

## LESSON TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-24

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

Paul established the church at Corinth (Acts 18) about 50-51 A.D. He wrote them a letter (un-preserved) from Ephesus (1 Cor. 5:9); when he heard of trouble he wrote a second letter which we call "First Corinthians." More bad news called forth from him a "severe third" (un-preserved) letter (see 2 Cor. 2:3,4,10; 7:8-12). Finally, about 57 A.D., from Macedonia, he wrote a fourth letter we now call, "Second Corinthians."

"Second Corinthians" is probably the least known of all Paul's letters. It has even been called by some "Paul's unknown letter." That is a tragedy! Christians are much poorer because so few have had the motivation or self-discipline to study a type of writing which demands personal involvement of mind and emotions. In this epistle we are called upon to evaluate a person, not just a doctrine. 2 Corinthians is the "Jeremiah-book" of the NT. It is a very *personal* letter from the heart of this mighty apostle. In it he deals with the trials and joys of his ministry from an emotional and intimate perspective. In it we are exposed to the *ministry* of the Gospel as it stabs the human heart—even to moments of defeat and depression. *Here we are involved "up close and personal" in the experience of the ministry as it is actually lived out in life.* Accepting the mission of Christ as a life-time calling will bring a life fraught with personal adversaries and psychological turmoil. But its victories and rewards are beyond all comparison to its trials (2 Cor. 4:16-18). In this letter the Holy Spirit of God bears witness with the spirit of Paul that a life devoted to the proclamation of the Gospel is the most challenging, useful and fulfilled life ever! That is what 2 Corinthians is all about!

This epistle should be required monthly reading for every preacher, missionary, and Sunday School Teacher. If every Christian read this epistle once a month they would be more sympathetic toward full-time servants of the Church. Don't just read it--**partake of it.** It is gospel ministry, lived and learned by one of God's greatest servants. **PROBLEMS THAT PLAGUE THE PREACHER---DON'T MISS BEING IN BIBLE SCHOOL FOR 2 CORINTHIANS!**

"I preached as never sure to preach again,  
And as a dying man to dying men."

Richard Baxter, Puritan preacher 1615-1691

### QUESTIONS:

1. What does the word "comfort" mean in the Biblical sense? 1:3-7 How do you feel about Paul's statement here that the goal of affliction is comfort?
2. List the afflictions Paul suffered. Can you list all yours? How did Paul's adversities help him? Have yours helped you? Do you need more? 1:3-7
3. Paul was "unbearably crushed"---should preachers become depressed 1:8? Does depression mean there is an absence of faith?
4. Paul had to defend his veracity 1:12-16. Why? Have you ever had people suspect yours? Your minister's? How did you deal with it?
5. Should preachers always try to make sure their words are clearly understood? 1:13 Why? How?
6. When a preacher promises something, is he obligated to keep his word? 1:15-18 If it would hurt? If it would harm? What if he doesn't?
7. Why does Paul mention the "Yes" of God? 1:18-22 What is the "Yes" of God? (see Hebrews 6:17-20)
8. How is God's Spirit his "seal?" 1:22 (see Eph. 1:13-14; Rev. 7:1-8; 9:4, 14:1; Gal. 5:16-26).
9. Is Paul shirking "leadership" by refusing to "lord it over" the Corinthians? 1:23-24 Should a preacher consider himself "The Pastor" of a congregation?

Pliny, Roman Governor in Asia in early A.D. 100 was puzzled by the Christians brought before him for trial, he wrote a his famous letter to the emperor Trajan asking for his advice. This was what he found himself up against. An unknown Christian was brought before him, and Pliny, finding little fault in him proceeded to threaten him: "I will banish you," he said "You cannot, was the reply, "for all this world is my Father's house." "Then I will kill you," said the governor. "You cannot," answered the Christian, "for my life is hid with Christ in God." "I will take away your possessions," continued Pliny. "You cannot, for my treasure is in heaven." "I will drive you away from man and you shall have no friend left," was the final threat. And the calm reply was, "You cannot, for I have an unseen Friend from Whom you are not able to separate me." What was a poor, harassed Roman governor, with all the powers of life and death, torture and the stake at his disposal, to do with people like that?

## LESSON TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 2:1-17

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

One evening in 1808, a gaunt man entered the office of Dr. James Hamilton in Manchester, England. The doctor was struck by the melancholic appearance of his visitor. "Are you sick?" asked the doctor. "Yes, doctor, sick with a mortal malady!" "What malady?" replied the doctor. "I am frightened of the terror of the world around me. I am depressed by life. I can find no happiness anywhere, nothing amuses me, I am *lonely*---I have nothing to live for. If you can't help me, I shall kill myself." The doctor replied, "Your malady is not mortal. You only need to get out of yourself. You need to laugh; to get some pleasure from life." "What shall I do?" said the patient. "Go down to the circus tonight to see Grimaldi, the clown." replied the physician. "Grimaldi is the funniest man alive. He'll cure you." A spasm of pain crossed the poor man's face as he said: "Doctor, don't jest with me; *I am Grimaldi!*"

Dr. Leonard Cammer, who has specialized for 30 years in treating depressed persons, said, "The human being is the only species that can't survive alone. The human being needs another human being---otherwise he is dead! A telephone call to a depressed person can save a life. An occasional word, a ten-minute visit, can be more effective than 24 hours of nursing care. You can buy nursing care. You can't buy love."

