

# **“A Heart Wide Open”**

*2 Corinthians 6:11*

## **A Study of Second Corinthians**

By Larry Brown  
David Mast  
2021

## SECOND CORINTHIANS CLASS OUTLINE

| LESSON            | TEXT                | SUBJECT  | PAGE |
|-------------------|---------------------|--|------|
| Introduction..... |                     | Introduction and Background  | 1    |
| Lesson 1 .....    | 1:1 - 11 .....      | Gratitude for God's Comfort.....<br>Deliverance from Affliction                                    | 13   |
| Lesson 2 .....    | 1:12 - 2:4 .....    | Why Paul Changed his plans .....   | 15   |
| Lesson 3.....     | 2:5 - 17 .....      | Forgive the Penitent Sinner.....<br>We Triumph in Christ   | 17   |
| Lesson 4 .....    | 3:1 - 18 .....      | Living Letters, .....<br>Glory of the New Covenant<br>Veiling and Unveiling                        | 19   |
| Lesson 5.....     | 4:1 - 18 .....      | "I Faint Not".....<br>God's Power Shines in our weakness<br>Seen vs. Unseen                        | 21   |
| Lesson 6 .....    | 5:1 - 21 .....      | Longing to be at home with God .....<br>Motivation for Service<br>Ministry of Reconciliation       | 23   |
| Lesson 7.....     | 6:1 - 7:1 .....     | "Be not unequally yoked" .....   | 25   |
| Lesson 8.....     | 7:2 - 16 .....      | Paul's letter brings godly sorrow.....<br>Titus brings good news                                   | 27   |
| Lesson 9.....     | 8:1 - 9:5 .....     | Giving - Promoting the Collection.....   | 29   |
|                   | .....9:6 - 15 ..... | Giving - Why (God Blesses you) .....   | 31   |
| Lesson 10.....    | 10:1 - 18 .....     | Paul defends himself .....   | 33   |
| Lesson 11 .....   | 11:1 - 33 .....     | Be faithful in Christ.....   | 35   |
| Lesson 12.....    | 12:1 - 21 .....     | Paul's Vision.....<br>Thorn in the Flesh<br>Re-Affirms his Apostleship<br>Another Visit to Corinth | 37   |
| Lesson 13.....    | 13:1 - 14 .....     | Warning of impending Discipline.....<br>Plea for self-examination                                  | 39   |

**“A HEART OPEN WIDE”  
A STUDY OF 2nd CORINTHIANS**

## **I INTRODUCTION**

First Corinthians receives much attention in our bible studies. In 1 Corinthians the Apostle Paul deals with a wide variety of church problems and doctrinal issues. However, 2nd Corinthians is much neglected in our bible study. No where in all the New Testament is the agonizing burden and triumphant spirit of the apostle Paul more apparent than in 2 Corinthians. It is a splendid example of what genuine, true, authentic Christianity is. We should not make the mistake in saying the reason that Paul’s ministry is so different from what ours’ is, is because he was an apostle. If we do, we miss the valuable lessons found in this letter. Obviously, there are some differences (shipwreck, stripes, etc...), but too often we ignore his example of what our ministry should be, by saying; “He was an apostle, God will not expect the same from me.” Paul is called a “minister” and a “servant”. These same words are used in reference to Christians’ in general who were simply servants of the Lord (Eph 6:21, Col 1:17, 1 Thess 3:2, 1 Tim 4:6). Until we learn the lessons of Paul’s example found in this letter, and as Christians come to view our lives as a service to perform, we will continue to be people who are “willing to do good” rather than a people who are determined to demonstrate in the world the same ideals Jesus demonstrated on this earth.

Contrary to some opinions, Second Corinthians is also a letter, not filled with despair and bitterness, but through the heartbreak there is always a triumphant joy. Many look at Paul and see an aimless vagabond preacher without a thought about how to get through the next days problem. No matter what happens to him he had deep principles and godly aims while he answers the charges of being an unstable, conniving charlatan (a person pretending to knowledge and ability he lacks).

