

2 Corinthians 1-7 Ep 219



In this outline are a few links to some of my favorite books that have really helped me understand the context and content of the scriptures. [Click here to see all of my favorite books on Amazon](#). As an Amazon Affiliate, I do earn a small commission from qualifying purchases (at no extra cost to you).

2 Corinthians – Introduction

Timothy's visit to Corinth (1 Cor. 16:10) apparently did not have much effect on the situation that 1 Corinthians deals with. Paul was very concerned about their response to 1 Corinthians and to Timothy's visit. In addition, men who claimed to be apostles came to Corinth and denied Paul's apostleship and authority. At least one believer accepted their arguments and turned against Paul, urging others to do the same. This so troubled Paul that he left Ephesus and went to Corinth for a brief, unsuccessful, unpleasant visit (2 Cor. 2:1; 12:14; 13:1–2). He promised to return (2 Cor. 1:16), but decided to postpone his visit lest it cause even more pain (2 Cor. 1:23; 2:3; 13:2). Back in Ephesus he was in danger of his life (2 Cor. 1:8–11). He then wrote a severe letter "out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears" (2 Cor. 2:4; 7:8), sending it to them by Titus.

After the riot in Ephesus, he left for Macedonia (Acts 20:1) by way of Troas (2 Cor. 2:12–13). He was so disappointed when he did not meet Titus there as expected, that he did not minister there, even though he had opportunity. So he went on to Macedonia. There he did meet Titus, who encouraged him with news of repentance on the part of most of the believers in Corinth. The church as a whole were again responsive to Paul's apostolic authority and had dealt with the man who was causing the trouble (2 Cor. 2:5–11; 7:5–13).

Paul's joy over this news and his continuing concern over the troubles of the church prompted him to write 2 Corinthians, probably from Philippi (see 2 Cor. 11:9; Phil. 4:15). In it he defends his ministry and apostleship, encourages the Corinthians to finish raising funds for the poor saints in Jerusalem, and warns against false apostles. He also prepares them for his third visit. The letter was sent by Titus (8:6), probably in A.D. 56.¹

¹ Stanley Horton, *I & II Corinthians: A Logion Press Commentary*, Logion Press, 1999, p. 94. Horton's date here is up for debate among scholars. Not everyone agrees as to when Paul wrote this letter. [The Encyclopedia Britannica](#) dates this letter to 55 A.D. Richard Lloyd Anderson puts 1 Corinthians at 57, thus having 2 Corinthians coming after this letter. See: [New Testament: Sperry Symposium Classics](#), "Paul's Witness to the Historical Integrity of the Gospels," Deseret Book, 2006. I see dating this letter as problematic for a few reasons, one of which has to do with the proposed disunity of this letter. Several challenges have led commentators to consider the possibility that 2 Corinthians is a compilation of multiple pieces of correspondence. The mention of a "sorrowful letter" in 2:4, which does not align with the content of 1 Corinthians, indicates that Paul had written at least three letters to the Corinthians. It is reasonable to suggest that the last four chapters of 2 Corinthians (chapters 10-13) contain the mentioned "sorrowful letter."

The main message of Paul's letter of 2 Corinthians can be summarized as a defense of his apostolic authority, authenticity, and ministry. Paul addresses various challenges and criticisms he has faced from opponents, highlighting his sufferings, hardships, and sacrifices for the sake of the Gospel. He emphasizes the themes of God's comfort in times of affliction, the surpassing glory of the new covenant, and the ministry of reconciliation. Paul encourages the Corinthians to remain steadfast in their faith, to live with integrity, and to support him in his mission. He also addresses issues related to generosity, unity, and the importance of genuine repentance. Ultimately, Paul's aim is to restore and strengthen his relationship with the Corinthians, urging them to embrace his teachings and to be reconciled with him and with one another.

2 Corinthians 1: God sends comfort in tough times

The main message of 2 Corinthians 1 is the theme of God's comfort in times of affliction and the reliability of Paul's apostolic calling. Paul emphasizes the comforting nature of God, who brings solace and support to believers in their trials. He shares his personal experiences of suffering and deliverance to encourage the Corinthian saints and assures them that they can find comfort and hope in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Paul also defends his integrity and trustworthiness as an apostle, addressing concerns about his change in travel plans and assuring the Corinthians of his faithfulness. The chapter also highlights the importance of forgiveness, restoration, and maintaining a joyous relationship within the Church.

I. Introduction and Greeting (2 Corinthians 1:1-2)

II. God's Comfort in Affliction (2 Corinthians 1:3-11)

A. Praise for God's comfort (1:3-4)

3. Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὁ πατὴρ τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν καὶ θεὸς πάσης παρακλήσεως. 4. ὁ παρακαλῶν ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ θλίψει ἡμῶν εἰς τὸ δύνασθαι ἡμᾶς παρακαλεῖν τοὺς ἐν πάσῃ θλίψει διὰ τῆς παρακλήσεως ἧς παρακαλούμεθα αὐτοὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ.

Additional evidence supports this perspective. Edgar J. Goodspeed highlights certain factors that indicate disunity in 2 Corinthians. He observes that chapters 1 to 9 convey a sense of harmony, reconciliation, and comfort, while chapters 10 onwards delve into personal misunderstandings and bitterness that persist until the end. This incongruity strongly suggests the presence of two letters instead of one: a conciliatory and gratifying letter in the first part, and an injured and incensed letter in the second part. Considering that the early section of 2 Corinthians references a painful and regretted letter, it is plausible that this letter is actually contained within chapters 10 to 13. See: Edgar J. Goodspeed, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, University of Chicago Press, 1936, p. 58-59. Craig Keener also examines the disunity of the text and the scholarly analysis in his work *1-2 Corinthians*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 146-151. After his examination of the arguments, Keener takes the position that 2 Corinthians is a unified work, stating "I currently favor reading the entire letter as a unity, but my conclusion and the situation it implies... remain a minority view. Because differences between the two major sections are not in dispute, one's conclusion depends on how heavily the burden of proof rests on specific hypothetical reconstructions (such as partition) or on those defying scholarly consensus (such as advocates of unity). I believe that the Ockham's Razor principle of the simplest solution warns against finding interpolations and additions without clear evidence."

3. Blessed is God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Father of mercies*, and God of all comfort,
 4. The *one who is* comforting us in all our *tribulation*², for we have the power to comfort those in any *and* all *tribulation* through the comfort with which we are comforted ourselves by God; (2 Cor. 1:3-4, my translation).

This verse is beautiful in that it shows us the character of God the Father. Clearly he is the father of Jesus Christ, as Paul indicates here. Elder Holland had this to say in reference to this idea:

“This reliance upon the forgiving, long-suffering, merciful nature of God was taught from before the very foundation of the world. It was always to give us hope and help, a reason to progress and improve, an incentive to lay down our burdens and take up our salvation. May I be bold enough to suggest that it is impossible for anyone who really knows God to doubt his willingness to receive us with open arms in a divine embrace if we will but 'come unto him.' There certainly can and will be plenty of external difficulties in life; nevertheless, the soul that comes unto Christ dwells within a personal fortress, a veritable palace of perfect peace. 'Whoso hearkeneth unto me,' Jehovah says, 'shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil' (Prov. 1:33). That is exactly what Paul said to the Corinthians. Trying to help them keep their chins up-and the Corinthians had a lot to be grim about-he wrote: 'Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God' (2 Cor. 1:3-4).”³

B. Sharing in sufferings and comfort (1:5-7)

C. Paul's personal experience of deliverance (1:8-11)

For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life (2 Cor. 1:8).