In one year the average American today probably meets as many people as the average person did in a lifetime 100 years ago. And yet he's far lonelier. There's a big difference between being lonely and being alone, and the mere presence of other people doesn't necessarily help at all!

Being a preacher is one of the loneliest callings in the world! Have you ever thought of it that way? A preacher is around hundreds of people every week, but he is often the loneliest person in the crowd. LONELINESS—A PROBLEM THAT PLAGUES PREACHERS! Be in Bible School and learn how you can help your preacher.

"Seldom can a heart be lonely If it seek a lonelier still—  
Self-forgetting, seeking only, Emptier cups of love to fill"  
Frances Ridley Havergal

### QUESTIONS:

1. Why is Paul so reluctant to cause the Corinthians "pain?" 2:2
2. Why does immoral behavior cause isolation and loneliness? 2:5
3. Is it possible to discipline immoral behavior and not cause loneliness? 2:6-8 How?
4. Does the devil want people to be lonely? 2:9-11 Why? How does he promote it?
5. Should preachers ever get so lonely they can't go through "opened doors?" What can a congregation do to help? 2:12-13
6. What event of the first century is Paul using to portray the Christian ministry in 2:14-16? How does this contribute to preacher-loneliness?
7. What is a "peddler" of the word of God? 2:17 (see also 4:2) Is preaching the gospel "a racket?" For whom?
8. How may a preacher handle the problem of loneliness?
9. Is it always intolerable to be alone?

We are born helpless. As soon as we are fully conscious we discover loneliness. We need others physically, emotionally, intellectually. We need them if we are to know anything, even ourselves."

C. S. Lewis

"The cure for loneliness is not a pill or suicide. It is a person. The lonely needs a person, or persons. Someone with whom he can share dreams, dreads, disappointments. Life is lonely until it finds such. The lonely person cannot wait for another to enter his life and dispel the loneliness. He must, first, begin the journey into another's life, through service, caring and helping. Then, chances are, he will find his loneliness vanishing. And he will probably have filled another's lonely hours too."

C. Neil Strait

## LESSON TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-18

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

Famous Bible scholar, Dr. Wilbur M. Smith, one afternoon, asked Dr. Klausner, a professor in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, if he would sign his autograph album. Dr. Klausner replied: "No, I am sorry; but it is the Sabbath." "I did not know until I made inquiry that night," said Dr. Smith, "the Talmud asserts that writing two words in succession is work, and if a man even signs his name on the Sabbath he has broken the Law." But as students gathered in his study on the Sabbath discussing one subject after another, Dr. Klausner would climb a little step-ladder and bring down some heavy book from his shelves, open it, point to some relevant text and discuss it, then return the book and soon take down another. The Talmud says nothing about bringing down books from shelves as work. To write two words would be labor, but develop a perspiration by reaching up for volumes and vigorously discussing them is not work! This is a perfect illustration of what Paul, the preacher, had to combat in the Judaizers plaguing the Corinthian church.

Legalism is an almost constant problem for preachers. It is a sin much more insidious than sins of the flesh. It damns more souls than fornication and thievery put together. It is a problem for millions of those *outside* the church as well. Legalism is fundamentally an attitude. It is when any sinner tries to be justified before God by some meritorious code devised by his own or someone else's self-righteous arrogance. Obeying the commandments of the Bible out of fear and love for God and Christ is **NOT** legalism! Legalism is the attitude that *demand*s justification from God on the basis of *earning* one's own righteousness and rejecting the need for the grace of God.

LEGALISM---A PROBLEM THAT PLAGUES PREACHERS.  
Has it ever plagued you? Be in Bible School and learn how to deal with it!

### QUESTIONS:

1. How was legalism a **problem** to the apostle Paul? 3:1-3
2. How did the Corinthians become "**letters**" from Christ? 3:1-3
3. How is the dispensation of the Spirit **different** from that of the Law?  
3:4-6
4. Which do you **prefer** to keep, the Law of Moses, or the Gospel of Christ?  
3:4-6 Why? Which do you prefer others should keep?
5. What is the **splendor** of the New Dispensation? 3:7-11
6. What was the purpose of the **veil** over Moses' face? 3:12-16  
Does it have  
some meaning for readers of the New Testament? What?
7. **Where** are we to "behold the glory of the Lord?" 3:18 Would you be a better Christian if the Lord showed himself to you physically?
8. What **happens** as a result of beholding the glory of the Lord?  
3:18
9. Is the opposite of legalism the **absence** of all restraint?

Liberty is the privilege of being free from the things we don't need in order to be slaves of things we do need.

