

Read through the Bible



2 Corinthians Week 2



Monday, June Eleventh

Every year, charitable organizations are tasked with determining how they are going to collect donations and administer them to people in need. In today's passage, Paul explains how he does this with the help of churches all over the Mediterranean.

Read: 2 Corinthians 8:1-24

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

At the time of this letter, Greece was divided into two regions – the north (Macedonia) and the south (Achaia). The city of Corinth was located in Achaia, while cities like Thessalonica and Philippi were situated in Macedonia. Thus, as Paul wrote to these Corinthian Christians, he used the Macedonian churches as examples of generous giving.

- How does Paul describe the way the Macedonian churches gave, even amidst their own poverty? (see verses 1-5)

So why was Paul collecting an offering from these Macedonian churches? Last summer, we read in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians that he was collecting money to provide for poor Christians in Jerusalem (see 1 Corinthians 16:1-4). Paul urges the Corinthian Christians to continue to do the same.

- What makes a gift acceptable to Paul? (see verse 12)
- Why was Paul careful to note how the Corinthians' offering was being collected and administered? (see verses 16-21)

Whenever an offering takes place, care and concern must be given to how it is collected and administered. As Paul shows us in this passage, multiple trustworthy people should oversee its collection and distribution so that all parties are held accountable.

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

Like the Macedonian churches did for poor Christians living in Jerusalem, what is one way you can give of your time, talents, or treasures this week to someone in need?



Tuesday, June Twelfth

When a toddler comes down with a stomach bug or a nasty cold, her mom and dad will typically put down whatever they're working on to take care of her. This may involve rocking her to sleep for over an hour. It may involve snuggling her close to let her know you are there while she is feeling miserable. It may even mean calling out sick for work to take care of her. In these ways and more, parents often find themselves giving generously of their time and energy to help their sick child in need. In today's passage, Paul explains his approach to giving generously.

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:1-15

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- Why does Paul not doubt the Corinthian Christians' generosity? (see verse 1-2) Why does he still find the need to send people to collect the offering? (see verses 3-5)
- How are we to give? (see verses 6-7)

Paul puts forth two important principles in these verses. First, our return is proportional to our giving (v. 6). For example, when some of you go down to Immokalee and generously give food and clothing to those in need, you see the joy and gratitude expressed from your kindness. The second principle is that our giving should come from within, not from outside pressures (v. 7). While people have many opinions on how much you should or shouldn't give to them and others, the decision should come from your heart.

- What indescribable gift has God given us? (see verses 14-15)

God did not give sparingly when He sent His Son to die for us. Instead, He gave Himself entirely so that you and I can receive that indescribable gift of grace that we are called to give to others.

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

Are you a cheerful giver (see verse 7)? Consider one simple way that you can be a cheerful giver to someone today.

Wednesday, June Thirteenth

Over the past decade, researchers and sociologists have noticed a strange phenomenon: many people who are bold on social media turn out to be very mild-mannered in person! For example, someone might post a long-winded and profanity-laced rant on Facebook about some political topic, but when you meet them in person, he comes across very shy and quiet. Why is it that the same person gives off two very different personas? In today's passage, Paul responds to criticism that he comes across very differently in his letters than he does in person.

Read: 2 Corinthians 10:1-18

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What appears to be a criticism of Paul in how he interacted with others? (see verses 1 and 10-11)
- How do we use our "spiritual weapons" against the lies of Satan and this world? (see verses 3-6)

In the spiritual battle going on around us, Paul reminds us that we don't fight with manmade weapons like guns and swords. Instead, we fight with spiritual weapons – prayer, fasting, and the Word of God (to name a few). Therefore, when someone (or even yourself) tells you: "God will never forgive you for what you've done," you can say, "I am already forgiven for what I've done because of what Jesus did on the cross for me." In doing so, we "take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ" (v. 5). This is why it is so important for us to remain immersed in God's Word so that we can continue to stand firm against these lies.

- How do some people boast? (see verse 12)? How are we to boast? (see verses 17-18; also check out Jeremiah 9:24)

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

Who do you find yourself boasting about most of the time? Your family? Your friends? Yourself? Take some time in prayer to consider how you can more faithfully boast in the Lord (v. 17).

Thursday, June Fourteenth

If you visit the Salvador Dali Museum in downtown St. Pete, you'll see a variety of the bizarre painter's original works. What's more, if you take your family and friends to discuss the images in the paintings, you might find that each of you have different interpretations of what they mean. However, as the creator of these paintings, it is Dali who ultimately determines what his images mean. In today's passage, Paul describes why God is the ultimate authority on who He says He is.

