

BUILDING FOUNDATIONS
2 CORINTHIANS



Building Foundations 2 Corinthians

Study Guide

Acknowledgements

The lesson outlines and notes in this booklet are based on New Tribes Mission's method of chronologically teaching scripture and were prepared by Tim McManigle and Scott McManigle of FBC Missions. Special thanks to Lane Martin and Lisa Grams for editing.

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Progression Toward Maturity

Phase 1: Relationship with God (Revelation 4:11; 1 Corinthians 1:9)

- The Call of God Is First to Himself.
- Foundation for Salvation (“Creation to Christ”)

Phase 2: Position with Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30a)

- We Become a New Creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- Foundation for Salvation (“Positioned in Christ” and “New Birth Explained”)

Phase 3: Dependence upon the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)

- The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth (John 16:13-14)
- Church Is the Pillar and Foundation of Truth (1 Timothy 3:15)
- Acts/Building Foundations

Phase 4: Practical Sanctification–Identification with Christ, Co-crucified with Christ, Conformed to Image of Christ (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:28-29)

- Romans to Revelation/Building Foundations
- Principles of Spiritual Growth
- God’s Masterpiece–The Cross
- Looking unto Jesus Lessons

Conclusion: Recommended Order of Study

Detailed Explanation of Each Phase

Phase 1: Foundation for Salvation (“Creation to Christ”)

The Christian life is a relationship; therefore, our desire is to lead our readers into a deep and intimate relationship with God. In order to grow into that level of relationship with God, there are foundational truths that must be clearly

taught and understood. These foundational truths include the following:

- The attributes of God – His love, power, grace, omniscience, omnipotence, justice, immutability, hatred of sin, faithfulness.
- The sinfulness of man, his helplessness to save himself, and his need for a Savior.
- Only God can provide a way of salvation.
- The Gospel

Phase 2: Foundation for Sanctification (“Positioned in Christ” and “The New Birth Explained”)

The moment someone is born again, there is an immediate change of position that takes place in his or her life. At that very moment, one becomes a child of God, and is taken out of Adam and placed into Christ. All that Christ is and all that Christ has become ours. Therefore, before service to God is considered, one must be grounded in an understanding of who we are in Christ. Some important foundational truths that should be emphasized in Phase 2 teaching include the following:

- Placed into Christ
- Justified (declared righteous) and accepted in Christ
- Child of God
- Restored to oneness with God
- Eternally secure in Christ
- His Divine power has given to us all things pertaining to life and godliness through His finished work on the cross.
- Our part is to believe.

Phase 3: Dependence upon the Spirit and Introduction of the Church (“Acts/Building Foundations”)

The position change that takes place in every believer's life at salvation is immediate and complete. The daily "living out" of that position, on the other hand, is a growth process. It is the progression of growth that the Holy Spirit is

working all believers through in His process of conforming us to the image of Christ.

In order for believers to move on to maturity, we must learn to walk and depend upon the Holy Spirit. Therefore, our purpose in Phase 3 teaching is to reveal the Holy Spirit's ministry and His faithfulness to lead, guide, feed, and protect God's children, as well as to introduce the church. Some of the important foundational truths that should be emphasized include the following:

- The Holy Spirit's ministry to lead, guide, feed, protect, and establish us in truth
- To emphasize the FAITHFULNESS of the Spirit to fulfill all that Jesus promised
- To reveal the early church's dependence upon the Spirit
- The Holy Spirit is as faithful in our lives today, as He was to the early church in the book of Acts.
- Introduction of the church and her role

Phase 4: Practical Sanctification–Identification with Christ; Conformed to the image of Christ (“Romans to Revelation/Building Foundations”), “Principles of Spiritual Growth,” God’s Masterpiece the Cross of Christ,” and “Looking Unto Jesus” lessons)

The Holy Spirit is teaching us to walk less in the flesh and more in the Spirit, with Christ becoming more and more the object of our hearts.

In Phase 4, we will study through the epistles with the purpose of learning to rest in our identification with Christ and His finished work. As we, by faith, begin to appropriate identification truths, our co-crucifixion with Christ, our lives will become more and more conformed to the image of Christ, manifesting the fruit of the Spirit.

