**Introduction**

**Lesson 1**

*II Corinthians 1:1-11*

**Background - Corinth**

A. A major harbor and commercial center at the tip of the Greek mainland.
B. Religion consisted of worship to various gods, with the sea-deities (i.e. Poseidon) and Aphrodite being the major influences.
C. Julius Caesar made it a Roman colony in 46 B.C. and it came to be one of the prominent centers of Greece.
D. Jews were abundant in this trade center (Acts 18:1-18).
E. The population in the first century was approximately 600,000 - 700,000, most of whom were slaves.

**Paul's First Trip to Corinth**

A. Paul came alone directly from Athens on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1), around 50 A.D., with the intent of preaching Christ (I Cor. 2:1-3).
B. Paul immediately went to work and converted his co-workers Aquilla and Priscilla (Acts 18:2-3).
C. Paul, as was his custom upon entering a city, reasoned in the synagogue, persuading Jews and Greeks (Acts 18:4-5). He was eventually rejected and lived next door to the synagogue with Justus (Acts 18:6-7).
D. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, and many of the Corinthians were converted, most likely forming the nucleus of the church established at Corinth (Acts 18:8, I Cor. 1:14-16).
E. Paul was brought up on charges before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, by the Jews (Acts 18:12-16). Gallio refused to judge accusations based on Jewish law, with the result that Sostenes, the ruler of the synagogue, was beaten.
F. Paul was in Corinth for a year and a half (Acts 18:11, 18). When he departed (around 52 A.D.), he sailed for Syria, taking Aquilla and Priscilla.
G. It appears that the church was primarily made up of people from the lower class (I Cor. 1:26, 7:21).
H. Because he had brought the gospel to them, Paul looked upon the Corinthians as his beloved children (I Cor. 4:14-15).

**The First Epistle to Corinth**

A. The epistle was written around 55 A.D., from Ephesus while Paul was on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:1, I Cor. 16:8).
B. Motivations for writing the first letter:
• Reports from the household of Chloe (I Cor. 1:11).
• Reports from Apollos (I Cor. 3:5-6, 16:12).
• Reports from Corinthians (I Cor. 16:17-18).
• Great concern over immorality (I Cor. 5:9).
• Their letters to Paul (I Cor. 7:1).

The Second Epistle to Corinth

A. The epistle was written around 56 A.D., from Macedonia as Paul was traveling to Corinth (Acts 20:1-2, I Cor. 16:5-6).

B. Primary reasons for writing the second letter:
• Joy at the news of Titus of how they had responded to the first letter
• Further encouragement to be ready with a gift for needy saints
• Defense of his apostleship

Questions (II Cor. 1:1-11)

1. How does Paul describe God (vs. 3)?

2. What did Paul hope to be able to do for others (vs. 4)?

3. What should the Corinthians gain whether Paul was afflicted or was comforted (vs. 6)?
4. What was the affliction Paul had experienced in Asia (look at Acts 19:23-41)?

5. What lesson was Paul expected to have learn from his affliction (vs. 9)?

6. What does Paul ask of the Corinthians (vs. 11)?

Write down one topic or fact you know about the following chapters of I Corinthians:
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Write down one topic or fact you know about the following chapters of II Corinthians:
1. 
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4. 
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13.
Introduction
In this section, Paul explains his actions and defends his character, both of which seem to have been questioned by the Corinthians as they were apparently called into question by false teachers in their midst. This fact must have been disheartening for Paul, yet his love for the Corinthians shines through even in this section which may at first glance seem self-centered with a focus on personal vindication. Paul refers to his previous letter and his anxiety over the Corinthians’ reaction to it. He mentions again the individual from whom they have withdrawn their fellowship, now urging them to forgive and comfort him.

Il Corinthians 1:12 – 2:2

12 For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you. 13 For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand and I hope you will fully understand— 14 just as you did partially understand us—that on the day of our Lord Jesus you will boast of us as we will boast of you.

