

2 CORINTHIANS

BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

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By

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PREFACE TO THE READER

One of the most important elements of a healthy Christian life is regular study of God's word. The Psalmist writes in Psalm 19:7-8, "*The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.*" I yearn for Christians to reap the rich benefits of scripture study and to grow in the knowledge and love of God's word by directly engaging with the biblical text. This is why I have chosen to publish Bible study questions instead of commentaries. There are many valuable commentaries to aid in your study of scripture, and I recommend using them. For guidance on commentaries visit www.bestcommentaries.com.

However, the focus of this book is to engage you, the reader, and to challenge you to answer relevant questions based on the scripture.

I have in mind three types of uses for this book. The first is group Bible studies. Most of these questions were written for my weekly men's Bible study. I recommend the leader use this resource to prepare beforehand, reading all the questions and picking five to seven for discussion. Twenty questions would certainly be a lot of material to discuss! For the Bible study, each participant could have a copy to follow along. The second use is sermon preparation. Asking questions of the text can be very helpful for understanding the flow and point of a passage of scripture. The third use is personal Bible study. Again, you can gain valuable insights by asking questions of the text.

My hope is that these Bible study questions would encourage and facilitate Christians' gathering together to study God's word. One day, as Habakkuk 2:14 says, "*the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*" Critical to this prophecy in Habakkuk is our *knowing* about the Glory of God, and this is best achieved through the study of the Bible. So let's do our part!

I challenge you, reader, to ask some friends, colleagues, classmates, or fellow church members to join you for a Bible study. Ask God to open your eyes to understand the scripture (Psalm 119:18), and step out in faith to spread the knowledge of the Glory of God. May this book enrich your study of God's living and active word (Hebrews 4:12), and may the Lord Jesus Christ bless your Bible studies!

SUMMARY OF 2 CORINTHIANS

As with his first epistle to this dysfunctional church in Corinth, in 2 Corinthians the Apostle Paul addresses a wide variety of vital topics essential to church health and fruitfulness. He urges the church to forgive and restore a repentant sinner. He urges the church to be pure from the world, and to be financially generous in the offering being collected for the saints in Jerusalem. He defends his ministry as an apostle over the false teachers who were mocking him and talking him down. In so doing, he points to his track record of astonishing suffering for the gospel, a resume unmatched in all of church history.

But the centerpiece of this amazing epistle is Paul's clear articulation of the nature of gospel ministry: the superior glory of the New Covenant over the Old, and the elements and motives for faithfulness in spreading the gospel to a lost and dying world. Absorbing these truths will change your life and make your church more fruitful for all eternity!

THE GOD WHO COMFORTS AND LEADS

2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-2:4

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What does this section teach you about trials and sufferings in the Christian life?
2. What kinds of comfort does God give Christians that are not available to non-Christians?
3. Why is self-reliance so deadly in the Christian life? Why is it so hard to change?
4. What does this chapter teach us about how God leads us to make decisions?

II. VERSE-BY-VERSE QUESTIONS:

THE GOD WHO COMFORTS US IN CHRIST (VV. 1-7)

1. Given that Paul has to defend his ministry and his apostleship in this epistle from the “super-apostles” (2 Corinthians 11:5, 12:11), how significant is his initial greeting, “Paul an apostle...”? (1)
2. The greeting in verse 2 is Paul’s standard greeting, yet it is filled with theologically significant words, like “grace” and “peace.” Why do you think Paul makes it a practice to greet his readers with grace and peace from God? (2)
3. How does God comfort us in times of affliction? In what ways do particular sufferings lead to specific comforts that can then be used to comfort others? How would this help you to see the providence of God in trials/suffering? (4)
4. How do we “share abundantly” in Christ’s sufferings and comfort? How does this idea relate to Matthew 20:22-23 and Colossians 1:24? (5)
5. How do the sufferings and comforts of one Christian (Paul in this case) produce perseverance and salvation in the lives of other Christians? (6)
6. What final hope does Paul have for them? (7)

GOD TRAINS US TO TRUST IN HIM AND NOT OURSELVES (VV. 8-11)

7. What circumstance from his own life does Paul relate in verses 8-11? Why does he do he share this experience with the Corinthian church?
8. What hardships in Asia do you think he is referring to? What do you think could have happened to Paul that would be so extreme as to make him despair of life itself? (8-9)
9. Why does Paul say this happened to him? What lesson was God seeking to teach Paul through this, according to verse 9? (9)
10. What does it mean to rely on yourself? Why is it so vital for us to not do this, but rather to learn to trust in God? How does our culture celebrate trusting in yourself? (9)

11. What is the significance of the fact that God orchestrated an extremely painful trial in Paul's life to teach him not to rely on/trust in himself but in God? (9)
12. What was the outcome of that deadly trial? Is the trial over with? If not, how does Paul expect to continue to be delivered? (10-11)
13. What role does Paul expect the Corinthians to play in his deliverance from severe trials? What does this teach you about the efficacy of prayer? (11)
14. What good thing comes from many people praying for some great thing that happens? Why is thanksgiving for answered prayer such a healthy thing for us in our walk with Christ? (11)

PAUL'S CHANGE OF PLANS WERE NOT WORLDLY BUT GODLY (VV. 12-2:4)

15. What significant claim does Paul make in verses 12-14? Given the context, why do you think Paul makes this claim about himself? (12-14)
16. Why is it important is it for pastors and other Christian leaders to be able to make the bold claim of verse 12? (12)
17. What is the boasting that Paul is speaking of in verse 14? (14)
18. What issue is Paul addressing in verses 15-17? Why do you think Paul's change of plans would have been troubling to some at Corinth, and evidence to his enemies that he was a bad leader? (15-17)
19. How does Paul link his change of plans to the gospel of Christ he preaches? Since Paul is a role model representing God (2 Cor. 5:20), how could Satan use Paul's change of plans to make some think the gospel promises itself were untrustworthy? (18-19)
20. How is Christ God's "yes" to all the eternal promises of the Bible? (20)
21. What important statement does Paul make in verse 21 about our security in Christ? (21)
22. How does the sealing of the Spirit function in the Christian life? How does it help us stand firm in Christ? How does the Spirit's seal serve as a deposit guaranteeing our full inheritance? (22)
23. What reason does Paul give for changing his plans? (1:23-2:4)
24. What letter is Paul referencing. What effect did it have on them? (3-4)
25. What does 2:4 teach you about Paul's state of mind and affection for this group of believers? How can we imitate this love with our fellow Christians? (2:4)

III. SUMMARY:

Paul begins his extended defense of his apostolic ministry by relating to the Corinthian church his own sufferings for Christ, as well as his reasons for changing his travel plans.

RESTORATION FOR A REPENTANT SINNER & THE AROMA OF CHRIST
2 CORINTHIANS 2:5-17

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What does this section teach us about God's grace in restoring repentant sinners?
2. How can this passage help us understand the need to fight Satan's schemes?
3. Why is it helpful to meditate on the idea that Paul is both an aroma of life and a stench of death to different people with the same gospel message?

II. VERSE-BY-VERSE QUESTIONS:

RESTORATION FOR A REPENTANT SINNER (VV.5-11)

Note: Many scholars believe that this section is dealing with the individual who was to be disciplined by the church in 1 Corinthians 5.