Some of the important truths that will be emphasized in Phase 4 includes the following:

- The believer's identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (crucified with Him and raised to newness of life)
- Sanctification is the process of walking less and less in the flesh and more and more in the Spirit.
- Our part in the process is faith in the finished work of Christ and our identification with it.
- What it means to truly walk in the Spirit
- Putting off the old and putting on the new
- Manifesting the life of Christ/fruit of the Spirit

Conclusion: Recommended Order of Study

Because there truly is a progression of growth that the Holy Spirit is taking all believers through, our Bible lessons have been developed and arranged to line up with that work of the Spirit in our lives. Each set of lessons contains the foundational truths that must be in place in a person's heart in order to facilitate their growth onto the next stage of spiritual growth. Therefore, we believe that it is important to teach the lessons in the following order:

- ***God's Eternal Plan***
- ***Building Foundations Order of Study:***

Acts	2 Corinthians
Romans	Philippians
Ephesians	Philemon
1 Corinthians	2 Timothy
1 Timothy	1 and 2 Peter
Titus	1, 2 and 3 John
1 and 2 Thessalonians	Hebrews
Revelation	James
Galatians	Jude
Colossians	
- ***Knowing God*** before the ***Digging Deeper*** studies
- ***Digging Deeper*** studies in any order

2 CORINTHIANS

LESSON 1

A. Introduction

- Paul preached the gospel in Corinth for the first time on his second missionary journey; he then wrote the first letter to the Corinthian church while in Ephesus during his third journey.
- Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to show the believers that they were living in carnality and to implore them to return to walking in the Spirit (**1 Corinthians 2:1-5**).
- Titus delivered that letter to the Corinthian church, and Paul then went on to Troas.
- After spending some time with the Corinthians, Titus had planned to meet Paul in Troas and to give a report.
- Something happened that prevented Titus from meeting Paul in Troas, so Paul went on to Macedonia and later Titus joined him there.
- The news that Titus brought back to Paul was both good and bad.
- The good news was that the Corinthians had accepted Paul's letter and even disciplined the man that was living in adultery; however, some new problems had arisen.
- These false teachers had been teaching in Corinth as they had taught in Colossae and Galatia, and some of the Corinthian believers were being led astray.
- The false teachers were saying that they were apostles and their message was truth and that Paul was not an apostle and therefore his message was not true.
- It was during this time that Paul wrote this second letter to the Corinthian believers.

B. A Reminder

Read 2 Corinthians 1:1-2.

- In much of Paul's writings to the churches, he began by mentioning his apostleship—it was of God and therefore his message was valid.
- In 2 Corinthians, as in all of Paul's letters, he reminded the believers that true grace and peace can only be found in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Man often attempts to find grace and peace in other ways, but true grace and peace comes only from God through the finished work of His Son.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.

- We live in a fallen world that is full of trials and tribulations. All of us encounter hardship and difficulties; however, Paul writes that it is God who comforts us in all hardships.
- How does He comfort us? In **Colossians 2:2** we read, *"...that their hearts might be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ."* Paul is clearly stating to the church at Colossae that truth encourages and gives confidence.
- In **John 8:32** John writes, *"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*
- This is the way in which God comforts us—with truth. In **John 14:6**, Jesus said that He is the truth. *"I am the way, the truth, and the life."*
- As the Spirit leads us into a clear understanding of who Christ is, all that He has done, and who we have

become in Him, to that degree will our hearts remain comforted no matter how difficult the circumstances.

- Paul goes on to say that one of the purposes in our becoming comforted by truth is so that God can use us to share that same comfort in the lives of others—to help lead others into the truths of our identification with Christ.
- There are many people in our churches who are going through difficult circumstances.
- Their greatest need is not for better circumstances, but rather to see more clearly who Christ is and all that is theirs in Him.

C. Christians Will Be Persecuted

Read 2 Corinthians 1:5.

- As Christians, we are not exempt from trials and persecution.
- Even though it is because of Christ that we are often called to suffer, the comfort that comes from knowing Him and from the inheritance that is ours in Him will provide more consolation than the suffering causes misery (**2 Timothy 3:12**).
- In this world as we are brought to a deeper walk in the Spirit, we can expect persecution; however, Paul makes it clear that the consolation in Christ will be more abundant.

D. Suffering

Read 2 Corinthians 1:6.

- God is using our daily circumstances to conform us more into the image of Christ.
- Sometimes He will use afflictions in our lives, and other times He may bring pleasant circumstances.

He is using all circumstances to teach us to walk less in the flesh and more in the Spirit, with the ultimate purpose of conforming us more to the image of His Son (**Romans 8:28-29**).

- As this transformation process is carried out in our lives, Paul makes it clear that it is also being used by God for the comfort and salvation of those with whom we have contact (**1 Thessalonians 1:6-8**).
- The more Christ-like we become, the more equipped we are to lead others into that same life-style.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:7.

- Paul was writing of his confidence that this truth would affect the lives of the Corinthian believers. Even though their faith in Christ came with persecution, the Spirit would continue to lead them into more and deeper truth, and the consolation in Christ would be more abundant.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:8-11.