In order to emphasize the theme of comfort and encouragement amidst hardships, Paul shares some personal experiences with the congregation in Corinth. He endured suffering while in Corinth, and his suffering was even more intense in the province of Asia, particularly in Ephesus. The account in Acts 19:1-20:1 describes his ministry there: After three months, certain members of the synagogue stubbornly "refused to believe and publicly spoke against the Way" (Acts 19:9). These unbelievers continued to exert pressure on Paul. Additionally, after two years of daily discussions in the lecture hall of Tyrannus and witnessing numerous extraordinary miracles, a riot broke out instigated by silversmiths who were losing business due to the decline in sales of their silver images of the goddess Artemis. However, Paul's life was not threatened during that incident. It is believed by some that there were other undisclosed threats and pressures that are not mentioned in the Book of Acts. It is even possible that Paul experienced imprisonment for a period of time. While Paul does not provide specific details, it is evident that he faced genuine danger, to the extent that he felt like a prisoner condemned to death. What Paul desired the Corinthians to understand was that God allows the saints to suffer, and one reasons for this is so that we can learn to depend on his spirit in times of deepest distress (D&C 121:7-10). God has taught that he also allows the wicked to exercise their agency in opposition to his work

² θλίψει – from θλίψις *thipsis*, denotes a pressing, or pressing together or pressure. This can represent oppression, tribulation, affliction, or stress. It comes from θλίβω, and denotes pressing grapes, or to press hard upon. It also literally or figuratively denotes a pressing, or a narrow passage or trouble.

³ Elder Holland, "Come unto Me," *Ensign*, Apr. 1998.

(D&C 121.13-16). We also learn lessons about how we may have also contributed to the problem (see D&C 121.39). The same God who raises the dead will not abandon us. He still loves us and desires for us to place our trust in Him.

Whatever Paul's suffering in Asia (1:8), it appears life-threatening. (Suggestions of temporary detention are plausible but uncertain; the "sentence of death" in 1:9 may be figurative like the "beasts" in 1 Cor 15:32).⁴

III. Paul's Integrity and Apostolic Ministry (2 Corinthians 1:12-24)

A. Boasting in a clear conscience (1:12-14)

B. Change of travel plans and reliability (1:15-22)

Various genres in antiquity prefaced their argument or teaching by narrating the events that had led to the present situation. Hospitality was important in antiquity, and it was an honor to host a prominent guest. For Paul not to have come could have seemed like both a breach of his word—and thus of his honor and integrity—and an insult to their hospitality. Correspondents sometimes affectionately protested failure to come or write more often (e.g., Cicero, *Letters to Atticus* 1.9; *Letters to Friends* 2.10.1), but the Corinthians seem more genuinely offended. Rhetoricians (trained public speakers) recommended that one defending himself defuse the audience's negative attitudes before addressing the more serious charges (chaps. 10–13).⁵

Ancient travel could be complicated, but Paul's unexpected change of travel plans (1:15–16) had disappointed the church and apparently exacerbated criticism (1:17). Paul had not only rejected their benefaction (11:7–9; 12:13); he had even more offensively robbed them of the privilege of showing an apostle hospitality.⁶

[John Chrysostom](#)⁷ wrote, "The carnal man, who is riveted to the present world and completely caught up in it, is outside the sphere of the Spirit's influence and has the power to go everywhere, doing whatever he likes. But the servant of the Spirit is led by the Spirit. He cannot just do what he likes. He is dependent on the Spirit's authority. Paul was not able to come to Corinth because it was not the Spirit's will for him to go there."⁸

2 Cor. 1.22 Greek: ὁ καὶ σφραγισάμενος ἡμᾶς καὶ δούς τὸν ἀρραβῶνα⁹ τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν "who, having even sealed us, and gave the [earnest pledge](#) of the Spirit in our hearts."

C. Affirmation of God's faithfulness (1:23-24)

IV. Reasons for Paul's Delayed Visit (2 Corinthians 1:15-2:4)

⁴ Craig S. Keener, [1-2 Corinthians](#), Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 157.

⁵ Keener, [Background](#), p. 500-501.

⁶ Keener, [1-2 Corinthians](#), p. 159.

⁷ Chrysostome ("Golden-mouthed") was a bishop in Constantinople. He lived from 347-407 A.D.

⁸ Gerald Bray (editor), Thomas Oden (editor), [Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, volume 7](#), Intervarsity Press, 1999, p. 201. This work cites *Homilies on the Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*.

⁹ ἀρραβῶνα, from ἀρραβών, of Hebrew origin מֵרָבֹן 'ērāḇōn, a word denoting a pledge or security in money matters.

A. Explanations for the change in plans and Paul's integrity (1:15-24)

Craig Keener does an excellent work explaining these verses which can be difficult to completely understand in the King James English:

Ancient literature regularly condemns fickleness and unreliability while praising those who keep their word even under duress. Many thought fickleness inappropriate for a virtuous person (Maximus of Tyre 5.3); the Roman world despised it in leaders. Those who changed stated plans had to explain their reasons and prove that they were not fickle (*CPJ* 2:219, §431; Phaedrus 4.prologue, lines 8–9); one might argue that it is impossible to foresee the future (Libanius *Declamation* 36.42; 44.50–52, 61) or that one was avoiding danger (Cicero *Att.* 3.4). Failure to carry through on one's word led to ridicule (e.g., Suetonius *Tib.* 38); keeping an agreement despite another's failure was honorable (Iamblichus *Pyth. Life* 30.185). Some Corinthians may have already been dissatisfied with Paul's "servile," apparently populist, flexibility, even before this change in plans (cf. 1 Cor 9:19–23). From Paul's perspective, however, the Corinthians are the fickle ones, flirting with his rivals (6:11–7:4). The elite typically portrayed the masses as fickle in their taste for leaders; later citizens of Corinth itself proved fickle in their appreciation of others (cf. Dio Chrysostom 37.33).

The Corinthian criticism must have gone deeper than their severe disappointment over his delay. Apparently for some, if Paul's word was not dependable when it involved his relationship with them, how could they trust his apostolic message (cf. 1:18–22; 11:4) and ministry (cf. 2:14–7:4)? Probably his "unreliability" with regard to his visit has also fed charges of unreliability regarding the collection (cf. 2:17; 4:2; 8:20–21; 12:16–18), at a critical time when Corinthian reluctance could stall that ministry's momentum (9:3–5). If Paul's word cannot be trusted, he cannot hold the Corinthians to their "promises" concerning the collection (9:5).