15 Because I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a second experience of grace. 16 I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on my way to Judea. 17 Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to the flesh, ready to say “Yes, yes” and “No, no” at the same time? 18 As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. 20 For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. 21 And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, 22 and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

23 But I call God to witness against me—it was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth. 24 Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith.

2 For I made up my mind not to make another painful visit to you. 2 For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained?

Paul’s Change of Plans - 1:12 - 2:2

1. How does Paul explain his character and attitude, especially in relation to the Corinthians?
2. Explain Paul's intentions in writing to the Corinthians.

3. Had Paul planned to come to Corinth? Why had his plans changed? What did his change of mind not reveal about his character?

4. What promises can always be counted on as being true?

5. In this section, who does Paul talk about the most in terms of his source of strength, confidence, identity? Who makes him confident? How does he demonstrate this confidence?

**II Corinthians 2:3-11**

3 And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all. 4 For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

5 Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you. 6 For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, 7 so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. 8 So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. 9 For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. 10 Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, 11 so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

12 When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord, 13 my spirit was not at rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia.

14 But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. 15 For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, 16 to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? 17 For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

_Pain, Forgiveness & Comfort - 2:3-11_  
1. Why had Paul previously written a letter to the Corinthians? (NOTE: There are multiple reasons mentioned in this section.) How did he feel about the letter?
2. What had they done toward the offender mentioned here? What situation mentioned in 1 Corinthians is this possibly referring to? (HINT: Look for a passage in 1 Corinthians that refers to dealing with a sinful brother.)

3. How were they to treat the man now? Why was their treatment of him important?

4. APPLICATION: How do the principles in this section help us in our relationships with each other?

Triumphal Procession - 2:12-17

1. How concerned was Paul concerning the Corinthian reaction to his previous letter? What does he say/do that demonstrates his concern?

2. What was his reaction to the news from Corinth? (see 7:5-9)

3. Though he was concerned about the state of the church in Corinth and his ministry for them, what attitude does Paul demonstrate at the end of ch. 2?

4. How does he identify himself and the impact of his ministry?

5. What was the work that he was seeking to accomplish?
Here we begin a long section in which Paul defends and defines his ministry and his general perspective on life as a reconciled ambassador for Christ. One evidence of the divine approval of Paul’s ministry's was the conversion of the Corinthians who are described as a letter of commendation read and understood by all. Chapter 3 mainly deals with comparison and contrast of the ministry of the Spirit and the ministry of the Letter. Despite the greater glory of the Spirit, many fail to see it because a veil remains lying on their hearts. While this may seem like it would be a source of great discouragement, Paul demonstrates a confidence that finds its source outside of any human influence.

Using the attached worksheet, read and make notes on the text. What do you see?

**II Corinthians 3:1-18**

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? 2You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. 3And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

4Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. 5Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, 6who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

7Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, 8will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? 9For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. 10Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. 11For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.

12Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, 13not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. 14But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. 15Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. 16But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. 17Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.
The Corinthians and Paul – 3.1-6
1. Why did Paul say that the Corinthians should trust him? What does he say about what the Corinthians meant to him?

2. In your own words, explain the confidence Paul had (3:4-6).

3. How are we made “sufficient” through the Spirit?

Spirit vs. Letter – 3.7-18
1. Paul talks a lot about “glory” in this section (10 times -- 3:7, 8, 9, 10, 11). What do you think the word “glory” means in this conversation? (Use an English dictionary, Greek lexicon, etc. to learn what the technical definitions are, then think about what the word could mean in this particular context.)

2. Complete the table below contrasting the ministries of the Spirit and of the Letter (3.3-18):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT</th>
<th>MINISTRY OF THE LETTER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ON HUMAN HEARTS (V. 3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEW COVENANT (V. 6)</td>
<td>KILLS (V. 6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>OF LIFE (V. 7)</td>
<td>GLORY ENDS (V. 7, 10, 11)</td>
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<td>GLORIOUS (V. 8)</td>
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<td>RIGHTEOUSNESS (V. 9)</td>
<td>FROM MOSES (V. 15)</td>
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3. What does this more glorious ministry provide those who proclaimed it (3.12)?