## **II. THE CITY OF CORINTH.**

Corinth had a population of approximately 500,000 people. It was the largest city in first century Greece, the administration capital of Achaia, and the commercial center of the Mediterranean. It commanded the North/South trade of Greece, and the East/West trade of the Mediterranean. Through all this trade Corinth grew wealthy and worldly and gained a reputation for luxury and excess. Most likely populated with Roman Citizens, Roman freedman, Greeks, and Jews. These people possessed a wild and boisterous spirit - this fact would manifest itself in the Corinthian church. While the church did have some believing Jews, mostly it was made up of former pagan Gentiles (1 Cor. 12:2).

## **III. THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH.**

Paul came to Corinth, alone in A.D. 50-51 after being disappointed in Athens. However, at Corinth the gospel bore much fruit and Christianity began in Achaia (Acts 18:10). Paul spent the next 18 months there. Many of its early members were formerly idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, and murderers (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

#### IV. THE CORINTHIAN CORRESPONDENCE.

The Corinthian church not only shows us the power of the gospel, it also shows how many problems can plague a young church. The following is a brief outline of what happened to Paul after he founded the church there;

A. Paul left Corinth and went to Ephesus. Here he suffers many afflictions;

1. Riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:23, 20:1).
2. Faced many adversaries (1 Cor. 16:9).
3. Fought wild beasts (1 Cor 15:32).
4. Maybe suffers a severe illness (2 Cor 1:10).
5. Suffered 39 strips (2 Cor 11:24ff).
6. “weighed down exceedingly”
- 7 “Despaired even of life” (2 Cor. 1:8).
8. Tremendous anxiety over the churches (2 Cor. 11:28).
9. Thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7).

**\*\* We must know and appreciate all that Paul went through if we are to fully understand 2 Corinthians.**

In Ephesus, Paul heard of problems that arose in Corinth. He writes a letter, now lost to us (1 Cor. 5:9), urging them not to associate with those who returned to the practice of fornication (1 Cor. 5:9). After that, Paul receives information from the house of Chloe that the church was locked in a carnal power struggle and was tearing apart (1 Cor. 1:10-11), peace had turned to partyism. Paul then received a letter from Corinth asking him many questions (1 Cor. 7:1). Paul replies with our book called 1st Corinthians.

First Corinthians was probably carried by Timothy or sent soon after Timothy was dispatched by Paul to Corinth (1 Cor 4:17, 16:10, Acts 19:22). We do not know the results of Timothy’s visit, but most agree that it could not have been good.

**(We do not know the exact order of the following events).**

Some evidence exists that Paul makes a hasty trip to Corinth soon after 1st Corinthians was written. Perhaps he learned that Timothy’s trip was not successful. Whatever the details, Paul says clearly in 2 Corinthians that “This is the third time” that he was ready to come to them. (2 Cor 12:14, 13:1) First trip = Established the church. Second trip = Hasty trip in between letters. Third trip = the one he promised to make in 2nd Corinthians.

Paul also says that he had determined not to come to them again “in sorrow” (2 Cor. 2:1). All this suggests a “painful visit” and possibly a disappointing one made after his first stay in Corinth and even after writing 1 Corinthians. It is doubtful that he would call his first visit, where he founded the church, “painful”.

Recent commentators have supposed that Paul wrote another letter, after his “painful visit”, which is also now lost. This judgment is made necessary, in their opinion, because 1st Corinthians could not have been the letter Paul describes that he wrote “out of much anguish of heart with many tears” (2 Cor. 2:4). Also, Paul’s change in itinerary had to be communicated to the Corinthians (this was one of the charges made against Paul by his opponents) in some way. If it was not communicated in this “Lost Letter”, then when? It is however a moot-point; there is no hard evidence of another lost letter and it does not change the message of 2 Corinthians. (For more information see the section “The Severe Letter” later in the introduction).