Freedom is like a coin. It has the word privilege on one side and responsibility on the other. It does not have privilege on both sides. There are too many today who want everything involved in privilege but refuse to accept anything that approaches the sense of responsibility. This is certainly applicable to the life of a Christian.

## LESSON TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-18

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

Dr. William E. Brown, president of Bryan College, Dayton, TN, writes in the college periodical, *Bryan Life, Summer, 1996*:

"Dennis Rodman. American hero. Why not? He is after all, one of the stars of the Chicago Bulls. Fans scream for his jersey which he discards at the completion of a home game and throws into the crowd. His book, *Bad As I Wanna Be*, remains near the top of the best-seller list. Every talk show wants him as a guest. Why has this tattooed, multi-pierced, neon-headed oddball captured such a large following? Whatever the answer, the Rodman mystique is puzzling...and troubling. Hearing him talk for just a minute makes it clear that he is unhappy with himself and with life. His book is even more depressing. He begins his story describing a time when he sat in the parking lot of the stadium in Detroit with a gun and seriously considered taking his life. He didn't then, but just wait, he promises. 'Thoughts of death are always a part of my life,' he says. Dennis Rodman's persona is a new brand of 'in your face' nihilism. Nihilism? What is nihilism? Nothing. Really! Nihilism points to the nothingness of a world-view without God. What is the meaning of life? There is none. How are we supposed to live? It doesn't matter; it amounts to nothing anyway. Dennis Rodman and other popular nihilists say, 'If life has no meaning, why get so serious about it?' Most are angry at any authority which frustrates their desire to do whatever they want. Since there is no ultimate right or wrong, those who impose standards on them are only making their lives miserable. Their task in life is to throw off the shackles, destroy all authority, and replace it with----nothing!"

Greg Donaldson's book, *The Ville: Cops and Kids in Urban America*, warns that Rodman's brand of nihilism has filled the spiritual vacuum of American culture in rural and suburban society as well as inner-city "jungles." Teens are now "connoisseurs of pop culture." In the "ville," brand names tyrannize the classrooms; prestige cars are worshiped. Kids strive for the right image and achieve it by wearing designer clothes and shoes, looking like a drug dealer with baseball caps, guns and beepers, or having a reputation as a con man. Meaning and purpose are replaced with Polo and Nike. Possessing the right props is worth dying for...and killing for.

Dr. Brown writes: "The worst strain of the infection causes kids to display a schizophrenic approach to life...I once heard a teenage girl share a stirring testimony of how Christ had become the Lord of her desires---Jesus Christ had so transformed her life, she said, that she looked at everything differently and her sole purpose was to serve Him. Immediately afterward, she was talking with her friends about how she wouldn't dream of dating a guy that didn't wear Sebago shoes. Millionaire idols like Dennis Rodman do nothing to dispel the myth that life is meaningless so there is nothing wrong with living hard and dying young. Ideas do have consequences. World-views have either victors or victims. In the attempt to secularize education and government to produce a value-neutral, God-free society, what is being accomplished? Nothing. And that nothingness is ripping the heart out of an entire generation."

Christians must lead the charge into this nihilistic culture with the message of the Gospel (2 Cor. 4:1-6). "The eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:16-18), visible by faith, but verified by the historical redemptive work of Christ, is able to fill the vacuum of nothingness.

### QUESTIONS:

1. Who is a "tamperer" with God's word? Could "tampering" with God's word bring discouragement? 4:1-2
2. Is the devil the "god" of this world? 4:4 In what way? How do you know?
3. What is the believer's "treasure?" 4:7 Are earthen vessels discouraging?
4. Is there an answer to being "struck down?" 4:8-9 What is it? Does it work?
5. How is "death at work in us?" 4:12
6. Do you feel like you are being "renewed" every day? 4:16
7. What is the connection between afflictions here and glory over there? 4:17
8. Will God say to you in heaven, "Well done....?" 4:17 Why?
9. What is **really real** to you? 4:18 What has this to do with discouragement or encouragement? Told anyone else lately what is *really real*?

## LESSON TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-21

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

Over the triple doorways of the Cathedral of Milan there are three inscriptions spanning the splendid arches. Over one is carved a beautiful wreath of roses, and underneath is the legend, "All that which pleases is but for a moment." Over another is sculptured a cross, and the words, "All that which troubles is but for a moment." But underneath the third, the great central entrance to the main aisle, is the inscription, "That only is important which is eternal."

### Preachers are plagued with the problem of perspective.

So often they get caught up in the vagaries and/or vanities of those things always begging to be "necessities" of this life they lose proper perspective. The avalanche of mundane "things" a preacher has to deal with every day tends to overwhelm him and, unless he keeps his mind exposed to God's word and rearranges his priorities from the spiritual to the secular. But this problem of perspective is not exclusive with preachers---IT IS A PROBLEM FOR EVERY CHRISTIAN!

The Bible bears witness that perspective is a constant problem with all mankind. The cry for a divine viewpoint for mortal man is the focus of **every** book of the Bible! Jesus, God incarnate, came to **live** the divine perspective as a human being thus proving it possible for all people to do so. Jesus saw, heard, thought, and lived every experience of human life from God's viewpoint.

