

2 Corinthians Series 2024 Introduction

Introduction: It has been nearly 20 years (2004) since I taught through this book. I am not sure how long it will take to work through this book this time. There are 13 chapters, 257 verses, and @ 4,477 words in the Greek version.

1) **Background of the book** (3 visits, 4 letters in @ 6 ½ years)

- a) Paul **first visited** Corinth on his 2nd church planting journey in 51-52 AD. Here he met Aquila and Priscilla. He spent 18 months in this city, as described in Acts 18:1-18. It was in this cosmopolitan city that God revealed Himself to Paul (Acts 18:9-10). Paul wrote his description of humanity recorded in Romans 1:21-32 from this city.
- b) Apollos was then sent to Corinth by Aquila and Priscilla to minister in Paul's absence (Acts 18:18-28; 1 Cor. 3:1-7). This took place in 53 AD.
- c) Paul then wrote his **first letter** (*uninspired*) to the Corinthians from Ephesus to address the issue of sexual immorality. That letter is now lost (1 Cor. 5:9-11).
- d) Paul had also written an earlier *inspired* letter to the Corinthians in the spring of 56 AD dealing with a variety of questions posed by the Corinthians, through their delegation listed in 1 Cor. 16:17. This **second letter** we know as 1 Cor.
- e) Paul had sent Timothy to Corinth to find out what was happening there (1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10-11). Timothy apparently returned with disturbing news concerning the assembly. Paul then made a **second visit**, which he described as painful (2 Cor. 2:1).
- f) Paul wrote a **third letter** (the second *uninspired* letter) and sent it by Titus (2 Cor. 2:3-4; 7:5-16). This letter caused genuine repentance among the Corinthians.
- g) Paul now writes his **fourth letter** (the second *inspired* letter) which we know as 2 Cor. It was probably written in Sept.-Oct. 56 AD, possibly from Philippi in Macedonia (northern Greece), as Paul is coming to the end of his third church planting journey.
- h) Paul made a **third visit** to Corinth for 2 months in the winter of 56-57 AD (Acts 20:2-3).

2) **An overview of the book**

- a) Overall outline
 - i) Paul addresses a resolved crisis—1:1-7:16
 - ii) Paul addresses the collection for Jerusalem Christians—8:1-9:15
 - iii) Paul addresses a new crisis—10:1-13:10

- b) Openness (2 Cor. 6:11)
 - i) Paul knows that his relationship with the assembly has been strained.
 - ii) Paul bares his soul, not as a pastor, but as a church-planter/discipler who hears of the struggles of his newborn flock.
 - iii) Paul reveals details about his personal life in this letter that we learn nowhere else.

3) Salutation of the book—1:1-2

- a) The writers
 - i) *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,*
 - (1) This was not something for which Paul had volunteered. He was an apostle by God's own choice, not his own abilities, powers, or self-assertion.
 - (2) Paul was selected by God as His authorized representative to accomplish His business.
 - (a) This becomes the issue in chapters 10-13.
 - (3) There were technical (here), semitechnical (Acts 14:14; Gal. 1:19), nontechnical (Phil. 2:25), and false (2 Cor. 11:13) apostles.
 - ii) *And Timothy our brother*
 - (1) He met Paul in 48-49 AD, @ 8 years earlier. (Acts 16:1-3)
 - (2) Timothy had already ministered in Corinth various times (1:19). They were quite familiar with him.
- b) The recipients
 - i) To a specific city—*To the church of God which is at Corinth*
 - (1) These were those who God had already chosen—Acts 18:10
 - (2) Men and women steeped in idolatry and sensuality had trusted Christ by His grace.
 - (3) This assembly belongs to God, not the members!
 - ii) To a larger province—*with all the saints (holy ones) who are throughout Achaia:*
 - (1) Notice that they are called “saints” and not the “church of Achaia.” Churches are local bodies of genuine believers.
 - (2) The other assemblies that we are aware of in Achaia include Athens (Acts 17:34) and Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1).
 - (3) Geographically and politically, Achaia was the southern part of Greece, while Macedonia was the northern part of Greece.
 - (4) Corinth was the capital city of Achaia.
- c) The desire of his heart
 - i) His desire
 - (1) Typical Greek greeting: *Grace to you*

- (a) The active demonstration of God's love.
- (2) Typical Jewish greeting: *And peace*
 - (a) The result of God's grace.
 - (b) Peace externally and internally.
- ii) From One source
 - (1) *From God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*
 - (a) Note the equality of the Father and the Son

4) Things we need to remember:

- a) The local church is central to God's program for this age.
- b) Every one of us needs God's grace.
- c) Every one of us needs God's peace.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 Explaining the God who comforts

Introduction:

According to his account in verses 8–11, Paul has recently been deeply challenged emotionally and threatened physically, having come through a terrifying time of intense persecution. The apostle describes this experience as overwhelming, bringing him to the brink of despair and a certain inability to cope with the situation. Death seemed imminent. (George Guthrie)

One other thing to observe, in the original Greek text, is the alliteration of the letter P. In verses 3-4, there are 10 words that begin with P.