- Paul continues by giving the Corinthians an example.
- At one point while in Asia, Paul said that the trials became so difficult that they did not think they could possibly survive.
- He further explained that God's purpose for these trials was to move their trust from themselves to the God who raises the dead.
- God orchestrates situations in our lives for the purpose of bringing us to the cross where the old man has been crucified and we come to the end of ourselves (**Luke 9:23**).
- As we are brought to this point, we are being set free from the reign of the flesh (**Romans 6:14**), to walk

in newness of life (**Romans 6:4**); the Spirit begins to draw our attention to Christ and manifests the life of Christ in us (**2 Corinthians 3:18**).

- In verse 10, Paul writes that this process of coming to the end of self, being delivered from the reign of the flesh, and being conformed to the image of Christ will be a process that our faithful God will continue throughout our lives (**Philippians 1:6**).

2 CORINTHIANS

LESSON 2

A. Godly Sincerity

- As we study through this portion of scripture, please keep in mind that the false teachers were attempting to discredit Paul's teaching.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:12.

- Paul was being falsely accused of many things, and he wanted the Corinthians to know he rejoiced in the fact that his conscience was clear and that his ministry was done in humble dependence on God and His grace—in the Spirit and not in the flesh.
- As Paul was walking in the Spirit, his ministry in the lives of others was sincere and for their benefit and not in an effort to exalt himself.
- In the flesh, even our ministering to others will have a self-serving motivation.
- In a similar way, there will always be those grace haters who speak evil of the truth (**2 Peter 2:1-2**); but to the degree that we walk in the Spirit, we too will have a clear conscience before God.

B. False Teachers

Read 2 Corinthians 1:13-14.

- It seems that the false teachers, in an effort to discredit Paul, were accusing him of dishonesty.
- They were saying Paul really didn't mean what he had written.

- Therefore, Paul is making it clear to the Corinthian believers that what he had written and said to them at various times is exactly what he meant to communicate.
- In the Spirit, our lives will be sincere and transparent; we will not be hiding things in our hearts.
- In the flesh, we put up a “false front” for the purpose of hiding the true motives and feelings of our hearts.
- Paul also states that he hoped the Corinthians would once again accept and have confidence in him as they did when he first proclaimed the gospel to them.
- In the Spirit, Paul’s concern was not for himself but for the Corinthians. For them to be suspicious of Paul and reject his message would be to reject the truth and follow the heresy of the false teachers.
- We have consistently seen that Paul’s greatest concern was for people to walk in truth and be molded into the image of Christ (**Galatians 4:19**).

Read 2 Corinthians 1:15-17.

- At some point, Paul had told the Corinthians he had planned to visit them both on his way to and from Macedonia; neither time did God permit him to fulfill his plan (**Acts 16:6-7**).
- Because of this, the false accusers were telling the Corinthians they were foolish for following a man’s teaching who did not keep his word.
- It appeared to them that Paul was only living for self; he told the Corinthians he would come but later changed his mind.
- Paul explains that he didn’t flippantly decide in the flesh to do what he wanted.

- He was communicating that he was being led by the Spirit and that the Spirit was influencing and controlling his decisions.

C. The Revealing Word of God

Read 2 Corinthians 1:18-20.

- Paul writes that just as God is true, so was Paul's teaching to the Corinthians.
- His teaching was centered in Christ through Whom God had faithfully fulfilled all of His promises.
- Therefore, for the Corinthians to reject Paul's teaching would be to reject Christ, for Christ was Paul's message.
- Saying that all of God's promises are fulfilled in Christ is a very significant statement (**Ephesians 1:10**). This would mean that there is nothing left for man to do but to receive, by faith, what Christ has provided for us.
- In order to *believe and receive* what He has accomplished, we must first *know* what He has accomplished. Only the Holy Spirit can reveal this to us through the Word of God.
- The Spirit's role in our lives is to use the written Word of God to reveal to us the living Word of God (**John 16:13-14**).

Read 2 Corinthians 1:21-22.

- Paul makes it clear to the Corinthians that the teaching they had heard was not flowery words of man's wisdom that have no impact on their lives.
- But rather Paul's teaching had emphasized that God had placed the Corinthian believers into Christ and had sealed them with the Holy Spirit (**Ephesians 4:30**), guaranteeing that all Christ was and had

accomplished had been fully bestowed upon them for all eternity (**Romans 8:17**—they were joint-heirs with Jesus).

- Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand that in Christ they truly had received all of God's promises, and these promises were not some teaching which they would never experience.

D. By Faith We Stand

Read 2 Corinthians 1:23-24.

- Paul now tells the Corinthians why he did not come to visit them.
- It was out of consideration for them that he canceled his visit. He had written to them previously confronting their sin, and to follow his letter with a visit would appear that he was trying to force them to change.
- Paul said he could not force them to believe but merely point them to truth and trust the Holy Spirit to bring about the change. Only as they came to know, understand, and believe the truth would they be able to, by faith, stand in it.

