

27 GEMS – A Survey of 2 Corinthians

Pastor Jason Dennett's Notes

The MESSAGE of 2 Corinthians:

2 Corinthians is the **18th shortest** book in the New Testament with **4,477** Greek words.

2 Corinthians is the **most autobiographical** of all of Paul's letters.

2 Corinthians is one of Paul's **least doctrinal** and **least systematic** letters.

2 Corinthians contains the **longest section on giving** in the New Testament (chap 8,9).

"Nowhere does Paul the Apostle open his heart to his readers so completely as he does here in his second letter to the Corinthians.." - Alan Redpath

The MEGA-THEME of 2 Corinthians:

"Open your heart to God's Ministers and their Ministry!"

The MEGA-STRUCTURE of 2 Corinthians:

- I. Paul **DESCRIBES** his Ministry (1–5)
- II. Paul **DESIREs** for the Corinthians (6–9)
- III. Paul **DEFENDS** his Apostleship (10–13)

- I. Paul **DESCRIBES** his Ministry (1–5)

Chapter 1: Paul's Ministry is about Suffering...but he isn't defeated!

A. Suffering is comforted by God.

- **2 Cor 1:3-10** - "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and **God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation,***
- **This letter begins with a beautiful portrait of the loving God that we worship: He is a God of comfort.** This is the word "*παράκλησεως*" or "*paraklēseōs*" which means encouragement and comfort. The Heavenly Father is One who desires to give His children mercy, comfort, and encouragement when they pass through trials and tribulations. He doesn't forsake them; He doesn't forget them; He doesn't distance Himself from them; rather He comforts and cares for us, as a loving Father with his dear beloved

children. (Read Psalm 103:13,14)

B. [Suffering is used to comfort others for God.](#)

- that **we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.** 5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. 6 Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. 7 And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that **as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.**
- An often overlooked aspect of our suffering is that **the Lord will use it not only in our life to bring us benefits** (*maturity, endurance, patience, etc..*) but also **in the lives of others to bring them comfort.** As we are comforted and ministered to by the Lord, and he brings us through the trial, He will often bring us to an individual who is going thru the same ordeal, and use us to comfort them with the grace we've received. (Read Luke 22:31,32; 1 Pet 5:5-11)

C. [Suffering causes us to look towards God.](#)

- 8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that **we despaired even of life.** 9 **Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, 10 who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us.."**
- Another spiritual benefit that comes from our sufferings (*Rom 8:28*) is that **they drive us to turn to the Lord and seek Him for His help and power.** This cultivates *humility* in us, drives out the poison of *pride*, and builds up our *faith* in our Great Creator and King once again! (Read Matt 14:25-33; Ps. 121:1,2; 1Sam 17:45-47)

Chapter 2: Paul's Ministry is about Sinners...but he is forgiving!

A. [Sinners should be disciplined, for open habitual sin.](#)

- **2 Cor 2:3-11 - "And I wrote this very thing to you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow** over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all. 4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you. 5 But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent--**not to be**

too severe. 6 This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man.."

- Previously, Paul wrote to the Corinthian congregation and told them to **remove a member who was living in open, unrepentant fornication** in their church (1Cor 5:1-8). Unbeknownst to many Christians, there are many passages in the New Testament that instruct the church or members to remove from fellowship those who are **living in open, unrepentant, ongoing, habitual sin**. This is what is referred to as "Church Discipline" by many. (Read Rom 16:17-18; Tit 3:10; 1Cor 5:9-11; Eph 5:11; 2Thess 3:6; Matt 18:15-18)
- B. **Sinners should be restored, when genuinely repentant of their sin.**
 - "..so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. 8 Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him. 9 For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. 10 Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, 11 lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices."
 - **However, the purpose of this church discipline, is to lovingly help the believer in question, who is caught up in sin.** Since the individual is not being sensitive or obedient to the Spirit or the Scriptures, the intentional separation of the saints is to **help them feel the weight and gravity of their sin**, in hopes that they will repent and turn away from it and come back to Christ. **Apparently, this is precisely what happened** with the sinning saint in Corinth - he repented and forsook his sin. Paul instructed the Corinthians to **receive him and restore him back into fellowship**, lest he be overcome with too much sorrow. **Note:** Restoration only took place after genuine Repentance on the part of sinner.
 - It is important to recognize the need for genuine **REPENTANCE** on the part of the sinner, but also the need for **RESTORATION** on the part of the church when it is present. **Unforgiveness, is a major strategy of Satan** towards believers today, and Jesus taught us that an unforgiving heart will imprison you inside. (Read Matt 18:21-35)

Chapter 3: Paul's Ministry is Spiritual...but he isn't carnal!

A. **True Ministry produces Spiritual results.**

- **2 Cor 3:1-6** - "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we

need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? 2 **You are our epistle written in our hearts**, known and read by all men; 3 clearly **you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.** 4 And we have such trust through Christ toward God."

- **Genuine ministry, which is led and guided by the Spirit, produces true spiritual results and fruit.** Jesus told us that the Father was glorified when disciples **brought forth much fruit** that remained (*John 15:1-8*), He taught us that **a good tree** produces good fruit (*Matt 7:17*), He said **the Word** produces lasting fruit when genuinely received (*Matt 13:8,23*). **John the Baptist** said that genuine repentance was evidenced by spiritual fruit (*Matt 3:7-10*), and Jesus' half-brother **James** said that without visible fruit of good works, our faith was dead and useless (*James 2:14-26*)
- B. **True Ministry is produced by Spiritual power.**
- 5 **Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,** 6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for **the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.**"
- **It is the LORD who gives us any and all power** to do ANYTHING of spiritual or eternal value as we serve Him. Servants who have proper perspective of the Lord and the ministry realize that it is HE that is making it happen, and only HE that deserves the honor, praise, and glory! (*Matt 3:16; Acts 1:8; Zech 4:6; Phil 4:13; Rom 11:36; 1Cor 1:26-31*) Any other perspective is rooted in pride, self, and a sinful self-reliance.