1) Paul praises God for who He is—1:3 ³ *Blessed [eulogetos] be ...*

- a) No verb in the Greek, so one must be understood.
- b) Thanksgiving: optative: it is something we do. Blessed be ...
- c) Benediction: indicative: it is something God is. Blessed is ...
 - i) A synonym for “worthy of praise”
 - ii) This is similar to the 18-19 benedictions used in the synagogues.
 - (1) Numbers 1-3 state the basic beliefs of the Jews.
 - (a) For examples, # 1 reads: “Blessed be You, O Lord, our God and God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, the great, the mighty, and the fearful God—God Most High—who bestows goodly kindnesses, and are the Creator of all, and remembers the love of the Fathers and brings a redeemer for their children’s children for the sake of Your name in love. King, Helper, Savior, and Shield; blessed be You, Shield of Abraham.”
 - (2) Numbers 4-9 are personal prayers.
 - (3) Numbers 10-15 are national prayers.
 - (4) Numbers 16-18 are about serving God.
 - (5) Number 19 is a prayer for peace.

2) Paul identifies this God—1:3

- a) **God & Father**: *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*,
 - i) In the OT He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- b) **Father & God**: *the Father of mercies [oiktirmos] and God of all comfort [paraklesis]*,
 - i) He uses the plural form of mercy.
 - (1) Cf. Neh. 9:19; Ps. 51:1; 103:13; Isa. 63:7; Dan. 9:9
 - ii) He uses the noun paraklesis and the verb parakaleo 10x in 1:3-7.
 - (1) Cf. Isa. 40:1; 51:3; 61:2; 66:13; Luke 2:25
 - (2) He gives every possible encouragement at every possible time.

c) Compassion and mercy were seen by the Romans as a weakness.

3) Paul states the extent of what God the Father does—1:4a

- a) It is all encompassing—⁴ *who comforts* [pres. act. ptc. parakaleo] *us in all our affliction* [thlipsis]
- i) Affliction can be internal or external pressure, or both. Adversity includes the harsh difficulties that may be physical, mental, social, financial, or spiritual. Think of squeezing or squishing. See 2 Cor. 1:8-10; 4:7-12; 6:4-10; 11:23-28; 12:10 for some examples.
- ii) Every time a painful affliction rises up in our lives, God's comfort rises to meet it and calm it. We will see throughout this letter that God often does not take away the affliction itself, but he does what is needed so that we can endure and even flourish in spite of the affliction. (Dane Ortlund)

4) Paul states the result and sphere of what God the Father does—1:4b

- a) *so that we will be able to comfort* [pres. act. inf. parakaleo] *those who are in any affliction* [thlipsis] *with the comfort* [paraklesis] *with which we ourselves are comforted* [pres. pass. ind. parakaleo] *by God.*

5) Things to remember:

- a) Who is God the Father? (Moody BC)
- i) He is both God and Father to Jesus.
- ii) He is a compassionate Father in hardship.
- iii) He is my exclusive and adequate source of all genuine comfort.
- iv) He is my actual comforter in time of need.
- v) He has a purpose in comforting me, namely, that I would pass on His comfort to others.
- (1) In other words, we are not comforted to be comfortable but to be comforters. (Wm. MacDonald)
- b) James Rosscup reminds us in the harsh difficulties of life, that we can say: "I want to come through this, fitted to be a comfort to others when they face their own afflictions, oh God. Since You have let me be in the kind of situation others are in, let me learn how to offer a balm of comfort to them."

2 Corinthians 1:5-7 Explaining the comfort God gives

Introduction: Having described the God who gives comfort, Paul (by the Spirit) describes the comfort of which God gives. Again, note the alliteration of the letter P (11x).

- Note the pattern of suffering first, comfort second

1) God's comfort is ABUNDANT—1:5

- a) **Suffering:**⁵ *For just as the sufferings [pathema] of Christ abound [pres. act. ind. perisseuo] to us,*
 - i) Pathema refers to our personal experiences, often originating outside of us, but sometimes from within. These experiences are often neutral, but usually perceived by us as unpleasant.
 - ii) "Sufferings of Christ" are the distresses in a hostile environment incurred by Paul because of his relationship to Christ. See 2 Cor. 1:8-10; 4:7-12; 6:4-10; 11:23-28; 12:10 for some examples.
 - iii) Sometimes we suffer: (Warren Wiersbe)
 - (1) Because of our own sin and rebellion. Jonah comes to mind.
 - (2) To keep us from sinning. (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7)
 - (3) To perfect our character (cf. Rom. 5:1-5)
 - (4) To help us share the character of God. (cf. Heb. 12:1-11)
 - (5) To help us minister to others. (cf. Cor. 1:5-7)
- b) **Comfort:** *so also our comfort [paraklesis] abounds [pres. act. ind. perisseuo] through Christ.*
 - i) Christ is the intermediary through who God comforts us.
- c) Whenever Christ's sufferings were multiplied in Paul's life, God's comfort was correspondingly multiplied through the ministry of Christ. (Murray Harris)
- d) **There is more than enough comfort for us.