E. The Flesh and the Spirit

Read 2 Corinthians 2:1-4.

- The false teachers were accusing Paul of being untrustworthy and insincere, but notice how far from their accusations were his actual motives.
- Paul's greatest desire for the Corinthian believers was to see Christ formed in them (**Galatians 4:19**). This was so much his desire that he put off his visit to give them more time to repent and grow into Christ-likeness. In so doing, when he finally did

visit them, the focus of his visit could be on praising God for their spiritual growth, rather than on the sadness for continued sin in their lives.

- In reading 1 Corinthians, it is easy to view Paul as being angry because of the sin in their lives.
- But verse 4 makes it clear the true attitude in which it was written: *“out of much affliction and anguish of heart, and with many tears...”*
- In the flesh, our response to others’ sin and failure will be anger or condemnation; but in the Spirit, it will be loving concern for one who has gone astray.

F. True Forgiveness

Read 2 Corinthians 2:5-9.

- In these verses, Paul is referring to a man in the Corinthian church who was living with his father’s wife. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul told the Corinthians that he must be disciplined by the church.
- Apparently, the Corinthians had done this, and the man had repented and wanted to be forgiven and accepted back into the church body; however, it would appear that many of the believers in the church were unwilling to accept him.
- Paul writes that the discipline had served its purpose and the man had repented; now they must forgive and accept him before he became greatly discouraged.
- The goal of church discipline is not condemnation and judgment but restoration and forgiveness.
- When a church continues to hold confessed sin to a man’s account, it has become inconsistent with the grace of God and is not acknowledging the forgiveness which God has granted to that person in Christ.

Read 2 Corinthians 2:10-11.

- Paul stated that if they would forgive this man, he would likewise forgive him. He went on to point out that the basis for forgiveness of him was the forgiveness that was theirs in Christ.
- Refusing to forgive a repentant brother is to reject God's grace on his behalf, which indicates that the flesh is active as we exalt ourselves above God.
- In the flesh, we are deceived, for the fleshly mind cannot discern the things of God (**1 Corinthians 2:14**); therefore, Satan can easily gain an advantage.
- To remain in this state will be to further depart from truth and the grace of God.

2 CORINTHIANS

LESSON 3

A. Good News/Bad News

Read 2 Corinthians 2:12-13.

- Paul had written 1 Corinthians from Ephesus and had given Titus the responsibility of delivering the letter to the church in Corinth; he had planned to meet Titus sometime later in Troas.
- While in Troas, Paul had opportunity to share the gospel with some people.
- It's interesting to note that Paul acknowledges God in all that he says and does: "***And a door was opened to me by the Lord.***"
- The work of evangelization is the Lord's work; therefore, it's important that we depend on the Spirit to lead us to those whose hearts have been prepared to hear and believe the gospel.
- After a time of teaching in Troas and Titus still had not come to meet him, Paul became more concerned and traveled to Macedonia looking for him.
- It was there in Macedonia that Paul finally found Titus; he had come from Corinth with both good news and bad news.
- The good news was the Corinthians were responding to Paul's teaching in his letter. Titus also had bad news—the false teachers were attempting to destroy Paul's ministry to the Corinthians.

Read 2 Corinthians 2:14-15.

- Not only was Paul eager to give all glory to God, but he desired to give thanks to the Lord for any and all victories. It's interesting to note Paul's clear statement that "***God...always leads us in triumph***

in Christ.” We rest in our position in Christ and daily abide in Christ (**1 Corinthians 15:57**; **Romans 8:37**). Paul also wrote that Christians are a fragrance of God in every place.

- As we walk in the Spirit, the life of Christ is lived out in and through us and many will find love, grace, tenderness and the gentleness of Christ to be a sweet fragrance.

Read 2 Corinthians 2:16-17.

- To those who reject the gospel, we are the aroma of death. We are a constant reminder of their sin and darkness, and they will hate us as they hated Christ (**John 17:14**).
- But to those who are teachable and accept the gospel, we are the sweet aroma of life.
- Paul asks who is worthy of being used by God in this way? No man is. However, as we rest in our position in Christ and abide in Christ, God makes us as such (**John 15:5**).
- Paul goes on to remind the Corinthians that he was not teaching the Word of God for worldly gain, but rather because God had led him to do so.
- In the flesh, Christians often seek to serve God for fleshly motives; but in the Spirit, our motives will be pure and genuine.
- Paul was not corrupting the Word of God by adding works and the keeping of the law to grace, nor was his focus of ministry to the soul (mind, will, emotions). He never tried to change people’s minds or change their desires or make them feel good. His ministry was a spiritual ministry, always pointing people to Christ.

