

# Read through the Bible



## 2 Corinthians Week 1



*Monday, June Fourth*

Welcome to our two-week journey through 2 Corinthians! This booklet is laid out to help you walk through a portion of Paul's letter each day. Whether you start off your day with this, find some time during your lunch break, or sit down with it before you go to bed, the hope would be for you to engage with the Bible on a consistent basis as God engages you and calls you into His story. May your journey be filled with fresh perspective as you reflect upon the contents of this letter to the Corinthians. – Vicar Chris

*Read:* 2 Corinthians 1:1-24

*Reflect:* Use the passage to work through these questions

Last summer, we read through Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. In it, he attempted to correct some issues that had arisen within the Corinthian church since his departure (lawsuits, sexual immorality, food sacrificed to idols, and abuses of the Lord's Supper – to name a few!). However, as he sat down to write this second letter, many of those issues within the church had largely been resolved. As a result, Paul was able to use this second letter as an opportunity to talk about his own personal sufferings while still encouraging these young Christians to hold firm to their faith.

- What is the benefit of God's comfort? (see verses 3-5)
- According to Paul, what was the purpose of the trials he and his companions endured? (see verses 8-10)

When things are going well for us, we often feel invincible. But when things start to fall apart, we realize that we don't have as much control as we thought we did. As Paul quickly found it, that's when we stop relying on ourselves and start relying on God.

- Why are the answers to God's promises always 'yes'? (see verse 20)

*Respond:* Apply what you've learned in prayer and action  
What is a current trial you are experiencing, and how are you relying on God to deliver you through it? If not, how can you?

## Tuesday, June Fifth

If you've ever walked into a home and smelled the aroma of a warm apple pie baking in the oven, you know what a joy it is to breathe in those smells. The sweetness of the apples. The tinge of zesty cinnamon. The doughy scent of the pie crust. All of these smells combine to evoke emotions and thoughts of how you feel about that apple pie. In fact, many different aromas help to shape how we think and feel about our everyday experiences. From the garlic scent of Mazzaro's Italian Market to the salty air of St. Pete Beach, aromas often awaken our deepest emotions and passions. In today's passage, Paul speaks of a pleasing aroma that all Christians possess and can use in their witness to others.

*Read:* 2 Corinthians 2:1-17

*Reflect:* Use the passage to work through these questions

- What was Paul calling the Corinthian Christians to do in regard to the man who had sinned? (see verses 5-8)

While we can't say with certainty who this "mystery man" was, many scholars believe he was the man referred to in 1 Corinthians chapter 5. In that chapter, we learned that a man within the Corinthian Christian community was sleeping with his stepmother! However, it now appears that the man had repented of his sin. Hearing of these events, Paul now urged the Corinthians to reaffirm and restore him to their community.

- What "aroma" was Paul giving off to those around him? (see verses 14-15)

As Paul illustrates, we are called to be the pleasing aroma of Christ to others. Some people welcome the scent. Others do not. Nonetheless, we do so every day because it is pleasing to God.

*Respond:* Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

In what ways do you give off the pleasing aroma of Christ to others? In other words, how do people see Christ in you?

## Wednesday, June Sixth

Even though we've had some rainy days the past few weeks, we are still considered the Sunshine State when compared to the rest of the country. And if you enjoy the sunshine like most Floridians, opening up the blinds or pulling open a curtain can bring refreshing sunlight into your home. However, as the sun begins to make its descent towards the west, you may find that refreshing sunlight blinding you as it shines right into your eyes. When this happens, we often have to close the blinds or pull the curtains to shield us from the sun's radiance. In today's passage, Paul speaks of a veil that had shielded God's people from His radiance.

*Read:* 2 Corinthians 3:1-18

*Reflect:* Use the passage to work through these questions

- Why does Paul have confidence? (see verses 1-6)
- How does Paul use imagery of a veil to explain Christ's effect on us? (see verses 12-16)

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments, his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord (see Exodus 34:29-35). The Israelites were afraid to come near him in this state, so Moses often wore a veil to hide the radiance. But in 2 Corinthians chapter 3, Paul is quick to point out that the veil is no longer needed because we can now experience the full radiance of God in Christ. Because Jesus has removed the veil, we can experience God's radiance openly and intimately.

- Why might some people have a veil covering their heart? (see verses 15-16)

Some Jews at the time did not believe Jesus was the Savior of the world. As a result, the veil continued to cover their hearts and kept them from experiencing the full radiance of God in Christ.

*Respond:* Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Spend some time in prayer thanking Jesus for removing the veil so you can experience the fullness of God's radiance and grace.

## Thursday, June Seventh

In November 2012, Kenneth Bae, a South Korean-born U.S. citizen, was arrested in North Korea and sentenced to 15 years of hard labor. Each day, Bae would wake up and go to work in the prison camps. "I worked from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at night, working on the field, carrying rocks, shoveling coal," he said in a TV interview. But even though Bae endured many hardships, he did not let them crush his spirit and his hope. "I certainly hoped when I was in North Korea ... that someday I'll be able to come home and celebrate with the friends and family that have been praying, rooting for my release," he said. Finally, after 735 days, Bae was released and sent back to the U.S. Bae's hope had finally come to fruition. In today's passage, Paul describes where he placed his hope as he faced trials of many kinds.

