understand the conflict that has been happening, and not to make the same mistake again.

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

For Christ's sake, willingly heed my warning. We will deal with opposition to the church by the Spirit of Christ (1-6). We belong to Christ as you will be see when we arrive (7-11). Unlike some of you, we have nothing to commend ourselves by but Christ (12-14). Our limit is our calling among you. The Lord Himself in charge (15-18).

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Those who lead in Jesus' name do so under the absolute authority of the Word of God.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 5**

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and we take every thought captive to Christ.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

1 *Christian authority is always in the first instance gentle and meek.*

7 *God owns everything.*

8 *The Lord gives authority to those fully submitted to him.*

13 *God assigns us a situation in which to do His Work.*

b) His grace?

18 *The Lord sovereignly commands us.*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

5 *Every single thought/thing is under the authority of Jesus.*

14 *God's message is the Gospel of Christ.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

2 *Respond to God's authority willingly.*

5 *Acknowledge that obedience to Christ is universal and absolute.*

6 *Be prepared in Christian leadership to punish disobedience 'at the end of the day'.*

7 *Do not view things 'only on the surface'.*

Christian confidence should be measured against the Word of God.

8 *Never be ashamed of the Lord's commission to 'build His church'.*

11 *Be consistent – let your deeds match your words.*

12 *Always compare yourselves with Jesus, NOT with other people.*

13-15 *Confine your speech to the areas where God has called you to minister.*

16 *Boast not in yourself but in the Lord.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Study 17 (2.6)

2 Corinthians 11:1-15

Ignore the devil and preach The Gospel

Background information

Paul temporarily adopts the mode of ‘foolish boasting’ to disarm his rivals and show the Corinthians how easily they have been deceived. The big difference is that Paul admits the foolishness of *his* boasting – the rivals do not! He uses irony to pretend to be less than he is in order to expose the crazy boasting of his rivals. He takes the part of a fool to help his readers grasp the wisdom of the Cross! His goal is to protect the church against the deception of Satan’s double agents (11:2-3). Paul does not want the ‘new creation’ in Corinth to turn tragically into a ‘new fall’.

Word List

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------|--|
| 3 | <i>serpent's cunning</i> | his plausible speech in the Garden of Eden. |
| 4 | <i>another gospel?</i> | as if Christ did not suffer and die in place of sinners. |
| 5 | <i>'super-apostles'</i> | i.e. not the true apostles who preach the same gospel as Paul but the recently arrived false teachers. ‘ <i>Super</i> ’ is ironic and means something like ‘ultra-superior’. |
| 6 | <i>not trained speaker</i> | gk <i>idiotes</i> -meaning ‘a layman in speech’, i.e. not using all the rhetorical flourishes of professional Greek debaters. |
| | <i>knowledge</i> | true knowledge of the true gospel given to him on the Damascus Road and after (Acts 9:1-18) |
| 7 | <i>lower myself</i> | tent-making (Acts 18:3) involved physical labour – which Greeks traditionally despised. |
| | | Some teachers of rhetoric were exempt from local taxes |
| 8 | <i>'robbed' other churches</i> | Paul accepted support sent without strings by poor Macedonians after he'd left (Acts 18:5; Philippians 4:15-19) He did not want to be under obligation to individual Corinthians. Patrons usually tried to influence protégés. |
| 10 | <i>stop</i> | Gk <i>phrasso</i> – very strong; to dam a river (cf Rom 3:19) |
| 13 | <i>false prophets</i> | as in v5 for ‘super-apostles’ |

Bible Connections

| | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---|
| 2 | <i>Church as bride to Christ</i> | <i>see Ephesians 5:25-27</i> |
| 3 | <i>Eve deceived</i> | <i>see Genesis 3:1-6</i> |
| | <i>danger of false teachers</i> | <i>see Romans 16:17-18; 2 Peter 2:1-2</i> |
| 7 | <i>free of charge</i> | <i>see 1 Corinthians 9:1-18 Acts 20:32-35</i> |

14 *Satan - angel of light?* see Matthew 4:8-1
 - *his other means of harming the church* see Corinthians 2:11; 4:4

15 *According to what he has done* see Matthew 26:27; Romans 2:6; cf 2 Timothy 4:14. Galatians 5:10; 1 Peter 1:17

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 1 *What is 'his foolishness'?*
How are they 'already doing that'?
- 2 *What did this 'jealously' look like?*
How can Paul be a 'go between'?
How can the church be a 'pure virgin'?
- 3 *How was Eve deceived?*
How can the churches' devotion be called 'sincere and pure'?
- 4 *How can you discern the right preaching of the Gospel?*
- 5 *Who are 'the super apostles'?*
- 6 *What sort of knowledge does he have?*
How have they made this 'perfectly clear'?
- 7 *How did he 'lower himself' and elevate them?*
What does he mean 'free of charge'?
- 8 *How had he 'robbed' other churches?*
- 9 *When will he continue to do so?*
- 10 *What does he mean by, 'the truth of Christ is in me'?*
How might they stop his boasting?
- 12 *Who is us?*
- 13 *How can you avoid being deceived by the false apostles?*
- 14 *What does it mean that the devil masquerades as an angel of light?*
- 15 *What will 'their end' be?*

What surprises or confuses you?