2) God's comfort is PURPOSEFUL—1:6

- a) **Suffering:**⁶ *But whether [1st class condition] we are afflicted [pres. ass. ind. thlibo], it is for [huper] your comfort [paraklesis] and salvation [soteria];*
- b) **Comfort:** *or whether [1st class condition] we are comforted [pres. pass. ind. parakaleo], it is for [huper] your comfort [paraklesis],*
 - i) *which is working [pres. mid. ptc. energeo] in your perseverance [hupomone] in the same sufferings [pathema] which we also suffer [pres. act. ind. pascho].*
- c) This is far more than merely setting a good example of enduring pain.

- d) Comfort that is mediated through believers is just as real as that mediated directly by God: because believers are in Christ, to be comforted by other believers *is* to be comforted by Christ. (Dane Ortlund)
 - e) **There is more than enough comfort for us to share with others. Paul suffers, we benefit. We suffer, others benefit.
- 3) **God's comfort is SHARED**—1:7 ⁷ *And our hope [elpis] for [huper] you is firmly grounded, knowing [perf. act. ptc.] (two things) that ...*
- The English word “hope” implies a certain degree of uncertainty. The Greek word instead communicates confident assurance.
 - Despite all the tension in Paul’s relationship with the church at Corinth, he is still confident of God’s work in them. (Cf. 7:6-7, 13-16)
- a) **Suffering:** *as you are sharers [koinonos] of our sufferings [pathema],*
 - b) **Comfort:** *so also (you are sharers of our) the comfort [paraklesis].*
- 4) **Things to remember:**
- a) Murray Harris writes: Whenever Christ’s sufferings were multiplied in Paul’s life, God’s comfort was correspondingly multiplied through the ministry of Christ.
 - b) Harris states it a different way: Paul is affirming that a Corinthian partnership in his sufferings guarantees partnership in the comfort he enjoys; if they suffer as he does, they will also receive comfort just as he does.
 - c) Let me encourage you to consider the unsettling pressures of life to be like a workbench vise. Yes, we ARE being squeezed, but by being squeezed because of the wisdom of the Craftsman, we are being held tightly so He can accomplish what He intends for us.

2 Corinthians 1:8-11 Explaining the Affliction he Experienced

Introduction: Paul, by the Spirit, first described the God who gives comfort, and then the comfort which God gives. Now he moves on to explain the affliction he has been experiencing in which he received God's comfort. Note, he does not write theoretically from a college or university office, but realistically from the trenches of life itself.

1) Paul's burden of affliction introduced—1:8

- a) **His willing explanation:** ⁸ *For we do not want you to be unaware (lit. "we do not want you not to know"), brothers, of our affliction [thlipsis] which came to us in Asia,*
 - i) Paul had intended to stay near Ephesus in Asia (cf. 1 Cor. 16:8-9; Acts 19)
- b) **His transparent explanation:** *that ... (the affliction was ...)*
 - i) **Oppressively heavy:** *we were burdened [bareo]*
 - (1) Weighed down
 - ii) **Extraordinarily difficult:** *excessively [kata uperbole],*
 - iii) **Overwhelmingly disabling:** *beyond [hyper] our strength [dunamis],*
 - iv) **Emotionally embarrassing:** *so that we despaired [exaporeo]*
 - (1) Utterly at a loss, utterly perplexed
 - v) **Life threatening:** *even to live.*
 - (1) He could see no chance of surviving the danger he faced.

2) Paul's burden of affliction expanded—1:9

- a) **The severe perception of his burden:** ⁹ *Indeed, we (emphatic) had [perf. act. ind. echo] the sentence [apokrima] of death within ourselves*
 - i) Some view this as a literal judicial sentence.
- b) **The theological explanation of his burden:**
 - i) **Negatively:** *so that [hina] we would not have confidence [perf. act. ptc. peitho] in [epi] ourselves,*
 - (1) He renounces self-reliance.
 - ii) **Positively:** *but (have confidence) in [epi] God who raises [pres. act. ptc. egeiro] the dead;*
 - (1)

3) Paul's settled hope in God's work explained—1:10-11

- a) **God's work explained—1:10**
 - i) **Past rescue:** ¹⁰ *who rescued [aor. mid. ind. ruomai] us from so great a peril of death,*

- ii) **Future rescue:** *and will rescue* [fut. mid. in. ruomai] *us,*
 - iii) **Settled hope:** *He on whom we have set our hope* [perf. act. ind. elpizo].
 - iv) **Future rescue:** *And He will yet* [eti] *rescue us* [fut. mid. in. ruomai],
- b) **The Corinthian participation— 1:11**
- i) **Joined in prayer:** ¹¹ *you also joining in helping us through your prayers on our behalf,*
 - ii) **Joined in gratitude:** *so that thanks may be given (to God) on our behalf by many persons (lit. “faces”) for the gracious gift* [charisma] *bestowed on us through the prayers of many.*

4) Things to remember:

- a) We should never assume we know the full depth of someone’s suffering.
- b) We should never forget the teaching purposes of suffering: renouncing self-reliance and depending on God.
- c) We should never forget the importance of prayer on behalf of others.