B. Our Lives Are Testimonies

Read 2 Corinthians 3:1-3.

- Paul asks do we need to prove the validity of our ministry among you, or do we need letters from you stating the validity of our ministry?
- The answer is no.
- Paul went on to say that the type of life the Corinthian Christians were living was a testimony of the ministry Paul and his companions had among them. As others saw and heard of their lives, it would give positive testimony to the ministry (**1 Thessalonians 1:6-8**).
- God used Paul and Titus to share the life of Christ with the Corinthian church, and then the Holy Spirit reproduced that life in them as they rested in their co-crucified position with Christ (**Galatians 2:20**).
- The false teachers were placing people under the law that was written on stones and that no one could keep; but the life of Christ is written on the hearts (mind, will, emotions) of men by the Spirit and ultimately leads to Christ living His life through man as man occupies himself with Him (**2 Corinthians 3:18**).
- Christ living His life in and through us will produce a testimony for the message of grace to those around us.
- The testimony of our lives, along with the frustration of living under the law, may one day reveal new truth to those living under the law.
- The following testimony is from a young pastor in a foreign country who had just gone through some classes on grace: *“The first day of teaching was very difficult for me. I have been to Bible school, I know this Bible, and the things you were teaching was not what I know the Bible to say. During the*

second day of teaching, I began to see that the things I thought the Bible was saying were fading away, and new truth was coming in its place. By the third day, I was so encouraged, and on the fourth day I could see that this grace teaching might possibly change the way I treat my wife; I have not been treating her well since the day I married her, and I have been unable to change."

2 CORINTHIANS

LESSON 4

A. God is Our Sufficiency

Read 2 Corinthians 3:4-5.

- Previously, Paul wrote that Christians who are abiding in Christ are a fragrance of Him as they live out the Christ-life and share Christ with others.
- Paul now goes on to say that Christians who are living out the Christ-life and affecting others in this way are not able to live this kind of life because of anything of themselves. It is God who has made them adequate for such a life.
- It's good to remember that those who are serving God in the flesh are doing it for selfish motives, but those who are serving God in the Spirit will serve Him with pure, selfless motives that are coming from Him.
- In the flesh, we will take credit for things that only God can do. In the Spirit, we will do what Paul did; all credit goes to God, who is the supreme source of all that we are and do.

B. The Law Kills, But the Spirit Gives Life

Read 2 Corinthians 3:6.

- Paul contrasts the law, which the false teachers were teaching, with grace, which was the basis for all that Paul and his companions taught.
- He writes that it was God alone who made them to be able administrators of the new arrangement between God and man (**1 Timothy 1:12**).
- The new arrangement is not of the law, for all the law can do is condemn man for failing to keep it.

- The new arrangement or covenant is of the Spirit who reproduces the life of Christ in us and gives us the ability (power and desires) to then live out the Christ-life.

Read 2 Corinthians 3:7-8.

- The story that Paul is referring to in these verses is found in **Exodus 34:28-36**.
- Paul referred to the law as the “ministration of death” because it brought condemnation to all as no man was able to obey it.
- Even though the law brought death to sinners, it was still glorious, for it showed something of the glory of God—it showed God’s power, holiness, hatred of sin, and punishment for sin.
- It is interesting to note that after Moses returned from receiving the law, his face shown with the glory of God until the Israelites could not look at it and Moses had to cover it.
- However, Paul writes that this glory was to be done away with. The fact that the glory did slowly fade from Moses’ face was a picture of what would happen to the law.
- Paul states that the new covenant is greater than the preaching of the law.
- The law was only given temporarily in order to prepare man for the coming of the new covenant, which was brought by Christ (**Galatians 3:22-26; 4:1-6**).

Read 2 Corinthians 3:9.

- Paul goes on to say if that which brought condemnation and death revealed God’s glory, then the new covenant that brings salvation and life is much more glorious.

Read 2 Corinthians 3:10-11.

- Some lights can seem very bright at night, but no light seems bright once the sun comes up, for the brightness of the sun far surpasses the brightness of even the brightest of lights.

Read 2 Corinthians 3:12-13.

- Once again, Paul contrasts law and grace.

2 CORINTHIANS

LESSON 5

A. A Ministry of God

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-2.

- During Paul's ministry, he was often under persecution and attack from the Judaizers (**Acts 9:23; 13:45, 50; 14:12, 19; 16:22-23; 17:5, 13; 18:6, 12; 20:3, 19; 21:27; 22:22; 23:12; 25:7**).
- The ministry of teaching and living out the life of Christ was bestowed upon Paul by God's grace and mercy.
- Therefore, even though he and his friends were persecuted, attacked, and had seen many led astray from the truth, their trust was still in God who had placed them into ministry, and they were not discouraged.
- Because they were confident this ministry was of God, they did not depend upon trickery and craftiness to persuade people; they simply presented the truth and trusted the Holy Spirit with the results.