4. Be prepared to explain the symbol of “the veil” used in 3.13-16--both the original Bible story it refers to as well as how it explains the spiritual condition of many people in Paul’s day (and ours for that matter).

5. When is “the veil” taken away?

6. What happens as a result of “the veil” being removed?

7. Into what are we being transformed?
The Light of the Gospel – 4.1-6

1. What made Paul not lose heart? How did he live and minister in such a way that demonstrated courage?

2. What was Paul’s attitude toward those who reject the Gospel? Why do people reject the Gospel?

3. What is the Gospel really about? What does it reveal? What does it do for those who “unveil” their hearts to receive it?
Paul previously stressed the differences in the hearts of Christians and of those whose hearts were veiled (3:15). By being able to know the glory of God, Paul was able to be courageous (4:1) and to denounce the things of the world. This section explains the strength and motivation for those who are servants of Christ. How can we overcome a world full of hardships and stay focused on sharing the gospel of Christ? Here Paul explains what it was that strengthened him to live dangerously for the sake of Christ. It was also certainly meant to be a passage of motivation to the Corinthians, renewing their fervor in serving God and reminding them of their (and our) purpose and promise in Christ.

Using the attached worksheet, read and make notes on the text. What do you see?

II Corinthians 4:7-15

7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. 11 For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So death is at work in us, but life in you. 13 Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, “I believed, and so I spoke,” we also believe, and so we also speak, 14 knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. 15 For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

Jars of Clay - 4:7-15

1. Why was the treasure (“knowledge of the glory of God,” see 4.6) in “jars of clay”?

2. Which of the description(s) of Paul’s sufferings impress you the most?

3. What does Paul say was the purpose of his suffering? What does he say life is all about for the servant of Christ?
4. What caused Paul to continue to speak? What was the result of him speaking?

II Corinthians 4:16 – 5:5
16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

5 For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, 3 if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. 4 For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

The Weight of Glory - 4:16 - 5:5
1. Use the table below to list the contrasts (there are at least 3 or 4 depending on how you see the passage) listed in 4.16-18:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Contrast</th>
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2. Be prepared to explain the meaning of the following concepts in this context:
   a. “So we do not lose heart.” (4.16)
   b. “an eternal weight of glory” (4.17)

3. What metaphor(s) does Paul use to describe our lives in 5.1-5? How does this section help you to get a better perspective on your life?

4. RESEARCH: Find another passage in the NT that uses similar language and further explains 5.4.
II Corinthians 5:6-10
6 So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

“Therefore...” - 5:6-10
1. With all of this discussion on his ministry, eternity, temporal suffering, etc., Paul lists some things that define his life in Christ. List as many as you can find in 5.6-10.

2. What does it mean to be at home or absent in the body? At home or absent from the Lord?

3. What does this passage teach should be “our aim”? What makes this “aim” challenging for us?

4. According to 5.10, on what basis will God judge us?
Reconciliation

Lesson 5

II Corinthians 5:11 – 6:10

Introduction
It is difficult to find a breaking point between this section and the previous one because Paul's discussion is so interrelated. Having described our future home in heaven, he stresses the need to serve God in all situations, for a day of judgment will come. Briefly, he again insists that he is not commending himself, but rather attempting to please God. His role, he explains, is that of an ambassador bringing a message of reconciliation from God; reconciliation provided through the sacrifice and death of Christ.

II Corinthians 5:11-6:10

11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. 12 We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. 13 For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. 14 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; 15 and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

6 Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. 2 For he says, “In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.”

Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. 3 We put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, 4 but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; 5 by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; 6 by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; 8 through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; 9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.
Reconciliation of God - 5:11-21
1. What was a motivation to persuade men?

2. Paul desired to be commended in their hearts and conscience (vs. 11, 12), but this commendation should occur through Paul's service to God, not by any special efforts directed toward them.

3. Read Romans 5:15-19. In what sense did one die for all?

4. Where is a person a new creature?


6. How does God bring about reconciliation in the life of an individual?

7. To whom has God committed the word of reconciliation?

8. Read Romans 8:3 and explain vs. 21.

Methods and Conditions of Paul's Ministry - 6:1-10
1. How can we receive the grace of God in vain?

2. Divide vs. 4-7 into two lists: one of the blessings of Paul's ministry, and the other of the difficulties of his work.

3. Explain how the contrasts listed in vs. 8-10 can all be true. Try to use specific examples from the life of Paul.

4. Read Philippians 4:11, 12.
Introduction
This section is perhaps the most personal of the epistle. Finishing his discussion of reconciliation in 5:20, 21, Paul urges them to avoid receiving the grace of God in vain. He then describes the condition of his ministry, listing both sufferings at the hands of men and blessings given by God. In his personal appeal to them, Paul explains that his heart is open to them, and he desires the same feeling on their part, seeing that he took advantage of no one. Finally, in this section Paul describes the great joy he felt in learning of their response to his previous epistle. Not only Paul, but Titus as well had been refreshed by the penitent, obedient spirit of the Corinthians.

II Corinthians 6:11 - 7:16

We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also. Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

Make room in your hearts for us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one. I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.
Personal Appeal for Their Affection - 6:11 - 7:4

1. According to Paul, whose fault was it if there was a strain in their relationship?

2. What did Paul desire from them?


4. What does God offer to those who will separate themselves from the world's defilement?

5. What should the promises of God prompt us to do?

II Corinthians 7:5-16

5 For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. 6 But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, 7 and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. 8 For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. 9 As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us.

10 For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. 11 For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter. 12 So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the one who did the wrong, nor for the sake of the one who suffered the wrong, but in order that your earnestness for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God. 13 Therefore we are comforted.

And besides our own comfort, we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. 14 For whatever boasts I made to him about you, I was not put to shame. But just as everything we said to you was true, so also our boasting before Titus has proved true. 15 And his affection for you is even greater, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling. 16 I rejoice, because I have complete confidence in you.
Response to Paul’s Epistle - 7:5-16

1. Read 2:13. Why was Paul without relief in Macedonia?

2. What news did Titus bring that comforted Paul? Why was he so anxious about this news?

3. Why was Paul glad he had made the Corinthians sorrowful?

4. Describe the two kinds of sorrow and their fruit.

5. What had refreshed Titus? How had he been received by the Corinthians?
**II Corinthians**

**Attitude in Offering**

**Lesson 7**

*II Corinthians 8:1 - 24*

**Introduction**
Titus had traveled through Macedonia, and Paul now knew of the Macedonian's generosity in making an offering for the needy saints. The Corinthians had previously been urged to make a collection on the first day of the week (I Corinthians 16:1-3) for the saints, and now Paul tells them of the efforts of the Macedonians, encouraging them to act in a similar manner. Paul also commends to them Titus and another brother whom he does not name (vs. 18). He ends this chapter with a challenge for them to show the proof of their love.

**II Corinthians 8:1-15**

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace.

But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have.

For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. As it is written, “Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.”

**Macedonian Example - 8:1-15**

1. What had been given to the churches of Macedonia (vs. 1)?
2. What was the financial condition of the Macedonian churches?