Thus, in 2 Cor. 1:18–22, Paul digresses from explaining his changed travel plans to defend the integrity of his ministry, of which those changes have occasioned questioning. Paul grounds his ministry in the gospel that shapes it (1:18–19), as he will continue to do (5:18–6:2). He insists on defending not himself apart from his gospel but, rather, the gospel that shapes his ministry (repeatedly in 2:14–7:4), turning to a more specific and less theological defense of his conduct in the "fool's speech" of 11:17–12:13. **His ministry is reliable not because his plans never change but because the God who established his ministry (and theirs, 1:21–22) is reliable (1:18–19); God keeps his promises (1:20; 7:1; cf. Rom 3:3–4; 9:6).**¹⁰

2 Corinthians 2: The saints need to forgive each other

The main message of 2 Corinthians 2 revolves around the themes of forgiveness, reconciliation, and the ministry of the Gospel. Paul addresses a specific situation involving a disciplinary action that was taken in the Corinthian church. He urges the Corinthians to forgive and restore the repentant individual who had caused pain and sorrow within the community. Paul emphasizes the importance of maintaining unity, extending forgiveness, and demonstrating love towards one another. This chapter underscores the need for forgiveness, reconciliation, and the ongoing ministry of proclaiming the message of God's grace and love.

¹⁰ Keener, [1-2 Corinthians](#), p. 159-160, emphasis added.

I. The Decision to Forgive and Restore (2 Corinthians 2:1-4)

A. Paul's decision not to visit in sorrow (2:1-2)

2 Cor. 2.2 Greek: εἰ γὰρ ἐγὼ **λυπῶ** ὑμᾶς καὶ τίς ἐστὶν ὁ **εὐφραίνων** με εἰ μὴ ὁ λυπούμενος ἐξ ἐμοῦ

For if I make you all **sorrowful**, then who is it that causes my **rejoicing**, if not the *person(s)* being made sorrowful by me? (my translation)

John Chrysostom explained, “What Paul is saying is that even if he were to make the Corinthians sorry he would be glad, since their sorrow would be proof of how much they held him in esteem.”¹¹

B. Paul's purpose for writing instead (2:3-4)

II. The Call for Forgiveness and Reconciliation (2 Corinthians 2:5-11)

A. Instruction to forgive and comfort the repentant offender (2:5-8)

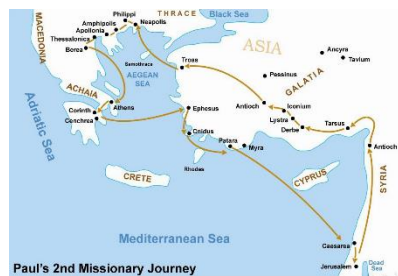
B. Exhortation to reaffirm love and restore the individual (2:9-11)

Who was this offender that Paul encouraged the saints in Corinth to forgive?

Apparently, Paul’s communication here involved an offender who had caused pain to both Paul and some members of the church in Corinth (2 Cor. 2.2-5). Paul emphasizes here that the person has suffered enough (2 Cor. 2.6), and that now is the time to forgive this person (2 Cor. 2.7-8). The Corinthian saints responded to Paul’s letter by disciplining the offender mentioned in 2 Cor. 2.5-6 and 7.9. It is believed by many scholars that the disciplined individual was a vocal critic of Paul, although there is a reference to “the one wronged” in 7.12 that raises some questions.¹² Some possible links in the text suggest that this person might have been the same individual mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5.1-5, known as the incestuous man, as believed by early church fathers.¹³ However, if this is the case, it took Paul’s severe communication in 2 Cor. 2.3-4 to bring about the much needed church discipline, as the Corinthians had not taken action after receiving the message contained in 1 Corinthians 5. There are a few hints that perhaps this offending person could have been both the incestuous man and a vocal critic, influenced by Paul’s opponents. Now that the offender had repented, Paul urges the Corinthians to forgive him, indicating that there is no longer a need for continued discipline (2.5-8, 10).

III. The Experience of Triumph in Christ (2 Corinthians 2:12-17)

A. Paul's journey to Troas and the open door for ministry (2:12-13)



From Troas, Paul received good news about their compliance and the man’s repentance (2:12-13; 7:5-16). Troas is Alexandria Troas, a significant and sizeable Roman colony, the port in Asia from which one sailed across to Macedonia, and thence walked or sailed to Corinth. The “opened door” means freedom to minister; at some

¹¹ *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, volume 7*, p. 204.

¹² Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, p. 162.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

point Paul stayed in Troas long enough to leave some possessions there (2 Tim 4:13).¹⁴

B. Gratitude for God's triumph in spreading the knowledge of Christ (2:14-16)

Paul begins a digression in 2 Corinthians 2:14 that will continue to 2 Corinthians 7:4. Digressions were common in ancient letter writing and elsewhere. For example, at one point Homer digresses for seventy-five lines, just repeating a verb to summon his audience back to the previous point. Paul has also used this pattern to frame some sections in 1 Corinthians (6:1-8; chap. 9; chap. 13). Paul begins a digression here defending the sincerity of his ministry—a common topic of Greco-Roman moralists—that lasts through 7:4. The Corinthians should receive Paul as an ambassador of Christ's new covenant, a revelation fuller than the one given to Moses.¹⁵

15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: 16 To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? (2 Cor. 2:15-16)

Roman conquerors would lead their shamed captives in a “triumphal procession”; in this period, only the emperor was allowed to lead triumphs. Christ had triumphed and now led believers in him as his captives (the image is similar to that of being Christ's servants); cf. Psalm 68:18, used in Ephesians 4:8. The Roman senate normally decreed public thanksgivings before the triumphal processions, so they were great celebrations for the victors and great humiliations for the defeated. Most of the captives were executed after the triumph. But Paul glories in the image of Christians as peoples taken captive by Christ (cf. 1 Cor 4:9, etc.), and this prisoner of war himself, who identifies with Christ's death in the following chapters, offers the thanksgiving! When sacrifices were offered in the Old Testament and elsewhere in the ancient world, incense was burned to offset the stench of burning flesh (cf. Ps 141:2), and the same would have been true at Roman triumphal celebrations. (Sirach 24:15 described Wisdom as having a pleasant “aroma”; Paul and his fellow witnesses for Jesus Christ fulfill here the role which that book ascribed to Wisdom, but it is unlikely that he intends an allusion to that book here; the image was a natural one.) The Old Testament has precedent for acknowledging one's own inadequacy (Ex 3:11) but God's adequacy (Ex 3:14; cf. 2 Cor 3:5).¹⁶

C. Contrast between authentic ministry and peddlers of the word (2:17)

For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ. (2 Cor. 2:17)

Professional speakers had long been accused of changing truth into error for gain (like a merchant providing impure products to save money). Philosophers had come under the same charge in some circles, because most made their living by their teaching or, in the case of the *Cynics, by public begging. The public often perceived wandering teachers and holy men as charlatans, no doubt because many of them were (in Scripture, cf. Jer 6:13-14; 8:10-11; Micah 3:5, 11). (Critics sometimes declined to name their opponents, thus refusing to grant them even explicit notice, but Paul may have his opponents in

¹⁴ Keener, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: The New Testament](#), IVP Academic, 2014, p. 502.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 502.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 503.

mind; cf. 2 Cor 11:4-5, 22.) Thus many philosophers and moralists felt the need to repudiate the charge, as Paul does here.¹⁷

2 Corinthians 3: Contrasting the Old Covenant and the New Covenant

The main message of 2 Corinthians 3 revolves around the contrast between the old covenant and the new covenant, emphasizing the superiority and glory of the ministry of the Spirit. Paul highlights the transformative power of the Gospel and the freedom believers have through Christ. He contrasts the ministry of the law, which brought condemnation, with the ministry of the Spirit, which brings righteousness and life. Paul emphasizes that the veil has been lifted through Christ, allowing believers to have direct access to God's glory. He underscores the role of the Spirit in bringing about spiritual transformation and the need to live in the freedom and liberty of the new covenant. The chapter ultimately emphasizes the surpassing glory of the ministry of the Spirit and the transformative nature of the Gospel.