1. What does Paul mean in verse 5 about people who have caused grief? Why does he want them to be sure that the grief that was caused by the sinner was really directed to the whole church, not particularly to him? (5)
2. What very important practical detail about church life emerges with the words "the majority" in verse 6? What does this teach you about how church discipline should be done? How is this word a key insight into congregational church government, the rule of a local church by the people? (6)
3. What does Paul mean by saying that the punishment inflicted on the sinner by the majority is sufficient for that person? (6)
4. The sinner grieved the whole church by his sin, the church responded by inflicting a punishment (expelling him from church membership), the sinner has repented, now they ought to welcome him back as a member. What does this show you about the grace of God in the lives of sinning Christians? (7)
5. What would the result be if they refuse to welcome him back, no matter how repentant he is? Why would that be terrible for the future health of the church? How would the repentant sinner be "overwhelmed by excessive sorrow"? (7)
6. What negative long-term consequences would such a hard-line stand have on Christian churches around the world? Effectively, church discipline would be final, and the person could never again be a member of a healthy church again. How would that be disastrous for the future of Christianity? (7)
7. To forestall such a devastating outcome, what specific things does Paul command them to do in verses 7-8? How would this greatly strengthen the ministry of the gospel in Corinth if they obey him? (7-8)
8. How is the right practice of church discipline by a local church a clear test of whether or not that church is healthy? (9)

9. We have two opposite ways to fail when it comes to dealing with sinners in the church: too lenient (not dealing with sin/failing to do any church discipline) vs. too harsh (not welcoming back a repentant sinner that has been expelled from church membership). Why is it vital for churches to avoid either extreme?
10. What does Paul say in verse 10? How does that relate to verse 5? Why is it important for them to understand that Paul's judgment is not really the final issue here, that the local church is the final human court? (10)
11. Paul wants them to know that full forgiveness in the sight of Christ is essential in order that Satan would not outwit them. Why would Satan want to be sure they fail in either one of the extreme ways—too lenient or too harsh? (10-11)
12. What does Paul mean by Satan's "designs"? The NIV says "schemes." What does this imply? How is being aware of Satan's "schemes" essential to avoiding his traps? How can we become increasingly aware of his schemes? Why should we study how Satan deceived us after we've fallen into one of his traps? (11)
13. 17th century Puritan Thomas Brooks wrote a great book on being aware of Satan's temptations and "devices" (schemes) based on this verse. It's called *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*. Brooks wrote that Christians should make a constant study of four topics: 1) Christ; 2) the Scriptures; 3) their own hearts; and 4) Satan's schemes. Why are all four vital topics for constant study?

THE AROMA OF THE GOSPEL: DEATH TO SOME, LIFE TO OTHERS (VV. 12-17)

14. Why do you think Paul is explaining his travel plans in verses 12-13? What is an "open door"? Why didn't Paul walk through the open door? (12-13)
15. What does Paul thank God for in verses 14-17? (14-17)
16. The image of a "triumphal procession" is powerful. A victorious Roman general would be given the honor of a parade in Rome before throngs of adoring citizens. Included in the parade are both honored soldiers who made the victory possible and defeated foes who are going to their execution. Which do you think Paul sees himself as in this image? See also 1 Corinthians 4:9. (14)
17. How did Paul spread the aroma of Christ everywhere he went? Why does the ministry of the gospel smell to some like the stench of death and to others the fragrance of life? How does this challenge you in your gospel witness? (15-16)
18. What is the significance of Paul's statement, "who is sufficient for these things?" (16)
19. What are Paul's motives in ministry? What is one common motive in ministry that Paul says absolutely does not characterize them? See 1 Thess. 2:5. (17)

III. SUMMARY:

Paul strongly urges the Corinthian church to reinstate the repentant sinner they had earlier disciplined, and he continues to defend the integrity of his gospel ministry.

THE SUPERIOR GLORY OF THE NEW COVENANT

2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-18

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. How are transformed lives the clearest proof of a person's ministry?
2. What does this chapter teach you about the superiority of the New Covenant to the Old Covenant?
3. What do you learn in this chapter about the Holy Spirit's role in converting all people, but especially Jewish people, to a genuine faith in Christ?

II. VERSE-BY-VERSE QUESTIONS:

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION: CHANGED LIVES (VV. 1-6)

1. Why do you think Paul thinks it necessary to keep proving the validity of his ministry to the Corinthians? What do you think are his motives for doing this?
2. What is usually the purpose of "letters of recommendation?" What does Paul say are his "letters of recommendation?" (2-3)
3. How do the changed lives of people prove that God is at work in someone's ministry? How were the Corinthians' lives changed? (2-3)
4. How does the Holy Spirit transform the lives of genuinely converted people? If that transformation does not occur, what does it tell you about that person? (3)
5. What is the "confidence" that Paul is talking about in verse 4? (4)
6. Why do you think Paul is so careful to say that his confidence in ministry comes not from himself (his own personality/persuasion/piety), but from God? (5)
7. How did God make Paul a minister? He also claims the same in Galatians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, Ephesians 1:1, 2 Tim. 1:1, that he was made an apostle by God. Why is this essential to his ministry to the Corinthians? (6)
8. What is the significance of the fact that God makes men competent to be ministers of the gospel? (6)
9. What does he mean by "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." Why should we not take this idea too far and minimize the role of the written Word of God? (6)

THE SUPERIOR GLORY OF THE NEW COVENANT (VV. 7-18)

10. What is the "ministry of death, carved in letters on stone"? Why does Paul call it that? (7)
11. How did the Old Covenant come with glory? What story from the time of Moses and the Ten Commandments does Paul zero in on here? See Exodus 34:29-35. (7)

12. How is the “ministry of the Spirit” (New Covenant) more glorious than the “ministry of condemnation” (the old covenant)? Why is Paul making this point to the Corinthians? (7-11)
13. Why does Paul call Moses’ ministry, “The ministry of condemnation”? How does this show you the purpose of the Old Covenant? (9)
14. Why does Paul emphasize that the glory of Moses face was so temporary? How is this really the main point Paul is making in these verses—the glory of the Old Covenant is fading and obsolete, the glory of the New Covenant is eternal?
15. How does Paul use this superior glory as fuel for hope, which results in his boldness in life and ministry? (12)
16. What point does Paul make concerning Moses veiling his face? What does Paul think this veil symbolizes when it comes to the Jewish people? (12-16)
17. How is Paul different than Moses when it comes to the veil? (13)
18. What is wrong with the minds of unbelieving Jews according to this passage? (13-16)
19. How is the veil like spiritual blindness? How is it related to 2 Corinthians 4:6? How does this passage explain why unbelieving Jews cannot see Christ in Isaiah 53 or Psalm 22? See Isaiah 53:5-6 and Psalm 22. (13-16)
20. How is the veil removed according to this passage? What does verse 14 tell us about that? What about verse 16? (14, 16)
21. What do verses 17-18 teach us about the Holy Spirit? What role does the Holy Spirit play in removing the veil of unbelief and spiritual blindness? (17-18)
22. What does Paul mean when he says “The Lord is the Spirit”? (17, 18)
23. What is the nature of the freedom Paul is speaking about, freedom in the Spirit? See Romans 6:18 and also John 8:34-36. (17)
24. How does verse 18 describe sanctification—progressive growth into holiness? How is sanctification the same as being “transformed into the same image”? (18)
25. Verse 18 literally says that Christians are being transformed “from glory into glory.” What does this teach you about the Christian life? How is that a journey “from glory into glory”? (18)

III. SUMMARY:

Paul describes the superior glory of the New Covenant in that it results in the transformation of its people into glorious and eternal conformity to Christ, unlike the Old Covenant which had a fading glory and only brought death to its people.

GLORIOUS LIGHT MINISTERED BY JARS OF CLAY
2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-18

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What does this passage teach us about those who refuse to believe the good news of the gospel?
2. What does Paul teach here about God's power to transform hearts?
3. Paul twice mentions that he does not "lose heart" (1, 16). What reasons does he give for this buoyant hope?
4. What do you learn here about suffering for the gospel?