1,8,10,19, 21 - Paul is so 'over the top'!

2) The Context

- a) surrounding passage
- 5 *Super apostles (12:11)*

b) whole Bible

- 1 *Foolishness (1 Cor 2:14)*
- 2 *Your maker is your husband (Isaiah 54:50; 62:5)*
Husband to Christ (Ephesians 5:22ff).
Virgin (Matthew 25:1-13).
They were his work ‘in the Lord’ (1 Cor 9:1).
He had begotten them ‘in Christ Jesus’ (1 Cor 4:15).
Lord’s return, and His ‘marriage’ to the church (Revelation 19:7).
- 3 *Eve deceived by the serpent’s cunning (Genesis 3:1ff).*
- 4 *‘Other Gospel?’ No such thing: (Galatians 1:8).*
- 5 *‘Chiefest of Apostles’ = either the pillars (Gal 2:9) (older commentators) or the interlopers (view of modern commentators).*
- 6 *Trained speaker (Acts 4:13 cf 1 Cor 2:3).*
Knowledge – the mystery of Christ (Ephesians 3:4,5; 1 Cor 2:6-11).
- 8,9 *Rightful, but not taken (1 Cor 9:12).*
Worked hard himself (Acts 20:34).
Help from Macedonia via Timothy and Silvanus (Acts 18:5).
Received support from the Philippians (Philippians 4:10-18).
- 13 *Have the form of Godliness but deny its power (2 Tim 3:1-5).*
Calling evil good, and good evil (Isaiah 5:20).
- 14 *Dis-believing Jews – ‘are of their father, the devil’ (John 8:44).*
- 20 *Enslaves = gk ‘katadoulo’ – used only once more in NT (Galatians 2:4).*
Prey upon (cf Luke 20:47).
Slap on the face signifies disgrace, cf Jesus (Luke 22:64).

c) Bible story

See Study 1.

LEARN

- 1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?
 - 1 *‘His foolishness’ is his boasting about his achievements*
They are ‘already doing that’ because some think he is foolish!
 - 2 *He wants them to give God His glory.*
Paul is a ‘go between’ as he is the one who presented the Gospel to them.
A ‘pure virgin’ would mean they are totally devoted to Christ
 - 3 *Eve was deceived by the serpent – ‘surely you will not die’?*
The churches’ devotion is ‘sincere and pure’ if belonging totally to Christ.

- 4 *Gospel preached aright if it matches what Paul/the Apostles taught*
- 5 *'The super apostles' are the new leaders – renowned public speakers*
- 6 *He knows Jesus?*
They made this 'perfectly clear' by their words and deeds.
- 7 *He 'lowered himself' by not expecting payment (cf the super apostles).*
'free of charge' means they did not have to pay to hear of Jesus.
- 8 *He had 'robbed other churches' by accepting support from them.*
- 9 *He will not expect personal cash support from them as he travels on.*
- 10 *'The truth of Christ is in me' means he preaches Jesus in reality.*
They might stop his boasting by giving him money (?)
- 12 *Us = Paul, Timothy (1:1) and perhaps his team.*
- 13 *You can be deceived by the false apostles by thinking they are of God*
- 14 *It means that the Devil posed as a messenger from God Himself.*
- 15 *'Their end' will be destruction in the lake of fire*

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

He is mixed up – He had been worried sick; he had heard good news though he had not witnessed it in person.

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

Indulge my foolishness but I want you to be Christ's alone. I fear however that you will be tempted by the devil to disbelieve Christ's only Gospel that we shared with you (1-4). You know that I am equal to all in the Lord (5,6) Was it sinful for me to avoid being a burden in any way upon you (7-9)? You all know it was because I love you and I will continue to do so, to expose the devilish false apostles (10-15). You've been enslaved and exploited by proud charlatans (21).

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Beware the devil's deception of an easier, worldly, less Christ-centred Gospel.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? *v3*

But I fear 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'

LIVE

- 1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?
 - a) His nature and character?

2 *God creates a holy jealousy within us.*

3 *Christ deserves and expects our pure devotion.*

11 *God is our witness.*

- b) His grace?

2 *Christ desires us for his bride*

- c) Jesus and His salvation?

4 *Jesus' Gospel (preached by the Apostles) is the only one.*

10 *The Truth of Christ is in His people.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

- 2) What should I do?