B. Satan's Deception

Read 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.

- Paul wrote that even though they preached the gospel simply and clearly, the truth of it was still hidden from those who did not believe.
- Satan, through his deceptive lies, is working to deceive the world from the truth of the gospel.
- Satan cannot force anything upon anyone; but through the flesh, he lies and deceives. As the lies

are believed, he gains influence and control over people.

- Depending upon the people group and their culture, he uses different tactics to deceive them from believing the gospel.
- In the west, he may use money, possessions, and fame.
- In other cultures, he may use the fear of spirits.
- Our own human wisdom and reasoning won't overcome Satan's deceptions.
- But as Paul said in Romans, the power unto salvation is in the gospel (**Romans 1:16**).
- Therefore, we need only share the pure and simple gospel message and trust the Holy Spirit to communicate it to hearts that he has prepared.
- After salvation, Satan's great deception is to keep new believers from seeing and believing in their identification with Christ and to depend upon their own works for sanctification.

C. Christ, Not Self

Read 2 Corinthians 4:5-7.

- Here Paul gives the reason he preached the gospel simply and purely—because the gospel is what Christ has done to save, not what man has done or must do.
- When we are preaching Christ and His finished work, we are preaching truth whether people believe it or not.
- Truth that is based on the finished work of Christ doesn't require our wisdom or flowery speech to make people believe it (**1 Corinthians 2:1-5**).
- The God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness at creation is the same God who causes

the light of the gospel to shine out of these fallen bodies of ours.

- As it was God who has done it in our hearts, it is only He that can do it in the hearts of others who are deceived; therefore, our trust must be in Him and not in ourselves.
- In verse 7, Paul gives the reason why God has chosen to work in this way—it is so that there will never be any doubt that this message is of God and not of ourselves.
- The fact that God takes sinful human beings, saves them, and then uses them to manifest the life of His Son to the world is a work that should make absolutely clear to everyone that this message is from God and is administered in hearts by His Spirit.
- Had God used great and mighty angels to proclaim this message, people's focus would be on the messengers rather than the message.
- God chose earthen vessels to carry the treasure so that people would be taken up with the greatness of the treasure.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-12.

- Paul wrote that God has chosen to use earthen vessels to carry the treasure of the gospel.
- At the moment of salvation, each of us received a new nature (**2 Corinthians 5:17**).
- Even though we have received a new position (out of Adam and into Christ) and a new nature, unless God takes us through the process in verses 8-12, that treasure and new nature will not be manifested through our lives but will remain hidden within.
- So God must take us through trying circumstances in order to show us the wretchedness of our flesh. The more we see it, the more we will accept and

appropriate our co-crucifixion with Christ, which in turn will free us from the control of the flesh and enable us to walk in the Spirit—ultimately leading to the Christ-life being manifested.

- Verses 10-12 outline the principle of death and resurrection that is throughout the bible.
- The Bible has one interpretation and many applications. In **John 12:24**, Jesus speaks of a seed rotting in the ground and dying to eventually produce fruit. He also speaks of his own life; he must die for us to have eternal life. This verse also speaks of Christians dying to self; in order for others to live, we must die to self.

D. A Purpose For Trials

Read 2 Corinthians 4:13-14.

- Paul says he is confident that all the trials and hardship God had taken him through was for the purpose of causing him to be raised to walk in newness of life (**Romans 6:4-5**).
- Just as we were crucified with Christ, so have we been raised with Him to walk as He walked (**1 John 2:6**).

Read 2 Corinthians 4:15-18.

- Paul continues by saying that the purpose of this difficult process is to make us more able ministers of God's grace, which in turn will cause more thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.
- Paul explains that he was not discouraged by the process. Even though his outward body was passing away, it was causing spiritual growth in his inner man as he learned to walk more in the Spirit.

- Paul acknowledged his affliction but knew it was only for a moment in comparison to eternity. If being afflicted while on earth means we become more like Christ and more souls be affected for eternity, then the affliction is worth it.
- Paul said they were not looking at the visible things of this life, but rather only at that which has eternal value.
- In the flesh, our focus is earthly and temporal, whereas in the Spirit, our focus will be eternal and heavenly (**Colossians 3:1-3**).

2 CORINTHIANS

LESSON 6

A. Paul's Focus

Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-3.

