

WEAKNESS

power in

2 CORINTHIANS 8-13

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Term 1	Passage		Preaching date
Week 1	2 Cor 8:1-15	What Grace Produces	30 April 2023
Week 2	2 Cor 8:16-9:5	Christian Money Management	7 May 2023
Week 3	2 Cor 8:9	Gospel Shaped Thinking	14 May 2023
Week 4	2 Cor 9:6-15	Joyful Generosity	21 May 2023
Week 5	2 Cor 10:1-18	The Weapons of our Warfare	28 May 2023
Week 6	2 Cor 11:1-15	True and False Apostles	4 June 2023
Week 7	2 Cor 11:16-33	Two Kinds of Boasting	11 June 2023
Week 8	2 Cor 12:1-10	Boasting about Experiences	18 June 2023
Week 9	2 Cor 12:11-21	The Faithful Shepherd	25 June 2023
Week 10	2 Cor 12:1-14	The Final Visit	2 July 2023

The Bible in a Year

Week	Passage 1	Passage 2	Passage 3
1	2 Cor 8:1-15	1 Corinthians 1	Psalms 135
2	2 Cor 8:16-9:5	1 Corinthians 2	Psalms 136
3	2 Cor 8:9	1 Corinthians 3	Psalms 137-138
4	2 Cor 9:6-15	1 Corinthians 4	Psalms 139
5	2 Cor 10:1-18	1 Corinthians 5	Psalms 140
6	2 Cor 11:1-15	1 Corinthians 6	Psalms 140-141
7	2 Cor 11:16-33	1 Corinthians 7	Psalms 143-144
8	2 Cor 12:1-10	1 Corinthians 8	Psalms 145-146
9	2 Cor 12:11-21	1 Corinthians 9	Psalms 147-148
10	2 Cor 13:1-14	1 Corinthians 10	Psalms 149-150

TERM 2 2023

What is the goal of these notes?

The goal is to grow your ability to read the bible. Bible reading is essential to Christian growth and survival but it's a skill that only develops with practice. Indeed because of the spiritual apathy that's part of our fallen nature the desire to read only grows with practice! The bible is an extraordinary book. It has changed people, nations and the flow of history. That's unsurprising since it's God's book and contains God's wisdom for life. Yet, bible reading in some ways is no different to reading any other book. These notes will assist you in developing skills which will increasingly enable you to feed yourself from the bible and help others do the same.

Three ways to use these notes

1. Personal reading

Use this guide to help you read your Bible every day. Scribble down your thoughts and questions each day, and remember to pray asking God to speak to you by His Spirit, through His word.

2. Growth Groups

Use the section at the end of each week to prepare for your Growth Group. Take this guide with you to your Growth Group each week so you can write down prayer points that come from the study that week and prayer requests from the members of your group. Let your group know who you are on mission to.

3. Church

Keep this guide with your Bible and bring it with you to church. Scribble down sermon notes in the space provided.

2 CORINTHIANS 8-13

An Introduction to 2 Corinthians

This is the second letter from Paul to the Corinthians in the Bible. From the text of the two letters, it seems that these were possibly letters 2 and 4 or 1 and 3 in a series of letters from the apostle to the troubled church in Corinth.

It's apparent that Paul's relationship with the church at Corinth is complex. They were a young church but immature and unhappy that Paul had not visited them. It seems that there are other 'teachers' in Corinth vying for their affections by running Paul's ministry down, saying something like, "How could someone as weak and hopeless as Paul be the authentic apostle?". The result is that a big part of this letter is a defence of Paul's apostolic ministry and an associated defence of the gospel.

It is also clear that some in the church have been strikingly ungodly, which was the occasion for Paul's "Severe Letter".

The second half of 2 Corinthians, which we are considering this term, is an application of the Christian worldview to the issues of generosity and Christian leadership. Among the churches of the new testament, Corinth is almost certainly the closest in culture to that of our present western world. It therefore has much to say to twenty-first century Christians by way of both warning and encouragement. As Paul labours to win the hearts, minds and souls of those at Corinth there will be much to learn about true and false Christian leadership.

3-1-1 Prayer

We all care for friends and family who don't know Jesus and this should be reflected in our prayers. List below the names of 3 such people you can be praying for once a week for one minute.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

WHAT GRACE PRODUCES

If we've got the gospel, or perhaps more accurately, if it's got us, then there ought to be obvious changes in our lives. They may not come immediately. They usually grow with our own depth of insight and conviction but they ought to be telling: a concern for the glory of Jesus; a concern for obedience to Him; a concern for the welfare of other Christians; a concern for a lost world; a concern to grow in our knowledge of the truth. These will show themselves in various ways and this week Paul will outline one such example.

Week 1: Day 1

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-15

Good bible reading involves a continual process of comparison between the big picture on the one hand and the details on the other. That's why one way to keep our bible reading fresh is to alternate between reading large slabs in overview and reading small bites very closely. Today, let's get an overview of the week while zooming in on one detail.

1. Paul is arranging a financial gift for the Christians in Judea. What can you find out about this gift?

Continued next page...

WEEK 1: 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-15

Day 1 continued...

2. Consider the cross references below. What does each tell you about this gift?

- Romans 15:25-27

- 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

- Galatians 2:9,10

3. Try to summarise what Paul wants from the Corinthian Christians.

PRAY: The body of believers is one diverse family drawn from many nations. The solidarity we share will last for eternity. Pray that you will find appropriate ways to express that solidarity in your care of brothers and sisters beyond our church.

WHAT GRACE PRODUCES

Day 2

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-15

1. In the space below, note the verse where the word “grace” is mentioned (including v 4) and try to explain in each context, what the word means.

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2. By referring to giving as a “grace” (v 7) what is Paul revealing about it?

3. What 2 examples does Paul give to persuade the Corinthians to follow through on their promise to give?

PRAY: If we love our brothers and sisters in Christ we will want to see them make progress in the faith and grow in grace. (2 Peter 3;18) In what ways would you like to “grow in grace”? Pray that God will help you to do this.

WHAT GRACE PRODUCES

Day 4

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:7-9

Titus has been an important envoy between Paul and the church at Corinth. Back in chapter 2:13 Paul was anxiously awaiting news from Titus about the church's attitude to himself. This was received to his relief in 6:7. Now (8:16) Titus would be returning to Corinth to urge them to finish the collection so he could take it to Jerusalem. But the key player in all of this is Jesus the God of grace.