I. Introduction and Personal Commendation (2 Corinthians 3:1-3)

A. Paul's affirmation of his own credibility as a minister of Christ.

B. The Corinthians themselves are Paul's letter of recommendation, known and read by all (2 Cor. 2-3).

2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: 3 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. (2 Cor. 3:2-3)

Elder Soares taught, "As we genuinely and continually strive to learn of the Savior and follow His example, I promise you, in His name, that His divine attributes will be written in our minds and hearts, (2 Cor. 3:3) that we will become more like Him, and that we will walk with Him."¹⁸

II. The Ministry of the New Covenant (2 Corinthians 3:4-6)

Elder Holland taught, "People do not join the Church because of what they know. They join because of what they feel, what they see and want spiritually."¹⁹

A. Paul's confidence in the sufficiency of God, not in his own abilities.

B. The new covenant surpasses the old covenant in glory and effectiveness.

C. The new covenant ministers life through the Spirit, while the old covenant brings death through the letter of the law.

III. Contrasting Ministries: The Old and the New (2 Corinthians 3:7-18)

A. The glory of the old covenant, reflected on Moses' face (2 Corinthians 3:7-11).

B. The surpassing glory of the new covenant, through Christ (2 Corinthians 3:12-18).

¹⁷ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: The New Testament*, IVP Academic, 2014, p. 503.

¹⁸ Elder Soares, "[In Awe of Christ and His Gospel](#)," April 2022 Conference.

¹⁹ Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, *Ensign*, May 2001, 14.

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:17).

Ezra Taft Benson taught, “When obedience ceases to be an irritant and becomes our quest, in that moment God will endow us with power.”²⁰

Elder Maxwell taught, “The Church is constantly concerned with one of the ultimate dimensions of freedom that is freedom from sin. We share the world's concerns with political and economic freedom, the more visible and traditional dimensions of freedom. Paul said, however, 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' (2 Corinthians 3:17.) Jesus said, 'The truth shall make you free.' (John 8:32.) It is so easy to become imprisoned in the single well-lit cell of one impulse and one appetite.”²¹

IV. Closing Thoughts (2 Corinthians 3:18)

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3:18)

After discussing the fact that the peaceable ones are to “lay hold upon every good thing” (Moroni 7:20-21), the sons of God are to “pray with all the energy of heart” to be filled with the pure love of Christ (Moroni 7:48), so that they may “become the sons of God” and that when Jesus appears “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” and that we may “be purified even as he is pure” (Moroni 7:48). I see these passages in Moroni 7 tied to this idea of approaching God in 2 Corinthians 3:18, where the saints are “changed into the same image from glory to glory.”

2 Corinthians 4: Eternal glory will outweigh the challenges of mortality

In this chapter, Paul encourages the saints to persevere through hardships and not lose heart. He emphasizes that the struggles they face are temporary compared to the eternal glory that awaits them. Paul highlights the transformative power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which brings light, life, and hope. He urges church members to remain focused on the message of Jesus Christ and not distort it, reminding them that their ministry is about serving Christ and proclaiming His Gospel message. Despite persecution and afflictions, the saints are not destroyed but participate in the sufferings of Christ. The main message here is about endurance and remembering that the present troubles are outweighed by the eternal blessings of the Gospel.

I. Introduction (2 Cor. 4:1-2)

A. Paul's affirmation of his ministry, the grace of God received, and the ministry not to be discouraged (2 Cor. 4:1)

B. The rejection of deceitful tactics (2 Cor. 4:2)

II. The Glorious Ministry of the Gospel (2 Cor. 4:3-7)

A. The hiddenness of the gospel's glory (2 Cor. 4:3-4)

“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not” (2 Cor. 4:4a)

²⁰ Ezra Taft Benson, Quoted by Donald L. Staheli, *Ensign*, May 1998, 82.

²¹ Elder Neal A. Maxwell, *Notwithstanding My Weakness*, Deseret Book, 1981, p. 100.

“This world of carnality and lust, of every lascivious and evil thing, belongs to Satan. He created it; he is its father and its god. All those who belong to it - all those who are carnal, sensual, and devilish - are his children, the children of disobedience. The earth itself is the Lord's, and he is its ruler; but the world (the corrupt society on earth) is under the rule of him who is the god of this world.”²²

B. The proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord and the role his servants (2 Cor. 4.5)

C. The power of God shining through human weakness (2 Cor. 4.7)

Many Greek writers felt that philosophers' contentment in suffering displayed special power. But whereas philosophers were often hailed as strong and unswayed by testing, Paul reminds his readers that his power is from God alone.²³

[Didymus the Blind](#) (313-398) taught, “It is not we but he who enables our faith, accepting us and judging us by it.”²⁴

III. Endurance in the Face of Trials (2 Cor. 4.8-13)

A. Afflicted and persecuted, but nor forsaken or destroyed (2 Cor. 4.8-9)

Joseph Smith related to Paul's message. One time he said:

"[While a prisoner of the Missouri mob] Notwithstanding that every avenue of escape seemed to be entirely closed, and death stared me in the face, and that my destruction was determined upon, as far as man was concerned, yet, from my first entrance into the camp [of displaced saints], I felt an assurance that I, with my brethren and our families, should be delivered. Yes, that still small voice, which has so often whispered consolation to my soul, in the depths of sorrow and distress, bade me be of good cheer, and promised deliverance, which gave me great comfort. And although the heathen raged, and the people imagined vain things, yet the Lord of Hosts, the God of Jacob was my refuge; and when I cried unto Him in the day of trouble, He delivered me; for which I call upon my soul, and all that is within me, to bless and praise His holy name. For although I was 'troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed' [see 2 Corinthians 4:8-9].²⁵

B. Carrying in the body the death of Jesus (verse 10)

D. Life and resurrection power at work (verse 11)

IV. Hope and Eternal Perspective (2 Cor. 4.14-18)

A. Paul testifies of the resurrection in the future (2 Cor. 4.14)

B. Focusing on the unseen and eternal glory to come (verses 16-18)

²² Bruce R. McConkie, [Mormon Doctrine](#), 2d ed., Bookcraft, 1966, p. 324.

²³ Keener, *Background*, p. 505.

²⁴ *Ancient Christian Commentary*, p. 230.

²⁵ *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols. 3:329.