2 Corinthians 1:12-14 Defending Your Integrity

Introduction: Paul meets questions concerning his motives head-on. (David Lowery) He will reveal the accusations against him in 1:15-2:11. So, Paul gets defensive. Is this ever okay for us as Christians today?

Paul had originally planned to spend time at Corinth “if the Lord permits” (1 Cor. 16:2-8). Apparently, he did not visit them, and now some are upset because of this change of plans and are falsely accusing Paul of lacking integrity. This paragraph launches one of the main themes of this letter.

1) Integrity—1:12

a) Two supports of his claim:

i) The claim of consistent behavior:

(1) *we have conducted ourselves* [aor. pass. ind. anastrepho]

(a) Paul looks back over the entirety of Paul’s life as a Christian in a single, comprehensive glance. (Murray Harris)

(2) Some Corinthians believed that Paul’s change in travel plans proved that he lacked integrity. But just as they trusted his word about Jesus Christ, they could trust his word about travel plans. (David Woodall)

(3) John MacArthur writes: they had accused him of being proud, self-serving, untrustworthy and inconsistent, mentally unbalanced, incompetent, unsophisticated, and an incompetent preacher)

ii) The supports of this claim:

(1) **Emotional confidence:** ¹² *For our boasting* [kauchesis] (but not arrogant self-confidence) *is this:*

(2) **Legal evidence:** *the testimony* [marturion] *of our conscience* [suneidesis] (the moral capacity of (mostly) objective self-evaluation before God in light of the highest standard we value),

(a) Cf. Acts 24:16

b) Two spheres of ministry:

i) **Generally:** *in* [en] *the world,*

ii) **Specifically:** *and especially toward* [pros] *you.*

(1) Perhaps the Corinthians were more critical than most of the behavior of itinerants (whose methods were not always exemplary) and Paul wanted it to be abundantly clear that as a messenger of the gospel, he renounced all such questionable methods. (Colin Kruse)

c) Two characteristics of ministry:

i) **Positive sphere:**

(1) **Integrity:** *that in* [en] *holiness* [haqiotēs] *and godly sincerity* [eilikrineia],

- (a) Most MSS read *haplotes* simplicity/singleness of purpose. This is more likely than *hagiotēs*, which Paul never uses.
- (b) The difference in Greek looks like: ΑΓΙΟΤΗΤΙ and ΑΠΛΟΤΗΤΙ.
- (2) **Dependence:** *in [en] the grace [charis] of God,*
- ii) **Negative sphere:**
 - (1) *not in [en] fleshly [sarkikos] (i.e. human) wisdom but ...*
 - (a) This is a “wisdom” that seeks to hide our motives in our pursuit of personal advantage, using others for our own gain.
- iii) Some people think that if they can discredit the messenger, they can discredit the message itself.

2) Transparency—1:13-14

- a) **Three stages of understanding:**
 - i) **Present:** ¹³ *For we write nothing else to you than what you read [anaginosko] and understand [epiginosko],*
 - ii) **Future:** *and I hope you will understand [epiginosko] until the end,*
 - iii) **Past:** ¹⁴ *just as you also partially did understand [epiginosko] us,*
- b) **Mutual disclosure:**
 - i) *that we are your reason for boasting [kauchema] as you also are ours,*
- c) **Mutual accountability:**
 - i) *in the day of our Lord Jesus.*
- d) There is no hidden agenda with Paul. He says what he means, and he means what he says. Don't try to read between the lines.

3) Things to remember:

- a) It is **NOT** wrong/sinful to defend yourself.
 - i) There are occasions when Christians, confronted by groundless accusations of impropriety of conduct, are justified in appealing to their motives for acting in a particular way. An unjustifiable stigma that may have become attached to a certain course of action may sometimes be removed by a frank appeal to one's clear conscience over the behavior in question. (Murray Harris)
- b) It is wrong/sinful to assume ulterior motives in others.
 - i) Warren Wiersbe wrote: Misunderstandings among God's people are often very difficult to untangle, because one misunderstanding often leads to another. Once we start to question the integrity of others or distrust their words, the door is opened to all kinds of problems.

2 Corinthians 1:15-20 When Your Good Intentions are Unfairly Criticized

Introduction: Stating your good intentions is far different than making an iron-clad promise. No one should confuse the two.