3. Describe how much the Macedonians gave. What had they done first, before they made a financial offering?

4. In what did Paul believe the Corinthians already abounded?

5. What did Paul say about Jesus Christ?

6. What did Paul say the Corinthians already possessed (vs. 11)? Because of this, what does he expect them to do?

7. What general principle is taught in vs. 12-15?

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**II Corinthians 8:16-24**

16 But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you. 17 For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his own accord. 18 With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel. 19 And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our good will. 20 We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us, 21 for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man. 22 And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters, but who is now more earnest than ever because of his great confidence in you. 23 As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. And as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. 24 So give proof before the churches of your love and of our boasting about you to these men.
**Commendation of Individuals - 8:16-24**

1. What was in the heart of Titus? How did he receive it?

2. What concerned Paul about the collection (vs. 20)?

3. Paul took thought for things honorable in the sight of whom?

4. How does Paul describe Titus to them (vs. 23)?

5. What was it that Paul hoped the Corinthians would demonstrate by their actions?
II Corinthians

Attitude of a Giver
Lesson 8

II Corinthians 9:1-15

Introduction
Paul continues to urge the Corinthians to fulfill their commitment to make an offering. He mentions that he has boasted of their preparation to the Macedonians, and now fears that they will not carry through with their promise. To encourage them, he explains that he who gives sparingly will reap sparingly. He points out that God loves a cheerful giver, and the gift should be made voluntarily. The result of the gift would be that God would be glorified by many.

II Corinthians 9:1-15
Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints, for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them. But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be. Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident. So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!
Proper Preparation - 9:1-5
1. What had Paul boasted to the Macedonians?

2. What did Paul now request of the Corinthians?

3. The Corinthians' gift was to be of what and not as what?

A Cheerful Giver - 9:6-15
1. What is the rule regarding sowing and reaping?

2. How should an individual give? What should not be the motivation?

3. What does God love?

4. What does God provide us with? What does this allow us to do?

5. What was to result from this offering (vs. 11-12)?

6. What would be the reaction of those who were to receive the gift (vs. 13-14)?

7. What do you think is the gift mentioned in vs. 15?
Introduction
Prior to this point of the epistle, Paul has spoken in the plural sense, "we", as he has defended himself and others. He shifts the emphasis to himself alone, saying "Now I, Paul, myself...". The reason for this is that he has begun to defend his apostolic authority against those who were undermining it at Corinth. Their attacks were evidently personal, and now Paul's defense is also personal. However, he is careful throughout to stress that his might or power is solely derived from God.

II Corinthians 10:1-18

I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!—2 I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of walking according to the flesh. 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, 6 being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

7 Look at what is before your eyes. If anyone is confident that he is Christ's, let him remind himself that just as he is Christ's, so also are we. 8 For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be ashamed. 9 I do not want to appear to be frightening you with my letters. 10 For they say, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.” 11 Let such a person understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present. 12 Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding. 13 But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you. 14 For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach you. For we were the first to come all the way to you with the gospel of Christ. 15 We do not boast beyond limit in the labors of others. But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged, 16 so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's area of influence. 17 “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” 18 For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.
Spiritual Warfare - 10:1-6
1. What qualities of Christ did Paul claim to possess as he pleaded with them? Read Matthew 11:28-30.

2. What did Paul intend to have toward some were at Corinth? Note that the some to whom he refers were the minority at Corinth who were stirring up problems for Paul. What did he say this group thought of him (vs. 2)?

3. What did Paul do in the flesh? What did he not do according to the flesh?

4. What weapons did Paul use? What were these weapons capable of accomplishing?

Paul’s Authority - 10:7-11
1. What should a person in Christ conclude about Paul?

2. Did Paul have the ability to boast about the authority which the Lord had given him? Why was he cautious about this?

3. What accusation had been made against Paul (vs. 10)?

4. What did Paul say in regard to this accusation?

A Proper Measure - 10:12-18
1. What insufficient measure were Paul’s enemies using to measure themselves?

2. God had appointed Paul a sphere or province which included the Corinthians. Read I Corinthians 3:1-10 and Romans 15:20-21 and explain what he meant.