1. Notice "giving" listed among other Christian virtues and activities in v 7. What does the wording of v 7 tell us about Christian giving?

2. What do you think Paul means in v 7 when he speaks of the "grace of giving"?

Notice that giving" is described as a "grace" yet Paul urges them to "excel" in it. This suggests that there's a choice to be exercised in a Christian's experience of grace.

3. List the various means Paul uses in these verses to encourage the Corinthians to give. Which for you is the most persuasive?

"Grace grows by exercise and decays by disuse."

Thomas Brooks

PRAY: God's grace does not leave us without responsibility. Indeed it creates a greater obligation since He has given us so much! Ask God to fill you with a deep sense of gratitude to Christ for His goodness to you.

WEEK 1: 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-15

Day 5

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:10-15

Today brings Paul to the crunch point is his appeal. Notice that he does it with delicacy but firmness. An important skill in bible reading is the ability to summarise a point. Today will give you an opportunity to practise this.

1. Verses 10- 12 are actually very straightforward. Try to summarise this into a simple sentence or two.
2. Christian life is like a marriage where we commit to our brothers and sisters in sickness and in health. How is this reflected by what is said in v 14?
3. Paul's desire is that there may be "equality" but obviously not in the amount given. What then could he mean and how should we work it out?

"Let us give according to our incomes lest God make our incomes match our gifts."

Anonymous

PRAY: Ask God to give you a soft heart as you consider your need to grow in the grace of giving.

WHAT GRACE PRODUCES

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. Paul is arranging a financial gift for the Christians in Judea. What can you find out about this gift? (Day 1 Q1)

2. Grace is a very prominent word in this passage. What do you think Paul means in v 7 when he speaks of the “grace of giving”? (Day 4 Q 2)

3. List the various means Paul uses in these verses to encourage the Corinthians to give. Which for you is the most persuasive? (Day 4 Q 3)

PRAYER POINTS & NOTES

CHRISTIAN MONEY MANAGEMENT

Since money is such a popular idol it is the cause of great temptation. It can be misused by people within the church who are tempted to theft or embezzlement. But it is also the subject of intense scrutiny by those outside the church who, in their opposition to God, are eager to point to wrong doing by His people. Hence we need to keep a clear conscience before God and before others especially in the handling of money.

Week 2: Day 1

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:16-9:5

One important skill in bible reading is to be able to follow the flow of thought in a passage. As a hint, this passage will express Paul's concern that Christians show themselves to be above reproach in dealing with money since we are easily tempted to misuse it.

1. Use a coloured pen, pencil or highlighter to divide the passage on the following page into 3 parts.

2. Give each part a title or brief description below

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3. Try to provide a title for this whole passage. (hint: don't use my one!)

PRAY: Since money is such a popular idol we need to take pains to deal with it wisely, generously and in a manner that does not bring the gospel into disrepute. Ask God to search your heart in these matters.

WEEK 2: 2 CORINTHIANS 8:16-9:5

¹⁶ Thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. ¹⁷ For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative. ¹⁸ And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. ¹⁹ What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. ²⁰ We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. ²¹ For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man.

²² In addition, we are sending with them our brother who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous, and now even more so because of his great confidence in you. ²³ As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. ²⁴ Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it.

9 There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the Lord's people. ² For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. ³ But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. ⁴ For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to say anything about you—would be ashamed of having been so confident. ⁵ So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.

CHRISTIAN MONEY MANAGEMENT

Day 2

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:16-24

These opening verses detail three of the people Paul is sending to Corinth to bear the gift from Corinth and Macedonia to the needy church in Judea.

1. What can you find out about Paul's organisation for this gift?

2. What sort of qualifications and precautions are necessary for those who handle money in the church? What is significant about the kind of men Paul chooses?

3. It is possible to get the two priorities in v 21 out of balance so that we become man-pleasers. What wisdom do the following give for keeping these two in their right balance?

- Luke 12:4,5
- 1 Peter 2:12

PRAY: The glory of God. That is always our goal. Pray that God will help you live today with that goal firmly in mind- whether your deeds are visible or invisible to people.

WEEK 2: 2 CORINTHIANS 8:16-9:5

Day 3

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:22-9:5

Paul's principle which we saw in 8:21 is often overlooked by those who are new to Christian life and faith. It matters immensely that we do right in the eyes of God but it matters too that we do what is right in the eyes of man. Notice that point today.

1. List the examples in this passage that show Paul's concern that he and other Christians do right in the eyes of men.

The young Christian may be inclined to say: "What I do is nobody's business but mine and God's." Paul does not subscribe to this idea..

2. For the sake of the gospel, in what areas of life is it important to take pains to do what is right in the eyes of God and in the eyes of man?

3. Consider Romans 14:13. How might the Corinthians' failure to follow through on their promise prove to be a stumbling block to the Macedonians? How does Paul seek to avoid this?

PRAY: Love for Christian brothers and sisters means carefully considering the impact of our actions on them. Ask God (Psalm 139:23,24) to search you in this respect.

CHRISTIAN MONEY MANAGEMENT

Day 4

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 9:1-5

The Corinthians were a young and immature church but were converted out of a background far from the gospel. And they were highly critical of Paul, yet he was very gracious to them!

1. What examples of Paul's speech show the esteem in which he holds the Corinthians? See also v's 22-24.

2. Do you find yourself tempted to speak negatively of people in your family, church, workplace? What do you think might drive this?

3. What would help you to more consistently follow Paul's example of gracious speech here?

PRAY: Thank God for his kindness and generosity towards us in the gospel and his daily grace towards us as his children. Ask for His help to reflect generosity in your relationships with others.

WEEK 2: 2 CORINTHIANS 8:16-9:5

Day 5

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:16-9:5

This passage could be seen purely and simply as an appeal for Christians to follow through on a financial promise. Yet it is far more than that.

1. Paul's concerns are shaped by the gospel. In this passage list those for whom he is concerned and try to identify his desire for each.

As we said in week 1, good bible reading is a dialogue between the big picture and the details. As we better understand the details we may modify our big picture and vice versa.