- In Paul's life and ministry, he endured much hardship and persecution; however, his hope was not in finding ways to avoid the hardship and difficulties, but rather his trust was in the Lord. He truly understood that while he was in his fallen body, life would be difficult; but the day was coming when he would be taken home and be free of his earthly body.
- While we are here on earth, we endure much hardship. Like Paul, our earthly tent is being torn down through sickness and disease; however, we too, know that we will be receiving a new body from God in heaven.
- Paul's hope was in Christ, not in striving for good circumstances in this life.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:4.

- Paul wrote that while we remain on this earth in these bodies, we are greatly burdened and groan to be free. It's not that we desire death, but we desire to be with our Heavenly Father and to be finally clothed with our new heavenly bodies.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:5.

- After telling the Corinthians that the destruction of their earthly bodies would only result in a new and heavenly body, Paul took them back to why this is so—because God in His grace has made us fit for it.

- By God's grace, we have been made prepared to receive something of which we are unworthy to receive.
- Not only has God made us fit for this, but in the meantime, He has given us His Spirit as a guarantee that we will honestly receive all that He has promised.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:6-8.

- Because God has promised us a new heavenly body, he has made us fit to receive it and has given to us His Holy Spirit as a guarantee that we will receive it. Paul wrote that he remained encouraged even in the face of some of the most difficult struggles.
- He went on to say that we should walk with a view toward our hope in what God has promised, rather than focusing on what is physical and temporal.
- In the flesh, our focus is on ourselves and what is earthly. If times are difficult, we're discouraged; if our circumstances are good, we're happy.
- However, in the Spirit, all circumstances, whether hard or easy, encourage us because our hope is in Christ and His finished work.
- Paul states that he would rather be separated from his body and with the Lord. Even though this had not yet happened, it would, and the promise of that encouraged him.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:9-10.

- Paul wrote of something else that was motivating him not to lose heart or become discouraged. Whether he remained on earth or the Lord decided to take him home, he desired to be pleasing to God. The day is coming when we all will stand before

the judgment seat of Christ and have our works judged (**1 Corinthians 3:10-15**).

- Will our works be judged to see if we were good enough to get into heaven? No. Our works will be judged according to what was done by grace through faith in the power of the Spirit or through man's effort and the power of the flesh.
- Only what Christ has done through us will be pleasing to the Lord.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:11.

- Because the day is coming when our works are going to be judged, we should desire to lead others to truth.
- God knows our hearts and motives in all that we do.
- Paul trusted that the Corinthians were convinced his ministry among them had been of the Spirit and not with fleshly motives and ambitions.
- Often our ministry and service is carried out in the power of the flesh; we may even see good results from it, such as people being helped and even saved.
- But, as Paul said, God fully knows our hearts and our motives.
- If we are in the flesh, our motive can only be selfish, which is never pleasing to God.

B. Controlled By the Love of Christ

Read 2 Corinthians 5:12-13.

- Paul, as well as his grace-based doctrine, was often attacked by the Judaizers whose focus was law-living.

- Paul was not exalting himself, but he wanted the Corinthians to know that he and his companions did everything out of faith in Christ and a desire to please God.
- Those who were attempting to put the Corinthians' church under the law were only concerned about appearance. Their focus was on themselves and their desire was to bring glory to themselves by appearing to have virtues that were really not in their hearts.
- Paul wrote if we are crazy as some accuse us of being, at least our motive is to be pleasing to God; and if we are teaching according to truth, it is for the benefit of the Corinthian believers (**2 Corinthians 4:5**).

Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-17.

- Paul is now bringing to our attention that believers who walk in the Spirit rather than the flesh will have a new view of one another.
- Rather than knowing each other in the flesh, we will now know one another according to the Spirit, which means we will no longer see other's flesh through our flesh.
- As we walk in the Spirit, our views and feelings toward others won't be controlled by their fleshly actions and attitudes, whether they are our fleshly actions and attitudes or theirs.
- Paul goes on to say, ***“though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more.”*** Many of us came to Christ through fleshly, self-centered motives; we didn't want to go to hell. Once saved, we most often continue living a self-centered life before Christ. We pray for good days, a good job, a new house, good health, all of our kids to be winners; thus our

relationship with Christ is in the flesh. However, in the Spirit, our mind is thinking godly thoughts, our desires are His desires, and our motives are coming from Him. We no longer know Him in the flesh.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-20.

- God has reconciled (brought from the place of an enemy to the place of a friend) those of us who have believed.
- God has done this work in our lives so that we are restored to oneness with Him.
- Not only has He reconciled us, but now He has given to us the ministry of reconciliation, the ministry of bringing others.
- This ministry is first to bring others unto salvation and secondly to an understanding and appropriating of all that Christ has done regarding our identification with Him.
- As ambassadors, we represent our homeland and beseech others to be reconciled.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.