Loss of divine perspective was the crucial problem with the Christians at Corinth. Paul dealt with it pointedly in 1 Cor. 15:1-58, as well as in our present lesson in 2 Cor. 5. Taking his stand on the revelation of God, Paul's viewpoint transcended earth and time. He saw eternity! He was then able to see everything and every experience in this life from that perspective.

Christians need to remind themselves every day to look at every thing and every person from God's viewpoint. Be sure to be in **Bible School** for this lesson and learn how to solve the problem of **perspective---the most crucial and constant problem a human being faces!**

### QUESTIONS:

1. What has our being an **"earthly tent"** to do with getting the right perspective? 5:1-4 (see also 2 Cor. 4:7; 2 Pet. 1:13-14; Eccl. 12:1-8; Job 4:17-21).
2. What is **guaranteed** to us when the Spirit of God is given? 5:5
3. How does being "at home in the body" make us **know** that we are **away** from the Lord? 5:6-8 (see again 2 Cor. 4:7)
4. What has the **fear of the Lord** to do with getting the right perspective? 5:9-11 (see Psa. 2:11; 19:9; 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 19:23; Eccl. 12:13-14; Rev. 14:7)
5. How does the **love** of Christ **control** anyone? 5:14 (see John 14:15; 14:21,23; 15:10; 15:12-14, etc.) Could the love of Christ be more "controlling" than fortune, force, fame, falsehood?--then why don't we put it to use?
6. Do you struggle with the apostolic instruction (5:16) to **quit** regarding others from a **"human point of view?"** How can we have anything other than a "human" point of view? (see Matt. 11:25-30; 1 Cor. 2:1-16; Phi. 2:5-11; 1 Pet. 4:1ff).
7. **How** do we **get** the divine perspective? 5:17-18
8. What is **reconciliation**? 5:18-20
9. Does it seem **fair** to you that Christ **became** sin **for** you? 5:21 All your sin? Completely? Hitler's sin?
10. Has God given **you** a **ministry** of reconciliation? 5:18 Are you doing it?

Men do not reconcile God, but God so changed the situation between himself and men through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ that he reconciled believers unto himself.

The love of Christ "compels" (NIV) us to seek this reconciliation like the "prodigal son" who "came to himself" and went back to the Father's house begging to simply be a servant in the house. But he found a Father waiting with open arms to bless him with a Father's riches.

## LESSON TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 6:1--7:1

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

In his earlier years, Jean Francois Millet (1816-1875), the great French painter, devoted himself almost entirely to the painting of nude figures, according to the prevailing practice of the day. But one day, chancing to hear the lustful conversation of some men examining a picture of his in a window, he resolved to turn his talents in some other direction. He and his wife were poor. It appeared to mean starvation to them both; but she agreed, and he gave up nude art and began to paint peasant scenes. He died in poverty but he is now immortalized by his greatness. He is known as "The Painter of Peasants," some of his most famous works being "The Sower," "The Gleaners," "The Shepherds," "Death and the Wood Cutter," and "The Angelus." This latter picture is one of the art treasures of the world, now worth millions of dollars.

Bud Robinson, well-known preacher of holiness of life, was taken by friends to New York City and shown around. That night in his prayers he said, "Lord, I thank you for letting me see all the sights of New York. And I thank you most of all that I didn't see a thing that I wanted!" Blessed is the man who can sit loose to the charms of this world, independent of them because he doesn't want them.

The Corinthian Christians lived in a city famous throughout the Roman empire for its worldliness and debauchery. Aristophanes, 300 years before the apostle Paul, had coined the word "corinthianize" to denote debauchery.

The world of paganism which surrounds the kingdom of God in our 21st century is no less depraved. The clarion call of God, "Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them...." is no less **imperative** today than it was in ancient Corinth. Any person who wishes to be welcomed by God into sonship must "cleanse himself from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect (i.e. fulfilled) in the fear of God!" PAGANISM THAT PLAGUES PREACHERS (AND ALL CHRISTIANS) is our lesson from 2 Cor. 6---Be in Bible School for the solution.

"The world today needs reality, not formality:"  
Lester Sumball

### QUESTIONS:

1. How does chapter 6 **tie** into chapter 5? 6:1
2. Why does Paul **quote** from Isaiah about the "acceptable time?" 6:2
3. Name four **restraints** Paul had to endure in his ministry 6:3-8:a. Do preachers today suffer any similar "restraints?"
4. What has **knowledge** to do with commending one's ministry? 6:6
5. Why does Paul include **genuine** love in his list? 6:6 Is there any other kind of love? How does one distinguish one from the other?
6. Have you ever been treated as **unknown**? Paul was! How do you handle being ignored? 6:9
7. Does your Christian experience seem as **paradoxical** to you Paul's did to him? 6:8b-10
8. Does "do not be **mismatched** with unbelievers" mean "do not marry non-Christians? 6:14
9. Is it possible for any human to be "**perfect**" in holiness? 7:1 How is it accomplished?

