

2 CORINTHIANS

DATE	BOOK	KEY THOUGHT	CONTENT	KEY LESSONS	JESUS IN THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE
	New Testament				
	Pauline Epistles				
			Often called "the hard letter", this is an intensely personal letter. It recounts the difficulties and hardships Paul has endured in the service of Christ (10-13). The Apostle regards the Corinthians as his children in		
51 - 52 AD	2 Corinthians 13 Chapters	Epistle of correction and the results of reconciliation		Do everything to please Jesus Christ (5:9)	Jesus paid the price for our sins. He is our example to follow.

OUTLINE OF 2 CORINTHIANS

1. Paul and the Corinthians are reconciled (2 Co. 1–2)
2. Paul's ministry as an apostle (2 Co. 3–6)
3. Paul's confidence and joy in them (2 Co. 7)
4. The contribution for Jerusalem (2 Co. 8–9)
5. Paul's legitimacy and authority (2 Co. 10–13)

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2 Corinthians encourages believers to embrace and follow the way of Jesus that transforms lives, values generosity, humility, and weakness.

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Paul uses a description of his own ministry as an exhortation for the Corinthians to live godly and open-hearted lives.

Paul describes how he's been honest, hopeful and devoted while suffering. These things have blessed his ministry.

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Paul's purpose in writing this letter was:

1. To express the comfort and joy Paul felt because the Corinthians had responded favorably to his painful letter (1:3-4; 7:8-9,12-13).
2. To let them know about the trouble he went through in the province of Asia (1:8-11).
3. To explain why he had changed his travel plans (1:12 - 2:4).
4. To ask them to forgive the offending party (2:5-11).
5. To warn them not to be "yoked together with unbelievers" (6:14 - 7:1).
6. To explain to them the true nature (its joys, sufferings and rewards) and high calling of Christian ministry. This is the so-called great digression, but it turns out to be in some ways the most important section of the letter (2:14 - 7:4).
7. To teach the Corinthians about the grace of giving and to make sure that they complete the collection for the poor Christians at Jerusalem (chapters 8 - 9).
8. To deal with the minority opposition in the church (chapters 10 - 13).
9. To prepare the Corinthians for his upcoming visit (12: 14; 13: 1-3, 10).

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2 Corinthians is a letter that expresses love, concern and affection for dearly beloved brethren for whom Paul wanted nothing but the best.

2 Co. 2: 4.

4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.

This letter addresses issues that were tearing the church apart, primarily the arrival of self-styled teachers (false apostles) who were assaulting Paul's character, sowing discord among the believers, and teaching false doctrine.

2 Co. 11: 13

13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

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In 2 Corinthians, Paul defends his character from critics who said that he was a fake apostle.

False teachers came to the church of Corinth and told the saints that Paul was:

1. Fickle
2. Proud
3. Unimpressive in appearance
4. Unqualified as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

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These False teachers sought to destroy Paul's reputation as an apostle who spoke divine revelation, hoping that the Corinthians would turn away from him.

These men accused Paul of:

1. Being inconsistent (2 Co. 1: 17)
2. Preaching his own ideas (2 Co. 3: 1; 2 Co. 4: 1-6)
3. Being deluded (2 Co. 5: 13)
4. Being a coward (2 Co. 10: 1, 10)
5. Being an idiot (2 Co. 11: 15)
6. Not being an apostle (2 Co. 12: 11; 13: 3)
7. Participating with Titus in scamming the brethren (2 Co. 12: 17-18)

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False teachers appear to have questioned Paul's veracity.

2 Co. 1: 15-17

15 In this confidence I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing;
16 that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea.

17 Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no *at the same time*?

False teachers questioned Paul's speaking ability.

2 Co. 10: 10

10 For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible."

2 Co. 11: 6

6 But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge; in fact, in every way we have made *this* evident to you in all things.

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False teachers tried to find fault with Paul for not accepting support from the church at Corinth.

2 Co. 11: 7-9

7 Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge?

8 I robbed other churches by taking wages *from them* to serve you;

9 and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia, they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you and will continue to do so.

2 Co. 12: 13

13 For in what respect were you treated as inferior to the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not become a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!

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There were also some people in Corinth who had not repented of their licentious behavior. This was another reason Paul had sent the “severe” letter.

2 Co. 12: 20-21

20 For I am afraid that perhaps when I come, I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps *there will be* strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances;

21 I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced.

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Paul's desire for the Corinthians was their spiritual restoration (2Co. 13: 9).

The Corinthians needed to clear three major hurdles to achieve restoration.

First, the Corinthians needed to identify and pray for the forgiveness of their sin of being unwilling to forgive one who seeks forgiveness (2 Co. 2: 5-9).

Secondly, the Corinthians needed to clear themselves from sharing unlawful affections with unbelievers such as uncleanness, fornication etc. (2 Co. 6: 11ff).

Finally, the Corinthians needed to be restored for being deceived by factious brethren who were teaching false doctrines and making false accusations against Paul (2 Co. 12: 19-20).

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The church at Corinth had recently been struggling with divisions and quarrels. Many of the believers resolved this issue by the time Paul wrote 2 Corinthians. They had repented of their sinful ways and had come back into unity with one another and with the leadership of Paul.

