

HEARING THE WORD



NIGEL BARGE

2 Corinthians
Work Book

Hearing the Word 2 Corinthians Work Book

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Nigel Barge, April, 2018

Scripture Quotations taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION
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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?

What surprises or confuses you?

2) The Context

What other parts of the Bible – surrounding passage, individual book, whole Bible, or Bible story – might help you understand this passage?

LEARN

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

- 2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?
- 3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

LISTEN

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point?
- 2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? v.

LIVE

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

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

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

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 - c) Jesus and His salvation?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

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).

13 *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

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- 2) What should I do?

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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*

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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.

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>

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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"'

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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;

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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>	Same verb used of people 'crowding' Jesus (Luke 8:45).
<i>one died for all</i>	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>	One who represents a king, speaking with the king's authority. <i>Plural</i> , i.e Paul & Timothy; or all believers?
<i>through us</i>	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> i.e. Jesus Christ.	 <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>

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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>dunamis</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)

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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)

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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>

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

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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

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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>	

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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 <i>limits/field</i>	Same Greek word <i>kanon</i> originally applied to a specified area in which local communities were obliged to supply transport for Roman officials passing through.
16 <i>regions beyond</i>	Corinth was the gateway to Italy and rest of Europe.

Bible Connections

1 <i>meekness & gentleness of Christ</i>	<i>see</i> Matthew 11:29
2 <i>How should Paul come to them?</i>	<i>see</i> 1 Corinthians 4:21
<i>attitude to world’s standards</i>	<i>see</i> Romans 12:2
<i>Paul’s ‘weapons’</i>	<i>see</i> 6:3-13; Ephesians 6:10-18
7 <i>How should we judge?</i>	<i>see</i> John 7:24
8 <i>Paul’s authority from God</i>	<i>see</i> Acts 9:1-30
13 <i>the scope of Paul’s ministry</i>	<i>see</i> Galatians 2:7-9
17 <i>If we must boast, how to do it?</i>	<i>see</i> 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?

What surprises or confuses you?

2) The Context

What other parts of the Bible – surrounding passage, individual book, whole Bible, or Bible story – might help you understand this passage?

LEARN

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

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

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

LISTEN

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point?
- 2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? v.

LIVE

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

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

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 *serpent's cunning* his plausible speech in the Garden of Eden.

4 *another gospel?* as if Christ did not suffer and die in place of sinners.

5 *'super-apostles'* ie not the true apostles who preach the same gospel as Paul but the recently arrived false teachers. ‘*Super*’ is ironic and means something like ‘ultra-superior’.

6 *not trained speaker* gk *idiotes* -meaning ‘a layman in speech’, i.e. not using all the rhetorical flourishes of professional Greek debaters.

knowledge true knowledge of the true gospel given to him on the Damascus Road and after (Acts 9:1-18)

7 *lower myself* tent-making (Acts 18:3) involved physical labour – which Greeks traditionally despised.

Some teachers of rhetoric were exempt from local taxes

8 *'robbed' other churches* 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 *stop* Gk *phrasso* – very strong; to dam a river (cf Rom 3:19)

13 *false prophets* as in v5 for ‘super-apostles’

Bible Connections

2 *Church as bride to Christ* see Ephesians 5:25-27

3 *Eve deceived* see Genesis 3:1-6

danger of false teachers see Romans 16:17-18; 2 Peter 2:1-2

7 *free of charge* see 1 Corinthians 9:1-18 Acts 20:32-35

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

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Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

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

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- 2) What should I do?

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 *Paul's many visions:* 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 *constant irritation of 'thorn'* 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

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What questions does the passage raise?

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Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

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

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- 2) What should I do?

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

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What questions does the passage raise?

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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>

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