A little boy had difficulty pronouncing some words. The word *worship* was one of them. "We go to church to wash up" he would say. And that's why we go to church today to partake of the Lord's Supper, repent of our sins and let Jesus's holiness "wash us up."

Art Linkletter used to ask one from his audience of children, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Mr. Linkletter often got amazing answers from the "tots." It's a good question for us at any stage of life. We must be constantly growing, developing, maturing. Spiritually we must never stop growing, and all along the way we must ask ourselves, "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

*The devil will promise you the whole world,  
but he doesn't own a grain of sand*  
ptb

## .LESSON TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 7:2-16

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D

Some years ago a Japanese artist started on an unusual trip around the world. He set out to find all the inferior pictures of his early years and replace them with better paintings. As an amateur artist he had painted many pictures of which he was afterwards ashamed. They were hurried, crude, careless, inartistic, incomplete. Some he had painted for food and lodging. Others were sold for cash he needed. Now, with time and training and experience, he could produce much better paintings. Now he was well-known and genuinely famous, but the memory of his early slipshod methods made him set out to exchange the paintings of his better days for the careless work of his early career. He was determined to put a worthwhile picture in the place of every inferior one, no matter how much effort and time it would take.

Contrast that with the news account of a murderer who had been sentenced to death in Texas. The murderer's brother, to whom the State was deeply indebted for former services, besought the governor of the State for his brother's pardon. The pardon was granted, and the man visited his brother with the pardon in his pocket. "What would you do," he said to him, "if you received a pardon?" "The first thing I would do," the murderer replied, "is to track down the judge who sentenced me, and kill him; and the next thing I would do is to track down the chief witness, and kill him." The brother rose, and left the prison with the pardon in his pocket!

We will be studying in this lesson the subject of **repentance**. Especially the difference between worldly grief and godly grief. Sorrow for one's sins is not, by itself, repentance! **It is an important subject...without repentance a sinner cannot be redeemed and saved!**

"Real repentance thinks God's thoughts about sin and hates it; takes God's side against self and dies to it; turns to God himself and serves him"

### QUESTIONS:

1. Why would an apostle have to **urge** Christians to **open their hearts** to him? 7:2-4
2. What **affliction** did Paul have in Macedonia? 7:5-8 Why was he there?
3. How did Paul make the Corinthians **sorry** with his letter? 7:8
4. Why was **he** not sorry he had made them sorry? 7:9
5. What is **godly grief**? 7:10
6. What is **worldly grief**? 7:10
7. How did the Corinthians **prove** they had repented? 7:11-12
8. What did the repentance of the Corinthians do for **Titus**? 7:13-14
9. Do you react with **fear and trembling** when God's messenger delivers God's message of repentance to you? 7:15-16

"Of all the acts of man repentance is the most divine.  
The greatest of all faults is to be conscious of none."  
Thomas Carlyle

"Repent" is the translation of a Greek verb *metanoeo*, meaning *to have another mind, to change the mind*, and is used in the New Testament to indicate a change of mind in respect to sin, to God and self. This change of mind may, especially in the case of Christians who have fallen into sin, be preceded by sorrow (2 Cor. 7:8-11); but sorrow for sin, though it may cause repentance, is not repentance. The first "son" in Matthew 21:28-29 illustrates true repentance. Repentance is not an act separate from faith, but saving faith includes and implies that change of mind which is called repentance.

PTB

## LESSON TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-24

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

A man put a note on a dollar bill and asked all who spent it to write down what it was spent for. In two weeks it was spent: 5 times for salary; 5 times for cigarettes; 3 times for candy; 3 times for meals; 2 times for clothing; 2 times for haircuts; once for groceries; 2 times for laundry; once for car repairs; once for a magazine---BUT NOT ONCE DID IT COME TO CHURCH!

Think about this: There are approximately 8,000,000,000 persons in the world; there are at the most 60,000 evangelical missionaries, but only **1653** of those are (1986) Christian Church missionaries. There is one (1) soldier for every 83 persons in the world; one (1) doctor for every 1080 persons in the world; one (1) evangelical missionary for every 90,000 persons in the world; one (1) Christian Church missionary for every 3,000,000 persons in the world!

It costs about \$1,000,000 per year to train a West Point cadet. It costs approximately \$7000 per year to train a missionary at Ozark Christian College. While some people spend a minimum of \$7.00 per week on dog or cat food, they seldom give \$7.00 per year to foreign missions! Did you know the Christian Churches had 200 **FEWER** missionaries in 1985 than in 1977? Did you know that **96%** of Christian finances are spent in the USA which comprises only **5%** of the earth's population? Did you know the average American **misplaces** more money each year than the per-member contributions to a majority of U.S. church denominations? Did you know (according to the IRS) Americans who itemize their deductions give an **average** of **3%** of their adjusted gross incomes to church and charity?