This much we know; the time after writing 1 Corinthians was filled with much anxiety for Paul. After writing 1 Corinthians, and before writing 2 Corinthians, Paul dispatched Titus to Corinth to try to bring them to repentance before he came as planned (1 Cor. 16:5-7). During this time, Paul was so gripped with anxiety that he could not bring himself to take advantage of a great opportunity to preach the gospel in Troas. (2 Cor. 2: 12-13). So, he left Troas for Macedonia. In Macedonia, Titus caught up with Paul and the wonderful news he brought concerning the Corinthian's repentance unleashed months of pent-up concern which had been building inside of Paul, and he poured a flood of emotion into a letter which we call -- Second Corinthians. This letter was written soon after 1 Corinthians, between AD 55 - 57.

Although the news from Titus was good, it was not unmixed; The majority of the Christians there repented and dealt thoroughly with the problems. But a new problem arose - Judaizers!! The leaders of this revolt were; (1). Arrogant men who sought to rule imperiously over the church (2 Cor. 11:19-20). (2) Boasted of their credentials as from the seed of Abraham (11:22). (3) Preached a perverted gospel (11:4). (4) Attacked Paul as a second-rate apostle (12:11ff). (5) They said Paul was weak and vacillating (10:10). (6) They said Paul insulted them by not accepting support from them (11:7), (7) or that Paul was setting them up for a latter kill (12:16-18). (8) And they charged that his failure to come to them was evidence that his promises were empty.

This forces Paul to change the tone of his letter from that of joy, triumph, and encouragement to a full-blown defense against his enemies in the last four chapters. This personal defense is clearly distasteful to Paul and he would not have engaged in it had the attack on him not also been an attack against the gospel.

## **V. WHY DID PAUL WRITE 2nd CORINTHIANS?**

This moving letter is a picture of Paul's tenacious hope and confidence, that these Christians who have blundered so badly, and hurt him so painfully, will turn out right (1:7, 7:16). Despite his affection for them; Paul does not gloss over their wrongs. He deals with them in a tough way letting them know they have sinned grievously; they have hurt him and broke his heart. But most importantly, Paul did not give up on them!!!!

What a lesson - No matter what someone does to you, that person is a soul and deserves to be saved. 2nd Corinthians is a classroom for every Christian who has suffered unwarranted abuse. To all who have suffered for Christ's cause Paul says; "Forget about yourself. Serve Christ. Remember others."

1. Respond to some charges raised against him.
2. Explain his change of plans.
3. Defend his ministry.
4. Encourage them to forgive and restore the man who started all the trouble.
5. Encourage the Corinthians to finish the collection they started a year ago.
6. Enforce his authority as an apostle.

## **VI. CONTRIBUTIONS OF 2 CORINTHIANS TO THE BIBLE:**

1. It gives us a few glimpses into the life of Paul of things we would not otherwise know: Hardships not recorded in Acts (11:23-27), Details of his escape from Damascus (11:32-33), His vision of Paradise (12:1-7), His thorn in the flesh (12:7-10).

2. Doctrinal Matters Discussed: Contrast of the Old and New Covenants; Proper View of Suffering for Christ; Ministry of Reconciliation; Importance of Saints Remaining Pure; Instructions about Giving; Exposes the Tricks of Satan; Falling from Grace; Christian Responsibility.

***There are several themes in this epistle that deserve special notice at this time:***

- TRIALS:**                    EXPLANATION: Paul experienced great suffering, persecution, and opposition in his ministry. He even struggled with a personal weakness - a “thorn” in the flesh. Through it all, Paul affirmed God’s faithfulness.
- IMPORTANCE: God is faithful. His strength is sufficient for any trial. When trials come, they keep us from pride and teach us dependence on God. He comforts us so we can comfort others.
- CHURCH  
DISCIPLINE:**            EXPLANATION: Paul defends his role in church discipline. Neither immorality nor false teaching could be ignored. The church was to be neither too lax nor too severe in administering discipline. The church was to restore the corrected person when he or she repented.
- IMPORTANCE: The goal of all discipline in the church should be correction, not vengeance. For churches to be effective, they must confront and solve problems, not ignore them. In everything, we must act in love.
- HOPE:**                    EXPLANATION: To encourage the Corinthians as they faced trials, Paul reminded them that they would receive new bodies in heaven. This would be a great victory in contrast to their present suffering.
- IMPORTANCE: To know we will receive new bodies offers us hope. No matter what adversity we face, we can keep going. Our faithful service will result in triumph. There is “Light at the end of the tunnel.”
- GIVING:**                EXPLANATION: Paul organized a collection of funds for the poor saints at the Jerusalem church. Many of the Asian churches gave money. Paul explains and defends his beliefs about giving, and he urges the Corinthians to follow through on their previous commitment.
- IMPORTANCE: Like the Corinthians, we should follow through on our commitments. Our giving must be generous, sacrificial, well planned, and based on need. Our generosity not only helps those in need but enables them to thank God. Not to mention that “God loves a cheerful giver.”
- SOUND  
DOCTRINE:**            EXPLANATION: False teachers were challenging Paul’s ministry and authority as an apostle. Paul asserts his authority in order to preserve correct Christian doctrine. His sincerity, his love for Christ, and his concern for the church were his defense.
- IMPORTANCE: We should share Paul’s concern for correct teaching in the church but in so doing, we must share his motivation -- Love for Christ and people.

