

**Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians:  
"Its Major Themes Reviewed, Part I"  
Father's Day 2023**

**Fathers day !!!! So many blessings, whether honored or not.**

**Introduction: The Major Themes in 2 Corinthians:**

***Doing a theme by theme overview is made especially difficult because themes are woven together everywhere and in sentences even (3 or 4 in same or several sentences, for example).***

***An example with a single sentence (and there are many to choose from here), might be in chapter 1:***

**2 Cor 1:12** For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

***Or, another within several sentences, as in chapter 3:***

**2 Cor. 3:1-6**

1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some *others*, epistles of commendation to you, or *letters* of commendation from you?

2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

3 *Forasmuch* as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is* of God;

6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

***Let's list the themes we will be using today and additionally another three further studies:***

- **Part 1: Some fundamentals were always underlying Paul's ministry:**
  - ***The Fundamentals of Ones Testimony, and That of the Lord God***
    - ***The Testimony of the Apostle (1:1-7; 1:12)***
    - ***The Testimony of the Corinthian believers (7:1-15)***
    - ***The Testimony of the Lord God (1 Cor. 2:1 and many places in 2 Cor. 3, and following)***

- ***The Fundamentals of Personal Relationships***
  - ***Paul's great confidence in the Corinthian believers and his ongoing love for them all and many very personal statements of the bond between them in Christ:***
- ***The Fundamentals of Paul's Plan Regarding his Soon Visit in Corinth***
  - ***The apostle must of course connect with those to whom he is writing and to do that he needs to lay a foundation for this letter's content:***
    - ***The issue of the upcoming visit's timing:***
      - ***The specific issue of the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem and the essence of grace giving is also defined in this letter like in no other with his own freely given ministry without regards as their example***
      - ***The specific issue of the unrepentant believer and his current repentance accompanied by their forgiveness and acceptance back into their fellowship:***
- **Part 2: The Critical Issue of Compromise in the Corinthian Church:**
  - ***Paul has many concerns however for those who have gone astray for various reasons, including all of these and more:***
    - **Compromise in general leading to rebellion against Paul and inevitably of course rebellion from their God, and regarding the very truth itself and even the gospel of the grace of God**
    - **Satanic influence through the false teachers, false apostles**
    - **Carnality**
- **Part 3: The Pauline Apostleship, Under Attack and Paul's Defense:**
  - ***Paul's apostleship attacked by evil, false apostles – 2 Cor. 11:13***
  - ***Paul's apostleship defended (10, 11, 13). Words / living letters, best defense of his apostleship - for that was how God had worked!***
  - ***His many persecutions and trials are detailed (chapters 2?, 4 & 6, 11)***
  - ***His promise that the full power of his apostleship would be exercised in person if needed (10, 12, 13)***
- **Part 4: The Central Doctrinal Teachings:**
  - ***The blessings of God under grace enumerated at length (1:4-7 )***

- *The essence of God's working under grace (a major theme with many references):*
  - *Always rejoicing and triumphing, even in our failures (2:13-17)!*
  - *God's strength manifested through our weakness (1:4-7; 3-4, 12 13:1-4! , etc.*
- *Liberty under grace is extolled while bondage under law is the alternative — the new covenant (3)*
- *The sure promise of eternal glory (5)*

**Our Outline: Second Corinthians, Its Major Themes, Part 1:**

***Some fundamentals always underly Paul's ministry as all his letters make clear:***

**I. The Fundamentals of Ones Testimony, and That of the Lord God:**

- ***The Testimony of the Apostle:***

***[READ ] 2 Cor. 1:1-7***

***1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:***

***2 Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.***

***3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;***

***4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.***

***5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.***

***6 And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.***

***7 And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.***

- ***This is so deep, so powerful, so marvelous a description of the bond between Paul and these Corinthians whom, if we knew it well, we might wonder whether the original bond formed when Paul was in Corinth and this church was being assembled had been broken forever by sin and rebellion aided***

*always by believing what the false teachers had been sharing with them. But no, the bond formed in Christ remained! Praise God.*

○ *The Testimony of the Corinthian believers:*

**2 Cor. 7:1-10, 14-16**

**1** Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

**2** Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.

**3** I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.

**4** Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

**5** For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.

**6** Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

**7** And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

**8** For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.

**9** Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

**10** For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

...