Americans are **selfish**. Even many American **Christians** are **selfish!** Only fools are selfish (Luke 12:16-21). The **wise use money and properties to make eternal friends** (Luke 16:1-19)

“God has given us two hands—one to receive with and the other to give with. We are not cisterns made for hoarding; we are channels made for sharing. If we fail to fulfill this divine duty and privilege we have missed the meaning of Christianity”

Billy Graham

### QUESTIONS:

1. Why does the apostle Paul use the word **grace** so often in a text about giving? 8:1, 7, 9, 19; 9:14
2. How can people give when they are in **severe affliction and extreme poverty**? 8:2
3. Does Christ want Christians to give **beyond their means**? 8:3 Should we count time and "things" we give as **giving to Christ**?
4. How does one **excel in giving**? 8:7 Is tithing a NT principle? Matt. 5:20!
5. What is **readiness** to give. How does that make what one gives acceptable? 8:10-12. You mean the Lord doesn't watch how much we give?
6. What is **equality**? 8:13-15 Is "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need" in the Bible? Where?
7. Why does Paul make a point to **characterize** those who will help him deliver this offering to Judea? 8:16-19
8. How did Paul keep himself **blameless** concerning the gift he was administering? 8:20-23
9. Is **giving money** the proper way to **prove one's love** to Christ? 8:24

*Epitaph on a tombstone in an ancient church burial ground—  
“What I gave, I have; what I spent, I had; what I kept, I lost.”*

Have you ever stopped to think  
that Christ never gave anyone money?  
The riches of the world were his for the taking,  
and his to give away, yet when the poor and  
the hungry came to him, he didn't give them money,  
and he rarely gave the food.  
He gave them love and service  
and the greatest gift of all—Himself.

## LESSON TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 9:1-15

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

From the royalties on his books alone John Wesley gave away (in American dollars today) \$100,000. He told Samuel Bradburn, a fellow preacher, in 1787, that he never gave away anything less than \$2500 and yet, when he died, his personal estate amounted to only about \$50. When he first began preaching, earning \$75 per year, he lived on \$70 a year and gave the remaining \$5 to the Lord. Next year's salary was doubled. He found that he lived comfortably on \$70 per year, so instead of raising his standard of living, he continued to live on that and gave the whole of his increase, \$145 to God. So later God entrusted him with larger and larger amounts.

This is a true story! John Wesley really lived! He really did that! He did not starve to death. He always had clothes to wear and a house in which to live. He had a horse to ride, a number of other necessities of life books to read, and paper upon which to write books and hymns. The Lord provided him "with every blessing in abundance, so that he might always have **enough** of everything and might provide in abundance for every good work." The Lord "supplied and multiplied his resources and increased the harvest of his righteousness." (2 Cor. 9:8,10 RSV).

God promises to do that for any Christian who will trust him and be faithful to the purpose for which God enriches him! **Trust**, you see, is the second (grace being the first) great **motivation** for Christian giving. Our problem is not so much in trusting God as it is in honestly differentiating between what is **enough** and what we **want**.

The Lord is gracious and good to us **in abundance** *not* to gratify our **wants** but he **enriches us in every way for great generosity...for the rendering of service to the saints**. And that is how we **acknowledge** the gospel of Christ. BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL...LEARN HOW TO GIVE AND BE HAPPY!

### QUESTIONS:

1. Why is Paul so concerned about **appearances** between the Corinthians and the Macedonians? 9:1-4
2. Why did he send the **brethren**? How would that help Corinth be **ready**? 9:5
3. Why the mini-parable about **sowing & reaping** sparingly or bountifully? 9:6
4. Are Christians really free to **make up their own minds** about their giving? 9:7
5. What is a **cheerful giver**? Should the church care as long as they get money, whether it was given cheerfully or grudgingly? 9:7
6. What is **every blessing in abundance**? 9:8 Why does the Lord give them?
7. Who **scatters abroad** and what is the result? 9:9-10
8. Are you satisfied when the **credit** for **your** generosity goes **to God**?
9. Have you ever thought of your giving in terms of your **acknowledgment** (Gr. *homologias*, "confession") of the gospel of Christ? 9:13
10. How can one give thanks for an **inexpressible** gift? 9:15

The world is full of two kinds of people, the givers and the takers.  
The takers eat well—but the givers sleep well.

An ungiving person does not live; he breathes, he eats, he sleeps, he gratifies his wants, but only exists until he has discovered the cleverly interwoven secret of life, giving of oneself. True giving is done without the slightest trace of expecting to receive. is it only in giving that we ever receive? Perhaps in giving of oneself there is enough taken away to have room to receive.

## LESSON TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-18

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

A Texas oil-man was getting married and was nervous about it. He told the minister that the fee would be in proportion to the brevity of the service, and that if he used a long service, he wouldn't receive a cent. When the wedding day came, the couple stood before the minister, in the bride's home, and the minister said to the man, "Take her?"----to the woman, "Take him?" and then closed the ceremony by pronouncing, "Took!"---a whole ceremony in five words. P.S. He got a \$500 fee---or to be brief---\$100 per word.