II. VERSE-BY-VERSE QUESTIONS:

THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL (VV. 1-6)

1. What is the connection between 4:1 and 3:18? What is "this ministry" that Paul speaks of? (1)
2. Why would Paul and his fellow ministers be tempted to "lose heart"? What keeps them from losing heart? (1)
3. Paul seems to be simultaneously defending himself and attacking his opponents in verse 2. What can we learn from verse 2 about Paul's opponents? What would be "disgraceful" or "underhanded" ways of promoting a gospel ministry? What does it mean to "tamper" with God's word? (2)
4. What is the significance of Paul's statement, "by the open statement of the truth..."? (2)
5. Why do Paul and Timothy have to "commend" themselves to the Corinthians? What does he mean by commending themselves to everyone's "...conscience in the sight of God"?
6. What does Paul say about the veil? How does this relate to 3:14-16? What is the significance of Paul extending the concept of the "veil" beyond the Jewish people to all those who are perishing? (3)
7. What does it mean for the gospel to be "veiled"? How is this veil removed? See 3:14, 16. (3)
8. Who is the "god of this world"? What does verse 4 teach you about his activity in the lives/minds of unbelievers? See also 1 John 5:19. (4)
9. How could verses 3 and 4 help us have compassion and mercy on people who are rejecting (sometimes with hostility) us and the gospel we are sharing? (3-4)
10. Paul speaks of the "light" of the gospel. How is the gospel "light"? From what does this "light" radiate? See John 1:4-5. What is the connection between this "light" and the "glory" of the New Covenant discussed in 3:7-18? (4)

11. What do you think it means that Christ is the “image” of God? See also Colossians 1:15, John 1:18, John 14:8-9. (4)
12. Paul says that he and Timothy are merely servants proclaiming “Jesus Christ as Lord.” What is the significance of this “Jesus Christ as Lord” proclamation for those who receive the gospel? What about those who reject the gospel? (5)
13. How would Paul be discredited if he was promoting himself? How does the fact that promotes Christ as Lord with himself as a servant add to his credibility? (5)
14. Paul draws a connection between the creative power of God in creating light at the beginning of creation (Genesis 1:3) and putting the light of the gospel in our hearts. What does this teach you about God’s activity in removing the “veil” from an unbeliever and showing them the greatness of Jesus Christ? (6)
15. What does the phrase “light of the knowledge of the glory of God” teach you about the gospel? How is the gospel “light”? How does the gospel relate to “knowledge”? How does the gospel relate to the “glory of God” (6)

INNER RENEWAL IN A JAR OF CLAY (VV. 7-16)

16. What do you think Paul means by saying that “we have this treasure in jars of clay”? What does he give as the purpose for this? (7)
17. What is the common theme of verses 8-9? What does this teach you about God’s sustaining grace in the lives of his servants? (8-9)
18. What do is it mean to carry the death of Jesus in your body? See also Colossians 3:3 and Romans 6:4. How is the life of Jesus also “manifested” in our lives? (10)
19. Paul makes an astonishing statement about the sovereignty of God in the suffering of his saints. What does this teach you about God’s purposes in bringing trials on his people? What does Paul mean here by “mortal flesh.” (11)
20. Paul connects his belief in the gospel to his proclamation of the gospel. Essentially, these should be inseparable. Why do you think so many Christians have difficulty speaking publicly about what they believe? (13)
21. What reason does Paul give for not losing heart? How is the outer self “wasting away”? How is the inner self being “renewed”? (16)
22. How can a Christian looking on suffering as “light” and “momentary”? What is the “eternal weight of glory”? (17)
23. What does Paul say about things that are seen vs things that are unseen? How is this counterintuitive? How does this give you perspective on your life? (18)

III. SUMMARY:

Paul explains why he does not lose heart in the ministry of the gospel, even in the midst of mass rejection and great suffering. He considers his hardships light and momentary compared to the eternal heavenly reward awaiting him.

LOOKING TO THE RESURRECTION WITH CHRIST

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-10

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. How should thinking about our resurrection bodies help encourage us now in this world?
2. How is judgement day a motive for evangelism?

II. VERSE-BY-VERSE QUESTIONS:

OUR ETERNAL DWELLING PLACE—OUR RESURRECTION BODIES (vv. 1-10)

1. What do these verses teach us about our heavenly future? (1-10)
2. What does Paul mean by “the tent that is our earthly home?” See 2 Peter 1:1(1)
3. What does Paul say is going to happen to the earthly tent we dwell in? How does our aging and gradual dying challenge our faith? (1)
4. What is the comfort Paul gives us in this verse? (1)
5. What is the groaning Paul mentions in verse 2? How does that relate to Romans 8:18-25? (2)
6. In what sense are we presently “naked” according to Paul’s train of thought here? (2-3)
7. Paul returns to the theme of groaning in verse 4. What is the longing inside of us based on that verse? (4)
8. How does the “swallowing up” of what is mortal connect with 1 Corinthians 15:54? (4)
9. What does verse 5 teach us about God’s purpose for us? How should the fact that God has created us to be in eternally glorious resurrection bodies be a constant encouragement to us, even while we suffering in these mortal and aging bodies? (5)
10. What does it mean that God has given us the Spirit as a “guarantee”? How does the Spirit give us a foretaste of heavenly joy that sustains us while we suffer disease, pain, aging and death in these present mortal bodies? (5)

Note: the Greek word behind “deposit” refers to earnest money, or a stipend given to a minor heir to sustain him until he is old enough to receive his full inheritance.
11. What reaction does Paul say we should have in verse 6? Do you feel that you are regularly confident in God’s eternal purposes for you, even while you may have to suffer pain in this present life? (6)

12. What does Paul mean that as long as we are present in these mortal bodies, we are “away from the Lord?” Considering what is written in Hebrews 13:5 and John 14:18, what does Paul mean here? (6)
13. What does it mean that we walk by faith and not by sight? How is faith like the eyesight of the soul? (7)
14. Why can Paul and his companions still have “good courage”? Why does Paul say that we he would prefer to be away from the body and present with the Lord? How does it relate to Philippians 1:23? (8)
15. What is the significance of this idea of being “absent from the body, present with the Lord?” How does this teach the idea of the eternity of the human soul, and the idea that departed believers are disembodied spirits in the presence of God in heaven right now? How do Mt. 22:31-32 and Hebrews 12:23 both teach the idea of perfected spirits of dead believers in the presence of God right now? (8)
16. What is the connection between verses 8-9? In other words, how should our future resurrection bodies motivate us constantly to please God? (8-9)
17. How should our ambition or goal be constantly to please God at every moment? How does it relate to Christ’s statement about his own life found in John 8:29, “I always do the things that are pleasing to him?”
18. How do the saints both on earth and in heaven seek constantly to please God? (9)
19. How is verse 10 a strong motivation for us to live a godly life? How does it relate to Paul’s statement to Felix in Acts 24:15-16? (10)
20. What does verse 10 teach you about Judgment Day? How does our giving an account to Christ fit into the context here in this chapter? What is the difference between giving an account to the Lord for our sins, and being condemned for our sins? See Romans 8:1?
21. How does the idea of giving an account for all our actions in the body (whether good or bad) relate to these passages: Romans 14:12; Matthew 12:36; Hebrews 4:13; Matthew 18:23; Matthew 25:19.
22. Why do so many Christians reject the idea of giving Christ an account for our sins on Judgment Day? Do you think that accounting will be painful or pleasant? (10)

III. SUMMARY:

Paul explains to the Corinthians that the future resurrection life in the presence of Jesus Christ and the reality of a future judgement day, furnishes the courage and motivation to live a faith-filled life and endure suffering and hardship for the name of Christ.

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-21

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What are some of the motivations for evangelism and missions in this section? How could studying these motivations help move us to more boldness and faithfulness in evangelism?
2. What does it mean to you to be God's ambassador in this world, as though God were making his appeal to lost people through you?