Some religious thinkers in Paul's world taught and understood that the future reward would be greater than present sufferings (e.g., Wisdom of Solomon 3:5; *1 Enoch* 103:9–104:2; *4 Ezra* 7:14-16). Plato and many philosophers after him rightly contrasted the temporal and the eternal. By Paul's day many Platonists thought that bodily things were heavy and weighed down the soul (cf. even Wisdom of Solomon 9:15), but that the soul was light; once freed by the body's death, it would soar up to the pure heavens from which it had originated. Paul here inverts the image but perhaps partly for a play on words that a few Jewish readers skilled in Hebrew exposition might catch: "glory" and "weight, heaviness," represent the same Hebrew word. Plato also believed that the world of ideas was the real, unchanging world, whereas the temporal, changing world of sense knowledge was only a world of shadows.²⁶ Paul does not deny the reality of the visible world but does agree that it is subject to decay, whereas the unseen world is eternal. In making this statement, however, Paul is still contrasting his ministry with that of Moses: he does not teach an outward law written on stones, but the law written in his inner person by the Spirit (2 Cor. chapters 3–4).²⁷

2 Corinthians 5: Reconciling mankind to God

The main message of 2 Corinthians chapter 5 revolves around the hope and assurance found in the eternal destiny of those reconciled to God through his Son Jesus Christ. Paul emphasizes that our earthly bodies are temporary dwellings ("earthen vessels" – 2 Cor. 4.7), and we eagerly anticipate our heavenly dwelling, a building made by God. He encourages believers to walk by faith and not by sight, understanding that while we are in this world, we are absent from the Lord. Paul emphasizes the reconciliation provided by Christ's death and resurrection, urging the early church in Corinth to be ambassadors of this message. This chapter highlights the transformative power of being in Christ, becoming new creations, and being reconciled to God through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

I. The Heavenly Dwelling and the Resurrection Body (2 Cor. 5.1-8)

A. Eagerly desiring the heavenly dwelling, longing to be clothed with the heavenly (2 Cor. 5.1-4)

This is the story of the [Hymn of the Pearl](#), the cosmic myth of the ages.²⁸ *The Hymn of the Pearl*, which is part of a writing known as [The Acts of Thomas](#), an [apocryphal text](#) purported to have been written in the second or third century. This story is of great importance, as it is the message of the Cosmic Myth. It is the story of a prince who has come to earth and forgotten his heavenly father and mother and must return to them. **We are the prince in this story.** This is a story about us: we are in the great deep, the sea, what is essentially the lone and dreary world, or Egypt as it is called in the *Hymn of the Pearl*. I find

²⁶ To gain a comprehensive understanding of Plato's perspectives on reality, it is crucial to delve into his allegory of The Cave. Plato's renowned allegory of the cave, composed circa 380 BCE, holds a significant place among the thought-provoking passages found within *The Republic*. This allegory serves as a vivid representation of the philosophical concept of Idealism as imparted in the Platonic Academy, and it continues to be a metaphor employed by philosophers over countless generations to guide us in transcending superficiality and materialism. In this particular dialogue, Socrates, the principal speaker, imparts to Glaucon, Plato's brother, the notion that each of us resembles prisoners who are bound within the depths of a cavern, blissfully unaware of the existence of a greater reality beyond the mere shadows cast upon the cave wall. Shawn Eyer renders a translation of Plato's allegory here at [Harvard.edu](#). Another rendering can be found [here](#). I remember working on this in graduate school, translating this for homework. I used the Greek text which can be found at [Perseus.Tufts.edu](#).

²⁷ Keener, *Background*, p. 506.

²⁸ Lori Driggs, Tshikamba, and Mandy Green have worked to render a beautifully illustrated and simplified rendition of this ancient story. It can be purchased [here](#).

that as I teach the stories from the scriptures, that I am reminded of this piece of extrabiblical literature, as it is the pattern that we see in so many of these stories.

B. God's purpose: giving us the Spirit as a guarantee (2 Cor. 5.5)

2 Cor. 5.5 Greek: ὁ δὲ κατεργασάμενος ἡμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο θεὸς ὁ καὶ δοὺς ἡμῖν τὸν ἀρραβῶνα²⁹ τοῦ πνεύματος "And He having had worked us into this self-same thing *is* God, who also has given us *his earnest pledge, that being* the Spirit!" (my translation)

Robert L. Millet taught about this idea in connection with purchasing his first home:

"[A] friend offered to lend us the down payment. It was at this time that Shauna and I became acquainted with the concept of 'earnest money.' We made a goodwill payment to the owner of the home, a small amount, to be sure, but an amount sufficient to evidence our seriousness about purchasing the place. That amount was called the earnest money. It was a token payment, a gesture indicating our desire to acquire that home, a promissory note of sorts.

God works with us in a similar way. He communicates to us that we are following a proper course by sending his Spirit. The Holy Ghost thus represents God's 'earnest money' on us, his down payment, his goodwill gesture and assurance to us that he is serious about saving us and that one day he will own us and claim us fully as his."³⁰

C. Confidence in the future resurrection and eternal life (2 Cor. 5.6-8)

II. Pleasing the Lord and Facing Judgment

A. Ambition to please the Lord, for we will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and everyone will receive according to what is due for their actions (2 Cor.5.9-10)

B. Fear of the Lord and persuading others (verses 11-13)

Paul discusses his boasting καύχημα (2 Cor. 5.12)

2 Cor. 5.12 can be confusing in the KJV.³¹ Here is another rendition:

We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you an opportunity to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast in outward appearance and not in the heart.³²

Keener explains this verse:

Paul quickly explains that his description of his confidence in ministry is not self-commendation (5:12). Some Corinthian Christians had apparently objected to his previous explanations (cf. 3:1; perhaps 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1), although accepting boasting from his opponents (11:17–20). To reduce the offensiveness of self-boasting, orators followed various conventions, such as denying

²⁹ ἀρραβῶν, of Hebrew origin ערבוּת 'erāḇōt, a word denoting a pledge or security in money matters.

³⁰ Robert L. Millet, *Alive in Christ: The Miracle of Spiritual Rebirth*, Deseret Book, 1997, p. 170-171.

³¹ οὐ γὰρ πάλιν ἑαυτοὺς συνιστάνομεν ὑμῖν ἀλλὰ ἀφορμὴν διδόντες ὑμῖν καυχήματος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἵνα ἔχητε πρὸς τοὺς ἐν προσώπῳ καυχωμένους καὶ οὐ καρδίᾳ. This verse is rendered in the KJV thus: For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion **to glory** on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

³² Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, p. 181.

that they were doing it (as here; 3:1; although he is: 4:2; 6:4); complaining that it was necessary (12:1) or that their audiences had forced them to do it (12:11); that one needed to silence opponents' arrogance (11:12) or respond to charges (10:10). Paul emphasizes that he is not boasting but merely giving his audience opportunity to boast about their founder, just as he boasts about them (1:14; 7:14; 9:2–3). Had they defended his honor as they should have, he would not be compelled to do so (12:11)! If he boasts, then, it is for their good only (10:8), and only within limits (10:13–17; 11:30; 12:5–6).

Obviously Paul believes that his rivals have been boasting (11:12, 18) and commending themselves (10:12, 18). Probably this includes worldly criteria like social status and rhetorical impressiveness (10:10–12; 11:6). (That Paul leaves his rivals anonymous, although he likely knows their names, may follow a convention of refusing to dignify opponents by naming them.) Paul points out that his rivals commend themselves on the basis of outward attributes rather than the heart; he borrows the key terms of 1 Sam 16:7 LXX, in which God chose David over his brothers (and perhaps most tellingly for Paul here, over Saul).