2. Consider your passage break-up from the start of the week. How do you see it now?

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3. List one thought that particularly struck you during your reading this week?

PRAY: Ask God to help you develop the skill of seeing the big picture in a passage?

CHRISTIAN MONEY MANAGEMENT

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. What qualifications and precautions are necessary for those who handle money in the church? What is significant about the kind of men Paul chooses? (Day 2 Q 2)

2. For the sake of the gospel, in what areas of life is it important to take pains to do what is right in the eyes of God and in the eyes of man? (Day 3 Q 2)

3. Paul's concerns are shaped by the gospel. In this passage list those for whom he is concerned and try to identify his desire for each. (Day 5 Q 1)

PRAYER POINTS & NOTES

GOSPEL SHAPED THINKING

At the heart of Christian maturity is the importance of right thinking. As young Christians, the minds of the Corinthians were very much shaped by their own worldly culture. Yet God would have them shaped by the culture of the cross. The richness of the bible means that even the smallest part contains great treasure and that's the case with the one verse we consider this week. 2 Corinthians 8:9 involves a principle that speaks to the issue of generosity but has application to much more.

Week 3: Day 1

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-15

1. Try to paraphrase the verse i.e. put it in your own words even if it ends up being much longer.

2. Consider verse 8 in its context. Why, in this context, does Paul remind them of the "grace" of the Lord Jesus?

3. Considering the verses both before and after, what various ideas does Paul expect v 9 to communicate to the Corinthians?

"O believer, herein is love! For your sake the Lord Jesus "became poor", that he might lift you up into communion with himself."

C.H. Spurgeon

PRAY: Jesus is the centre of the Christian life and the cross is at the centre of all He is to us. Meditation on the cross should shape our thinking. Ask God to help you in this.

WEEK 3: 2 CORINTHIANS 8:9

Day 2

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:9 & PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

1. In Phil 2, there is a logical flow to God's actions with His Son. Try to describe it below.

2. "...that though he was rich..." (2 Corinthians 8:9) In what sense was Christ rich? (consider Philippians 2:6; Colossians 1:15ff; John 17:5)

3. What emotions might be involved for a rich human being who suddenly becomes poor?

PRAY: It is hard to imagine the depth of Jesus' sacrifice. Praise Jesus for His humility and kindness in giving up all the prerogatives of Godhood to take on flesh and die for us.

GOSPEL SHAPED THINKING

Day 3

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:9 & PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

1. "...yet for your sake he became poor." In what sense did Jesus become poor?

2. Many reputable versions (ESV, NASB, HCSB, NRSV) render v 7 as follows: "He emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant..." In what sense did Jesus "*empty*" Himself?

Consider the following, esp paragraphs 5-10 & summarise what you find:

<https://www.samstorms.org/all-articles/post/article-10-things-you-should-know-about-the-kenosis-controversy>

PRAY: Jesus voluntarily chose not to exercise the prerogatives and powers of deity, opting instead to depend upon the empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit. Praise God for the sacrifice of Jesus!

WEEK 3: 2 CORINTHIANS 8:9

Day 4

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:9

1. "...so that you through his poverty might become rich..." In what various ways has the believer become rich through the poverty of Jesus?

- Romans 8:15
- Romans 8:17
- Romans 8:29,30

2. It is a pattern for God to exalt the humble as He did in Christ (1 Peter 5:5,6). In what other ways do you imagine God exalts the humble? (Hint: see 2 Corinthians 9:8-11)

PRAY: While wealth is one of God's blessings, true riches are found in a character that grows increasingly Christ-like. Ask God to help you believe this truth and live for it.

GOSPEL SHAPED THINKING

Day 5

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-25 & 2 CORINTHIANS 8:9

The cross is the wisdom of God. (1 Cor 1:24) It involves humility, selflessness, sacrifice, an appearance of weakness, a refusal to stand on personal rights, the offer of forgiveness, the postponing of glory. The cross redefines what it means to be truly and wisely human.

1. In our culture, what do you think are the major issues that shape the way people think about human identity and success?

2. Consider the paragraph that begins Day 5. List below some present ideas about human fulfillment that are corrected by the wisdom of the cross.

3. Sacrifice is the way of the cross & always leads to God's blessing. This week we celebrate Mother's Day. God delights in the role of motherhood. (Titus 2:3,4) What are the sacrifices of motherhood in today's world? What are some of the blessings?

"it is fitting that the one who humbled himself most deeply, the one whose obedience cost the greatest imaginable self-denial, should be most highly exalted."

John Piper

PRAY: Motherhood and fatherhood are in essence roles of nurture and service. Human parents may let us down. They're fallen people after all. Give thanks for your parents and if you find this hard to do, ask God to help you in it.

WEEK 3: 2 CORINTHIANS 8:9

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. In our culture, what are the major considerations that shape the way people think about human identity and success? (Day 5 Q 1)

2. Considering the verses both before and after, what various ideas does Paul expect v 9 to communicate to the Corinthians? (Day 1 Q 3)

3. Sacrifice is the way of the cross that leads to God's blessing. What are the sacrifices of motherhood in today's world? What are some of the blessings? (Day 5 Q 3)

PRAYER POINTS & NOTES

WEEK 4: 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-15

Week 4: Day 1

READ JOHN 11:17-27

Remember from week 2 the value of learning to follow the author's flow of thought. Try that again today by seeking to break the passage up into its logical parts. I'm going to suggest that there are four (4) parts.

1. For each, list the verses involved and give it a title. The last one is done for you.

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- God's Way deserves praise! v 15

2. List below the most helpful insight you've picked up from the passage on your first read.

PRAY: The Psalmist says, "The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes." (Psalm 19:8) Praise God for the wisdom of His ways.

THE VALUE OF GENEROSITY

Day 2

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-11

Verse 7 is a wise safeguard against grudging giving. This is why online giving is such a helpful practice because it avoids thoughtless giving.

1. What are the principles for giving in these verses?

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2. Do you tend to be generous or sparing in your giving?

3. What changes would you need to make to move more toward generosity?

PRAY: God seeks to change people from the inside out hence the example in 8:9 of the Lord Jesus. Pray that you and our church will grow in generosity, not merely with material goods but with all we have.