Paul's relationship with the Corinthians church was obviously strained. **First**, Paul didn't follow his original plan. Instead, he wrote a strong letter to them. (1:15-2:4; 10:10; 12:13-15) **Second**, his face-to-face visit appears to have only worsened the already strained feelings. **Third**, Paul refused to accept payment for ministering (11:8-9; 12:16-18). [Apologetics Study Bible]

- 1) **Good intentions—1:15-16** ¹⁵ *And in this confidence I intended [impf. ind. boulomai] at first ... [four infinitives]*
 - a) *to come to you, so that you might receive grace twice;*
 - i) His intention was to benefit them, not himself.
 - b) ¹⁶ *that is, to pass your way into Macedonia,*
 - c) *and again from Macedonia to come to you,*
 - d) *and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea.*
 - e) Paul was providentially hindered (twice!) from fulfilling his original plans. Cf. 1 Cor. 16:2-9; Acts 20:1-3
 - i) His intentions and his reality:
 - (1) Plan A: Ephesus, Macedonia, Corinth, maybe Jerusalem
 - (2) Plan B: Ephesus, Corinth, Macedonia, Corinth, Judea
 - (3) Reality: Ephesus, Corinth, Ephesus, Troas, Macedonia
 - ii) Therefore, the false teachers who had infiltrated the Corinthian church began to falsely accuse him of lacking integrity and being arbitrarily self-oriented.
 - iii) Have some in the church been pouting over Paul's change of plans, making them susceptible to the accusations of the false teachers?
- 2) **Rhetorical questions—1:17** (assumes a negative answer to both)
 - Some see these as echoing some of the suspicious accusations against him of being impulsive, unstable, and unreliable.
 - a) **Not fickle:** ¹⁷ *Therefore, was I vacillating when I intended to do this?*
 - b) **Not fleshly:** *Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?*
 - c) Ironically, it is the Corinthian church that is being fickle and fleshly. Titus' visit has helped calm things between them. (cf. 7:7-12)
- 3) **Consistency of communication is rooted in God's character—1:18** ¹⁸ *But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no.*

- This verse moves from particular accusations (v. 17) to general theological truths that are relevant to the issues at hand (vv. 18-22). (Murray Harris)
- a) **No inconsistent CHARACTER:** *But as God is faithful ...* (an oath)
 - OT: Cf. Num. 23:19; Deut. 7:9
 - NT: Cf. 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Thess. 3:3; Heb. 10:23; 1 John 1:9
 - i) This concept is repeated in 1:23.
 - ii) Unlike the gods and goddesses of the Greeks and Romans.
- b) **No inconsistent CONTENT:** *our word (all communication, spoken & written) to you is not yes and no.*
 - i) He changed his plans, and for good reasons; but he did not lie when he was present with them in Corinth. (Paul Barnett)
- c) Dane Ortlund wrote: Paul is tying the integrity of his apostolic communication of the gospel to the integrity of God himself, and probably even identifying God's faithfulness as the sustaining power of his own sincerity and integrity.

4) Consistency of Christ—1:19-20

- a) **Three acceptable witnesses:** ¹⁹ *For the Son of (the faithful) God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy (cf. Acts 18:5; 5-1/2 years earlier)—was not yes and no, but has become yes in Him.*
 - i) Paul was consistent individually and with his ministry team.
- b) **Comprehensive:** ²⁰ *For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes.*
 - i) **Negative:** This does not mean that promises to Israel are redirected in Christ to only Christians.
 - ii) **Positive:** It does mean that Christ guarantees the fulfillment of those promises to Israel.
 - (1) As David Stern writes: He is the instrument through whom God the Father has fulfilled, is fulfilling and will fulfill every promise he has ever made to the Jewish people—including the promise that they will return from Exile to possess and live in the Land of Israel and the promise that the Kingdom will be restored, with the Son of David on the throne.
- c) **Affirmative response:** *Therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.*
 - i) The Amen of affirmation of Paul, his ministry team, and the Corinthians to all of God's promises.

5) Things we need to remember:

- a) God is glorified in consistency, but duplicity is a denial of the gospel. ((David Woodall)
- b) How can we use this situation in our lives?
 - i) Do make appropriate plans in dependence on God's providence.

- (1) Don't make promises you don't intend to keep.
- ii) Remember that changes can and will take place.
 - (1) It is not wrong to change your plans. But try to explain to others the best you can. However, you can't stop them from assuming you have sinful motives.
 - iii) There is a time to stand firm, and there is a time to back off.
- c) Paul was a man of true character because he was a man with a clear conscience. (Warren Wiersbe)
 - i) He is under God's authority and so must do what God leads him to do. (Ben Witherington)
- d) Remember James 4:13-17.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 The Four-fold Work of God the Father

Introduction: There are many word pictures that Paul, by the Spirit, uses to illustrate what God has done for us.

Note well the three persons of the Triunity of God. The order of Christ, Father, and Spirit is reflected in 13:14.