Many thinkers emphasized the inadequacy of appearance. Nevertheless, it might be more than coincidence that Paul's term for "outward appearance," πρόσωπον *prosōpon*, is "face," and Paul has just been contrasting the mere glory on Moses's face with the new covenant glory on the heart (3:3,7,13,18; cf. 4:6). Like Moses, however, Paul has more freedom for his heart when speaking with the Lord, and (despite his "uncovered face," 3:12,18) uses more restraint with the Corinthians (5:13). The point is that the heart is less obvious than outward appearance.³³

"For whether we were beside ourselves, [it was] to God; whether we be of sound mind -- [it is] to you, for the love of the Christ doth constrain us" (2 Cor. 5:13-14a Young's Literal Translation)

Whether Paul was serving God or the Corinthians (5:13), he was clearly not living for self (5:15) as his rivals did (5:12). Stoics considered all folly to be "madness," but Paul is not yet parodying folly (as in 11:23; though cf. 1 Cor 1:25; 4:10), because he is "beside himself" only for God (and parallels this with "heart" rather than appearance in 5:12). More relevantly, many associated prophecy and divine possession with temporary *mania* (insanity; as in 1 Cor 14:23), a charge sometimes leveled against prophets (2 Kgs 9:11; Jer 29:26; Hos 9:7; *Sib. Or.* 1.172) or philosophers (Diogenes Laertius 6.3.82). Such insanity could be contrasted with sobriety ("our right mind"), as here (cf. Acts 26:25; many cite, e.g., Philo *Cher.* 69; Plato *Phaedrus* 244A).

Because Paul wanted everything to edify others, he had kept most of his deep spiritual experiences (12:2–4) to himself rather than sharing them with the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 14:18). Perhaps bringing into question how well they had appropriated new covenant life, the Corinthians could not accommodate Paul's personal experience of God any more than the Israelites had been able to endure Moses's (3:13; Ex 34:34–35). (Ideally God's glory should not have been covered; 1 Cor 11:4, 7.)³⁴

E. Motivated by the love of Christ (verse 14)

F. A new perspective on people and Christ's work of reconciliation (verses 15-16)

³³ Keener, [1-2 Corinthians](#), p. 183.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

2 Cor. 5.15-16 can be confusing in the KJV. Here is another rendition:

5:15: And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. 5:16: From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way.

Paul more likely simply rejected his preconversion understanding of Jesus (perhaps of his apparent inadequacy by high-status standards) or (just possibly) of the Messiah (cf. 1 Cor 15:9). Most significantly, the cross, like Christ's suffering apostles, was meaningless to those who saw it merely outwardly, unaware of Jesus's resurrection (and the Spirit of life working in his agents; 2:15–16; 1 Cor 1:18). Paul's point is that Jesus's resurrection provides a new, eschatological framework of faith for seeing Christ and all who are in him (5:14–15); anyone in Christ already belongs to the eschatological order (5:17), although this new existence is perceivable only in the heart, not in appearance (5:12; cf. 3:3).³⁵

III. The Ministry of Reconciliation

A. Christ's death and the reconciliation of the world makes all things new (1 Cor. 5.17-19)

The Greek word for Atonement (καταλλαγή) is found four times in the New Testament. One of those occasions is here in 2 Cor. 5.19:

ὡς ὅτι θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ **κόσμον καταλλάσσειν ἑαυτῷ** μὴ λογιζόμενος αὐτοῖς τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν καὶ **θέμενος** ἐν ἡμῖν **τὸν λόγον τῆς καταλλαγῆς**

As in that God was in Christ, **a world reconciling to Himself**, not recounting to them their trespasses; and **having placed** in us **the doctrine of the Atonement** (2 Cor. 5.19, my translation).

This gist here to me is that God is not going to be recounting all the stuff we did wrong (μὴ λογιζόμενος αὐτοῖς τὰ παραπτώματα), as the doctrine of the Atonement of Jesus is placed in us, and we are being reconciled to God through his son. We forgive others and Jesus forgives us. We show grace to the people who have hurt us, and in so doing, we become reconciled to them as we are to God. It is a really cool bit of verses here in 2 Cor. 5.17-21, especially in the Greek!

B. The church is to be ambassadors for Christ, and are “to sit again” (re-con-silio) with God (2 Cor. 5.20)

C. God making Jesus sin for us to become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5.21)

“The night of atonement was a night of irony. He who was sinless became, as it were, the great Sinner. In Paul's words, God the Father had 'made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.' (2 Cor. 5:21.) To the Galatian Saints, Paul also taught that 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' (Gal. 3:13.) He who deserved least of all to suffer now suffered most-more than mortal mind can fathom. He who had brought life-the more abundant life (John 10:10)-was subjected to the powers of death and darkness. As the Prophet Joseph Smith taught the brethren of the School of the Prophets, Jesus Christ is called the Son of God because he 'descended in suffering below that which man can suffer; or, in other words, suffered greater sufferings, and was exposed to more powerful contradictions than any man can be.’”³⁶

³⁵ Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, p. 185.

³⁶ Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet, eds., *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 5: The Gospels*, Deseret Book, 1986, p. 436.

2 Corinthians 6: The Call to be Separate from the World

The main message of 2 Corinthians chapter 6 revolves around the call to live as faithful and dedicated servants of God. Paul exhorts believers not to receive God's grace in vain but to demonstrate their commitment to God by living lives of righteousness and endurance. He emphasizes the urgency of the present time for salvation, urging believers to separate themselves from worldly influences and associations that could compromise their faith. Paul highlights the hardships and trials he and his fellow workers have endured for the sake of the Gospel, showcasing their authenticity and dedication. The main message of 2 Corinthians 6 is to embrace the opportunities of the present, live in righteousness and holiness, and to be wholly devoted to God's service (Omni 1.26), knowing that we are His temple and that He desires a deep and genuine relationship with those on the covenant path.

I. Paul's Ministry and Exhortation (2 Corinthians 6:1-13)

A. The appeal to receive God's grace (2 Corinthians 6:1-2)

B. The characteristics of Paul's ministry (2 Corinthians 6:3-10)

“Giving no offense” (2 Cor. 6.3)

“Giving no offense” (KJV) was important for those in public office or for those whose behavior would influence public perceptions of their group; this topic was widely discussed by ancient political theorists, public speakers and minority religions.³⁷

Denise Turner shared this wise counsel when we are offended:

When my sister was in the Young Women program, she, like many girls then and now, enjoyed talking with her friends and being silly whenever she had a chance. On one occasion a teacher finally got fed up and told her, 'Leave the class and don't come back until you can behave.' My sister left and never did come back. That was 30 years ago.

As Proverbs 18:19 reminds us, 'A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city.' It is so easy to offend someone-and so dangerous! The Apostle Paul, knowing how a thoughtless action or comment could affect a member's attitude about the Church, urged us to give 'no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed' (2 Cor. 6:3).