1 *Be flexible in the way you communicate the Gospel*

Jealously look to the well-being of your 'children' in the Gospel.

3 *Be aware of the devil's devices to corrupt your thinking of Jesus.*

Guard the Gospel truth carefully.

5 *Be confident in God of your ability and worth.*

7 *Do not concede to worldly values in preaching the Gospel.*

8 *Allow people from other areas to support the preaching of the Gospel.*

11 *Let people know that you love them.*

12 *Use your grace to undercut those who oppose you.*

13 *Beware of people masquerading within the church as 'children of light'.*

15 *Wait. 'Hypocrites' will get their come-uppance on the day of judgment.*

20 *Avoid harsh, demanding, legalistic oversight; it may seem attractive to some - but not to God!*

21 *There is a place for sarcasm in making a point to Christians.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Study 18 (2.7)

2 Corinthians 11:16-33

If you must, ‘boast’ in your weakness

Background information

Like contestants in ‘The Apprentice’, the false teachers were talking up their CVs. Paul takes the literary convention of boasting and *inverts* it. His boast is in folly, weakness, disappointment and defeat. The Romans struck a special medal – the *Corona Muralis (Crown of the Wall)* – for the first soldier to scale the wall of a city the Roman army was attacking. As Christ’s fool, Paul’s climactic ‘boast’ is as a fugitive, ignominiously lowered *down* a wall (Acts 9:25)!

Paul does have a Jewish pedigree, so he could have boasted of it, as his opponents did of theirs. But boasting of his weakness shows how silly his rivals are to boast. Christ had *called* him: his pedigree was irrelevant to that.

His suffering proves his commitment to serving Christ who had *commissioned* him to take the good news to the Gentiles, whatever the cost (Acts 9:15,16). His weakness came from being identified with Christ crucified, and with those whom God had called him to love and serve in Christ.

Word List

| | | |
|----|-------------------------|--|
| 22 | <i>Hebrew</i> | descendants of the patriarchs |
| | <i>Israelites</i> | those who were by race and religion Jewish |
| | <i>Abraham</i> | the first of the patriarchs |
| 24 | <i>39 lashes</i> | normal maximum penalty – Jews thought 40 would kill you! Deuteronomy 25:3 says 40 ‘degrades an Israelite.’ |
| 25 | <i>beaten with rods</i> | i.e. punishment by a Roman court, despite being a citizen. |
| 32 | <i>Damascus</i> | in Syria, about 75 miles/120km north of Jerusalem. Paul entered in power to arrest Christians, but left it weak, as one of them. |

Bible Connections

| | | |
|----|---|---|
| | <i>Paul’s lists of ‘accomplishments’</i> | <i>see</i> 2 Corinthians 4:8-9; 6:4-12 |
| 22 | <i>Paul’s attitude to his pedigree</i> | <i>see</i> Philippians 3:4a-11 |
| | <i>Jesus quoted Isaiah, who knew from the start Hebrews would not listen.</i> | <i>see</i> Isaiah 6:9-10 Matthew 13:13-15 |
| 25 | <i>Paul beaten, by Roman court</i> | <i>e.g.</i> Acts 16:22,23,37-39 |
| 28 | <i>concern for young churches</i> | <i>c.f.</i> Matthew 18:1-6,10-14 |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 16 *When did he first speak?*
How do you receive a fool?
- 17 *How would the Lord talk?*
- 18 *How does the world boast?*
- 19 *Why would the wise put up with fools.*
- 20 *Who was enslaving etc them?*
- 21 *How were they too weak?*
What are others boasting about?
What is the difference between a Hebrew, an Israelite, Abraham's descendent?
- 23 *What does he mean a servant of Christ?*
Why does he cite his failures, weaknesses etc.
- 28 *What does he mean by 'everything else'?*
- 29 *Why does he feel weak / burn at their sufferings / failures.*
- 31 *Why does he call Him 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'?*
What is he saying that might be lies?
- 32 *Why did he have to escape from Damascus?*

What surprises or confuses you?

- 21 *Why, if he knows it is foolish, does he carry on speaking?*

2) The Context

a) surrounding passage

- 16 *I repeat (11:1)*

b) individual book

- 31 *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus (1:3)*

c) whole Bible

- 17 *The Lord is gentle and humble in heart (Mt 11:29)*
- 20 *Exploits / preys upon (KJV) cf (Luke 20:47)*
Takes advantage / catches cf (Luke 5:5)
Slaps on the face cf (Luke 22:64; Acts 23:2)
- 21 *The (real) work is to believe in Jesus (John 6:29)*
- 22 *Refuse compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ (Phil 3:8)*
Hebrews: Aramaic- as opposed to Greek-speaking Jews (Acts 6:1)

Hebrew of Hebrews (Philippians 3:5)

Israelites the people adopted by God (Rom 9:4)

Sons of Abraham – father of the faithful (Rom 4:12)