II. VERSE-BY-VERSE QUESTIONS:

1. Verses 9-21 is the greatest series of verses in the Bible on motivations for evangelism. Go through these verses and pull out ideas from each part saying "I should evangelize because..." (9-21)
2. How does the fear of the Lord cause us to persuade people to come to Christ? Are we fearing what God will do to us if we don't evangelize, or are we fearing what God will do to the lost if they don't come to Christ... or both? (11)
3. What role does persuasion play in evangelism? How does it fit into the idea of "reasoning with" people from the scriptures? See Acts 17:2, 17:17, 18:19, Isaiah 1:18, and 1 Peter 3:15. How is evangelism in part an effort in reasoning? (11)
4. Acts 2:40 says that Peter pleaded with people to save themselves from this sinful generation. Pleading implies passion. How is evangelism a combination of both reason and passion? (11)
5. What does the second half of verse 11 and verse 12 contribute to Paul's argument? How do these words tend to show the importance of the character and lifestyle of the messengers of the gospel? (11-12)
6. How does verse 13 show the accusations of others against Paul as he was doing this evangelism ministry? See Festus's cry against Paul in Acts 26:24. Why do passionate Christians sometimes look insane to lost people? (13)
7. What does it mean when Paul says "the love of Christ controls (or compels) us"? What is Paul feeling compelled/constrained about here? (14)
8. What does the "love of Christ" mean? Is it his love for us or our love for him that compels/constrains us to evangelize the lost? How could either one be a suitable motivation for evangelism? (14)
9. What does it mean that Christ died for all, and therefore all died? How is this a motivation for evangelism? (14-15)
10. How should Christ's death for us free us from living for ourselves? How does selfishness (living for ourselves) stop us from evangelism? (15)

11. What does it mean to regard someone “according to the flesh”? How is the commitment to see people through a spiritual lens vital to evangelism? (16)
12. 2 Corinthians 5:17 is one of the most important verses for a new Christian to memorize. Why do you think that is? What does it mean to be “in Christ?” How does being in Christ make someone a “new creation?” What is the significance of the word “creation” in terms of the power of God on a person’s life? (17)
13. If someone is in Christ, Paul says “the old has passed away; behold the new has come.” How does that describe the changes that happen when someone becomes a Christian? What does that mean in practical, daily life? What does it mean mentally, emotionally, socially, financially? (17)
14. What does it mean that God reconciled us to himself? What is reconciliation? How does it relate to the fact that, at one time we were enemies of God? See Romans 5:10, Colossians 1:21. Who did the reconciling work? (18)
15. What does it mean that God has given to us the “ministry of reconciliation”? What does this consist of? How is this a lifelong responsibility for every Christian? (18-20)
16. How is the fact that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ show this to be a unilateral work of a sovereign God? (19)
17. Paul speaks of the “ministry” of reconciliation and the “message” of reconciliation, using different Greek words. But he says that he has committed each of these to us. How do you understand these? (18-19)
18. What does it mean to be an ambassador? How are we God’s ambassadors to a sinful, hostile, rebellious world? (20)
19. In what way does God make his appeal to lost people through us? How does the Spirit work that in us as evangelists? (20)
20. What is the significance of Paul’s words, “We implore (beg) you... be reconciled to God”? How should that give us a pattern for evangelism? (20)
21. Verse 21 is one of the most significant verses in the Bible on substitutionary atonement and the double transfer (imputation) involved in the cross of Christ: our sins to him, his righteousness to us. How should this be at the center of our ministry of evangelism? (21)
22. What does verse 21 teach you about Christ’s purity? What does it teach us about our positional righteousness in Christ? (21)

III. SUMMARY:

Paul gives a comprehensive explanation of the motives and message of evangelism. This chapter should be studied carefully by every Christian to grow in passion and fruitfulness in evangelism.

THE COST AND COMMITMENT OF THIS DAY OF SALVATION

2 CORINTHIANS 6:1-18

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. Why is it important for all Christians to realize the urgency of Paul's statement, "Now is the day of salvation?" How does that urgency help us to redeem the time both in personal holiness and bold evangelism?
2. How do Paul's various sufferings listed humble and motivate you?
3. How does this chapter point to the threat of worldliness in our present age? What does the call to "come out and be separate" mean for you personally?

II. VERSE BY VERSE QUESTIONS:

NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION (VV. 1-2)

1. How do these two verses connect with the previous chapter? What was Paul discussing in 2 Corinthians 5:18-21? How does the urgency here help to complete Paul's appeal in chapter 5? (12)
2. What does it mean to "receive the grace of God in vain"? How does this connect to the doctrine of effectual calling? (1)
3. What Old Testament scripture does Paul quote in verse 2? What is God saying to sinners here? How could an evangelist use this verse to move people to immediate action in responding to the gospel? (2)
4. Why do lost people who are under the conviction of the Holy Spirit when they hear the gospel put off responding to Christ? How is Felix an example of this in Acts 24:25? What eventually happened to Felix's interest in the gospel?
5. Talk about the similarities between verse 2 and Isaiah 55:6-7. How do both verses point to a moment in time when God may be gracious, but with no guarantees that he will be similarly gracious tomorrow (if tomorrow ever comes)? See also Hebrews 3:7-8. (2)
6. How should the urgency of this passage be pressed even on people already converted, for both evangelism and personal holiness? (2)

PAUL'S EXAMPLE OF SUFFERING IN THE MINISTRY (VV. 3-13)

7. What kinds of "obstacles" could an evangelist or missionary or pastor put in someone's path to make them stumble over the gospel message? How can someone's ministry be "discredited"? Why is it vital for ministers of the gospel to live out godliness before the eyes of the people they are ministering to? (3)
8. Paul uses various terms, all in the plural, to discuss his trials: "afflictions, hardships, calamities." What does this teach you about his life? How does endurance in the face of stiff opposition validate the message of the gospel? (4)

9. Paul mentions in greater detail the kinds of sufferings he endured for the gospel in verse 5. How does this list convict and motivate you to serve Christ? (5)
10. What traits does Paul list concerning his lifestyle in verse 6? What do these traits contribute to Paul's ministry? How do they challenge you to grow? (6)
11. What "weapons" do you think Paul is talking about? What does this teach you of the struggle involved in advancing the Kingdom of God? Compare with 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. (7)
12. Paul is treated with honor and praise by some, but he is dishonored and slandered by others. How are both sides of this equation inevitable for faithful ministers of the Word of God? (8)
13. Paul contrasts the way he and his companions are treated to the reality of the situation. "We are treated as... and yet are..." How does this show you the opposition and slander that Paul faced? (8-10)
14. Go through each of the ways Paul says he was treated. How was he treated as an "imposter," as "unknown," as "dying," a "punished," as "sorrowful," as "poor," and as "having nothing"? These are all slung at him as insults, yet some of them seem to be true, others are not. How does Paul deal with each of these attacks? (8-10)
15. How was Paul "poor, yet making many rich"? How was it true that Paul owned nothing, yet possessed everything? How does Paul's response to all these attacks show the glorious buoyancy of his joy in Christ? (10)
16. What appeal does Paul make to the Corinthians in verses 11-13? What does this show you about the vulnerability of a true gospel minister? (11-13)

COME OUT AND BE SEPARATE (VV. 14-18)

17. What does this section teach you about the dangers of worldliness? (14-18)
18. In the context, what does it mean to be "unequally yoked" with unbelievers here? How could this passage also be understood to preclude Christians marrying non-Christians? Why does that "unequal yoking" produce so much misery and distress in church life and home life? (14)
19. What reasons does Paul give for his command? What does it mean that we Christians are the "temple of the living God?" (15-16)
20. What do verses 16-17 teach you about God's desire to have a holy people, set apart to him? Why is it vital for Christians to "come out and be separate" from unbelievers? How do we do that without leaving the world?

III. SUMMARY:

Paul explains that passionate gospel ministry comes with great suffering. He also issues a call for holiness of the church based upon God's desire to dwell with her.

PAUL'S JOY IN THE CORINTHIANS' REPENTANCE

2 CORINTHIANS 7:1-16

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What does this chapter teach you about the emotional investment a minister of the Word must make in the lives of the people he's ministering to?
2. What does this chapter teach us about the nature of true repentance? Why is it vital for us to understand the elements of true repentance as we deal with our own sins? Why is it likewise important when counseling others in their sins?
3. Paul is overjoyed and encouraged about the journey of repentance the Corinthians had travelled. Why is it so important for parents and pastors and disciples to express joy in the progress made by people they are leading?