3. What mutual benefits did desire from his relationship with the Corinthians (vs. 15)?

4. Where should glorying take place?

5. Who is truly commended?
Wisdom of God
Lesson 10
II Corinthians 11:1 - 33

Introduction
Paul's fear that the Corinthians would be beguiled by false teachers led him to defend himself against those who tried to betray themselves as apostles of Christ. Because of the boasting of the false teachers, Paul attacks them by "boasting" of his accomplishments. By viewing the circumstances of Paul's ministry, the Corinthians could clearly see that he was indeed a true apostle of Christ, self-sacrificing, courageous, and always concerned for their spiritual welfare. While Paul appears uncomfortable making this type of self-defense (referring to it as foolish speaking), it was certainly effective in calling attention to the true nature of Christian service.

II Corinthians 11:1-21a
I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! 2 For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. 3 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. 4 For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough. 5 Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. 6 Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not so in knowledge; indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things. 7 Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge? 8 I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. 9 And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. 10 As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. 11 And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! 12 And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. 13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds. 16 I repeat, let no one think me foolish. But even if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. 17 What I am saying with this boastful confidence, I say not as the Lord would but as a fool. 18 Since many boast according to the flesh, I too will boast. 19 For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves! 20 For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face. 21 To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that!
Why No Wages? - 11:1-11
1. Earlier Paul stated he felt as a father to the Corinthians. How does he feel toward them in this section?

2. Be prepared to explain the similarities between Eve's and the Corinthians' beguilement.

3. What was Paul's rank among the apostles? among sinners (I Timothy 1:15)?

4. Paul took no wages from the Corinthians. Read I Corinthians 9:11-19 to understand why. How had some of the Corinthians interpreted his action? What was Paul's reply to them?

False Teachers - 11:12-21
1. What does Paul call his critics?

2. How can Satan appear as an angel of light? Why would he choose this approach?

3. What did the ministers of Satan attempt to do?

4. Since boasting was not of the Lord (vs. 17), why did Paul use this method?

II Corinthians 11:21b-33
But whatever anyone else dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. 22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. 23 Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. 24 Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; 26 on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; 27 in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?

30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. 31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. 32 At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to seize me, 33 but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his hands.
**Paul's Sufferings - 11:22-32**

1. What earthly position did Paul possess?

2. List each of Paul's physical sufferings and each of his emotional sufferings. Alongside each list a reference from the book of Acts or other scriptures which elaborate on this suffering:

3. In what does Paul say he would glory?
**Introduction**

In this section Paul continues to "boast" in order to show that he was indeed an apostle (and thus a teacher of the true gospel). He explains that his glorying should have been unnecessary, for the signs of an apostle had been performed among them (vs. 11,12). Here his glorying focuses on his weaknesses. He mentions his thorn in the flesh which would prevent him from being overexalted. He concludes the section by stating his readiness to come to them along with his fear that he might have to mourn over many who had not repented.

**II Corinthians 12:1-21**

_I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord._

_2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows._

_3 And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— _

_4 and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter._

_5 On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses— _

_6 though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me._

_7 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. _

_8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me._

_9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me._

_10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong._

_11 I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I was not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I am nothing._

_12 The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works._

_13 For in what were you less favored than the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong!_
**Thorn in the Flesh - 12:1-10**

1. Do you believe Paul is speaking of himself in vs. 2-4? Why or why not?

2. Be prepared to discuss what is paradise or the third heaven?

3. What was the purpose of Paul's thorn in the flesh? Are we told what it was?

4. Why was Paul willing to glory in his weaknesses?

5. When was Paul strong? Explain.

**Signs of an Apostle - 12:11-13**

1. Why had Paul become foolish?

2. What were the signs of an apostle?

3. For what "wrong" does Paul ask forgiveness?


**III Corinthians 12:14-21**

14 Here for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be a burden, for I seek not what is yours but you. For children are not obligated to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. 15 I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less? 16 But granting that I myself did not burden you, I was crafty, you say, and got the better of you by deceit. 17 Did I take advantage of you through any of those whom I sent to you? 18 I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not act in the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps? 19 Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved. 20 For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. 21 I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced.