23 *He dies daily (1 Cor 15:31)*

26 *In danger from Gentiles / Jews – the world hates (John 15:18,19)*

29 *'weak' = believers who are hyper sensitive (Rom 14:1; 1Cor 8:7; 9:22)*

30 *for (the Lord's) power is made perfect in weakness. (2 Cor 12:9)*

31 *God and Father of the Lord Jesus (Ephesians 1:3; 1 Thess 1:1; 1 Pet 1:3)
not lying / solemn assertion cf (Gal 1:20; Rom 9:1; 1 Tim 2:7)*

d) Bible story

See *Study 1.*

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

16 *He first spoke of this in 11:1.*

You receive a fool patiently / making allowances.

17 *The Lord would speak modestly / humbly.*

18 *The world boasts by drawing attention to itself.*

19 *If you were so wise you would be surrounded by fools.*

20 *The false apostles were enslaving them.*

21 *They were too weak to be domineering, imposing and aggressive.*

They are boasting about their credentials, abilities, achievements etc.

The difference was: Hebrew – position within Judaism; an Israelite – of the Jewish nation; Abraham's descendent – someone circumcised.

23 *A servant of Christ is one whose faith is in Jesus.*

He cites his failures, weaknesses etc. because they are his credentials.

28 *'everything else' means all the physical hardships.*

29 *He feels weak - as a 'parent' would.*

31 *He calls Him 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' to underline the solemnity of his statement.*

Paul is not lying by saying he views himself as having nothing to boast about

32 *He speaks of leaving Damascus as a degrading act of 'retreat'.*

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

He carries on speaking, but his boasting is in reverse – of his weaknesses.

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

Let me, (like the false apostles) indulge in some unchristian boasting (16-21a). I have the completely religious pedigree (21b,22) I have worked harder, been more persecuted by Jew and Gentile, been more stretched physically than any other (23-27). On top of that I identify with the weak and the struggling in the church (28,29). The Lord knows I have been weak from the very start of my ministry (30,31)

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

A disciples' very weakness that is their prize attribute in the Lord's service

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? *v 30*

If I must boast, I will boast of things that show my weakness.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

17 The Lord is modest

30 The Lord delights when we know our 'weakness'.

31 God is our ultimate witness

b) His grace?

21/23 To boast in anything but the grace of Jesus is total foolishness

c) Jesus and His salvation?

23 Our ultimate identity is as a servant of Christ

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What should I do?

16 Don't boast - any boasting is foolishness

17 Be modest - Followers of Jesus are modest.

20/21 Christian leadership is NOT authoritarian, exploitative or harsh.

22-27 Take note - Christian identity is independent of: birth / background /culture, effort, recognition, achievement.

28 Note - Godly leadership 'burns' for the maturing of Christians.

30 As Christian boast of your weakness in the Lord's work.

32 Understand that the start of the Christian life is defeat and disgrace.

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Study 19 (2.8) 2 Corinthians 12:1-13

Show God's power through your weakness

Background information

The false teachers boasted about visions. Paul could have done the same: he had had an experience so 'out of this world' that he talks about it in the third person. He has not words, or permission, to convey the indescribable. Instead he boasts of his weakness, of suffering that God not only allows, but turns to Paul's advantage! It is only when we are weak that we can appreciate, and draw on, the strength God supplies. God's power is not added on top of ours, as the critics claimed; it comes when we're at our weakest.

The 'thorn' metaphor implies pain. Theories include eye-disease, perhaps glaucoma (Galatians 4:15; 6:11), malaria contracted in Perga, a swampy area, hence no preaching there (Acts 13:13), epilepsy, migraine, depression etc. But, we are not told, which was God's precise intention so that readers down the ages could work out how the word applied in *their* difficult situation.

Where the critics alleged Paul's suffering implied God was *not* blessing him, he listed the many varieties of his weakness and suffering as evidence of God's *blessing* because it had kept him utterly reliant on God alone.

Word List

| | | |
|-----|------------------------------|--|
| 2 | <i>I know a man</i> | Paul speaks of himself in the third person. |
| 2,4 | <i>third heaven/paradise</i> | 'Home of the righteous dead', according to Jewish tradition from the Apocrypha, (2 Enoch 8:1- not OT). Persian – 'walled garden' implies fellowship with God |
| 7 | <i>conceited</i> | Elated or uplifted. Greek could almost mean 'airborne'! |
| | <i>was given</i> | Greek passive mood implies <i>God</i> gave it. cf v12 |
| | <i>thorn</i> | Greek <i>skolops</i> can mean a stake or a 'splinter'. |
| 9 | <i>he said to me</i> | Greek perfect tense indicates Paul could still hear God saying 'My grace is sufficient...' |
| | <i>power</i> | Greek <i>dunamis</i> (c.f. Acts 1:8) |
| | <i>may rest on me</i> | Lit. 'may pitch his tent upon me' (c.f. Exodus 40:34) |
| 12 | <i>signs...were done</i> | Another passive which means <i>God</i> did them, not Paul. |