II. VERSE BY VERSE QUESTIONS:

THE CALL FOR ABSOLUTE PURITY (VV. 1)

1. What does Paul call on all Christians to do in verse 1? How does this command connect with the end of the previous chapter? (1)
2. Why is it vital for 21st century Christians to be extremely diligent to be pure from the continual onslaught of the world's defilement? (1)
3. How does the "fear of God" serve as a strong motivator for personal purity? Why should we fear the Lord's reaction to our sin? (1)
4. What do you think "bringing holiness to completion" means? (1)

PAUL'S EMOTIONAL INVESTMENT IN THE CORINTHIANS (VV. 2-7)

5. Paul seems extremely emotional invested in the Corinthians. How do these verses demonstrate that? Why is it so important for church leaders to be emotionally invested in the people they are leading?
6. What does Paul mean by "Make room in your hearts for us"? What credentials does Paul give in verse 2 for why they should not be shutting Paul out? How do these words give us an insight into the kind of slander Paul had to refute? (2)
7. What do you make of Paul's statement in verse 3? How does this display the level of care he had for them? (3)
8. Paul has a high level of confidence in the Corinthians. What does expressing such confidence do to church members or disciples or children that we are called to lead? Conversely, if these folks feel that you lack confidence that they will succeed in the Christian life, how could that be devastating to them? (4)
9. What account does Paul relate in verses 5-7? What does it show about Paul's level of concern and love for them? Why does he share this with them? (5-7)

10. What do these verses teach you about the anguish that a missionary, evangelist, church planter, pastor, or even a parent has to endure as the people they are entrusted with struggle in their Christian lives? (5-7)
11. What comfort did Titus bring them? What news did he bring from Corinth? How did Titus's news relate to the letter Paul had written to them? (5-8)
12. What reactions from the Corinthians did Titus tell Paul about in verse 7? Why did these reactions bring joy and comfort to Paul? (7)

THE NATURE AND FRUITS OF TRUE REPENTANCE (VV. 8-16)

13. The cause of all this emotion was a letter Paul seems to have written to them. Many commentators believe this was not 1 Corinthians but a lost letter, sometimes called the "painful letter." Based on what Paul says here, what do you think he might have said to them in that letter?
14. Paul knows that the letter he wrote them brought them great pain. Why was he ultimately glad about that pain? Why would God actually want the Corinthians to feel sorrowful? (9)
15. How does this relate to the fact that our sins always grieve the Holy Spirit? See Isaiah 63:10; Ephesians 4:30. Why would the Spirit want to work in us the same grief he felt over our sin? (9-10)
16. What is the fruit of godly sorrow, according to verse 10? How does this relate to Jesus' assertion, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" in Matthew 5:4. (10)
17. What are the elements of true repentance that Paul unfolds in verse 11? How should a counselor or pastor who is working with someone caught in sin use this list? (11)
18. Why is earnestness/alarm/zeal to address the situation and clear your name essential to true repentance? What would be the opposite reaction to sin? (11)
19. How does their reaction to his strong, rebuking letter prove their love for Paul? Why was this very encouraging to Paul? (12-13)
20. What effect did their reaction to Paul's letter have on Titus? What does Paul say were the reasons for Titus's joy? (13-15)
21. How does Paul end this chapter? What do you find hopeful about this final statement? (16)

III. SUMMARY:

Paul expresses the depth of his emotional commitment to the Corinthians, especially in that he rejoices that the painful letter he wrote them rebuking them for their sins resulted in them being genuinely sorrowful and ardently setting all things right. This gives us a display of the nature of true repentance.

IMITATING CHRIST AS A GENEROUS GIVER

2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-24

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What does this chapter teach about principles of Christian giving?
2. Why is generosity in giving such a vital part of a healthy Christian life?
3. How can other people's example of giving be a good motivation for us to give?
4. How is Jesus Christ the ultimate example of a generous giver?

II. VERSE BY VERSE QUESTIONS:

THE EXAMPLE OF THE MACEDONIANS IN GENEROUS GIVING (VV. 1-7)

1. This chapter and the next are both about a collection Paul is taking among the Gentile churches. What does Romans 15:25-28 teach about this collection?
2. What does Paul say about the way the Macedonian churches contributed to this collection? What is his motive for relating this to the Corinthians? (1-5)
3. What were the specific circumstances of these Macedonian churches that made the giving so remarkable to Paul? Why is it often the case that poor and suffering people give more generously than rich and comfortable people? (2-4)
4. Paul cites the extreme levels of suffering the Macedonian churches were enduring. Why does this make their giving more noteworthy? How does their example challenge you personally in giving generously? (2-4)
5. What do you think Paul means when he says the Macedonian churches gave "according to their means...and beyond their means..."? How do you understand these words? How should their example remove a lot of the excuses Christians often make for not giving generously to the work of the Lord? (3)
6. What does verse 4 teach about their attitude? What would motivate someone to plead to be allowed to give to the needy? How does it display the maxim Paul will give in the next chapter, the Christians should give "not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9:7)? (4)
7. What different recipients are mentioned? "First to the Lord, and then by the will of God to us." What does this teach you about using your funds to support multiple ministries? (5)
8. What did Paul instruct Titus to do concerning the Corinthians in this matter? How did Titus start this? How is he now to bring it to completion? (6)
9. There is an old saying: "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." Though there are many interpretations of this, one of them is that many people intend to do many good things that they never actually get around to doing. How does verse 6 show that intending to give is not enough? (6)

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST AS THE ULTIMATE GIVER (VV. 8-9)

10. What does verse 8 teach you about how we should think about Christian giving? How should Paul's approach here affect the way pastors seek to motivate their churches to give? (8)
11. In verse 9, Paul goes infinitely beyond the admirable example of the Macedonian churches to point to the example of Christ. How is Christ the perfect example of lavishly generous giving? (9)
12. What does verse 9 teach you about Christ in his preincarnate state? How did he willingly lay down immeasurable wealth in order to save us? See Phil. 2:5-7(9)
13. How did Christ's poverty make us rich? How could that be a pattern for missionaries to go overseas, or for wealthy Christians to use their wealth to start ministries for the poor and needy? (9)

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR GENEROUS GIVING (VV. 10-15)

14. What do verses 10-11 teach us about the backstory to this section? How does it show their original attitude? What is Paul concerned about now? (10-11)
15. What does Paul mean by speaking of their "readiness"? Why does he say it is acceptable "according to what a person has...?" (12)
16. How do verses 13-15 teach us the proper proportion of material wealth in the worldwide Christian church? How should it convict wealthy Christians to give more? (13-15)
17. What does the story about the manna that Paul cites teach us about wealth and giving? (15)

TRUSTEES OF WHAT IS GENEROUSLY GIVEN (VV. 16-24)

18. What role do Titus and the two brothers Paul mentions here play in the practical aspects of the collection? (16-24)
19. While explaining how the money will be properly handled, Paul makes a profound theological statement. What do the words, "God, who put into the heart of Titus..." teach you about God's activity in the human heart? (16)
20. How do verses 19-22 show the challenge of moving large sums of money in the ancient world. What is being done to mitigate the ethical concerns? Why would Paul feel the need here to act honorably "in the sight of man"? (19-22)
21. What motivation does Paul give for the Corinthians to act faithfully? (24)

III. SUMMARY:

Paul is very concerned that the Corinthian church will not fulfill its promise to give generous financial support to the suffering Judean church. He stirs them to generosity by first showing them the example of the impoverished Macedonian Christians, then by the example of Christ.

SOWING GENEROUSLY, REAPING ETERNALLY

2 CORINTHIANS 9:1-15

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. How would you define generosity? How does God the Father display generosity? How did the Lord Jesus Christ display generosity?
2. How would having an eternal perspective affect our generosity in Christian giving?
3. What promises and encouragements for generosity are given in this passage?
4. How could the saying “God loves a cheerful giver” affect every area of the Christian life?