It often seems difficult to offer suggestions or opinions without being pushy, even insulting to an extent. When I was a young mother, someone recommended a gospel-oriented music tape to me. Her words were, “If you love your children, you’ll get them this tape.” I interpreted this to mean that, in her opinion, if I chose not to get it, I must not be a good mother. This was insulting to me, and I deliberately and spitefully avoided getting the tape, which I later found to be quite good...

This leads us to the other side of the issue: we have a responsibility to avoid taking offense and to freely forgive, even when we have not been asked to do so. One of the most frequently reported reasons for Church inactivity is 'Someone offended me.' We need to exercise patience with others. If we allow ourselves to be offended, any excuse will do...

³⁷ Keener, *Background*, p. 508.

I know from my own experience that it is easy to give and take offense, despite good intentions. But when such offenses occur, we need not let them stay. Kindness, repentance, forgiveness, and charity can help us over the rough places in our relationships with our brothers and sisters."³⁸

As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. (2 Cor. 6.10).

Although better off than most peasants, artisans (Paul had earned his living as a leatherworker—Acts 18:3) toiled, remained poor and had little social status; this was especially true of those who moved around, as Paul did. Cynic philosophers gave up all possessions to pursue their lifestyle but considered themselves spiritually rich. Cynic and Stoic philosophers claimed that, although they owned little or nothing, all the world belonged to them, because they were friends of the gods who owned it; as a servant of the true God, Paul has all the more reason to apply the phrase “possessing all things” to himself.³⁹

C. The call to be separate from unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:11-13)

2 Cor. 6.12 can be a bit confusing in the KJV. It reads:

Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. (2 Cor. 6.12)

Craig Keener offers another translation: “There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours.”⁴⁰

II. Exhortations to Holiness and Fellowship (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1)

A. The warning against unequal yoking with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

In 6:14–7:1 Paul makes a digression, a common literary device; he frames it like some of his other digressions and uses antithesis in a striking emotional climax to the preceding section. Perhaps he summons the believers to choose between him (as Christ’s agent) and the rival teachers; ancient Mediterranean values required one to befriend one’s friends and oppose their enemies. “Unequal yoking” (cf. kjv) here might evoke Leviticus 19:19 (cf. Deut 22:10); the principle would reinforce the law’s prohibition of marriage with nonbelievers (cf. Deut 7:3; Ezra 9:12; Neh 13:25) but need not be limited to marriage. The Dead Sea Scrolls contrast the people of light and the people of darkness (e.g., 1QM 1.1, 11). The lack of concord between the wise and the foolish was a Greek proverb; more prominently, the division between wise and foolish, righteous and wicked, and Israel and the Gentiles was central to Old Testament and Jewish thought. Others offered similar contrasts (Sirach 13:16-19, using one of the same verbs as here). Very religious and less religious Jews could work together, but the more religious Jews

³⁸ Denise Turner, "[If Any Man Offend Not](#)," *Ensign*, Aug. 1998.

³⁹ Keener, *Background*, p. 509.

⁴⁰ The Greek text of 2 Cor. 6.12 literally reads thus: οὐ στενοχωρεῖσθε ἐν ἡμῖν στενοχωρεῖσθε δὲ ἐν τοῖς σπλάγχνοις ὑμῶν. “You are not straightened/distressed in us, rather you are straightened/distressed within your own spleen/bowels/inward parts.” I see Keener here working with this text and rendering it the way he does as these terms are euphemistic for feeling and affection, where Paul is saying to them, “hey guys, this holding back of affection is coming from within your own hearts. You all need to work this out!”

imposed some limitations. Rhetorical questions were a common part of rhetorical style, and Paul has several successive ones in verses 14-16.⁴¹

It is here that Bryce quoted from C.S. Lewis' work [*The Great Divorce*](#). Much of the conversation Bryce quoted are shared here:

"The demand of the loveless and the self-imprisoned that they should be allowed to blackmail the universe: that till they consent to be happy (on their own terms) no one else shall taste joy: that theirs should be the final power; that Hell should be able to veto Heaven."

"I don't know what I want, Sir."

"Son, son, it must be one way or the other. Either the day must come when joy prevails and all the makers of misery are no longer able to infect it: or else for ever and ever the makers of misery can destroy in others the happiness they reject for themselves. I know it has a grand sound to say ye'll accept no salvation which leaves even one creature in the dark outside. But watch that sophistry or ye'll make a Dog in a Manger the tyrant of the universe."

"But dare one say-it is horrible to say-that Pity must ever die?"

"Ye must distinguish. The action of Pity will live forever: but the passion of Pity will not. The passion of pity, the pity we merely suffer, the ache that draws men to concede what should not be conceded and to flatter when they should speak truth, the pity that has cheated many a woman out of her virginity and many a statesman out of his honesty-that will die. It was used as a weapon by bad men against good ones: their weapon will be broken."

"And what is the other kind-the action?"

"It's a weapon on the other side. It leaps quicker than light from the highest place to the lowest to bring healing and joy, whatever the cost to itself. It changes darkness into light and evil into good. But it will not, at the cunning tears of Hell, impose on good the tyranny of evil. Every disease that submits to a cure shall be cured: but we will not call blue yellow to please those who insist on still having jaundice, nor make a midden of the world's garden for the sake of some who cannot abide the smell of roses."

"You say it will go down to the lowest, Sir. But she didn't go down with him to Hell. She didn't even see him off by the bus."

"Where would ye have had her go?"

"Why, where we all came from by that bus. The big gulf, beyond the edge of the cliff. Over there. You can't see it from here, but you must know the place I mean."

My Teacher gave a curious smile. "Look," he said, and with the word he went down on his hands and knees. I did the same (how it hurt my knees!) and presently saw that he had plucked a blade of grass. Using its thin end as a pointer, he made me see, after I had looked very closely, a crack in the soil so small that I could not have identified it without this aid.

⁴¹ Keener, *Background*, p. 510.

"I cannot be certain," he said, "that this is the crack ye came up through. But through a crack no bigger than that ye certainly came."

"But-but," I gasped with a feeling of bewilderment not unlike terror. "I saw an infinite abyss. And cliffs towering up and up. And then this country on top of the cliffs."

"Aye. But the voyage was not mere locomotion. That bus, and all you inside it, were increasing in size."

"Do you mean then that Hell-all that infinite empty town-is down in some little crack like this?"

"Yes. All Hell is smaller than one pebble of your earthly world: but it is smaller than one atom of this world, the Real World. Look at yon butterfly. If it swallowed all Hell, Hell would not be big enough to do it any harm or to have any taste."

"It seems big enough when you're in it, Sir."

"And yet all loneliness, angers, hatreds, envies and itchings that it contains, if rolled into one single experience and put into the scale against the least moment of the joy that is felt by the least in Heaven, would have no weight that could be registered at all. Bad cannot succeed even in being bad as truly as good is good. If all Hell's miseries together entered the consciousness of yon wee yellow bird on the bough there, they would be swallowed up without trace, as if one drop of ink had been dropped into that Great Ocean to which your terrestrial Pacific itself is only a molecule."

"I see," said I at last. "She couldn't fit into Hell."

He nodded. "There's not room for her," he said. "Hell could not open its mouth wide enough."

"And she couldn't make herself smaller?- like Alice, you know."