- 1) **BUSINESS SALE: present aspect, guaranteeing one's validity & stability**—1:21a ²¹ *Now He who establishes* [pres. act. ptc. *bebaioo*] *us with you in (eis, toward) Christ* (i.e. Christward)
 - a) An ongoing work of God's strengthening us. We cannot establish ourselves.
 - b) God is doing this establishing work for both those who bring the Word of God and those who receive the Word of God.
 - c) Cf. Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 15:58; 1 Pet. 5:10

- 2) **Past aspects # 1 & 2**—1:21b-22a
 - a) **MINISTRY: assignment to service, setting apart and enablement:** *and anointed* [aor. act. ptc. *chrio*] *us is God* (the Father),
 - i) At salvation
 - ii) God has graciously and wisely chosen to use us to reach other treasonous rebels.
 - b) **MERCHANDISE: ownership, security, authenticity, and assurance of destination:** ²² *who also sealed* [aor. mid. ptc. *sphragizo*] *us*
 - i) At salvation
 - ii) We are His, and we will securely reach our final destination.

- 3) **BUYING A HOUSE/ENGAGEMENT: past aspect # 3 with a future focus**—1:22b *and gave the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts.*
 - a) **Past aspect:** *and gave* [aor. act. ptc. *didomi*]
 - i) At salvation
 - b) **Future focus:** *the pledge [arrabon] of the Spirit in our hearts.*
 - i) The guaranteed obligation of more to come.

- 4) **Things we need to remember:**
 - a) John MacArthur has stated: For the critics to attack Paul's authenticity was equal to tearing down God's work, as well as the church's unity.
 - b) George Guthrie wrote: To deny the validity and integrity of Paul's ministry would be to deny their own spiritual existence.

2 Corinthians 1:23-2:4
Paul's Joy and Love Expressed

Introduction:

1) Paul's personal non-visit—1:23-2:2

a) His solemn desire to spare them—1:23

- i) **His oath:** ²³ *But I call God as witness to my soul,*
 - (1) Paul often uses God as his witness. (cf. Rom. 1:9; Phil. 1:8; 1 Thess. 2:5, 10)
 - (2) He is willing to stake his life on this statement.
- ii) **His desire:** *that to spare you I did not come again to Corinth.*
 - (1) His non-visit was intended to be beneficial (not harmful) to them.
 - (2) Perhaps he simply wanted to give them to spiritually digest his first letter and prove their obedience.

b) His humble evaluation of them as faithful coworkers—1:24

- i) **Correcting their wrong assumptions:** ²⁴ *Not that we lord it over your faith,*
 - (1) He is not a dictator or spiritual bully just because his actions do not satisfy their preconceived ideas. He is not committing spiritual abuse or trying to intimidate them.
 - (2) Cf. Mk. 10:42; 1 Pet. 5:3
- ii) **Encouraging their faith:** *but are workers with you [sunergos] for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm.*
 - (1) Workers may refer to Silas and Timothy, not the Corinthians.
 - (2) Even if they are listening to those actively criticizing Paul.

c) His thoughtful desire to not cause sorrow—2:1 ¹ *But I determined this for my own sake, that I would not come to you again in sorrow [lupe].*

- i) Paul, as the leader of the ministry team, makes the final decision of their travel plans.
 - ii) However, this does not mean that spiritual leaders never make ministry decisions based on avoiding discomfort.
- d) His sober recognition of them as a conduit of joy—2:2** ² *For if [1st class condition] I cause you sorrow [lupeo], who then makes me glad [euphraino] but the one whom I made sorrowful [lupeo]?*
- i) Does this refer to a specific person who has been convicted of his sin and has repented?

2) Paul's personal letter—2:3-4

- a) His confident purpose in receiving joy—2:3** ³ *And this is the very thing I wrote you, so that when I came, I would not have sorrow [lupe] from those who ought*

to make me rejoice [chairō]; having confidence in you all that my joy [chara] would be the joy [chara] of you all.

i) Even though he did not personally visit, he did not avoid contact with them altogether. He wrote to them.

(1) This probably refers to a now-lost letter after 1 Corinthians.

ii) Cf. 2 Cor. 12:14; 13:1 about a third visit

b) **His reason for expressing his love for them—2:4** ⁴ *For out of much affliction [thlipsis] and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears;*

i) **Negative:** *not so that you would be made sorrowful [lupeō],*

ii) **Positive:** *but that you might know the love [agape] which I have abundantly for you.*

(1) Cf. 2 Cor. 12:15

3) Things we need to remember:

a)

2 Corinthians 2:5-11

The Significance and Dangers Associated With Forgiveness

Introduction: C. S. Lewis wrote: “We all agree that forgiveness is a beautiful idea until we have to practice it. (*Reflections on the Psalms*) British author John Stott reported that one British humanist stated: “What I envy most about you Christians is your forgiveness. I have nobody to forgive me.”

1) The significance of corporate forgiveness—2:5-7

a) How sin injures individuals and the congregation—2:5

i) **Individually:** ⁵ *But if [1st class condition] any has caused sorrow [pf. act. ind. lupeo], he (anonymous) has caused sorrow [pf. act. ind. lupeo] not to me,*

(1) The one causing pain was a member of the congregation who had apparently sinned in a personal relationship with others (cf. adikeo in 2 Cor. 7:12) in the congregation and was disciplined by a congregational vote. Previous generations cf. this with 1 Cor. 5.

(a) Perhaps an assault against Paul’s character & authority?