Bible Connections

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | <i>Paul's many visions:</i> | see Acts 9:4-6, 12; 16:9-10; 18:9-10; (plus, later than this letter: 22:17-21; 23:11; 27:23-24) |
| 7 | <i>constant irritation of 'thorn'</i> c.f. Numbers 33:55 | |

| | | |
|----|---------------------------|---|
| | <i>messenger of Satan</i> | <i>c.f.</i> book of Job. God lets Satan <i>test</i> Job, not <i>kill</i> him. |
| 8 | <i>prayed three times</i> | <i>c.f.</i> Matthew 26:39,42,44 |
| 13 | <i>never a burden</i> | <i>see</i> 2 Cor 11:7-9 and note on p20; <i>cf</i> Acts 20:32-36 |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 1 *What has his previous boast been?*
Why does he continue if there is nothing to be gained?
What is the difference between a vision and a revelation?
- 2 *What does he mean 'caught up'?*
Why does he specify the time - fourteen years?
- 3 *Why does he repeat 'God knows'?*
- 4 *Who does not permit him to tell?*
- 5 *Why would he boast about him but not about himself?*
- 6 *Why should he not be a fool if he boasts about this truth?*
- 7 *Why could he be conceited?*
What is a thorn in the flesh?
- 8 *Why 3 times?*
- 9 *What did he mean 'my grace is sufficient for you'?*
What weaknesses would he boast of?
- 10 *Why is it for 'Christ's sake' that he delights in his weakness.*
- 11 *How did they drive him to make a fool of himself?*
Why should he have been commended by them?
- 12 *What does he mean 'with great perseverance'?*
- 13 *How had he not been a burden on them?*

What surprises or confuses you?

- 1 *Why did he speak about these things now to these folk?*

2) The Context

- a) surrounding passage
- 1 *Truth of Christ (11:10)*
- 5 *I am not in the least inferior (11:5)*

- b) individual book
- 1 *boast (10:8,13; 11:1, 17, 21, 30)*

c) whole Bible

2 14 years (*Gal 2:1*)

3 I do not know (remember) – cf *I Cor 1:16*

4 Paradise (only two references - *Lk 23:43; Rev 2:7*)

Caught up (cf *Acts 8:39; I Thessalonians 4:17*)

Third heaven cf all the heavens (*Ephesians 4:10*)

8 'three times' tempted and forgiven (*Jn 18:15-27; 21:15-18*)

11 Apostles of the gentiles (*Acts 9:15; Romans 11:13*)

12 Miracles performed by Apostles to corroborate the truth (*Acts 5:12; 14:3; Hebrews 2:4*)

13 Paul never a burden on the Corinthians (cf *11:7-11*)

d) Bible story

See Study 1.

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

1 His previous boast has been in his weaknesses.

He continues as there may be a lesson for them; there is nothing to be gained for him.

A vision is visually presented and perceived; a revelation can be just heard.

2 By 'caught up' he means it was nothing to do with him.

Fourteen years = 2 x 7? Corresponds to *Galatians 2:1*?

3 Repeats 'God knows' to show he is struggling to describe the indescribable.

4 God does not permit Paul to tell.

5 Nothing justifies boasting about self. He was using 3rd person to detract from self.

6 He would not be a fool if he boasted about this, as it was simply the truth.

7 He'd be conceited if he thought the great revelations were due to him. A thorn in the flesh is a continuous, painful irritant.

8 Three times is a complete number.

9 All that is freely given to you is enough – you need to do nothing! His weaknesses were demonstrated by his sufferings (*11:23-27*).

10 It is for 'Christ's sake' because his weakness shows Christ's glory.

11 *They drove him to be a fool by being fools themselves.
He ought to have been commended by them as The Apostle to the Gentiles*

12 *'with great perseverance' means single-minded determination.*

13 *He had not been a burden, since he had taken no payment from them.*

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

He spoke out of desperation.

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

I will continue 'boasting'. 14 years ago, I was given a private experience of paradise (1-4). To say any more would be boasting (5,6). To ensure I was humble, the Lord permitted Satan to torment me, though I pleaded for it to stop. The Lord showed me that He was more than enough. So I celebrate my weakness, since through it, God's strength is revealed. (7-10)

Compare me with these 'super apostles'. I did all the things a real apostle does – signs, wonders and miracles. I didn't even charge you for it! (11-13)

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

As God uses us, our complete weakness demonstrates God's complete power and control over all things.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 9b**

My grace is sufficient for you. My power is made perfect in your weakness.