WEEK 4: 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-15

Day 3

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 9:8-11 & PSALM 112

One important clue to good bible reading is to chase up the cross references an author uses as a guide to his thinking. That's our goal today. The Psalm is about those under the Sinai covenant who "fear the Lord". (Psalm 112:1)

1. Are there promises here which don't seem to be true of us who are no longer under the Sinai covenant? How might they be fulfilled in Christ?

It is common in some Christian contexts to hear that if we give more money, God will make us even more materially wealthy. A misunderstanding of this very passage could lead to this idea.

2. 2 Corinthians 9:8 tells us that "God is able to bless you abundantly." In v's 8-11 what clues are given as to the nature of the blessing?

3. Which of these attributes would you most like to grow in?

PRAY: Thank God that in Christ we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 1:3) Ask Him to grow your character in Christ.

THE VALUE OF GENEROSITY

Day 4

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 9:12-15

If the Corinthians followed through on their promise there would be a series of results which would extend the blessing in ever widening circles.

1. List below some of the possible results of the Corinthians' generosity?

2. What are some of the expressions used by Paul to describe the giving he hopes will come from the Corinthians?

3. The overall outcome of this act would be thanksgiving to God. Why is this so appropriate?

"When we have given God all we have and are, we have simply given Him His own."

William S. Plumber

PRAY: Our goal is to see the glory of God magnified among all we know. Ask Him to give you a growing insight into how you can more directly live for His glory.

WEEK 4: 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-15

Day 5

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 9:12-15

1. Look back over days 1-4. Are there ways in which your passage outline has changed? If so, note it in the space below.

2. What observations this week suggest that the prosperity gospel is wrong?

3. If you had a friend who wanted to grow in their expression of regular generosity how would you advise them?

"In this world it is not what we take up but what we give up that makes us rich."

Henry Ward Beecher

PRAY: Thanksgiving is good for our souls since it puts us in mind that God is always at work for our best to make us like Christ. Think for a moment and give Him thanks for the work He is doing in you.

THE VALUE OF GENEROSITY

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. What are the principles for giving in v's 6-11? (Day 2 Q 1)

2. 2 Corinthians 9:8 tells us that "God is able to bless you abundantly." In v's 8-11 what clues are given as to the nature of the blessing? (Day 3 Q 2)

3. If you had a friend who wanted to grow in their expression of regular generosity how would you advise them? (Day 5 Q 3)

PRAYER POINTS & NOTES

THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE

Do you recall the situation in Corinth? A group of rival teachers, the “super-apostles” had moved into town, undermining Paul while teaching a different gospel with a different Jesus. (11:4) This abrupt segue therefore, which will carry us through to the letter’s end, returns to Paul’s legitimacy as an apostle. Paul’s tone with the Corinthians is a mixture of gentleness (v 1) and firm rebuke (v 2,6,7). If his tone seems overly defensive, remember that to abandon him was to lose the gospel.

Week 5: Day 1

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-18

The series of letters between Paul and Corinth (perhaps as many as 4) means that there’s plenty to read between the lines. We need to fill in the gaps like someone listening in to one side of a phone conversation.

1. Reading between the lines, what information can you infer in v’s 1-11 about the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians?

2. The “boasting” of the “super-apostles” will be a key theme of the next 2 chapters. What can you infer about them in v’s 12-18?

3. Paul’s tone is defensive but with good reason. Why does it matter that Christians fight for the truth?

PRAY: Consider those who minister to you. If they’re good servants they will want you to love the truth and will need your prayers in that fierce spiritual battle. Pray that you will love the truth and those who serve it.

WEEK 5: 2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-18

Day 2

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-6 & 11:12-15

Paul uses a military analogy to describe the work of Christian ministry because Christian life always takes place in the midst of a spiritual battle. (Ephesians 6:12,13)

1. The weapons of our warfare and Paul's are almost certainly the word of God and prayer. (Acts 6:4) In 10:3-6 how would you describe the way he engages in the battle?

2. How are Paul's opponents described in 11:13-15?

"The sinful mind wants peace at any price but the spiritually discerning mind recognises that some battles for the truth must be fought and won for the sake of people's eternal good."

Anonymous

3. Gentleness or firm rebuke. Many tend to one or the other but Paul, like Jesus, knew there was a place for both. With whom was Jesus gentle and with whom was he firm? Consider Matthew 11:28-30 & Matthew 23:23-26

PRAY: Christian life involves a spiritual battle where the stakes are incredibly high. Pray that God will make you discerning as to when to be gentle and when to be firm.

THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE

Day 3

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 10:7-11

Wordly judgments were the hallmark of Corinthian immaturity. This is evident in their critique of Paul. According to one ancient source he was, “a small in stature with bald head and crooked legs.” In contrast, Greek culture vaunted fine oratory, physical beauty and self confidence!

1. How does the paragraph above help shed light on the criticisms of Paul in this passage?

2. The theme of “boasting” will be central to Paul’s argument. What does Paul boast about in this passage? (See Acts 9:1-6; Galatians 1:11-17)

3. The right application of authority is important. Who are those with God-given authority to build you up? Over whom do you exercise God-given authority?

“The simple believe anything. Like children, they may be overly impressed by the spectacular and dramatic, or they may need approval too much and so be taken in by forceful personalities who give it to them.”

Tim Keller

PRAY: Give thanks for those who brought you the gospel and exercise God-given responsibility over you. Pray for them to be faithful and to perform their role with joy. (Hebrews 13:17)

WEEK 5: 2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-18

Day 4

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 10:12-18

The “super-apostles” were Jews. (11:22) A decade earlier it was agreed that James, John and Peter should take the gospel to the Jews while Paul and Barnabbas took it to the Gentiles. (Galatians 2:7-9) This agreement established the “sphere of service” (v 13) in which each should work.

1. How does the paragraph above shed light on Paul’s words in this passage?
2. It appears from v 12 that the “super-apostles” compared themselves with Paul and boasted of their supposed superiority. We are all inclined to compare ourselves with others. What alternative questions are we urged to ask ourselves in v’s 17 & 18?
3. Are there any personal matters in your life about which you need to ask whether the Lord would commend you?

PRAY: Consider the question you’ve written in Q 3 above and turn it now into a basis for prayer.

THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE

Day 5

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 10:14-18

Paul was a wonderful gospel servant, faithful to the task he was given. Faithful to this church especially. They were his letter of recommendation (3:1-3) and sadly, they couldn't see it!

1. What was Paul's desire for his ministry among the Corinthians?
2. Few of us are full time gospel ministers so how might these things apply to the ministries in which we share?
3. Paul longed to see the gospel expand to regions well beyond Corinth. (see Romans 15:20-24) Consider your own responsibilities. How do you long to see the gospel expand in your:
 - family?
 - friendship circle?
 - church?

PRAY: Consider what you've written above and pray for each. Remember especially your 3:1:1 contacts.

WEEK 5: 2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-18

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. Reading between the lines, what information can you infer in v's 1-11 about the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians? (Day 1 Q 1)

2. Paul's tone is defensive but with good reason. Why does it matter that Christians fight for the truth? (Day 1 Q 3)

3. We are all inclined to compare ourselves with others. What alternative questions are we urged to ask ourselves in v's 17 & 18? (Day 4 Q 2)

PRAYER POINTS & NOTES

WEEK 6: 2 CORINTHIANS 11:1-15

Marriage is a permanent, exclusive, monogamous relationship between a man and a woman. To allow the intrusion of a third party is always wrong. Paul the apostle was a match-maker. The bride-to-be is the church universal, the husband is the heavenly Lord Jesus. So Paul was rightly concerned that the bride-to-be was flirting!

Week 6: Day 1

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 11:1-15

1. On the passage on the following page, use a highlighter or similar to note those expressions (including sarcasm) which speak of Paul's passionate commitment to this church.
2. What do each of these statements suggest about Paul and his convictions as a pastor?

"Christ is the king of His church and the church is the greatest queen in the world"

Richard Sibbes

PRAY: All who understand the place of the church in the affections of Christ need to grow in this love. So pray for yourself and your brothers and sisters that this would be true of you.

TRUE AND FALSE APOSTLES

11 I hope you will put up with me in a little foolishness. Yes, please put up with me! ² I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. ³ But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. ⁴ For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

⁵ I do not think I am in the least inferior to those "super-apostles." ⁶ I may indeed be untrained as a speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way. ⁷ Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the gospel of God to you free of charge? ⁸ I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. ⁹ And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so. ¹⁰ As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, nobody in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine. ¹¹ Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

¹² And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. ¹³ For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. ¹⁵ It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

WEEK 6: 2 CORINTHIANS 11:1-15

Day 2

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 11:1-4

1. Verses 1 & 4 repeat the expression, “put up with”. What failure in the Corinthians’ is Paul identifying here?

2. Jealousy isn’t always a positive emotion but in some contexts it is a mark of appropriate faithfulness. What are the current threats to the faithfulness of the church?

3. What are the greatest threats to the purity of your own devotion to Christ?

“As Christians, we cannot love Jesus if we do not love what Jesus loves. Jesus loves the church.”

Kevin DeYoung

PRAY: Give thanks for the love and faithfulness of Christ. Pray that He’d guard our hearts to be faithful and pure in our devotion to him.

TRUE AND FALSE APOSTLES

Day 3

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 11:1-18

1. Even in Paul's admissions (e.g. v 6) there are things to learn about the "super-apostles". What can you find out about them in these verses?

2. What do the following suggest about them?

- 2 Corinthians 3:1-3
- 2 Corinthians 11:22 (see also 2 Corinthians 3:7ff)
- 2 Corinthians 10:12 & 12:1
- 2 Corinthians 12:7

PRAY: We need discernment to avoid being deceived by "deceitful workmen...masquerading as apostles of Christ" Pray that God will grow your discernment.

WEEK 6: 2 CORINTHIANS 11:1-15

Day 4

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 11:5-11

In order to understand this passage we need to see another feature of Corinthian worldliness. In Graeco-Roman society the affluent would give money to travelling philosophers so putting them under obligation but Paul refused this. We'll see why today but it seems that the Corinthians have held a grudge over his flouting of this social convention since he first came 6 years before.

1. In v's 7-9 what was Paul's "so called" sin?

Paul's statement that he "robbed other churches" is his use of a military metaphor which is explained in the next verse. Those poor churches from Macedonia (8:1ff) dug deeply to give beyond their means, supplying Paul's need and sparing the Corinthians from any need to support him. This may have made Corinth think that Paul favoured the Macedonians.

2. What reason does he give for not accepting their payment? (see also 1 Corinthians 9:17,18 for an explanation of Paul's "boast")

3. So, should we support those in gospel ministry? What can you find out about this from 1 Corinthians 9:3-14?

PRAY: Give thanks for those who serve among us in paid and unpaid gospel ministry. Ask that God would continue to enlarge our hearts with a vision for the cause of the gospel both here and beyond.

TRUE AND FALSE APOSTLES

Day 5

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 11:1-15

A valuable skill in bible reading is to be able to summarise a passage. It tests whether we have understood the argument and can explain it succinctly.

1. Try to summarise this week's passage.

2. What impresses you most about the apostle Paul as a servant of the gospel?

3. Paul is concerned about false teaching but not all errors matter equally. Is there a way to determine where we should draw the line?

"Lord, I tend to be smug about my right beliefs. I love to think I know the truth, but even when I do, I don't know how to use it. Please bring into my life what is necessary for wisdom to grow, and then remind me that I received it from you. Amen."

Tim Keller

PRAY: Consider the quote above and if you think it is appropriate, pray it for yourself.

TRUE AND FALSE APOSTLES

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. Even in Paul's admissions (e.g. v 6) there are things to learn about the "super-apostles". What can you find out about them in v's 1-18 (Day 3 Q 1)

2. Jealousy isn't always a positive emotion but in some contexts it is a mark of appropriate faithfulness. What are the current threats to the faithfulness of the church? (Day 2 Q 2)

3. Paul is concerned about false teaching but not all errors matter equally. Is there a way to determine where we should draw the line? (Day 5 Q 3)

PRAYER POINTS & NOTES

WEEK 7: 2 CORINTHIANS 11:16-33

“Accusations have been made that Paul is worldly, a fool and weak. Paul denies the first: the weapons of his warfare are not worldly but possess divine power...He then turns to their second and their accusations, that he is a “fool” and is “weak”. With these he actually agrees, though his agreement, which combines both charges into one, is stated in a brilliant literary form which is full of irony.”