**14** For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth.

**15** And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him.

**16** I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things.

- *The opening of this letter focused powerfully on the comfort of God for believers and that theme continues in this letter. Here it is the testimony of the Corinthians that is in focus. Such words should comfort us always as well. For God is working and without his working in us we should be indeed most miserable. The divinely worked balance between Paul's testimony and its response in the Corinthians is marvelous to behold! Praise God for his gift!*
- *The Testimony of the Lord God:*

**[READ ] 1 Cor. 2:1-5**

**1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.**

**2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.**

**3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.**

**4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:**

**5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.**

**1 Cor. 2:6-10**

**6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:**

**7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:**

**8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.**

**9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.**

**10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.**

- *The testimony of the Lord God in its full grandeur and glory is magnificent to behold. But we see it here revealed in these words chosen so perfectly by the Holy Spirit of God. Every word here is without rival and needs commentary — another time perhaps.*

***But the greatest question anyone can ask is this: What is the Lord doing? And as I always have said, if we don't ask questions we will never receive answers. We see here in verses 1 through 10 of***

***chapter 2 of Paul's first letter what he was doing in Corinth through his chosen servant, Paul and how that work was accomplished through those words spoken by Paul before sinners of the Gentiles living in Corinth. We know Paul often reminded the Corinthians of that work for we see it everywhere also in this letter. But the next chapter, chapter 3 reveals far more about that inestimable working, a working that continues today as the words of grace are heralded before sinners:***

***[READ ] 2 Cor. 3:1-3***

***1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?***

***2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:***

***3 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.***

- ***The rest of the chapter says so much, so very much more about how that working in the hearts of men is accomplished, but we need to go on, to the next theme. But the fundamental theme of Testimony, of Paul's, of the Corinthian believers, and of the Lord God working it all out in the hearts of his elect children, is precious indeed — and so very encouraging.***

## ***II. The Fundamentals of Personal Relationships:***

- ***Paul's great confidence in the Corinthian believers and his ongoing love for them all and many, very personal, statements of the bond between them in Christ fill the letter. One that stands out for me is in chapter 1:***

***[READ ] 2 Cor. 1:14 As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.***

- ***So, as it is so clearly written here, Paul, though he was apostle of the Gentiles, he nevertheless rejoiced TOGETHER WITH the Corinthians. When we think of all that means, and it is astounding to consider, we see how perfectly constructed that bond of personal relationship was between the apostle and these eternally saved sinners in Corinth, so recently captured by the power of grace and delivered from the corruption of Greek culture and religion. And that personal***

***bond was bi-lateral due to the power of God's working for nothing could break it, even satan himself was unable:***

**2 Cor. 11:28-29**

**28** Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

**29** Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

- ***For the bond was of and by Almighty God! His grace had accomplished it and through it the ministry of abounding grace would continue, whatever arose in its path to minimize it or render it ineffective. Praise God the ministry of grace continues today! Amen.***

### **III. The Fundamentals of Paul's Plan Regarding the Soon Visit to Corinth:**

- ***The apostle must of course connect with those to whom he is writing and to do that he needs to lay a foundation for this letter's content:***
- ***The issue of the upcoming visit's timing (two factors or more!):***
  - ***The specific issue of the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem and the essence of grace giving is also defined in this letter like in no other with his own freely given ministry without regards as their example:***
    - ***You will recall the Corinthians had promised before and the response of the Macedonians to that was a willing heart to give. But they had failed to do so. Paul here in this letter in chapters 8 and 9 explains in detail how that should be remedied, by performing the offering collection with no longer any delays:***

**[READ ] 2 Cor. 8:1-12**

**1** Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

**2** How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

**3** For to *their* power, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their* power *they* were willing of themselves;

4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

5 And *this they did*, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

7 Therefore, as ye abound in every *thing, in* faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and *in* all diligence, and *in* your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

10 And herein I give *my* advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.

11 Now therefore perform the doing of *it*; that as *there was* a readiness to will, so *there may be* a performance also out of that which ye have.

12 For if there be first a willing mind, *it is* accepted according to that a man hath, *and* not according to that he hath not.

- *Such words. They demand that our minds and hearts expand fully to receive them, don't they? And they are so encouraging. The whole essence of grace giving is revealed here in these short sentences and no more is needed. The phrasing is critically important: "ye abound in everything"; "ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ"; "though he was rich"; "yet for your sakes he became poor"; "that ye through his poverty might be rich".*

*And more in application follows: "therefore perform the doing of it"; "that as there was a readiness to will"; "so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have"; "... not according to that he hath not."*



- ***Many giving programs in organized religion go so contrary to these principles that they deserve no comment here and will get none. And there is more to follow of these blessed words, never to be forgotten, for they ring true to the heart of the message of God's abundant grace:***

***[READ ] 2 Cor. 9:1-3, 7-8***

1 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:

2 For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.

3 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:

...