LIVE

- 1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?
 - a) His nature and character?
- 2) *God holds his followers within himself.*
- 2/3 *God knows all things.*
- 7) *God uses the devil's 'thorns' to encourage us to grow.*
- 8) *God sometimes answers prayers with 'no', 'not yet', or 'not that way'.*

b) His grace?

1 The Lord gives vision and revelations.

9 The Lord's grace is all we need.

c) Jesus and His salvation?

9 Jesus' power rests upon his weak disciples.

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

1 Note – there are times to boast of what the Lord has done.

2 Accept that there are things that only God knows.

4 Note – there are experiences that God gives us that are not for sharing with others.

5 Do not boast about yourself.

7 Discern and accept the 'thorns' that the Lord permits, and draw on the strength God gives to cope with it.

9 Rely on the grace of God.

10 Delight in weakness and adversity – physical and spiritual.

11 Commend God-given leaders.

12 Pursue the service God gives you 'with perseverance'.

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Study 20 (2.9)

2 Corinthians 12:14 - 13:10

Truly submit to God's Word

Background information

When Paul re-visits the Corinthians, the issues will not be the ones the false teachers have raised, but signs of Christian life – or the lack of them v20,21: quarrelling, sexual sin etc *still!* He is preparing for a possibly tense arrival. His argument all along has not been in defence of his status or position, but to strengthen the vital faith and Christ-likeness of his dear friends in Corinth.

Paul calls this his third visit to them. See discussion on pp 4 and 5.

The last chapter invites the Corinthians to give themselves a spiritual 'MOT' (v5) before a coming day of judgment, whether on earth or in heaven, and to take steps to remedy anything in themselves that contradicts the nature of Jesus. But if they had nothing to repent of, that verifies Paul's ministry under God: it had indeed brought them new life, which *disproves* his critics' claims.

Word List

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 12:16 <i>crafty fellow...</i> | <i>ie</i> 'crafty fellow you say that I am ...' as in RSV |
| 13: 9 <i>goodbye</i> | <i>Lit</i> 'Rejoice', greeting to meet or leave someone. |
| <i>perfection</i> | better 'be mended/restored'. Same verb as when James and John are 'mending' their nets Mark 1:19 |
| 12 <i>holy kiss</i> | A hug? Showing genuine fellowship, not lust. |

Bible Connections

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 13:1 <i>testimony of two or three</i> | <i>see</i> Deuteronomy 19:15 |
| 10 <i>when I come</i> | Paul stayed 3 months <i>see</i> Acts 20:2-3 |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

12:14 *Why a third time?*

How does he want them?

Who is the parent?

15 *What will he spend?*

16 *How has he caught them?*

17 *Why is the brother not named?*

18 *What is ‘the same spirit’?*

19 *How have they been ‘defending themselves’?*

20 *What is his opinion of them?*

Why does he fear?

21 *How might God humble Paul?*

13:1 *What is the matter that must be established by 2 or 3 witnesses?*

2 *What was the warning?*

In what way will he ‘not spare them’?

3 *How is the Lord ‘powerful’ and not ‘weak’?*

4 *What does he mean by ‘crucified in weakness’ but ‘lives by God’s power’?*

How was Paul ‘weak in his power’ and ‘live with his power’?

5 *What does it mean by ‘in the faith’?*

7 *What might they do that is ‘wrong’ and ‘right’?*

8 *What is ‘the truth’?*

9 *What does he mean by ‘their perfection’?*

10 *When was this authority given?*

What surprises or confuses you?

12:21 *Why will God humble Paul before the Corinthians?*

2) The Context

a) individual book

12:17 *Unnamed, known by them, trustworthy (8:22).*

18 *Titus makes the collection (8:6).*

21 *Impurity, sexual sin, debauchery (2:5-11; 1 Cor 5:1-5).*

13:10 *Authority = constructive not destructive (10:8).*

b) whole Bible

12:19 *Corinthians not his judges (1 Cor 4:3).*
20 *slander (Col 3:8; 1 Pet 2:1).*
21 *humble yourself (Luke 18:14; James 4:10; 1 Pet 5:6).*
13:1 *Establish by witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15 cf Mt 18:16; John 8:17).*
4 *Power = all authority (Matt 28:18).*
He died to sin.... but lives to God (Rom 6:10).
Blessed are the poor in spirit... those who mourn... the meek (Matt 5:3-5).
5 *Jesus is Lord (1 Cor 12:3).*
Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Col 1:27).
7 *Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8).*
Prayer is to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1:3).
8 *I am the truth (John 14:6).*
10 *Paul's 'authorisation' (Acts 9:15-19).*

c) Bible story

See Study 1.

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

12:14 *He had been twice before – only once recorded, in Acts 18:1-18.*

He wants their fellowship in the family of God.

Paul is the parent?