## SECOND CORINTHIANS

### OUTLINE

- |      |   |                 |
|------|---|-----------------|
| I.   | <u>Removal of Misunderstanding</u>  | (1:1 - 2:11)    |
|      | A. Salutation   | (1: 1 - 2)      |
|      | B. Comfort in Affliction  | (1: 3 - 11)     |
|      | C. Explanation of Recent Conduct  | (1: 12 - 2:4)   |
|      | D. Call to Forgive the Penitent Sinner  | (2: 5 - 11)     |
| II.  | <u>The Apostolic Ministry</u>   | (2:12 - 7: 1)   |
|      | A. Paul's Anxiety at Troas  | (2:12 - 13)     |
|      | B. Thanksgiving for the Triumphal Progress<br>of the Gospel.                                      | (2:14 - 17)     |
|      | C. The Ministry of the New Covenant   | (3: 1 - 18)     |
| III. | <u>The Apostolic Ministry (Continued)</u><br><u>The Hardship and Glory of the Gospel Ministry</u> | (4: 1 - 5: 10)  |
|      | A. The Treasure Entrusted to Paul and his<br>Associates   | (4: 1 - 6)      |
|      | B. "This Treasure in Earthen Vessels"   | (4: 7 - 15)     |
|      | C. Inward Renewal   | (4: 16 - 18)    |
|      | D. The Christian's Hope   | (5: 1 - 10)     |
| IV.  | <u>The Apostolic Ministry (Continued)</u><br><u>The Ministry of Reconciliation</u>                | (5: 11 - 7: 16) |
|      | A. The Word of Reconciliation   | (5: 11 - 19)    |
|      | B. Plea of the Ambassadors  | (5: 20 - 6:10)  |
|      | C. Pleas for Reciprocation of Paul's Feelings<br>toward the Corinthians.                          | (6: 11 - 13)    |
|      | D. Call for Separation  | (6: 14 - 7: 1)  |
|      | E. Renewal of Plea for Reciprocation  | (7: 2 - 4)      |
|      | F. The Coming of Titus  | (7: 5 - 16)     |
| V.   | <u>The Collection for the Saints</u>  | (8: 1 - 9: 15)  |
|      | A. Grace in Macedonia: How Giving Became a Gift   | (8: 1 - 5)      |
|      | B. Paul's Care for the Corinthians  | (8: 6 - 15)     |
|      | C. Titus and His Companions   | (8: 16 - 24)    |

- VI. The Collection for the Saints (Continued)
- A. Paul's Glorifying on Behalf of the Corinthians (9: 1 - 5)
  - B. Encouragement to Give (9: 6 - 11)
  - C. Effects of Giving (9: 12 - 15)
- VII. Vindication of Paul's Apostleship Against the Attack of False Teachers. (10:1 -13:14)
- A. The Threat of Vengeance Against Rebellion (10: 1 - 18)
- VIII. "A Little Foolishness": Paul's Glorifying (11:1 -12:13)
- A. The Reason for Glorifying (11: 1 - 15)
  - B. Boasting in Weakness (11: 16 - 33)
  - C. Visions and Revelations (12: 1 - 10)
  - D. Paul's Apostolic Credentials (12: 11 - 13)
- IX. The Coming of Paul (12:14-13:14)
- A. Paul's Third Trip to Corinth.