II. VERSE BY VERSE QUESTIONS:

AVOIDING THE SHAME OF UNPREPAREDNESS IN GIVING (VV. 1-5)

1. What is the connection between chapter 9 and chapter 8? Why does Paul say he has no need to write to them about this? (1)
2. How had Paul used the Corinthians’ initial eagerness to help in the offering (for the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem) to stimulate others to give? (2)
3. What is Paul concerned about in verses 3-4? Why would their unpreparedness be a source of humiliation not only for them, but for Paul and his team? (3-4)
4. What remedy does Paul propose to be sure that they will not be embarrassed by their unpreparedness? (5)
5. Why would their unpreparedness result in giving grudgingly? Why would it also mean (almost certainly) that they would give less money in the offering? Thus how would planning and preparation in giving produce better results, both in amount and in attitude? (5)

SOWING GENEROUSLY, REAPING ETERNALLY (VV. 6-15)

6. What principle does Paul give for Christian giving in verse 6? What does it mean to “sow sparingly?” What would cause us to do that with our money? What would cause us also to sow sparingly with our time and energy? (6)
7. Jesus said in Luke 9:24 that if you save your life, you’ll lose it; but if you lose your life, you’ll save it. How does that relate to the idea of sowing sparingly? (6)
8. Concerning evangelism, how is it also true that if we evangelize little, we’ll see little results? Adoniram Judson once passed out 500 tracts in a village in Burma, and saw one man converted. How does that convict you of “sowing sparingly?”
9. What key principles does verse 7 teach concerning Christian giving? What does God love about a cheerful giver? (7)

10. How do the Father and the Son and the Spirit act as cheerful givers? For examples, see Luke 12:32, Hebrews 12:2, and 1 Corinthians 12:11.
11. What would motivate someone to give “reluctantly or under compulsion”? Why is that a bad way to give? Why do you think so many “Christian” ministries use pressure tactics or guilt manipulation to promote giving? Why is this unhealthy in the long run? (7)
12. What promises does the text give us if we give generously and cheerfully? (8-11)
13. How does the promise that “God is able to make all grace abound... so that... you may abound in every good work” relate to our Christian giving? How would generosity in financial giving increase our fruitfulness in every area of the Christian life? (8)
14. Why would it make sense that God would reward generous Christians with even more resources to be generous with, but that God would restrict the resources of stingy people?
15. How does the quote of Psalm 112:9 fit into Paul’s persuasion here? (9)
16. Paul expands the agricultural analogy in verse 10, saying that when we scatter seed, we will have both seed to sow and bread for food. How does this encourage us to give? (10)
17. What is a “harvest of righteousness” and how does it relate to Christian giving? What kind of rewards should motivate Christians to give generously? (10)
18. How could some people misunderstand verse 11 as teaching “the prosperity gospel,” that if we give generously, we will become financially rich? What do you think verse 11 is actually promising? (11)
19. In verse 12, Paul explains that Christian giving serves a dual purpose. What are the two things he mentions? (12)
20. How does our generosity cause thanksgiving to overflow to God? How could this be an excellent and pure motive for giving? (12-13)
21. How does our giving to Christians not in our local church tend to bind the universal church together and give everyone in the Body of Christ a sense of the worldwide extent of the Body? (13)
22. How can the recipients of the financial blessing turn and bless the givers? (14)
23. Why is Paul’s thanksgiving here a fitting conclusion to his teaching on giving? (15)

III. SUMMARY:

Paul completes his appeal to the Corinthians to give generously and cheerfully to the service of the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. In this, he gives timeless principles on Christian giving all generations.

PAUL DEFENDS HIS MINISTRY

2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-18

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think Paul spent so much time defending his ministry against those who were attacking him?
2. What does this section teach us about spiritual warfare, and the power of the true ministry of the Word of God?
3. What does Paul mean by confining his boasting to the fields the Lord has assigned to him? How do you understand Paul's "boasting" here?

II. VERSE BY VERSE QUESTIONS:

SPIRITUAL WEAPONS TO FIGHT A SPIRITUAL WAR (VV. 1-6)

1. The context is vital for understand this passage. How does 2 Corinthians 11:4-6 and 12-15, give insight into why Paul is so urgent to defend his reputation? What do those verses show about his opponents?
2. How do you understand Paul's statement in verse 1? How does verse 10 help explain verse 1? (1)

Note: It seems that this was one of the insults lodged against Paul by his opponents; that is letters were full of lofty and mighty language, but in person he seemed weak, small, and soft spoken.

3. What appeal does Paul make to the Corinthians? Why is he so careful to make it with "meekness and gentleness"? What level of "boldness" does he think he will have to display when he gets to Corinth? (1-2)
4. What insights do we get from verses 3-5 on Paul's understanding of spiritual warfare and of the spiritual violence involved in the ministry of the Word? (3-5)
5. How is the warfare carried on by Christians in preaching/teaching the Word and in discipleship and church leadership different from that done by the world? How are our weapons different than those of the U.S. Military? (3-4)
6. What do human weapons do compared to Christian spiritual weapons? How would verse 8 give an insight in to that? What effect do human weapons have? What effects do the Christian weapons produce? (3-5)
7. What "arguments" are Christians seeking to destroy? How are they like "strongholds" and in what way are they "raised against the knowledge of God"? How does this illuminate how Satan maintains power over people on earth?
8. How does the ministry of the Word demolish these strongholds/arguments? How does this relate to John 8:32? (4-5)
9. What is the difference between destroying an argument that is enslaving a person, and destroying the person himself? What is the difference between having an argument and making an argument? Which is Paul advocating? (5)

10. How does understanding that we are not battling against people but against the false ideas that are enslaving them help us not to get sinfully angry when doing evangelism and apologetics with unbelievers?
11. What does it mean to “take every thought captive to obey Christ”? (5)
12. What does Paul seem to be threatening in verse 6? How would you relate it to what he says in 1 Corinthians 4:18-21? (6)

PAUL’S BOLDNESS WHEN ABSENT AND PRESENT (VV. 7-11)

13. What challenge does Paul give to his opponents in verse 7? (7)
14. What does verse 8 teach you about the true purpose of God-ordained authority? How does this relate to parents/children, church leaders/members? (8)
15. Why does Paul boast freely and openly about his authority? What does it teach you that Paul is not ashamed of his authority? (8)
16. How could Paul’s letters be terrifying to those who read them? What is the real reason for their scary words and powerful tone? (9)
17. What insight does verse 10 give us into Paul’s ministry? How does it relate to 1 Corinthians 2:3-5? What is Paul’s reason for his weighty letters and his gentleness in person? (8-11)
18. What misunderstanding of his ministry does he seek to correct in verse 11? (11)

THE LIMITS OF BOASTING (VV. 12-18)

19. What does verse 12 teach you about Paul’s enemies in Corinth, the “Super-Apostles” of 2 Cor. 11:5? What is so bad about comparing yourself with yourself in order to commend yourself? (12)
20. How does Paul address the “Super-Apostles” habit of arrogant boasting in verse 13? What limits does Paul put around his own boasting? How does that serve as a rebuke for the “Super-Apostles” boasting? (13)
21. Why would it be appropriate to boast about work you yourself were involved in (as Paul does in 1 Thess. 2:19 and Romans 15:18-19), but wrong to venture into taking credit for something you had nothing to do with building? (13-15)
22. What hope does Paul share in verses 15-16? How does he want the Corinthians involved in helping him take the gospel to unreached regions? (15-16)
23. How does Paul’s repeating of “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord” fit into his train of thought in verse 17? (17)
24. What is Paul’s final word in this chapter? How is it a strong rebuke to the “Super-Apostles”? (18)

III. SUMMARY:

Paul vigorously defends his ministry against the attacks of the Super-Apostles, showing that it is improper for them to boast about work they did not accomplish.