7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so *let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

8 And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

***That says it all, doesn't it? "God is able ... to make all grace abound ... that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." Five absolutes. Enough? Never enough. His grace is ALWAYS SUFFICIENT! So no more excuses and no more delays!***

- ***But don't miss the logic embedded here either, for the former promise of the Corinthians stimulated the Macedonians spiritually and so that promise needed to be kept for even greater reasons! Paul explains it all here in chapter 9 in these verses. And then when we look in Galatians 2 and Romans 15, we see the historical context of this and understand also that Paul's promises are also on the line here, visible for those in Israel to see, the Jewish saints there. So the testimony of God on every side is on the line. So that is the rest of the story as to why Paul felt so compelled to come to Corinth sooner rather than later and also to go on to Jerusalem now. All scripture fits together perfectly as we see here and have seen so often. Praise God!***

- ***The Galatians (ch. 2) & Romans teaching (ch. 15) also give a dispensationally fuller explanation (see also Acts 11:29-30):***

***Gal. 2:7-10***

7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;

8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)

9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

10 Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

***Rom. 15:25-27***

25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

- ***His own freely given ministry without regards:***

***2 Cor. 11:7-10***

7 Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?

8 I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.

9 And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.

10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia.

- ***This is a major issue for the apostle and he writes of it often, whether directly or indirectly. He used the offerings of the assemblies to enable him to reach out to new areas previously not evangelized, but in a given assembly he provided for his own needs through his own industry in tent-making. He was not willing to minister to the saints in an assembly context except freely. This is so contrary to the mode of operation in the churches, isn't it? So other related references would include these: Gal. 6:6, 1 Cor. 9:4, and 1 Tim. 5:17-18.***
- ***The additional issue of the unrepentant believer and his current repentance accompanied by their forgiveness and acceptance back into their fellowship:***

***[READ ] 2 Cor. 2:4-11***

***4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.***

***5 But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.***

***6 Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.***

***7 So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.***

***8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.***

***9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.***

***10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;***

***11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.***

- ***For the apostle, that the now repentant sinner in the assembly be well received back into the fellowship was a burden on his heart so weighty that he uses many words here to emphasize how important that was to him. They needed to know his will on the subject and***

*any remaining unwilling to accept that brother back should now be well assured that Paul himself was of the opinion that a full forgiveness was now his will as well as the will of God. Furthermore, there were the concerns firstly that further unwillingness in this matter would not only harm the repentant one whom the Lord loved so much but also provide satan with much further opportunity to cause division in the assembly. But Paul was coming to Corinth without further delay in the will of Almighty God and now the full scope of his thinking on the matter had been communicated.*

- *So, to conclude, Paul's visit was set for a number of reasons: 1) Many promises had been made over a period of several years regarding to collection for the saints in Jerusalem and they were a great burden on the apostle's heart, 2) the desire to boast again regarding his freely given ministry in Corinth, and 3) the issue of the unrepentant believer now hopefully received back into fellowship with no ongoing confusions. So delaying further was in his mind not an option, even though travel to Jerusalem might indeed result in his imprisonment and martyrdom. Amen.*

#### **Conclusions / Application:**

- **Our Outline: Some fundamentals were always underlying Paul's ministry:**
  - ***The Fundamentals of Ones Testimony, and That of the Lord God***
    - ***The Testimony of the Apostle (1:1-7; 1:12)***
    - ***The Testimony of the Corinthian believers (7:1-15)***
    - ***The Testimony of the Lord God (1 Cor. 2:1 and many places in 2 Cor. 3, and following)***
  - ***The Fundamentals of Personal Relationships***
    - ***Paul's great confidence in the Corinthian believers and his ongoing love for them all and many very personal statements of the bond between them in Christ:***
  - ***The Fundamentals of Paul's Plan Regarding the Soon Visit to Corinth***
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- ***The specific issue of the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem and the essence of grace giving is also defined in this letter like in no other with his own freely given ministry without regards as their example***
- ***The specific issue of the unrepentant believer and his current repentance accompanied by their forgiveness and acceptance back into their fellowship.***