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**Third Visit - 12:14-21**

1. What questions does Paul ask the Corinthians? What is his point?

2. What did Paul fear he would find if he came?

3. How would Paul react if he found what he feared?
**II Corinthians**

**Final Words**

**Lesson 12**

**II Corinthians 13:1 - 14**

**Introduction**

Paul's final words to the Corinthians are a mixture of gentle encouragement and reminders of his warnings. He speaks clearly of those that sin, warning that he would not spare, but would deal sharply with them when he came again. He reminds them of the victory of Christ, the opportunity they had to allow Christ to live in them. Finally, he gives them a series of exhortations in order that the God of love and peace might dwell among them.

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**II Corinthians 13:1-14**

*This is the third time I am coming to you. Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.*  
2 I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them—  
3 since you seek proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you.  
4 For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God.  
5 Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!  
6 I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test.  
7 But we pray to God that you may not do wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed.  
8 For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.  
9 For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. Your restoration is what we pray for.  
10 For this reason I write these things while I am away from you, that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down.  
11 Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.  
12 Greet one another with a holy kiss.  
13 All the saints greet you.  
14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
**Paul's Farewell - 13:1-14**

1. Paul makes it clear in vs. 1,2 that he will deal with those who sin when he comes to Corinth.
2. Read II Corinthians 8:9 and Hebrews 2:14-18. Use these passages to explain what Christ accomplished through weakness.


4. Why did Paul pray for them not to sin?

5. Use II Corinthians 4:7-15 to explain vs. 9.

6. Note how often Paul brings up the thought of vs. 10 (cf. 1:23; 10:9; 13:2).

7. Be prepared to:
   a. explain how they could accomplish each of Paul's exhortations in vs. 11
   b. explain which of their problems would be resolved by achieving Paul's exhortation.

8. How does vs. 14 teach that a trinity exists?
II Corinthians

Review

Lesson 13

Read II Corinthians at least once more all the way through. As you read, note passages that have particular relevance to our goals, listed below.

1. Live more faithfully to the commitment we have made to God

2. Be more aware of the nearness and comfort of God

3. Be more motivated and prepared to share the Gospel

4. Be more aware of the needs of others and willing to sacrifice to help them

5. Think more constantly of the life we have beyond this one

List (at least) 3 life lessons that you have gained from our study of 2 Corinthians and be prepared to discuss in class.

What was your favorite passage (it can be a single verse or a section of chapters) in 2 Corinthians? Why? How has it helped you?
Match the following quotes with the appropriate verse reference. Be prepared to answer from memory in class. Try to remember how these quotes fit into the context of where Paul writes them.

1. 1.3-4 of those
   Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

2. 2.4
   For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

3. 2.14-16 through
   But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? (2.14-16)

4. 3.16-18
   But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

5. 4.7
   But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

6. 4.16-18
   So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

7. 5.6-8
   So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

8. 5.9
   So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

9. 5.20-21 implore
   Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

10. 6.14
   Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

11. 7.9-10
   As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly produces death.

12. 8.1-2
   We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

13. 9.6-7
   The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

14. 10.4-6
   For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.
15. 11.1-3  I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

16. 12.19  Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved.

17. 13.5  Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!

Place the appropriate title with the corresponding section of 2 Corinthians.

- Introduction 1.1-11
- Paul’s Changed Plans 1.12-2.17
- The Ministry of Glory 3.1-4.6
- Christian Perspective 4.7-5.21
- Paul & Corinthians’ Relationship 6.1-7.16
- Giving for the Saints 8.1-9.15
- Paul’s Defense 10.1-12.13
- Final Instructions & Warnings