SERVANTS OF SATAN EXPOSED

2 CORINTHIANS 11:1-15

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What does this section teach you about the danger of false teachers?
2. What does it teach you about the kinds of credentials (proof of sincerity) that we should be looking for in true teachers of the word of God?

II. VERSE BY VERSE QUESTIONS:

PAUL'S ZEAL FOR THE PURITY OF THE BRIDE OF CHRIST (VV. 1-6)

1. What is the “foolishness” Paul refers to in verse 1? How does it relate to the final verse of the previous chapter? Why do you think Paul decides to “foolishly” boast about his credentials in this chapter? (1)
2. What insight does verse 2 give to Paul’s motives for his ministry in Corinth? What does Paul mean by saying he wanted to present the church as “a pure virgin to Christ”? How does this give us insight into how ministers should think about their congregations? (2)
3. What present threat does Paul see concerning the spiritual health of the Corinthian church? How are the “super-apostles” deceiving and threatening the spiritual purity of the church? (3)
4. What analogy does Paul use in verse 3? How does this help us to see the gravity of being taken in by false teachers? (3)
5. How does verse 4 give us a clearer insight into what kind of doctrine the “super-apostles” were preaching? What is the other “Jesus” or a different “gospel”? See also Galatians 1:6-9. What does Paul mean by a “different spirit?” (4)
6. What does he mean by the fact that the Corinthian church “put up with it [false teaching] readily enough”? How is this a rather severe rebuke for them? What does it imply is the responsibility of every local church concerning the doctrine they are receiving? (4)
7. What does the phrase “super-apostles” mean in verse 5? (5)

Note: Not every translation chooses this approach. Some just simply say “to the chief of the apostles.” But the entire first half of this chapter is addressing these false teachers (verse 4 implies a false gospel they are readily accepting, and verse 13 openly asserts that his opponents are “false apostles” and “disguising themselves as apostles”). It seems they are arrogant people who are boasting about their superiority, which pushes Paul toward the boasting he does here.

8. Paul speaks about his deficiencies in public speaking. Why does he mention that here? What does he say about his knowledge? How has he demonstrated this knowledge in his numerous letters? See also Ephesians 3:3-4. (6)

THE “SUPER-APOSTLES” ARE SERVANTS OF SATAN IN BEAUTIFUL DISGUISE (VV. 7-15)

9. What issue does Paul discuss in verses 7-12? What does he talk so much about the issue of financial support? What does it tell you about the false teachers he was opposing? (7-12)
10. What does Paul mean in verse 8 by saying he “robbed other churches” in order to preach the gospel to the Corinthians free of charge? What does that show about his own motives in ministry? (8)
11. How does he expand his point in verse 9? Where did Paul get his financial support? What does this show about Paul’s methods of ministry? What does this teach us about the need to support missionaries in church planting endeavors, so they can preach the gospel free of charge? (9)
12. What do verses 10-12 show us about how passionate Paul is in opposing these false teachers? Why does Paul painstakingly show the differences between himself and the false teachers? (10-12)
13. What does Paul call his opponents in verse 13? Why is this kind of open, powerful attack necessary here, and not a matter of unkindness or slander? (13)
14. What is the point of verses 13-14 with the “disguising” and “masquerading” language? (13-14)
15. How does Satan “disguise” himself as an angel of light? How do false teachers do the same? (13-14)
16. Jesus calls false teachers “wolves in sheep’s clothing.” That implies they are difficult to discern. He also said in Matthew 7:16. “By their fruit you will recognize them.” What are some signs that identify someone as a false teacher, masquerading as a servant of righteousness? (13-15)
17. What does Paul mean by his final statement on them, “Their end will correspond to their deeds?” (15)

III. SUMMARY:

Paul gives overwhelming credentials of his suffering to show the superiority of his character and his calling to his doctrinal enemies, and to reestablish his leadership over the Corinthian church. He is very concerned that they have taken in and been captivated false teachers who claim to be apostles.

PAUL'S STAGGERING CREDENTIALS OF SUFFERING

2 CORINTHIANS 11:16-33

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What does this passage teach you about the level of Paul's sufferings for Christ?
2. How does Paul's staggering list of sufferings compare with your sufferings or those of anyone else you have heard of (not counting Christ)? How would meditating on Paul's sufferings help you toward being content in any afflictions you may go through?

II. VERSE BY VERSE QUESTIONS:

1. In this section, Paul indulges in what he calls "boasting." The focus of the boasting is his clearly superior credentials as a servant of Christ, yet he says he is acting like a madman to say this, acknowledging how out of Christian character this is. So, why does he do this boasting? What purpose does it serve? (16-33)
2. How does this approach actually line up with the way the "super apostles" conduct their own ministry? See verse 18 and also 2 Corinthians 10:12. (16-33)
3. He begins by saying that no one should think him foolish. Why is he concerned about that? What is this "foolish" thing he is about to do? What limits does he put around the boasting he's about to do? (16-17)
4. What do verses 18-20 show about how the "super-apostles" conducted their ministry? What were they like in dealing with the Corinthians? How do these verses give key insights into the abusive ways false teachers seek to dominate churches? (18-20)
5. Paul severely takes the Corinthians to task for tolerating these false teachers. What does this teach you about the responsibility all local churches have for the kind of teachers and leaders they allow to teach and lead them? (18-20)
6. Do you think Paul was being sarcastic in verse 21a? Why does he do that? (21a)
7. What is the first phase of his boasting in 21-22? What does it show you about the "super-apostles"? Were they Jews or Gentiles? (21-22)
8. How is verse 23 the key to the whole section? How do Paul's sufferings for Christ give him a moral authority to teach Christian doctrine to us all? (23)
9. Why does Paul acknowledge how insane it is for any servant of Christ to boast that he is a greater servant than others? (23)
10. What is the significance of Paul's statement, "with far greater labors"? How is it true? See verse 27 and also Acts 20:34 and 1 Thessalonians 2:9-10. What does this teach you about Paul's commitment to ministry? (23)

11. Paul also speaks of his physical trials of persecution by other people because of his Christian faith, which include prison and beatings. What do you learn from this amazing catalog of suffering? How do these sufferings give Paul the right to speak truth and lead the churches of Christ? (23-25)
12. Paul also listed the physical trials that came into his life simply because he was out on the road and on the seas travelling for the gospel of Christ; these are not specifically persecutions for his Christian faith, but dangers he endured in travels. What are these trials? (25-26)
13. Paul also listed “dangers” he faced from various types of people and in various places. Though not always resulting in actual attacks, they pressed on his mind and could lead him to fears and anxieties. How is this a weighty aspect of ministry? It seems like Paul could easily have suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, and yearned for a quiet life safe at home. And yet he continued to serve Christ relentlessly. How does this motivate you personally? (26)
14. Paul also speaks of the personal pressures of the workload he carried, and what that did to his body—deprived of food, clothing, and rest. What insights does this give you as well? (27)
15. The author to Hebrews speaks of people like this, who lived in deserts, mountains, caves, and holes in the ground, as “men of whom the world was not worthy.” (Heb. 11:38) How does that characterize Paul?
16. What does Paul consider the greatest threat to his peace of mind in verses 28-29? Why would it be a torment to him that Satan might come behind him constantly and undo everything he had sought to build by attacks of sin, division, persecution, and false doctrine. See also 1 Thessalonians 3:5. (28-29)
17. Paul next turns to the common theme of his “credentials”: they actually portray him as a weak, buffeted, suffering man, not a superhero. He will develop this fully the next chapter. Why is the “boasting in weakness” theme key to Paul’s concept of his ministry? (30)
18. How did his being lowered over a wall in a basket and escaping King Aretas in Damascus a picture of him in weakness? (31-33)

III. SUMMARY:

Paul gives overwhelming credentials of his suffering to show the superiority of his character and his calling to his doctrinal enemies, and to reestablish his leadership over the Corinthian church.