**Read:** 2 Corinthians 4:1-18

**Reflect:** Use the passage to work through these questions

- How did Paul and his companions keep from deceiving others and distorting the Word of God? (see verses 1-2)

In the past few decades, some televangelists have been accused of deceiving others and distorting the Word of God. Paul clearly understood this danger that came with delivering such a powerful and life-changing message. This is why he noted he was very careful not to dress up the Gospel message or use it for his own benefit. Instead, Paul simply set forth the truth plainly (v. 2). As His followers, you and I are also called to set forth the truth plainly.

- How does Paul describe the labor of bringing the Gospel to the nations? (see verses 7-12)
- How is Paul able to not lose heart in the midst of his trials and sufferings? (see verses 16-18)

**Respond:** Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Consider the trial you thought about on Monday. How might you fix your eyes on the eternal rather than the temporary (v. 18)?

## Friday, June Eighth

In the musical *Les Miserables*, runaway convict Jean Valjean takes refuge in a church, and the resident bishop there offers him some food and a place to stay. But in the middle of the night, Valjean steals expensive pieces of silver and leaves. Shortly after, two guards bring him back into the church and ask the bishop if Valjean had stolen these things from him. Instead of punishing him, the bishop insists that Valjean was allowed to have the pieces and could take more if he wanted. As the guards leave, the bishop shares with Valjean these words (in song, of course!): "*But remember this, my brother, See in this some higher plan, You must use this precious silver, To become an honest man, By the witness of the martyrs, By the Passion and the Blood, God has raised you out of darkness, I have saved your soul for God!*" After experiencing the grace of the bishop, Valjean had been given a new life. In today's passage, Paul shares how we are given a new life in Christ.

**Read:** 2 Corinthians 5:1-21

**Reflect:** Use the passage to work through these questions

- How does Paul describe our earthly "dwellings" and our heavenly ones? (see verses 1-4)
- How does Paul navigate through life? (see verse 8)
- Who are we as a result of Christ? (see verses 16-17)

Becoming a Christian isn't just a simple update to our resume or an indicator on our Facebook profile. Instead, Paul shows us that we are completely new creations thanks to Christ (v. 17). Because Jesus has reconciled us to God, everything changes about who we are. Our central identity no longer rests in our work or our family or our talents, but rather in the new reality that we are beloved children of God. The goal for us, then, is to live out of that reality!

**Respond:** Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Would you say you live your life largely by faith or by sight (v. 8)? What is one way you can live your life in faith today?

## Saturday, June Ninth

In farming communities, two cattle are often attached to a wooden beam that joins them together. This “yoke” allows the two oxen to pull the heavy load attached to them. But if the two oxen are unequally yoked (one is stronger than the other, one is taller than the other, etc.), they cannot effectively perform the task they’ve been given. In today’s passage, Paul speaks of Christians and unbelievers as being unequally yoked.

*Read:* 2 Corinthians 6:1-18

*Reflect:* Use the passage to work through these questions

- What experiences does Paul recount of his ministry? (see verses 4-10)

Paul’s resume shows us that sharing the Gospel is no easy task. It is often not glamorous nor easy. But, as Paul mentions throughout his letter, it is always worth it! In fact, the Corinthian Christians were proof that his sufferings and hardships were worth it.

- What advice does Paul give for the Corinthian Christians’ interactions with unbelievers? (see verses 14-18)

Verse 14 is often quoted in situations where a Christian is planning to marry a non-Christian. But is Paul only talking about marriage? At that time, the Corinthian Christians had joined themselves with unbelievers, and had allowed the unbelievers’ ways of thinking to infiltrate their practices (think back to the problems they were having in 1 Corinthians). While Paul isn’t calling them to never talk to unbelievers, he is cautioning the Corinthians not to conform to their patterns and ways of life (check out this idea in Romans 12:2). As has been mentioned in our current sermon series (Peter calls us “strangers” in this world), we must consistently remember that we are to be in this world, but not of it.

*Respond:* Apply what you’ve learned in prayer and action

Take a few minutes in meditation and prayer to thank God for all those who labor in sharing the love of Jesus with others.

## Sunday, June Tenth

In the TV series *The Golden Girls*, four female roommates (Dorothy, Blanche, Rose, and Sophia) often find themselves in a variety of tough situations: Dorothy has a rough day as a substitute teacher. Blanche realizes she isn’t as attractive as she used to be. Rose makes a blunder while recording a live shot for a news station. Sophia loses money at the dog track. And yet, regardless of their predicament, they always find a way to gather together with some cheesecake and comfort one another. In today’s passage, Paul shares what it is like to be comforted by the Corinthian Christians.

*Read:* 2 Corinthians 7:1-16

*Reflect:* Use the passage to work through these questions

- How were Paul and his companions comforted during their moments of conflict and fear? (see verses 5-7)

When we find ourselves going through a tough time, one of the most comforting things we can experience is a phone call or a visit from a good friend. All of a sudden, our sorrow turns to joy as we laugh and reminisce about our times together. While the visit doesn’t erase the pain, it does remind us that we are not alone in this world. At every turn, there are brothers and sisters in Christ that we can turn to and be comforted by much like Paul was.

- What was the Corinthian Christians’ effect on Titus? (see verse 13)

After visiting with the Corinthian Christians, Titus found his spirit refreshed. Have you ever spent some time with fellow believers and felt your spirit refreshed? In our technological world today, we often take our face-to-face interactions for granted, but there is great value in being around our brothers and sisters in Christ!

*Respond:* Apply what you’ve learned in prayer and action

Who is someone that you can reach out to this week and comfort as he or she experiences hardship and pain? In other words, how can you refresh someone’s spirit?