Paul still felt the need to articulate a defense of his apostleship and his message. Some in the church had apparently taken his meekness among them to be a sign of moral weakness or lack of authority (2 Co. 10: 1-2).

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These accusations led Paul to defend himself by arguing that:

1. He was on the same level of importance as the other apostles.
2. He had deep knowledge of the Christian faith.
3. He had suffered profound physical punishment in the name of Christ.
4. He had received visions and revelations from God (2 Co. 11: 1–12: 13).

2 CORINTHIANS THEMES

1. Strength in weakness

Throughout the letter Paul turns upside down our natural expectations of the way life works. Contrary to the way the world and our own human hearts naturally function, God takes what is low, despised, and weak to accomplish His purposes.

2 Corinthians tells us that comfort comes through affliction (2 Co. 1: 3-7), sufficiency through insufficiency (2 Co. 3: 1-6), life through death (2Co. 4: 7-15), blessing through suffering (2 Co. 6: 3-10), salvation through grief (2 Co. 7: 2-10), abundance through poverty (2 Co. 8: 1-2, 9, 14) and boasting through hardship (2 Co. 11: 16-30).

Chapter 12 then gives a key principle: **God's "power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Co. 12: 9)**. God uses men's weakness to display His grace, glory and power.

2 CORINTHIANS THEMES

2. Reconciliation

Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to emphasize the importance of reconciliation among believers.

Paul addresses the need for the Corinthians to reconcile with an estranged brother (2Co. 2: 5-11) as well as with Paul himself (2 Co. 7: 2-16).

To fail to reconcile is to be outwitted by Satan (2 Co. 2: 11). As believers face divisions and broken relationships in the church, Paul's gentle exhortations to pursue restoration when possible are words worth remembering.

2 CORINTHIANS THEMES

3. Servant leadership

Paul gives a powerful example of what it means to lead the body of Christ.

Christian leaders are to do what Christ himself did: pour out their lives in self-giving love for the sake of others. While Christians in no way atone for sin as Christ did, we do spread the knowledge of that atonement in the way He did—through sacrificial love (2 Co. 4: 10-12). “If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation” (2 Co. 1: 6). “For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Co. 4: 5).

Servant leadership is not optional for the church. It is the high calling of all who lead God’s people.

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Paul was overjoyed to learn from Titus that many of the Corinthians had repented of their rebellion against Paul (2 Co. 2: 12–13; 7: 5–9).

The apostle praised them for this in an expression of his genuine love (2 Co. 7: 3–16). Paul also urged the Corinthians to finish collecting an offering for the poor (chapters 8—9) and to take a harder stance against false teachers (chapters 10—13).

Finally, Paul vindicated his apostleship, as some in the church had likely questioned his authority (2 Co. 13: 3).

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Paul wrote to the Corinthians in the wake of their repentance from divisions and quarrels.

The message for Christians today –

Living in unity requires us to
humbly forgive one another and to
follow our leaders.

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A. Church Unity is the spiritual union of the redeemed through the indwelling of the Spirit.

This is demonstrated in the assembling of the faithful.

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B. Humbly forgive one another

Eph. 4: 32

32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Col. 3: 12-13

12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, **humility**, gentleness and patience;

13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

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C. Supreme authority belongs to Jesus Christ as head of the church.

Ephesians 5: 23

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

D. Spiritual leadership under Jesus Christ in the church is possessed by elders.

a. As shepherds who teach and care for the flock

Ephesians 4: 11–13

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

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b. As overseers ruling the church

1 Thessalonians 5: 12

12 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction,

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c. The response of the church to the leadership of elders

I. Elders are to be obeyed.

Heb. 13: 7

7 Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.

Hebrews 13: 17

17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

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II. Elders are to be honored and respected.

1 Thessalonians 5: 12–13

12 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction,

13 and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.

1 Timothy 5: 17

17 The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

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Second Corinthians reminds us that even as Christians, we hurt each other and need to forgive those who wrong us (2 Co. 2: 7).

Paul was willing to exhort the Corinthian believers to forgive those who had fallen away and repented.

Paul's defense of his own apostleship against a vocal opposition illustrates the apostle's commitment to this way of life among God's people.

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An overinflated sense of ourselves often leads us to strike out on our own or hold on to our frustration and anger regarding the choices of others.

Paul reminded us of Jesus's ministry of reconciliation (2 Co. 5: 17–19). We must seek to reconcile relationships which destroy church unity.

Look out for the pitfall of disunity with leaders and other believers in your own life, while striving to live among all people in humility.

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2 Corinthians applies to our lives today. One area of service is stewardship, not only of money, but of time as well.

The Macedonians not only gave generously, but “they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God’s will” (2 Co. 8: 5). In the same way, we should dedicate not only all we have to the Lord, but all that we are. God really doesn’t need our money. He is omnipotent!

God wants the heart of faithful Christians to demonstrate the love and commitment to serve the Lord and others.

Stewardship and giving to God is more than just money.

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God does want us to give monetarily as we have purposed in our heart, and He promises to bless us when we give to Him.

God wants us to give Him our all.

1. We should spend our lives living faithfully, serving our Father in heaven and others.
2. We should dedicate our lives to God.
3. We should give ourselves first to the Lord, then to the church and the work of the ministry of Jesus Christ.