(2) Paul minimizes the pain of being directly sinned against. But there is still a sin to be forgiven. (cf. 2:10)

ii) **Congregationally:** *but in some degree—in order not to say too much—to all of you.*

(1) Unrepentant sin impacts the whole congregation. But the pain is still felt by the congregation.

(2) It was not true that the unnamed offender grieved all the Corinthians equally, but it was true that all of them in some measure were pained by his action. (Murray Harris)

b) How church discipline may impact the one sinning—2:6

i) ⁶ *Sufficient for such a one is this punishment [epitimia] which was inflicted by the majority [polus] (the greater number, not just the pastors),*

(1) The disciplined, repentant individual can never effectively pay for his or her own sins. Jesus paid for them on the cross.

(2) The censure (sanctions, legal penalties, formal act of criticism and rebuke) is limited in scope and time. There comes a time when the individual repents, and the authoritative, group discipline is complete. It is enough.

(a) Perhaps some thought the congregation had not been tough enough?

(b) Perhaps some thought the congregation had been too tough?

(3) But remember, time alone never removes the sinfulness of sin.

c) How the lack of restoration may impact the one who genuinely repents—2:7

i) **What does the congregation need to do?** ⁷ *so that on the contrary you should rather graciously forgive [charizomai] and comfort [parakaleo] him,*

- (1) Repentance is assumed to have taken place.
- ii) **Why should the congregation do this?** *lest such a one be swallowed up [katapino] by excessive sorrow [lupe].*
 - (1) How horrible if the repentant one gave up completely because the congregation refused to forgive and comfort him.
- iii) Someone said: Forgiveness not only gives, it also takes away,

2) The bigger danger of not forgiving—2:8-11

a) The importance of reaffirmation—2:8

- i) ⁸ *Therefore I encourage [parakaleo] you to reaffirm [kuroo] your love [agape] for him.*

(1) This might not look precisely the same in every situation. The point is that the congregation should do what they can to cause the repentant individual to recognize the reality of their loving forgiveness and the restoration of their recognition of him as a brother in Christ.

(2) The reaffirmation of love for which Paul calls, then, appears to be a formal act by the congregation, in the same way that the imposition of punishment in the first place appears to have been formal and judicial.

(Colin Kruse)

b) The response to his letter—2:9

- i) ⁹ *For to this end also I wrote, so that I might know your proven character [dokime], whether you are obedient [hupekoos] in all things.*

(1) The Corinthians congregation swings like a pendulum from one end of the spectrum to the other. (cf. 1 Cor. 5:2; 2 Cor. 2:6)

c) He supports their forgiveness—2:10-11

- i) **Forgiveness is rooted in grace:** ¹⁰ *But one whom you graciously forgive [charizomai] anything, I graciously forgive [charizomai] also.*

- ii) **Forgiveness is granted in the presence of Christ for the benefit of the congregation:** *For indeed what I have graciously forgiven [charizomai], if [1st class condition] I have graciously forgiven [charizomai] anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ,*

- iii) **Forgiveness is granted as a means of protecting the congregation:** ¹¹ *so that no advantage [pleonekteo] would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant [agnoeo] of his schemes [noema].*

(1) Christians need to understand the different plans and purposes that Satan wants to implement against individuals and the congregation. One of his primary intentions is to cause division and animosity with a congregation, encouraging some to be too lenient and others to be too harsh.

(a) The minority who continues to support the sinning brother against the majority of the congregation is a problem.

- (2) We all live our entire lives “in the present of Christ,” i.e. we are accountable to Him.
- iv) C. S. Lewis wrote in *The Weight of Glory*: Real forgiveness means looking steadily at the sin, the sin that is left over without any excuse, after all allowances have been made, and seeing it in all its horror, dirt, meanness, and malice, and nevertheless being wholly reconciled to the man who has done it. That, and only that, is forgiveness.

3) Things we need to remember:

- a) Five stages of God-honoring church discipline in these verses. (Harris)
- i) Wrongdoing (7:12)
 - ii) Punishment (2:6)
 - iii) Pain (2:5, 7)
 - iv) Repentance (2:6; 7:9-10)
 - v) Forgiveness and encouragement (2:7, 10)
 - vi) Affirmation and restoration (2:8)
- b) Satan is the enemy of peace. He is defeated by reconciliation. Christian love and charity neutralize all of Satan’s powers over us and serves as an invisible, protective shield. (David Garland)

2 Corinthians 2:12-17
Ministering the Word in the Sight of God

Introduction: 2:12-13 are a transitional section which form an introduction to 2:14-7:4.