**Second Corinthians is divided into three basic sections:**

1. Paul's explanation of his ministry (1:1 - 7:16).
2. Paul's collection for the saints (8:1 - 9:15).
3. Paul's vindication of his Apostleship (10:1 - 13:14).

## THE “SEVERE LETTER”

(This is a theory)

1. It is described in 2 Cor. 2:4

### 2. Its Purpose:

A. It was intended to arouse the church to discipline “the one who did the wrong” (2 Cor. 2:6, 9; 7:12).

1. To spare the Corinthians another “painful visit” (1:23 - 2:4).
2. To demonstrate his affection for the Corinthians. (2:4).
3. To test the Corinthians’ obedience to apostolic authority (2:9).
4. To make them aware of their genuine concern and affection for him (7:12).

### 3. Its Identification;

A. *Our book of 1st Corinthians.*

1. Similarity between 1 Cor. 5 and 2 Cor. 2:5-11, 7:12.
2. The incestuous man is the “one who did the wrong”, this man’s father is the “one who suffered the wrong”. After being handed over to Satan (disciplined) this man repented. in 2 Cor, 2:7, 8 Paul urges that he be received back into church fellowship.
3. Some Problems;
  - a. 2 Cor. 2:6, 9 suggests that the “letter of tears” dealt primarily with the wrongdoer and the need for his punishment. This is not true of 1st Corinthians.
  - b. If these two are the same, then the man was committing adultery and not incest. For in 2 Cor. 7:12 the man’s stepfather was still alive.
    1. Two separate Greek words (moicheia) adultery, (porneia) incest.

B. *A second theory is that this “severe letter” is actually now part of 2nd Corinthians.*

1. Chapters 1 - 9 are Paul’s third letter to Corinth.
2. Chapters 10 - 13 make up all or part of the “severe letter”.
3. There is a direct shift of emphasis between 1 - 9 and 10 - 13.

C. *The third theory is that this “severe letter” is a lost intermediate letter.*

1. Scholars who hold this view say this letter was an intensely personal letter, quite brief, and addressed to specific un-edifying situation.

## CHARGES AGAINST PAUL

1. Paul's personal integrity.
2. His Apostleship - not genuine.
3. His word could not be trusted.
4. Pocketed the money intended for needy saints in Jerusalem.
5. Fickle
6. Proud
7. Unimpressive in appearance and speech.
8. Dishonest.
9. Unqualified as an apostle.

## EVENTS SURROUNDING THE CORINTHIANS.

1. Paul arrives at Corinth from Athens (A.D. 50) and establishes the church there. He stays with Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18).
2. Paul leaves Corinth after 18 months (A.D. 52), leaving Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus and going to Caesarea and Antioch.
3. Paul goes to Ephesus and makes this city his center of activity for probably three years (A.D. 52 - 55).
4. Paul writes a letter to Corinth concerning immorality in the church there (1 Cor. 5:9). This letter was written prior to our 1st Corinthians, probably in A.D. 52 or 53.
5. The Corinthians write Paul a letter asking certain questions about marital relations, idol foods, order in worship, etc.... Paul responds with our 1st Corinthians (fall of A.D. 54 or spring of 55).
6. Timothy is sent to Corinth, perhaps carrying 1 Corinthians (1 Cor. 16: 10,11). Around this time, before Timothy arrived, false apostles came to Corinth in an attempt to undermine Paul's work. They succeeded in gaining a large following.
7. Timothy returns to Paul in Ephesus with a bad report of the conditions at Corinth. Paul hastens by ship to Corinth, but his visit is "painful" and unsuccessful (2 Cor. 2: 1). He returns to Ephesus.
  - A. Apparently while there Paul is openly insulted (2 Cor 2:5-8, 10; 7:12).
8. Paul, having told the Corinthians he would go back to Corinth before going to Macedonia, writes a letter in lieu of that visit. This letter was written "with many tears" and "out of much affliction and anguish of heart" (2 Cor. 2"4). This letter was carried to Corinth perhaps by Titus.
9. After the riot in Ephesus, Paul leaves Ephesus for Troas (spring A.D. 55) and suffers his "affliction in Asia". He had arranged with Titus to meet him along a pre-arranged route. Paul hoped to see Titus at Troas but did not find him there (2 Cor 2: 12, 13). Not finding Titus, Paul went on to Macedonia.
10. Somewhere in Macedonia, Titus returns to Paul with the report that the situation in Corinth is improved. Paul, along with Timothy, sends a letter (our 2nd Corinthians) which is taken by Titus and two brothers. They are to gather the Corinthians collection before Paul himself arrives in Corinth (2 Cor. 8: 16-23; 9:4). Paul was planning a visit shortly (2 Cor. 12:14; 13:1).