In Bolton, England, the Rev. David Harrison has a new way to hold the attention of his congregation. He hangs a human skeleton from the pulpit whenever he preaches. "If you don't rivet their attention, you flop," the preacher said.

After his return from church services one Sunday a small boy said, "You know what, Mommie? I'm going to be a minister when I grow up!" "That's fine," said his mother, "but what made you decide that?" "Well," said the youngster pensively, "I'll have to go to church on Sunday whatever I am, and I think it would be more fun to stand up and yell than to sit still and listen."

A PROBLEM THAT CONSTANTLY PLAGUES A PREACHER IS HIS METHODOLOGY. In our own Midwestern, conservative, city of Joplin we've seen ministers preach from church-building roofs, give away halves of beeves, give away green stamps, drop parachutists from the skies, keep up steady streams of "Christian" entertainment groups, and ex-criminals or sports celebrities performing at their services. Our lesson in this chapter deals with the apostle Paul's ministerial methods. Is **any** method of gospel proclamation acceptable just as long as it gets results? Does the end justify the means? **All of us will learn something from this lesson---BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL.**

The Bible is not true because it works—  
it works because it is true!  
—Sidney Cave

### QUESTIONS:

1. Is Paul being **sarcastic**? 10:1 Is there any place for **sarcasm** in preaching?
2. Have you ever thought of your service to Christ as a **war**? 10:3-4 How are wars **fought**? Where is the **enemy** for Christ's army?
3. What is the **goal of Christian warfare**? 10:5 What is the Christian's **most important** weapon?---it has to do with "thinking."
4. What **authority** does a preacher have? 10:8 Is the exercise of authority a proper **method** to use?
5. Is **frightening** people a proper ministerial method? 10:9
6. Should the Lord's servants use **human comparisons** as a method in ministry? 10:12
7. Does God place **limits** on men's ministries? 10:13-15 What are they? Should there be "comity" (territorial) agreements among denominations?
8. How often should preachers **move on** to a **new field** of service? 10:16
9. Is the preacher responsible **only** to the Lord for his methods of service? 10:18

William James (1842-1910) was a philosopher turned psychologist.

His philosophy was *pragmatism* meaning that truth is determined subjectively according to what works. Truth is not objective (out there apart from the human psyche, i.e. mind) but subjective (in the inner being) as he determines what works. James contended that to find the meaning of an idea, we must examine the consequences to which it leads in action.

He taught that truth was relative to human judgment and human needs. Accordingly, for James, truth is a process—pragmatism examines the results of thinking. The American educational system bought into this philosophy and now we hear it in phrases like, "If I like it, it must be true and good" and "If I don't like it, it must not be true or good."

Or more popularly, "Follow your gut!"  
**This is not the teaching of the Scriptures!**

## LESSON TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 11:1-33

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

A man had spread a slanderous story about his preacher through the town, and soon the whole countryside had heard it. Some time later the man confessed the story was untrue. Afterward he came to the preacher and asked his pardon. The old preacher said, "Of course, I will gladly forgive you if you will comply with a wish of mine." "Gladly," he replied. "Go home, kill a black hen, pluck the feathers, and put them in a basket and bring them here." In half an hour he was back. "Now," said the preacher, "go through the town and at each street corner scatter a few of these feathers, the remaining ones take to the top of the bell-tower and scatter them to the winds, and then return to me." The penitent man did exactly as he was instructed. "Now go through the town and gather the feathers again, and see that not one is missing." The man looked at the preacher in disbelief. "Why, that is impossible! The wind has scattered them everywhere!" "And, so," said the preacher, "while I forgive you gladly, do not forget that you can never undo the damage your untrue words have done."

CHARACTER ASSASSINATION---A PROBLEM THAT PLAGUES PREACHERS! Even apostles were not exempt! What untold damage must have been done around the city of Corinth by the maligning of Paul's ministry. We will never know. But we do know the damage such backbiting can do, and has done, to people and churches within our own circles. *Falsehood* (slander) ought to be exposed. Paul defended his ministry and his reputation in order that the name of Christ and the church might be upheld. While God's servants must be willing to confess wrong and repent, they must also expose slander and defend the integrity of their ministries and their reputations for Christ's sake. **Has slander touched your life? Bible School--can help you deal with it!**

To murder character is as truly a crime as to murder  
the body: the tongue of the slanderer is brother  
to the dagger of the assassin  
—Tyron Edwards

### QUESTIONS:

1. Did Paul **really** plan to act **foolishly** toward the Corinthians? 11:1,16,17,19,21,23. Why are preachers thought of as **fools**?
2. What was the point at which Satan attacked Eve? 11:3. What is the defense against that? (remember 2 Cor. 2:11 & 10:3-5)--it has to do with thinking!
3. Why did they malign Paul's lack of **skill in speaking**? 11:6 (see 1 Cor. 2:1). And he converted thousands without speaking skill?
4. How did Paul **rob** other churches by not taking support from them? 11:7-11. Would our congregation be robbed if it didn't support missions?
5. How can Satan **disguise** himself as an **angel of light**? 11:12-15 Have you seen any one disguised as an angel of light? How did you know?
6. Can you feel the **bite** of Paul's **satire** to the Corinthians? 11:16-21 Does anything he says in these verses apply to our city?
7. How could a man who said so much about **humility** be so **boastful** that he was a "better" servant than others? 11:22-27
8. Is a preacher supposed to be **pressured** and **anxious** about the church? 11:28 Doesn't that show faith is lacking?
9. Isn't it a little masochistic to **boast about things which show weakness**? 11:30 What's in weakness to boast about? (This leads into ch. 12).