- This is the message of reconciliation: Christ took our sin on Himself and was punished for it, thereby making it possible for us to receive God's righteousness through Him. This is the message that reconciles man with God.

2 CORINTHIANS

LESSON 7

A. Now Is the Time For Grace

Read 2 Corinthians 6:1-2.

- Just as the Judaizers had followed Paul to Galatia and Colossae, they had followed him to Corinth and attempted to persuade the Corinthian believers to depend on the law for their acceptance with God.
- Thus, Paul writes, “[*do not*] *receive the grace of God in vain.*”
- The Corinthians had accepted the gospel and believed; now Paul didn’t want them turning back to the law, depending on their own works, and discarding what they had freely been given in Christ.
- Paul quotes **Isaiah 49:8**: “*In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.*”
- So it was now God’s time in their lives; God had sent salvation through His grace, and Paul didn’t want them returning to law-living.

Read 2 Corinthians 6:3-5.

- Paul’s call to preach the Word of God and establish churches was not an easy task as it came with much hardship and affliction.
- There is an error today in people’s thinking, that the life of those who are walking with God will be smooth, joyful and easy. Jesus promised that the message of grace will bring conflict and division in people’s lives and families (**Luke 12:49-53**).

- The servant of God is called to a difficult work. Paul endured such hardship and difficulties as he walked in the Spirit through life.
- In the Spirit, Christ will be the object of our hearts and we will be so convinced of the truth of God's Word that it won't matter what happens to us in the process. We'll just rejoice in the privilege of suffering with Him.
- In the flesh, our focus will be on ourselves and the preservation of the things we hold dear: health, material possessions, reputation, etc. Thus when being a servant of God conflicts with our desires, we will quickly become discouraged and give up.

Read 2 Corinthians 6:6-7.

- Paul mentions the way he and his companions endured the hardships in ministry.
- He writes that while enduring hardship in ministry, they walked in purity, understanding, patience, kindness, love, righteousness, and truth.
- To respond to such hardship and difficulties in such a way as this is only possible by walking in the Spirit.
- In the flesh, we would respond in anger, revenge, and discouragement to such hardship.

B. Continue Walking in the Spirit

Read 2 Corinthians 6:8-10.

- Paul now lists some of the ways he and his co-laborers were treated by various people, and through which they continued manifesting the fruit of the Spirit.

- In some places they were honored and well accepted, but often they were treated like criminals or enemies.
- At other times, people lied about them, but on occasion the truth was told.
- They spoke the truth about God but were regarded by some as deceivers.
- Many knew them and what they stood for, but out of hatred for their message, often they were treated as if they were unknown.
- While going through the process of dying to themselves, they continued to have life.
- They were beaten and stoned and thrown in prison and run out of town numerous times, but God preserved their lives.
- Though they went through many hard and trying times and often witnessed God's children being led astray, still they rejoiced in the grace and faithfulness of their sovereign God.
- They themselves were physically poor, yet their message and teaching made others rich in Christ.
- Though they had nothing materially, they were joint heirs with Christ and possessed all things pertaining to life and godliness.
- These men lived life in the Spirit.

Read 2 Corinthians 6:11-13.

- Paul is reminding the Corinthians of his open and honest ministry to them which was motivated by love.
- It's interesting that the Corinthians' response to Paul's loving ministry was to withdraw and reject him.
- Paul asks them to turn back to him in love and acceptance rather than withdrawal and rejection.

- This is yet another manifestation of the flesh—rejecting the truth and all those who are preaching it.

C. Do Not Be Joined With Unbelievers

Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

- The unbelieving false teachers claimed to accept the gospel, but they depended more upon the keeping of the law to obtain God’s acceptance.
- Therefore, Paul asked them some questions for the purpose of revealing to them how inappropriate it is to become “yoked” together with unbelievers.
- What does righteousness and wickedness have in common? The answer is *nothing*.
- Can light and darkness mix together? No. Either we have light or the light goes out and there is only darkness.
- Is there peace between Christ and Satan? No.
- What do believers have in common with unbelievers? Unless we are walking in the flesh, our affections and desires have changed and we can no longer have the fellowship we once had (**Galatians 5:24**).
- As those who are the “temple” of God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, what do we have in common with those who are unbelievers and worshiping other gods?
- In verse 17, Paul shares God’s desire for His children: to walk in the Spirit, to live holy and righteous lives, and that His sons and daughters no longer live in communion with the wickedness of this world.

Read 2 Corinthians 7:1.

- We know God desires a true knowledge of Himself (**2 Peter 3:18**), and this is why: a true understanding of His love, grace, and mercy to sinful man would cause us to separate from everything that might hinder our relationship with Him and only accept and desire what will foster godliness and holiness in our lives.