15 *Paul will spend his resources – financial, physical, spiritual.*

16 *He has caught them by not taking their money!*

17 *The brother is not named, perhaps to emphasise that he is 'brother'.*

18 *'The same spirit' was 'generously', for their welfare.*

19 *They might have thought that they were 'defending' their reputation.*

20 *He fears that some may be in rebellion against his (God's) authority.*

He 'fears' because he considers that this 'rebellion' might be the case.

21 *God humbled Paul when some did not recognise his God-given authority.*

13:1 *The matter is carnal lifestyle.*

2 *The warning was about this carnal lifestyle.*

He 'will not spare them' of exposure of sin and judgment of it.

3 *The Lord is weak in that he doesn't seem to be dealing with the sin.*

4 *He means Jesus was weak when crucified, but was raised to total power.*

Joined to Jesus by faith, we share in his vulnerability, but also his power’.

- 5 ‘In the faith’ means believing that Jesus is Lord.
- 7 Doing right is loving and walking humbly with God; ‘wrong’ is rebelling against God, ignoring Him, His Word, law, approved Apostles, etc.
- 8 Jesus is ‘the truth’.
- 9 ‘Their perfection’ means being completely submitted to the Saviour.
- 10 The authority given through Ananias after Paul was converted.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

12:21 God will sadden and humble Paul by the apparent failure of Paul’s work among the Corinthians.

3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

It’s been one way. Like a parent I have not taken anything from you and neither have my team (12:14-18). Am I defensive in this? I fear that when I come to you in person, I will have to deal with serious carnal sin (12:19-21). When I come, we will deal with the sin, ‘by the book’. Like Jesus we are weak, however immensely strong in God (13:1-4). So ‘wise up’! Humble yourselves before God, so that when I arrive, I might, by His authority, encourage you in Christ (5-10).

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Be honest – are you submitted to the Christ who is within you?

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? *v13:5*

‘Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realise that Christ is in you – unless of course you fail the test’

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

12:19 God oversees those who speak in Christ.

21 God humbles us before the church.

b) His grace?

13:4 God uses our weakness to show His power

c) Jesus and His salvation?

13: 3 Christ has spoken, definitively, through the Apostle Paul

13:5 Christ is in every believer.

5 Christ is the yardstick by which believers measure themselves.

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

2) What should I do?

12:12 Christian ministry is not primarily for personal gain.

15 In Christian leadership, spend yourself for the benefit of your people.

19 Christian leaders should not defend / justify themselves.

21 Christian leaders, be prepared to grasp the nettle when dealing with sin in the church.

13: 5 Compare yourself to Jesus, who is in you, and not to others.

7 Prayer is to God – the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (1:3).

8 We can do nothing except for the truth.

9 Be glad when you are weak.

10 Exercise the authority God gives.

As a rule, act early to address difficulties.

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Study 21 (2.10)

2 Corinthians 13:11- 14

Act faithfully by loving one another

Background

The letter ends with a sentence much quoted at the end of Christian worship, declaring a benediction on the people before they part. It conveys blessing from each person of the Trinity. Only the triune nature of God himself, three in one, can transform Corinth's faction-riddled church.

In the benediction in vs 14, the three genitives (...of the Lord Jesus Christ, ...of the Father, ...of the Holy Spirit) are subjective – it is *God's* grace, *God's* love, *God's* fellowship that Paul is 'imparting' with this three-fold blessing.

How did the Corinthians respond to Paul's letter? Well, they didn't rip it up, because we are still reading it today! When Paul arrived, he stayed 3 months and had peace to write what we call the letter to the Romans, his fullest statement of the gospel. That suggests the Corinthians received him well!

Word list

11 *finally* The rest *ie* what's left after all is over.
brothers used 25 times in 1 Cor, and 7 times in 2 Cor.
goodbye *Lit* 'Rejoice', a greeting to meet or leave someone.
perfection (c.f. 13:9) *lit.* *unite completely* *ie* restoration.
'*Listen to my appeal.*' means *lit.* *Admonish yourselves.* – i.e. Pull yourselves together.
Be of one mind' *Lit.* Think the same thing (same word *phroneo* used for 'be like-minded' in Philippians 2:2)
'*and the God of love and peace will be with you*' is conditional on them obeying the command to 'live in peace' in the previous sentence.

12 *holy kiss* Probably a hug, showing genuine fellowship, not lust. The first century norm for this was male with male, and female with female.

Bible connections

11 *Be of one mind.* (Philippians 2:2-5, Think 'like' Jesus)
God will be with us. (Matthew 28:20)

14 *fellowship* *Gk.* *koinonia* (c.f. Acts 2:42)

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

11 *Why finally?*

Why brothers?

Why goodbye?

What is perfection?

What is his appeal?

What does 'of one mind' mean?

What does 'live in peace' mean?

With whom are they/we to live at peace?

12 *What is a 'holy kiss'?*

When are they expected to do this?

