

2 CORINTHIANS

Lesson 1

2 Corinthians 1 - 2

This week we begin a new study in the book of Second Corinthians. Second Corinthians is a letter written by Paul to one of the early churches located in the city of Corinth. Located in what today is known as Greece, it was a cosmopolitan center of trade and thought. Paul's two letters and three visits there resulted in the books, or letters, called first and second Corinthians - something Chuck Swindol refers to as First and Second Californians - which quickly sums up the attitudes and lifestyles at Corinth.

Paul's previous visits had been to help establish and ground the church in the gospel message, and to correct the church about false teaching and the worldly wisdom that it was attempting to follow. He had promised to return - to follow-up with them - but had been delayed in his return. False teachers in the church had pointed to his lack of returning as a negative, indicating Paul was an insincere believer and had misled them.

This letter addresses the arguments of the false teachers and the faulty wisdom of the day influencing the church. It also reveals much about the man and apostle Paul himself, and his deep love for the church at Corinth.

Today we'll look at three primary areas in our opening study: (1) finding ourselves in a no-win situation, how do we handle it versus how Paul handled his, (2) how to be comforted and how to comfort others and why, and finally, (3) we'll look at how easily the world's wisdom can creep into the policies and doctrines of the church.

Please read 2 Corinthians 1:1 - 2:4, then answer the following:

1. Where did Paul get his authority to say and to teach what he did about Christ and the Gospel?
2. Look up, and write down, the definitions for "comfort" and "edify".
3. What is Paul saying in verses three through five that applies in our lives today? Give at least one example.
4. In verses six and seven, what does Paul say that relates to the previous verses? I.e., what is he telling us here about the relationship between verses six and seven and verses three through five that we can apply today?

5. In verses eight through eleven, what happened to Paul? What did he believe was going to happen to him during that time of trouble?

6. In verses eight through eleven, when Paul felt that he would not get out of that current situation - i.e., that this time he would lose his life - who saved him?

7. Have you ever been in a situation where you thought there was no hope - a time when you thought that literally you would die? Did God save you?

8. Paul is responding to a charge against him in verses twelve through fourteen of Chapter 1. What is that charge?

9. What did Paul mean by “to spare you” as a reason for not visiting the church at Corinth a second time? (1:23 - 2:4)

10. And finally, as we consider Paul’s letter and the ongoing struggle at the church in Corinth, let’s look for a moment at the message Paul was preaching so that we can better understand some of the struggles that he and they were having. Look at the following references in the book of Acts and jot down the important points about the Gospel message Paul was preaching - In Acts, Chapter 17, verses 2,3,18, and 24-31, plus Chapter 18, verse 5. According to these verses, what did the Gospel message Paul preached state?

In the next lesson, we will look at what it means to need comforting, to be one who comforts, and to be a witness even when it seems to counter worldly wisdom. We’ll see that from our life experiences that God is equipping us to relate to the sufferings and challenges of others. We’ll also see that, through these opportunities to serve, we’ll be his witnesses; and our actions will testify to his presence and grace in our lives during times of difficulty.

We will learn much about Paul during this study, we’ll see his great love and concern for the churches he helped begin, and we’ll look at the basic foundations of the gospel message – that Jesus is indeed the much anticipated Messiah, the

Christ – and that he actually lived on the earth, died by crucifixion, and on the third day was raised from the dead. That from, and by, this one sacrifice, our sins, even today, have been paid for – atoned for – and because they have, we can have peace and an eternal relationship with God if we choose Christ as our Savior. To reject Jesus is to reject God himself.

So as we begin this study, let's all pray that God will strengthen our faith, ground us in the real truth of the Gospel message, and equip us to go and witness to the lost that are living in our own neighborhoods. Separating real fact from worldly wisdom we can better serve our Lord and Master and deliver the message of hope that He brings to all the world.

Let me also encourage you contact me any time during this study, if there is something you don't understand about the Gospel message, or about your walk, or about sharing your faith – please don't hesitate to ask. God will give us all the wisdom we need – but as James tells us “we have not because we ask not”. Let me know if you need help – that's what we're all here for.

May God give you a deeper spiritual vision than you've ever had as we study His message of peace and great grace in His Holy Word this week.

Have a great week everyone.

Yours in Christ,

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