1) Paul explains his travel history—2:12-13

- a) **FIRST ASPECT, a negative state of mind:** ¹² *Now ...* ¹³ *I had* [pf. act. ind.] *no rest* (release of tension) *for my spirit*, (cf. 2 Cor. 7:5-6; 8:13; 11:28)
- Cf. Paul's intense emotional state in 2 Cor. 4:7-12.
 - Paul wrestled with continual uneasiness of mind. (Murray Harris)
- i) **The immediate cause:** *not finding Titus my* (Gentile) *brother*.
- (1) Perhaps Titus was carrying some of the Corinthian financial gift for the people in Jerusalem? (cf. 2 Cor. 8:6)
 - (2) Paul's sequence is: no Titus, no peace, no preaching (Murray Harris)
- ii) **The general timeframe:**
- (1) **Purpose:** *when I came to Troas for [eis] the gospel of (the) Christ*
 - (a) Troas is a strategic city, an important seaport and commercial center. The roads to Europe and Asia Minor passes here.
 - (b) He possibly left Ephesus due to the riot of Acts 19.
 - (c) He had a vision in Troas (@ 260 miles north of Ephesus) that directed him to Macedonia (cf. Acts 16:8-10).
 - (2) **Providential opportunity:** *and when a door was opened for me in the Lord*, (cf. 1 Cor. 16:9; Col. 4:3; Rev. 3:8)
- b) **SECOND ASPECT, adjusted plans:** *But saying farewell to them, I went on* [aor. act. ind.] *to Macedonia*.
- i) Paul does not leave Troas because the opportunities for evangelism had dried up. He returns to follow the original itinerary of 1 Cor. 16:5.
 - ii) He will return to Troas many months later and spend seven days with them. (cf. Acts 20:7-12)
- c) Paul pauses his travel narrative here but will pick it up in 7:5-16.

2) Sincere ministry of the Word—2:14-17

- This abrupt new section (2:14-7:4) is about apostolic ministry
- a) **Gratitude—2:14-16a** ¹⁴ *But thanks be to God*,
- i) **God displays us as defeated enemies in His victory parade:** *who always leads us in triumphal procession* [pres. act. ptc. *thriambeuo*] *in (the) Christ*, (cf. Col. 2:15)

- (1) As conquered enemies of the victorious General. Some of the defeated enemy became submissive slaves of the General, while others were punished and/or executed.
 - (a) Is it a celebration? Yes.
 - (b) Is it a humiliation? Yes.
- (2) Like sports teams that have parades in their cities when they have won championships.
- ii) **God displays His fragrance in His victory message:** *and manifests* [pres. act. ptc. phaneroo] *through us the aroma* [osme] *of the knowledge of Him in every place.*
- iii) **Explaining the interpretation of the fragrance:** ¹⁵ *For we are* [pres. act. ind.] *a fragrance* [euodia] *of Christ to God ...*
 - (1) **Only two destinations for only two groups of people**
 - (a) **Positive:** *among those who are being saved*
 - (b) **Negative:** *and among those who are perishing;*
 - (2) **Only two results for only two groups of people**
 - (a) **Disagreeable stench:** ¹⁶ *to the one an* (unpleasant) *aroma* [osme] *from death to death,*
 - (b) **Agreeable fragrance:** *to the other an* (pleasant) *aroma* [osme] *from life to life.*
 - (3) Like the celebration confetti that falls of fans of both the winning and losing teams.
- b) **Humility—2:16b** *And who is sufficient/adequate, qualified for these things* (of ministry with eternal consequences)?
 - i) This is answered **positively** in 2 Cor. 3:1. We are, by God's grace!
 - (1) Genuine apostles are adequate because God chose them.
 - ii) This is answered **negatively** in 2 Cor. 3:4-6. No one, on their own!
 - (1) Rule of thumb, only the immature, the insincere, or the deceivers think they are sufficient.
 - (2) Self-reliance is a disqualification for Biblical ministry. (Murray Harris)
- c) **Contrasts—2:17**
 - i) **Negative:** ¹⁷ *For we are not like many, peddling/marketing* [pres. act. ptc. kapeleuo] *the word of God,*
 - (1) The dangers of advertising and marketing, manipulating the message for results and personal gain.
 - (2) This addresses their motivation and their techniques.
 - (3) The Biblical cross does not sell well, in Corinth or Sleepy Eye.
 - ii) **Positive:** *we speak* [pres. act. ind.] *in* [en] *Christ in the sight of* [katenanti] *God*
 - (1) Transparent motives: *but as from* [ek] *sincerity* [eilikrineia],

- (2) Source and accountability: *but as from [ek] God,*
(a) Apostles were authorized representatives of God who were accountable to communicate God's message without alteration or substitution. They did not need to be creative but faithful.
iii) Paul received no money from the Corinthians for his teaching. (Cf. 2 Cor. 11:7-9)

3) Things to remember:

- a) Becoming a Christian is a matter of being lovingly and graciously conquered by the Sovereign of the universe. You have been a traitorous rebel, and He has defeated you. This is great news!
- b) There is a Christ-like scent that permeates the lives of all genuine Christians. Whether one finds it attractive or not is directly related to one's final destiny. The aroma remains the same, but it is interpreted differently. Do you smell like Christ?
- c) George Guthrie writes: *Those who proclaim the gospel participate in cosmic-sized matters, spiritual life and death, liberation and destruction. Who can be considered adequate for such a role?*