13 *Who are 'all the saints'?*

14 *What is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ?*

What is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit?

Why 'you ALL'?

What surprises or confuses you?

11 *How short and general his final greeting is!*

2) The Context

a) surrounding passage

11 *For the rest ie. 'after examining self to see whether in the faith' (13:5)*

b) individual book

11 *'think' the same things - same word as in Philippians 2:5.*

13 *all the saints (1:1)*

c) whole Bible

11 *Finally (Ephesians 6:10; Philippians 4:8)*

Goodbye, literally. 'rejoice' cf Philippians 4:4.

Peace – fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) Peace with God (Romans 5:1;

Mark 9:50).

God is love (1 John 4:8).

Let the peace of God rule in your hearts since as members of one body you were called to peace. (Colossians 3:15)

13 *Holy kiss (Romans 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:26).*

14 *Fellowship gk. koinonia (c.f. Acts 2:42), Comforter gk. Paracletos (John 14:15).*

Love: not that we loved God but that He loved us (1 John 4:10).

d) Bible story

See Study 1.

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

11 *‘Finally’ – because it is in conclusion.*

‘Brothers’ because Paul was writing for those ‘in Christ’.

Goodbye – ‘rejoice’ is not a platitude but a command!

‘Perfection’ is being ‘completely restored’.

‘Listen to my appeal’ is lit ‘admonish yourselves’.

‘one mind’ is lit think the same thing (n.b. as Jesus!)

Live in peace means the opposite of strife / factions / antagonism.

This command is for those who are ‘in Christ’.

12 *‘Holy kiss’ is an act of Christian recognition and fellowship.*

They do this whenever they formally meet.

13 *All the saints are those with Paul / his team.*

14 *This is enjoying the undeserved gift of God in Jesus.*

The fellowship of the Holy Spirit is His companionship.

‘You ALL’ would include any Corinthians who had been doing wrong.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

He sums it up succinctly by focusing on God Himself

3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

To sum up – resolve to rejoice in all you do and God will enable you (11).

Accept one another in Jesus as we do you (12,13).

Jesus’ grace, God’s love, and the Holy Spirit’s fellowship be with you all (14).

LISTEN

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Let Jesus be the standard you strive for, heed the Word of God, don't let the Devil split you, let the peace of God rule in your hearts and you will know Gods love and peace .

- 2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? *v 11*

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.

LIVE

- 1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

- a) His nature and character?

11 God's intention in all things is for His children to 'enjoy' Him.

God of love and peace desires to be with us.

God gives Himself for us and imparts His peace.

14 God is love.

- b) His grace?

14 Jesus is the expression of God's grace

- c) Jesus and His salvation?

14 Jesus is the expression of God's grace.

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

11 Strive to respond to God by completely submitting to Him by obeying His commands in the way you live amongst others in Christ.

12 Publicly express your love for one another.

13 Show believers in other places your support of them.

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Sharing the Word

Use

'Hearing the Word' can be used alone, with one other person, or in a group

Preparing for a group

Time put in alone beforehand will greatly benefit time spent together.

Work through the stages - LOOK, LEARN, LISTEN, LIVE.

Write down your own questions and answers. *

Format

- a. LOOK - Any questions? (If answer is known or not!)
Relevant cross references in rest of the Bible?
- b. LEARN - Answers to questions?
- c. LISTEN - Key verse and Main Point?
- d. LIVE - What does it show about God /His grace/ Jesus?
What should I do

n.b. Leave plenty of time for the LIVE section!

By also eating together and a time of prayer, you will have shared something of the life of the early church! (Acts 2:42-47)

Remember!

As we gather round God's Word -

- a) Listen to the views of others.
- b) Make room for the novice. (They can join in too when you start by listing 'Any questions'.)
- c) Don't let the 'knowledgeable' dominate. Encourage everyone to think for themselves.
- d) Try to include others, especially 'seekers', in your time together.

* The **process** is explained and practiced in a four-hour course, suitable for all, called '**An Introduction to 'Hearing the Word'**'

<https://hearingtheword.org.uk>

“I can read the Bible for myself!”

To show that the Bible is accessible to all,
the Rev Nigel Barge, a former minister of Torrance Parish Church,
has devised a tool called ‘Hearing the Word’.

The Manual explains the basic principles of Bible reading,
teaches them by means of an interactive course,
and practices them on a single passage, Mark 10:35-45,
Participants follow in a Workbook: *Hearing the Word - Introduction*,
which includes the next six passages in Mark,
so they may follow on for themselves.

As the principles apply equally to all, the course will both
instruct the novice and refresh the ‘hardened’ Bible student!

Further Study Guides cover various genres of Bible material –
Narrative, Poetry, Law, Letters, Prophecy etc.
For the current list of material or to place orders, contact

ISBN 978-1-912209-66-8