Chapter 4: Paul's Ministry is about Sincerity...so he isn't deceitful!

A. **Sincerity in honoring the Word.**

- **2 Cor 4:1-5** - "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. 2 **But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully,** but by manifestation of the **truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.** 3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is **veiled to those who are perishing,** 4 **whose minds the god of this age has blinded,** who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. 5 For **we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord,** and

*ourselves **your bondservants for Jesus' sake.**"*

- **Contrary to many so called "teachers", Paul's sincerity was evident in the way that he handled God's Word.** He taught the Scriptures honestly, plainly, and thoroughly. He didn't preach or teach for financial profit, or for personal profit as was the case for many Greek orators and philosophers of the day. Paul did not speak about himself or for himself, but in true sincerity, preached Christ as Lord and God...and himself the slave of Jesus to the churches!

B. **Sincerity in opposing the World.**

- **2 Cor 4:8-9, 12-14** - "*We are **hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed...*** 12 *So then death is working in us, but life in you. 13 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "**I believed and therefore I spoke,**" we also believe and therefore speak, 14 knowing that **He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present [us] with you.**"*
- **However, living sincerely for the Kingdom of Christ, will result in persecution from the enemies of Christ.** Paul experienced many sufferings in his ministry as an apostle of Christ (2Cor 11:22-33), and his life resembled that of a soldier operating on a battlefield of war, suffering behind enemy lines for the sake of his Commander in Chief! (Read 2 Tim 2:3,4; Eph 6:10-20; 2Cor 10:3-6)

C. **Sincerity in expecting the Kingdom.**

- **2 Cor 4:16-18** - "*Therefore **we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.** 17 *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but **at the things which are not seen.** For the things which are seen are temporary, but **the things which are not seen are eternal.**"**
- During Paul's ministry, his sincerity evidenced itself by **looking for his reward in the next world**...not this one. Paul understood better than most that his labors, toils, and even sufferings were simply investments in the coming Kingdom of Christ. He gladly and joyfully looked ahead to receiving his crown, and eagerly anticipated entering his eternal ministry to serve His King forever. (2 Tim 4:6-8; 1Cor 3:8-15; Heb 6:10; Matt 19:28; 25:21; Rev 2:26-27; 5:10; 20:4-6)

Chapter 5: Paul's Ministry is *Serious*...so Paul isn't careless!

A. Ministry has a Serious Transformation.

- 2 Cor 5:1-2, 4, 8 - *"For we know that if our earthly house, [this] tent, is destroyed, **we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.** 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, ... 4 For we who are in [this] tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, **that mortality may be swallowed up by life.** ... 8 We are confident, yes, well **pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.**"*
- Paul knew that a serious gift awaited him in his future, one in which his old, persecuted frame longed for: **a powerful resurrection body!** He spoke about this glorious "upgrade" in his previous letter to the Corinthians (1Cor 15) and revealed to them that this body will be one that is immortal, glorious, powerful, incorruptible... yet it will be physical. It is the blessed gift that all the redeemed in the **"First Resurrection"** will enjoy: a powerful perfect resurrection body, that will be used to serve and enjoy the Lord for all eternity! (Read John 5:24-29; Rev 20:4-6; 1Cor 15:50-58)

B. Ministry has a Serious Destination.

- 2 Cor 5:9-11 - *"Therefore **we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.** 10 **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,** that each one may receive the things [done] in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 11 **Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;** but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences."*
- Another serious dimension to Paul's ministry was the Day of Judgement. This Day is for the Christian, and is not for condemnation but compensation; it won't be for redemption, but rather for rewards; it's not for your penalties, but for your prizes! This is where Christ will reward all His saints for their faithful service in His Name, and for the Heavenly investments that they made with the resources that were committed into their care. In his own words, this Day of destiny was a huge motivator in Paul's personal ministry. (2 Tim 4:6-8; 1Cor 3:8-15; Heb 6:10; Matt 19:28; 25:21; Rev 2:26-27; 5:10; 20:4-6)

C. Ministry has a Serious Communication.

- 2 Cor 5:20,21 - *"Now then, **we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us:** we implore [you] on Christ's behalf, **be reconciled to God.** 21 **For He made Him who***

knew no sin [to be] sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

- **Since the stakes were so high, the message became all the more serious and important to Paul.** He says that ALL Christians have been appointed as "ambassadors" of Christ in this world. We are all his legal representatives, in a foreign and hostile country, declaring Christ's teachings and Kingdom. Paul says that, through us, Christ is pleading with world to be reconciled and made at peace with their Creator.
- The only way this has been made possible is through ***the substitutionary death that Jesus endured*** in our place upon the Cross. Here, better than anywhere else in the New Testament, Paul describes what happened in our salvation: *Christ became sin for us; we received His perfect infinite righteousness in return!* This is truly the "**Great Exchange**" that many theologians are amazed by - He took our sin; we received His perfection....freely by grace! (*Read Eph 2:8,9; Romans 5:1-10; 6:23*)

II. **Paul's *DESIRES* for the Corinthians** (6–9)

III. **Paul *DEFENDS* his Apostleship** (10–13)