Paul Barnett. The Message of 2 Corinthians.

Week 7: Day 1

READ JOHN 11:17-27

Under the influence of the Christian worldview, boasting in much of western society is seen to be brash and inappropriate but it wasn't always so and especially not in the first century Graeco-Romans world. So Paul's opponents were boastful, particularly at Paul's expense.”.

1. In this passage what do you find out about:

- The “super-apostles”/
- The Corinthians?

2. Contrast the style of ministry of the “super-apostles” 16-20) with the style of ministry that Paul learned from Jesus. (8:9; 10:1; 13:4)

PRAY: Give thanks for the compassionate, selfless love of Christ. Pray for those who have been harmed by abusive Christian leadership and ask that our church would be shaped by the character of Christ.

TWO KINDS OF BOASTING

Day 2

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 11:16-22; 30-33

Behind Paul's language in chapters 10-12 lie the barbs and criticisms of the "super-apostles".

1. What are the implied criticisms of Paul in these verses?

Paul's ironic "boasting" in v 22 is of a different nature to that of v's 30-33. He says more about this in Philippians 3:4b-8.

2. How would you define the boast in each?

- V 22 (see Philippians 3 for help)

- V's 30-33

3. In what worldly attributes are you tempted to put confidence?

"One reason we worship false gods is because idolatry is easier than faith. Our longing for immediate gratification... makes idolatry not just tempting but easy."

R.C. Sproul

PRAY: Ask God to show you where your true dependence lies and for the courage to die to idolatry.

WEEK 7: 2 CORINTHIANS 11:16-33

Day 3

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 11:23-29

In these verses Paul's boasting takes a more serious and less ironic tone. What appears in these verses are the credentials of the exemplary servant of Christ. When we read them we should bear in mind the contrast between Paul and the prosperity preachers of today with their luxury jets, tailored suits and carefully coiffed hair.

1. How would you summarise the credentials of the exemplary servant of Christ?

2. It is common for our Christian concerns to extend only a small distance beyond ourselves or our families. In v's 28,29 Paul's concerns are larger. How would you put his perspective into words?

3. Unlike the worldly Corinthians, Paul is a "world-minded Christian". His concerns are shaped by Christ's great commission. What steps do you imagine would help you become a world-minded Christian?

PRAY: Ask God to make you a "world-minded Christian".

TWO KINDS OF BOASTING

Day 4

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-25

The cross of Christ creates a culture that's very different to that of the world. To understand "Christian boasting" we need to compare the culture of the cross with the culture of Corinth.

1. Paul describes the message of the cross as "foolishness" (v 18) and weakness (v 25) How does it differ from what is valued by the world (Jews and Gentiles)?

2. What Is God's motive in choosing to save through an apparently 'weak and foolish' message?

"Fascinated by the rhetoric of learned scholars of the day, the Corinthians were sometimes more impressed by form and show than by content and truth."

Don Carson

3. We Christians can easily be tempted to emulate the superficiality of the Corinthians. We can be impressed by a musician or preacher with great stories or by miracles & experiences. What attributes will help us avoid "Corinthianism"?

PRAY: The culture of the cross is profoundly wise. It brings a humble order and wisdom to life. Thank God for the wisdom of the cross. Ask Him to help you grow in it.

WEEK 7: 2 CORINTHIANS 11:16-33

Day 5

READ READ 2 CORINTHIANS 11:16-33

1. What examples in the passage show Paul's discomfort with "boasting" as the super-apostles had done?
2. Look carefully at the nature of Paul's "Christians boasting". What is the logic behind it?
3. What's the motive behind worldly boasting? In what areas are you prone to worldly boasting?

"Perish each thought of human pride, let God alone be magnified; His glory let the heavens resound, shouted from earth's remotest bound"

Philip Doderidge

PRAY: If God is to be exalted in our lives then we need to see our absolute weakness. Pray that God will help you in this and help us as a church.

TWO KINDS OF BOASTING

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. What examples in the passage show Paul's discomfort with "boasting" as the super-apostles had done? (Day 5 Q 1)

2. Look carefully at the nature of Paul's "Christians boasting". What is the logic behind it? (Day 5 Q 2)

3. We Christians can easily be tempted to emulate the superficiality of the Corinthians. We can be impressed by a musician or preacher with great stories or by miracles & experiences. What attributes will help us avoid "Corinthianism"? (Day 4 Q 3)

PRAYER POINTS & NOTES

BOASTING ABOUT EXPERIENCES

Christian bookstores are filled with titles that make us feel that our spiritual experience is on a lower plane: “Ninety Minutes in Heaven”, “Twenty Three Minutes in Hell”; “How to Experience Visions and Dreams.” Such books persuade us that the author is in touch with something better. This was the claim of the “super-apostles”.. Paul’s reply is a sobering reality check.

Week 8: Day 1

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-10

1. What does Paul say and what does he choose not to say about his visions and revelations?

In some ancient Jewish literature, the sky is referred to as the first heaven, the realm of the stars as the second and the abode of God as the third. This may be what Paul was referring to here.

2. Reading between the lines, why does he even raise this topic?

3. What reasons does Paul give for being so sparing in his recounting of this experience?

PRAY: We’re all tempted to say things which will make us appear to be significant and important. It requires a good understanding of our own littleness and of God’s immense worth, to speak much of Him and little of self. Pray that God would make us more like this.

WEEK 8: 2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-10

Day 2

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-7

In v 12 next week we'll learn, but only very briefly, something of Paul's apostolic gift of "signs, wonders and miracles". We wouldn't know anything about this vision were it not forced out of him by these circumstances at Corinth and even then he recounts it in a veiled way.

1. What observations in this passage tell you of Paul's humility in considering this spiritual experience?

We may think that visions and overt miracles occurred daily in the bible but the reality is that in all the years of bible history they clustered largely around three great saving events: the exodus, the ministries of Elijah and Elisha and of course the coming of the new age in Jesus.

Continued next page...