## PAINFUL VISIT

1. Although Luke does not mention a second visit to Corinth, several passages in 2nd Corinthians indicate more than one visit.
  - A. They show Paul had already been to that city twice - the second visit being painful".
  - B. First:
    1. 2 Cor. 12:14, 13: 1, 2 refer to two prior actual visits.
  - B. Second:
    1. 2 Cor. 2:1 and 12:21 indicate that one of the two earlier visits were "painful".
2. It would be very unlikely that Paul would describe his founding visit as painful.
3. This visit occurred after 1st Corinthians was written and after the "severe letter" was written because Paul was waiting for news from Titus about the outcome of the sever letter.

## LESSON ONE

### 2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-11

The salutation in this epistle is nearly in the same words as in other letters (vs 1-2). Here, the introduction is for thanksgiving for God's consolation. Paul blesses God as the God of all mercy for the consolation which he had experienced. He identifies himself with the Corinthians; representing his affliction as theirs and his consolation also as belonging to them (vs 3-7). He refers to the affliction which came upon him in Asia that it was so severe that he "despaired of life". But through their prayers, God delivered him, and he was assured, would continue to deliver him (vs 8-11).

#### **KEY MESSAGES:**

1. Comfort - Comfort - Comfort, all to the praise of God who is the source of all comfort.
2. Christians are to be instruments of comfort.
3. If we are willing to suffer for Christ, then He will comfort us. Ultimate object- a crown. Ja 1:12
4. There is a need to know about the suffering of others.
5. Pressure was brought on Paul so that he might learn to trust in God.
6. Prayer changes things.

#### **KEY PHRASES:**

1. "by the will of God..." - Paul was an apostle, not self-appointed, but God appointed him.
2. "Blessed be God" - Paul was praising God for the present blessings - for what God was accomplishing then and there.
3. "Saints" - (hagios) - one who has been sanctified.
4. "Father of mercies..." - means the originator of...
5. "Tribulation..." (thlipsis),(vs 4) to crush, press, squeeze, constraint, narrowness of room.
6. "helping together" vs 11 (sunupourgeo) - made up of three words, with, under, and work. It pictures laborers working together, under pressure, to get the job done.
7. "despaired even of life..." vs 8 - (exporethenai) - implies the total unavailability of an exit from his oppressive circumstances. His deliverance then had to be from God

#### **APPLICATION:**

In spite of all the suffering, affliction, and heartbreak that Paul went through, how was he able to write a letter saturated with encouragement? What was his secret weapon? How did he endure?

1. REMEMBER WHAT GOD IS TO YOU (1:3)
2. REMEMBER WHAT GOD DOES FOR YOU (1:4a, 8-11).
3. REMEMBER WHAT GOD DOES THROUGH YOU (1:4b - 7).

**QUESTIONS:**

1. When was 2 Corinthians written?
2. Name the three divisions of this book.
3. Why should Christians expect to suffer? (there are three “that we” phrases in vs 4, 9, 11)
4. How does suffering prepare us to comfort others? vs 4.
5. How can we comfort others?
6. How did Paul deal with his sufferings?
7. From what was Paul delivered?
8. What helped Paul in being delivered? vs 11.
9. What did Paul learn from his affliction in Asia?
10. How does God comfort us?
11. What is the purpose of suffering?