"Nothing like small enough. For a damned soul is nearly nothing: it is shrunk, shut up in itself. Good beats upon the damned incessantly as sound waves beat on the ears of the deaf, but they cannot receive it. Their fists are clenched, their teeth are clenched, their eyes fast shut. First they will not, in the end they cannot, open their hands for gifts, or their mouths for food, or their eyes to see."

"Then no one can ever reach them?"

"Only the Greatest of all can make Himself small enough to enter Hell. For the higher a thing is, the lower it can descend-a man can sympathise with a horse but a horse cannot sympathise with a rat. Only One has descended into Hell."⁴²

Unequally Yoked

Many LDS commentators have related these verses to marriages outside the faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁴³ In today's environment, with so many members struggling in their faith even after a mission, I have found this kind of commentary less and less in public addresses. But perhaps this is just how I have viewed the commentary from the pulpit in the last 20 years.

⁴² C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, HarperOne, 2009, chapter 13.

⁴³ See for example, Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 1988, p. 351. Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 1969, p. 241. Kimball, *Marriage and Divorce*, *BYU Speeches*, September 7, 1976. Richards, October 29, 1963 *BYU Speeches of the Year*. Peterson, *CR*, 1958, p. 106.

B. The call to be a holy people (2 Corinthians 7:1)

2 Corinthians 7: Godly Sorrow will lead us to Repent

The main message of 2 Corinthians 7 is one of repentance, reconciliation, and encouragement. The apostle Paul urges the Corinthian saints to cleanse themselves from defilement and to pursue holiness, emphasizing the need for sincere repentance and turning away from sin. He commends them for their response to his previous letter, expressing joy and relief at their repentance and change of heart. Paul encourages them to continue growing in their faith, to deepen their love for one another, and to restore their relationship with him, highlighting the importance of reconciliation and unity within the Church of Jesus Christ. The message of 2 Corinthians 7 emphasizes the transformative power of God's grace and the restoration that comes through genuine repentance and the reconciliation offered through Jesus Christ and his Atonement.

I. The Joy of Repentance and Reconciliation (2 Corinthians 7:1-16)

A. Pursuit of holiness and cleansing (2 Corinthians 7:1)

B. Paul's affectionate appeal to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 7:2-4)

Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man. (2 Cor. 7.2 KJV)

Another reading would be:

Χωρήσατε ἡμᾶς· οὐδένα ἠδικήσαμεν οὐδένα ἐφθείραμεν οὐδένα ἐπλεονεκτήσαμεν

“Make room for us, for we have done injustice to no one, we have destroyed no one, we have taken advantage of no one” (my translation).

Rhetorically, the Greek of 7:2 uses *anaphora* (three times beginning with “no one”) and *homoiopoton* (three verbs ending the same way); 7:3 is full of pathos (emotional appeal). Speakers often followed shocking or offensive statements with more welcome words; writers often indicated the end of a digression by returning to the point. Paul uses language of great affection. A writer could clarify that he stressed a point not for other reasons but to show love (Cicero, *Letters to Friends* 2.4.2). The greatest expression of friendship in Greco-Roman literature was willingness to die with someone (which also makes sense outside Greek culture; see 2 Sam 15:21; Jn 13:37; 15:13).⁴⁴



The digression, where Paul defends his ministry, God's justice, the gospel message, and his love for the Corinthian saints ends here at 2 Cor. 7.4. He now picks up his thought again on his experiences when he was in Macedonia that we left off back in 2 Cor. 2.13.

C. Paul's joy upon receiving Titus' report (2 Corinthians 7:5-7)

For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. (2 Cor. 7.5).

⁴⁴ Keener, *Background*, p. 510.

What were the problems in Macedonia?

Paul had a vision to go there (Acts 16.9). He arrived in the city of Philippi and baptized Lydia (Acts 16.14-15), after which he cast the spirit out of the woman who was involved in soothsaying (Acts 16.16-18). After this, her “masters” caught Paul and his companion Silas, and beat them severely, and cast them into prison (Acts 16.22-24). An earthquake that night shook the foundations of the prison (Acts 16.26) and the prison doors opened. After much discussion, Paul and Silas departed Philippi (Acts 16.40). Still in the region of Macedonia, but now in the city of Thessalonica, Paul and Silas experienced opposition and were sent away (Acts 17.10), and so they went into the city of Berea (Acts 17.10). The people that opposed Paul in Thessalonica came down to Berea to stir up opposition, and Timothy comes down to be with Paul (Acts 17.14). It is at this point that Paul heads to Athens (Acts 17.16).

When does Paul first meet up with Timothy?

Acts 16.1-4 relate that Paul meets Timothy when in the region of Galatia while in Derbe and Lystra. Timothy was the son of a Jewish mother and a Greek father. Timothy became part of the Christian community, and Paul circumcised Timothy (Acts 16.3) for reasons unstated in the text, but probably for reasons associated with Paul’s work in the Jewish community, for in so doing, Paul would be able to more effectively teach these Jewish people about the Savior.⁴⁵

D. The sorrowful yet repentant response of the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 7:8-11)

E. The effects of godly sorrow and repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10-11)

President Benson taught, “Godly sorrow is a gift of the Spirit. It is a deep realization that our actions have offended our Father and our God. It is the sharp and keen awareness that our behavior caused the Savior, He who knew no sin, even the greatest of all, to endure agony and suffering. Our sins caused Him to bleed at every pore. This very real mental and spiritual anguish is what the scriptures refer to as having ‘a broken heart and a contrite spirit.’ (See 3 Ne. 9:20; Moro. 6:2; D&C 20:37, 59:8; Ps. 34:18; Ps. 51:17; Isa. 57:15.) Such a spirit is the absolute prerequisite for true repentance.”⁴⁶

F. The comfort and encouragement brought by Titus (2 Corinthians 7:13-16)

The Corinthian Christians’ respectful reception of Titus indicates that they viewed him as a representative of Paul himself. According to the customary practice, when receiving a representative, one should extend the same honor as they would to the person being represented. Expressing

⁴⁵ The reason Paul circumcised Timothy was likely a practical one rather than a theological requirement. Since Timothy had a Jewish mother, he would have been considered Jewish by birth, and his uncircumcision may have been a hindrance to his acceptance and effectiveness among the Jewish communities they would be visiting during their missionary work. By circumcising Timothy, Paul removed a potential barrier and ensured that Timothy’s Greek heritage would not hinder their outreach to Jewish people. It is important to note that Paul’s decision to circumcise Timothy in this particular circumstance should not be understood as a theological stance regarding circumcision for all Gentile believers. In other letters, such as Galatians, Paul strongly opposes the idea of Gentile believers being compelled to undergo circumcision for salvation or to adhere to Jewish laws and customs. I see this as one of the many things that makes the Bible complicated, yet beautiful. But for those seeking perfect uniformity throughout the text, they find these things difficult. Many want the Bible what they want it to say rather than read it for what it actually says.

⁴⁶ Ezra Taft Benson, “[A Mighty Change of Heart](#),” *Ensign*, Oct. 1989.

confidence in Titus could serve to prepare the listeners for a forthcoming request, which will be discussed in our next podcast when we discuss Paul's request for a collection that he is organizing for the saints living in Jerusalem who are experiencing great hardship.