BOASTING ABOUT EXPERIENCES

2. Why does Paul recount this episode at all? (see 10:7,18; 11:1-3; 11:11,12)

3. When we see Christian books or hear of Christian ministers who loudly proclaim their spiritual experiences, how should we respond to them?

"Most people go through life concerned that others will think too little of them. Paul was concerned that others would think too much of him. He insisted that people should focus on the gospel not the messenger."

D.A. Carson

PRAY: Ask God to give you a discerning heart to be impressed by Christ and His infinite goodness and greatness and not by the experiences of mere men and women.

WEEK 8: 2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-10

Day 3

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 12:7b-10

1. What need is there, even in a mature believer like Paul, to be given a “thorn in the flesh”?

There’s been endless speculation about Paul’s thorn in the flesh but again he tells us little. The doctrine of the sufficiency of scripture is very helpful. It says that, what the bible doesn’t tell us, we don’t really need to know. A helpful guide for choosing Christian books!

2. Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” was a “messenger of Satan” yet Paul pleads with God to take it away. What have you learned about God’s sovereignty over evil that might explain this?

3. Try to put this into your own words; why is awareness of our own weakness a great blessing? In what ways are you aware of your own weakness?

PRAY: Thank God for his goodness and authority over all things including Satan. Ask that you’d trust him in all things, longing for Him to conform you more and more to the likeness of Christ.

BOASTING ABOUT EXPERIENCES

Day 4

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 12:7b-10

1. Paul responded to his experience in verse 7 with prayer but God still didn't take it away. What does this show us about prayer?

2. Paul may have become aware of God's answer (v 9) by means of a revelatory event or simply by reflecting on what he knew of God. Put in your own words the reason given for the prayer not being answered as Paul had hoped?

3. How do these verses help you understand why prayers of your own might seem to go unanswered?

Our Lord never referred to unanswered prayer. He taught that prayers are always answered: "Everyone who asks receives". And He implied that prayers are answered rightly because of the heavenly Father's wisdom."

Oswald Chambers

For more on apparently unanswered prayer see-

<https://mattperman.com/2011/05/ji-packer-on-the-problem-of-unanswered-prayer/>

PRAY: When we pray "in Jesus' name" we are really praying on the basis of what Jesus has done for us. Thank God that because of Jesus he always hears and answers your prayers.

WEEK 8: 2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-10

Day 5

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 12:9,10 and ACTS 9:10-16

1. Having considered these verses in 2 Corinthians 12, reflect for a moment on the God-ordained suffering of Paul about which you hear in Acts 9. Why was it beneficial for us?

2. The statement in 2 Corinthians 12:9 & 10 is an expression of remarkable Christian maturity. How do you imagine Paul responding to a situation where he knew himself to be inadequate?

"Depend on it. God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply."

Hudson Taylor

3. Are there situations you are facing in life at the moment for which you feel inadequate? How can you "delight in them"?

PRAY: As we grow in Christian competency and as a church grows in strength and size, the easier it is to be tempted to trust human resources and not God's. Is this a familiar temptation for you? Pray for yourself, your family and your church.

BOASTING ABOUT EXPERIENCES

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. What does Paul say and what does he choose not to say about his visions and revelations? (Day 1 Q 1)

2. What need is there, even in a mature believer like Paul, to be given a “thorn in the flesh”? (Day 3 Q 1)

3. Are there situations you are facing in life at the moment for which you feel inadequate? How can you “delight in them”? (Day 5 Q 3)

PRAYER POINTS & NOTES

THE FAITHFUL SHEPHERD

The time for building Paul's case has come to an end. He has shown the folly of the "super-apostles" who had won the affections of the Corinthians. Along the way he has gently shamed his readers by showing their own worldly thinking. But now he comes to the point. He lists some of their specific failures, shares some of his fatherly pain and reveals his loving, apostolic intent to bring them to a better mind.

Week 9: Day 1

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 12:11-21

The heartfelt pain of Paul's language can make the structure of this passage hard to spot so let me suggest it. Firstly there's the failures of the Corinthians; secondly the motives of the apostle.

1. What did Paul do, intend to do and refuse to do for the sake of the Corinthians?
2. List what these verses say about the Corinthians' failures
3. See if you can spot the point in the passage where Paul suddenly changes tone and outlines his intent?

PRAY: As I read this passage I marvel at Paul's patient gentleness and firm, fatherly resolve. Give thanks to God for him and pray that these traits might be evident in your own leaders.

WEEK 9: 2 CORINTHIANS 12:11-21

Day 2

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 12:11-13

1. Paul has been reluctant to boast like a fool (11:17,21) but the Corinthians have driven him to it. How do you think they have done that?

2. What were the marks of a true apostle? What might it mean that Paul "persevered" in these marks? (See 2 Corinthians 11:23-29 and 1 Corinthians 4:9-13)

3. The worldliness of the Corinthians led them to miss the greatness of the apostle Paul while also discouraging him. How do we encourage those who minister among us?

PRAY: There are so many who minister among us looking out for our good. Ask God that we as a body will rightly value their ministry and seek to encourage them.

THE FAITHFUL SHEPHERD

Day 3

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 12:13-18

We all know that repetition is a key to discerning an author's mind and discovering a recipient's grievances and that is the case as we near the end of this letter.

1. What repeated word in these verses sheds light on a sore spot in the relationship between Paul and Corinth? (see 11:7ff to understand what this language means)

Among fallen, worldly people, money is often a cause for suspicion, distrust and questioning of motives. The Corinthians were angry that Paul wouldn't accept their patronage whilst working among them but ironically, a second grievance seems to push in exactly the opposite direction.

2. What matter is being hinted at in v's 16-18. The clue is in the mention of Titus and the brother sent with him. (8:6 & 8:16-21)

3. Try to put into words these two grievances. Put side by side, why is this ironic?

PRAY: One impact of our sinful nature is a disordering of our human faculties including our ability to logically reason and see our own faults. Praise God that He begins the work of restoration in Jesus. Pray that He will be doing that in our reading together this term.

WEEK 9: 2 CORINTHIANS 12:11-21

Day 4

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 19-21

It would be a problem if the Corinthians were left thinking that Paul was merely apologising or was simply on the defensive. It would risk them thinking that they indeed had a case and that he was in the wrong. Out of love Paul won't allow this.