PAUL'S VISION OF HEAVEN AND HIS THORN IN THE FLESH

2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-21

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What does this section teach you about the unique privileges God granted the Apostle Paul? How does Paul's experience show us the possibilities of the foretastes of heavenly glory that God can give to his servants here on earth?
2. What does Paul's "thorn in the flesh" teach you about earthly suffering?
3. How can you put into practice the lesson God taught Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness"? What does Paul mean by "When I am weak, then I am strong"?
4. What does the second half of this chapter teach you about Paul's loving ministry to the Corinthian church? How could pastors learn from his example?

II. VERSE BY VERSE QUESTIONS:

PAUL'S VISION OF HEAVEN (VV. 1-6)

1. How does this first section connect with the last chapter? How does Paul's "boasting" here show his superiority to the false apostles he is opposing? (1-6)
2. What is Paul boasting about here? What do you think he means by "visions and revelations from the Lord"? How does this topic uniquely qualify him to instruct the Corinthians? (1)
3. Why do you think Paul says "I know a man in Christ..." and doesn't identify himself as that man? How do we know that Paul is talking about himself? (2)
4. What does it mean that this "man" was "caught up"? What does the phrase "the third heaven" mean? What do you think the first and second heavens are? (2)
5. Paul says he doesn't know whether it was in the body or outside of the body. Since he is in fact talking about himself, what do you find surprising about that? What does it teach you about the power of visions? (2-3)
6. Paul uses the word "paradise." What does this word mean to you? What does Paul say happened to him in paradise? (4)
7. Paul says he literally heard "inexpressible words," words one can't put into words. Not only that, people would be forbidden to try to put them into words. What does all that mean? (4)
8. Why does Paul say he actually would boast "on behalf of that man," but not about himself? Paul does say he wants to boast in his weaknesses. Why? (5)
9. Why does Paul say his boasting would in some sense be appropriate? How is it very different from the boasting done by the false apostles he is fighting? (6)
10. Why does Paul say he refrains from boasting in himself? (6)

PAUL'S THORN IN THE FLESH (VV. 7-12)

11. How does verse 7 prove conclusively that Paul was talking about himself the whole time? What does Paul say God did for him after the experience of being caught up to the third heaven? What was God's reason for doing this? (7)
12. How does Paul's interpretation of the reason for the thorn give us a good sense of God's reasons for bringing suffering into the lives of Christians? (7)
13. Why does Paul call the thorn in the flesh a "messenger of Satan"? How does this demonstrate the way sometimes God uses Satan to do his will? How does it relate to Joseph's statement to his brothers in Genesis 50:20? (7)
14. What was Paul's response to the thorn in the flesh? What does this show about a proper Christian response to suffering? (8)
15. What was God's response to Paul when he begged him to remove the thorn? What does that statement mean: "My grace is sufficient for you"?
16. What does it mean that, "My power is made perfect in weakness"? How is this displayed in many ways in the gospel and in God's ways of dealing with his servants on earth? Think of God reducing Gideon's army in Judges 7:2?
17. How does the death of Christ stand as the all-time greatest example of God's strength being made perfect in weakness? (9)
18. What is Paul's conclusion? What does "When I am weak, then I am strong" mean? How is the reverse "When I am strong, then I am weak" also true? (9-10)

PAUL'S LOVING MINISTRY TO THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH (VV. 11-21)

19. What do verses 11-12 teach you about how the Corinthian church should have treated Paul? How would the "signs of a true apostle" also show his superiority to the false apostles? What "signs" do you think he is talking about? (12)
20. What does Paul seek to prepare the Corinthians for in verses 14-21? (14-21)
21. How is Paul's fatherly love for this church an example for all Christians? (14-15)
22. In verses 17-18, Paul is zealous to prove he did not exploit them. How does that relate to this whole section in which he is defending himself against the false teachers who were besetting the Corinthians? See 2 Cor. 11:20. (17-18)
23. How does verse 19 explain what Paul's been doing for a chapter and a half? (19)
24. What is Paul afraid of in verses 20-21? How do these verses show the sad state of affairs in Corinth? How would their sinful state be very humbling for Paul? (20-21)

III. SUMMARY:

Paul continues his defense of his ministry in contrast to the false apostles who were assaulting the Corinthian church. He uses his heavenly vision and his thorn in the flesh to prove his divine calling.

PAUL'S FINAL WARNINGS TO THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH

2 CORINTHIANS 13:1-14

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What role do warnings play in the Christian life? What are some right ways and wrong ways to deal with biblical warnings?
2. How do we examine ourselves to see if we are “in the faith?” Why is this important for every Christian to do? On what basis should we make a judgment about whether we are Christians or not?
3. What does it mean to aim for restoration (completeness, maturity) in the Christian life (verses 9, 11)? How does this help us to grow?

II. VERSE BY VERSE QUESTIONS:

1. What tone does Paul use with the Corinthians as he closes this letter to them? Why does he use such a tone? What significance does Paul place on this being his third visit to the Corinthian church? (1)
2. Why is it important that charges must be established by multiple witnesses? How could a single uncorroborated testimony unjustly destroy someone's life and ministry? (1)
3. Why does Paul so frequently warn the Corinthians? What does his repeated use of warnings show about his ministry? What does it show about the Corinthian church? How should we wisely take these verses to heart? (2)
4. Why do you think the Corinthians were demanding proof that God was actually speaking through Paul? How does that fit what we've learned in the previous chapters? (3)
5. How is Christ “powerful” toward them through Paul's ministry with them? (3)
6. Why does Paul speak of Christ being weak when crucified? How does that fit into the point he's been making of Paul's own weaknesses in 12:9-10? How does Paul show a similarity between Christ's “weakness” and “strength” and his own approach to them in ministry? (4)
7. Why is the command to “examine yourself” to see if you are in the faith so vital in the Christian life? Why do so many church goers neglect this command? Why would some Christians be surprised to hear a pastor urge them to do this? (5)
8. On what basis can we judge whether or not we are born again? What are the “marks of regeneration” that we should see in our lives? How could Galatians 5:19-25 help us to examine ourselves to see if we are Christians? How could 2 Peter 1:5-8 help us? How could Colossians 3:1-17 help us? (5)

9. What should someone do if they “fail the test?” What does Paul say about himself concerning this test? (5-6)
10. What does Paul mean in verse 7 about them not doing any wrong, even if Paul himself is proved to be a false teacher or a reprobate? Why is this concept vital, that each church and individual is responsible for their own spiritual standing and health? (7)
11. What does verse 8 mean concerning Paul’s ministry? (8)
12. Why does Paul say he is glad whenever he himself (and his ministry team members) are weak, but the Corinthians are strong? (9)
13. What does verse 9 teach about Paul’s prayers for them? How can we pray this for ourselves and for others? (9)
14. What insight does verse 10 give into Paul’s occasionally harsh tone in his letters? What does it teach you about the true purpose of spiritual authority? (10)
15. Verse 11 is translated various ways: “Be perfect” (KJV); “Aim for perfection” (NIV84); “Aim for restoration” (ESV); “Be made complete” (NASB). How does this command point toward continual growth for the Corinthians, both individually and corporately (as a church)? (11)
16. How does verse 11 also point toward Christian unity? Why is that so vital for a local church? (11)
17. What does it mean to “greet one another with a holy kiss?” What is a 21st century American version of this? (12)
18. Why does Paul so often include greetings from other Christians at the end of his letters? How would this have encouraged the churches? (13)
19. Verse 14 is a very famous benediction. How does it reveal the existence of the Trinity? (14)
20. What is ascribed to the separate members of the Trinity? What to Jesus, what to God (the Father), what to the Holy Spirit? (14)

III. SUMMARY:

Paul finishes his epistle to the Corinthians with some final warnings, urging them to take very seriously their salvation in Christ.



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