Read: 2 Corinthians 11:1-15

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- Why was Paul still concerned for the Corinthian Christians? (see verses 1-4)

Paul knew that even though the Corinthian Christians had a firm faith in Jesus, they were still susceptible to false teaching. Even today, false teachings are sometimes attractive to us because they align with how we want to view the world around us. For example, someone may come to you and say that as long as people believe in a higher deity, they are going to heaven. This may initially seem attractive to you because, after all, who doesn't want as many people as possible to go to heaven? But the reality, though, is that this is not what God's Word says (see what Jesus says in John 14:6). This is why we must always describe God by who He says He is, not who we want Him to be.

- How does Paul compare himself to those who are trying to deceive the Corinthian Christians? (see verses 5-6)

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

What is an attractive teaching you have heard recently that is contrary to who God says He is? If you can't think of an instance, consider a fellow Christian you know who believes a teaching that is contrary to God's Word. How can you use God's Word to gently correct that belief (either for yourself or your fellow Christian)?

Friday, June Fifteenth

When someone says something about you that isn't true, chances are your first instinct isn't to just simply ignore the person. Instead, you often find yourself going on the defense to protect your reputation. In today's passage, Paul goes on the defense to protect his reputation with the Corinthian Christians.

Read: 2 Corinthians 11:16-33

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- How does Paul describe these "fools" that the Corinthian Christians were putting up with? (see verses 16-21)

As you can see from the past couple of chapters, Paul's tone and words have become much more defensive. Why might that be? As we read yesterday, false apostles were going around and deceiving churches into believing things that were not true. Some even spoke out against Paul and his ministry. Thus, he appears to be defensive for two main reasons. First, he seems to be frustrated that the Corinthian Christians were allowing these false apostles to mislead them (see verse 20). Second, Paul clearly feels the need to defend his ministry against those who have been speaking against him (see verses 16-18).

- What has Paul endured throughout his ministry of sharing the Gospel of Jesus? (see verses 22-29)

If there were any doubts that Paul was sincere in his missionary efforts, his list of many sufferings is an attempt to put them to rest. In doing so, Paul wanted the Corinthian Christians to see that he was not in this for his own gain; he was merely a servant of Christ.

- How does Paul choose to boast? (see verse 30)

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

Consider the last time you felt like you had to defend your reputation. How have others' words about you affected what you believe about yourself? Who does God say you are?

Saturday, June Sixteenth

As Floridians, we have the great privilege of living with mosquitos, especially during the summer. Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of these little buggers is that no matter how many times you swat them away, they always seem to come right back at you. In today's passage, Paul talks about something that just won't go away.

Read: 2 Corinthians 12:1-21

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- In regard to his vision, why does Paul choose to boast in his weaknesses instead of himself? (see verses 5-6)
- Why was a "thorn" given to Paul? (see verse 7)

If you've ever thought or said the phrase, "That person is a thorn in my side!", this verse is where it comes from. Throughout the centuries, many people have wondered what exactly that thorn in Paul's side was. The Greek work for 'thorn' (*skolops*) speaks of "something which frustrates and causes trouble in the lives of those afflicted." While we know it was not an actual thorn, answers over the years have included a temptation, an illness, a physical condition, or a person with whom Paul did not get along. Regardless of what the thorn was, Paul understood that it was given to him to keep him from being prideful and conceited.

- Why does God not take away the thorn, and how does Paul respond to God's answer? (see verse 8-10)
- What is Paul's concern in verses 20 and 21?

Whoa! Paul's sentiment in these verses is deep: what if I'm not who you want me to be and what if you're not who I want you to be? In so many of our relationships, that's the reality we are forced to come to grips with. Instead of always focusing on trying to change people, how can we love them where they're at?

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

Who or what has been a thorn in your side recently? How can you rely on God's strength as you deal with this thorn (v. 10)?

Sunday, June Seventeenth

When a piano teacher holds a recital to showcase her students' work, it is also an opportunity for the students to evaluate whether or not they've been practicing as they should. When the big moment finally comes in front of family and friends, the students are tested to see if all that hard work (or not so hard work!) has paid off. In today's passage, Paul encourages the Corinthian Christians to showcase their faith by putting them to a test.

Read: 2 Corinthians 13:1-14

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What test does Paul suggest the Corinthian Christians take? (see verses 5-6)
- Why does Paul suggest he is saying these things in his letter now as opposed to in person? (see verse 10)

In today's work environment, more and more supervisors are sending their employees' evaluations to them ahead of time. The idea is that the employee can take some time to examine the critique so that when she or he meets with the boss, a more constructive (and less defensive) conversation can be had. This seems to be Paul's approach for why he is informing the Corinthian Christians of these things now as opposed to when he visits them for a third time.

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

On this Father's Day, take a moment to thank your heavenly Father for giving you the gift of grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 14)!

Well, that's the end of 2 Corinthians! I pray your time in God's Word has been filled with fresh perspective as you reflected on both the trials and joys of Christian ministry. It has truly been a pleasure reading along with you! Have a great rest of your summer, and I'll be back in September with our next book...1 Samuel. – Vicar Chris

Questions? Comments? Contact Vicar Chris at chris.futch@oursaviorfl.org or (727) 531-2761.