1. List below the verses which express Paul's true motives.

2. Consider your own ministry in church. How do these two motives impact what you do and how you do it?

It seems extremely doubtful that these two motives ranked highly in the thinking of the "super-apostles" yet it is so easy to deceive ourselves. We need God's help to see clearly at this point otherwise we will be slow to repent and grow.

3. Prompted by Paul's example, is there a need for adjustment or correction in the way you serve?

PRAY: Ask God for eyes to see opportunities for strengthening and encouraging others. Pray for the wisdom and love to do so in a way that will honour Christ.

THE FAITHFUL SHEPHERD

Day 5

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 12:11-21

As you read back over this week it is valuable to learn what you can from Paul's example. In v 20, as Paul prepares to return for a third visit he is fearful that he will find unrepentant sin. But strikingly, he is also fearful (v 21) that he himself will be humbled

1. There is a profound relationship between false doctrine and ungodly living. The false doctrine in Corinth is rooted in worldliness and pride. What kind of sins might these two lead to?

2. How might Paul be humbled by God? The clue to this is in Paul's sense of responsibility. (See Romans 15:15,16)

3. What impresses you most about the apostle Paul in this passage? Is there one thing here that you might emulate?

PRAY: The Christian life is a life of engagement in a loving family. We have a responsibility for others and to our Heavenly Father. Pray that God will deepen both of these convictions in you.

WEEK 9: 2 CORINTHIANS 12:11-21

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. What did Paul do, intend to do and refuse to do for the sake of the Corinthians? (Day 1 Q 1)

2. There is a profound relationship between false doctrine and ungodly living. The false doctrine in Corinth is rooted in worldliness and pride. What kind of sins might these two lead to? (Day 5 Q 1)

3. The worldliness of the Corinthians led them to miss the greatness of the apostle Paul while also discouraging him. How do we encourage those who minister among us? (Day 2 Q 3)

PRAYER POINTS & NOTES

WEEK 10: 2 CORINTHIANS 13:1-14

It's been said that it's not just the destination that matters but the journey by which we get there. That's certainly the case in this letter. Paul has argued his point with great gentleness and restraint. He has revealed his own deep love for the Corinthians, explained misunderstandings and exposed the errors of his opponents. That's the journey, but now he comes to the destination with absolute clarity. There are crucial decisions for this church and Paul's pastoral wisdom was essential.

Week 10: Day 1

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 13:1-14

What would you say in closing to a church like this? It's worth considering BEFORE reading so you can compare your instincts with that of the apostle. Paul begins with a legal quotation from Deuteronomy 19:15, not because he is promising a court case. Rather, the two or three witnesses is a reference to his two or three visits. He was saying in effect (v 2), "I've given you plenty of warning!"

1. The tone of this passage is one of warning. What statements bear this out?

Continued next page...

THE FINAL VISIT

2. Try to paraphrase the MAIN thought in each of the following:

- V's 2-4

- V's 5-7

- V's 8-10

PRAY: It's important in gospel ministry that our tone matches our message just as it is when leading anyone. Pray that in your own ministry God will give you such a clear grasp of the spiritual need that your tone and body language will be helpful.

WEEK 10: 2 CORINTHIANS 13:1-14

Day 2

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 13:1-4

Again the Corinthian critique of Paul is very clear, very hurtful and very worldly. They have mistaken his gentleness for weakness.

1. What evidence did the Corinthians already have that God had been at work through Paul? (3:2, 10:1-5, 11:23-29; 12:12)

2. Remember that the Christian worldview is shaped by the cross i.e. Jesus' earthly ministry. It involved divine power veiled in weakness. What does that experience teach us about:

- Jesus Himself
- Christian servants like us & Paul

3. How might we experience Christ's power in our own experience?

PRAY: The world generally knows only one way to exercise authority but not so Jesus or His people. Pray that in your dealing with others we will know the appropriate time for gentleness (weakness) and the appropriate time for power (boldness).

THE FINAL VISIT

Day 3

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 13:5-10

The call to ‘examine yourselves’ comes in an important setting. The behaviour of some at Corinth has caused Paul to doubt the reality of their conversion. But his plea raises an important distinction.

1. Some introspection is useful in the Christian life but it's possible to spend too much time looking inward & not enough time looking to Christ. What is the place of self examination in Christian life?

2. Between him passing his test and the Corinthians passing their's, what is Paul's greatest longing? What statements show this?

3. What does this teach you about biblical leadership?

"For every look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ."

Robert Murray McCheyne

PRAY: Thank God for our great leader Jesus who showed His character by laying down His life. Pray that our church leadership and your own will be shaped more and more by Him.

WEEK 10: 2 CORINTHIANS 13:1-14

Day 4

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 13:11-14

Last words are not always revealing but in this letter they are.

1. What priorities are revealed by Paul's last words?

We might think that spiritual restoration is fully God's work and it is. But in that case we might wonder how God's work and our striving (v 11) fit together.

2. How would you explain that puzzle? (See Philippians 2:12,13)

3. We have an active role in God's work of growing us. What are some of the implications of this? How might this apply to v's 11-14?

PRAY: C.H. Spurgeon was once asked if he could reconcile the truths of God's sovereignty and human responsibility. "I wouldn't try," he replied; "I never reconcile friends." Thank God for His wisdom in the business of our growth in Him!

THE FINAL VISIT

Day 5

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 12:11-13:14

1. How would you summarise Paul's model of Christian ministry?

2. What can you find out about the above from the following;

- 4:7-10
- 5:20,21
- 12:9,10
- 12:19

3. What attributes would you most like to see in your own life?

PRAY: What an unfathomable blessing we have in the model & teaching of Jesus and His apostles. Thank God for this and ask him to grow in your love of His word and of the character of His Son.

WEEK 10: 2 CORINTHIANS 13:1-14

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. The tone of this passage is one of warning. What statements bear this out? (Day 1 Q 1)

2. Some introspection is useful in the Christian life but it's possible to spend too much time looking inward & not enough time looking to Christ. What is the place of self examination in Christian life? (Day 3 Q 1)

3. We have an active role in God's work of growing us. What are some of the implications of this? How might this apply to v's 11-14? (Day 4 Q 3)

PRAYER POINTS & NOTES



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