Character assassination is at once easier and surer than physical assault; and it involves far less risk for the assassin. It leaves im free to commit the same deed over and over again, and may, indeed, win him the honors of a hero even in the country of his victims.

—Alan Barth

*"Have patience awhile; slanders are not long-lived.  
Truth is the child of time; ere long she shall appear  
to vindicate thee"*  
—Immanuel Kant

## LESSON TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-21

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

In Corinth some false apostles had come boasting about their exploits, how faithful and tremendously dedicated they were, hypnotizing the Corinthians into believing that they were true apostles of Christ, but teaching them false doctrines. Paul compares boasts with them. But what **remarkable** boasts he makes---not as the world would expect!

He does not display an impressive list of scholastic degrees. He does not mention any of his famous converts. He does not make any claims about the great crowds or the remarkable miracles that accompanied his ministry. He does not say anything about being "internationally known." He boasted about an incredible list of hardships---beatings, fastings, imprisonments, stonings, shipwrecks, dangers from every side. and concludes with the embarrassing story about the night he had to be let down over the wall in a basket!

And finally Paul describes an experience that sounds like something well worth boasting about. He was caught up into **Paradise** (among many other visions and revelations he apparently had). Now, we would expect Paul to put down these false apostles and challenge them to come up with something greater than this. He had even waited 14 years after the experience to mention it to anyone!

Incredibly, he is more interested in discussing the "weakness" the Lord laid upon him---his **thorn in the flesh**. This is very remarkable, especially in these days when we have an epidemic of books and periodicals appearing, all telling us of some unusual, fantastic, miraculous experience of religious leaders who have had "visions" of the Lord, heard the Lord's voice, and are specially "anointed." Such individuals immediately arrange lecture tours, TV interviews, write autobiographies, and revel in celebrity status. **You do not see anything like this from the apostle Paul!** He wants to remind people of his inadequacies, his incapacities, his deficiencies. **WEAKNESSES---PROBLEMS THAT PLAGUE PREACHERS.** See you in Bible School!

### QUESTIONS:

1. What is **Paradise**? Where is it? Why couldn't Paul tell about it? 12:1-4
2. Why didn't Paul **boast** about having been in Paradise? 12:5 Would you?
3. Why was Paul given a **thorn in the flesh**? 12:7 What was it? Who gave it? (see Job ch. 1 & 2; Psa. 567:65-72; 2 Cor. 1:8-11)
4. How can God's **grace** be **sufficient** to turn weakness into power? 12:8-9
5. Do you have a **thorn**? What do you do with it? Are you content with it? 12:10 How does one **become content** with thorns?
6. What are the signs of a **true apostle**? 12:1-13 Compared to what?
7. Why shouldn't children **lay up for their parents**? 12:14-18 Does Paul mean children do not need to take care of needy parents?
8. How was Paul building up the Corinthians by **boasting** about **himself**? 12:19
9. Why was this apostle, who preached so much about humility, **afraid** he would be **humbled** when he came again to Corinth? 12:20-21

It was pride that changed angels into devils;  
it is humility that makes men as angels.  
—St. Augustine

I believe that the first test of a truly great man is his  
humility. I do not mean by humility, humble  
doubt of his own power. But really  
great men have a curious feeling that  
the greatness is not in them, but through them.  
And they see something divine in every other man  
and are endlessly, foolishly, incredibly merciful.  
—John Ruskin

## LESSON TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 13:1-14

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

You have 30 seconds to complete the following test questions:

Circle the correct answer:

1. T F I must be a good person to be saved.
2. T F I must believe that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was bodily resurrected from the dead in order to be saved.
3. T F If I believe Jesus rose from the dead I must repent of my sins and be baptized to be saved.
4. T F It makes no difference what one believes, so long as he sincerely keeps the Sermon on the Mount, God will save him.

I will be saved by: (circle the answer most nearly correct)

- a. living a good moral life.
- b. being an American citizen.
- c. the fact that God would not let anyone be lost.
- d. God's grace which I accept by faith.

Paul closes his "Second" letter to the Corinthian Christians by **commanding** them (Gr. *peirazete* [pronounced pie-rah-zetay] present tense, imperative mood) to continually **test** (or prove) themselves, whether they have Christ in them or not. This not merely a suggestion, it is an order! This apostolic order is just as mandatory for all Christians today!

How do we do that? Is there some set of rules we can look up and see if we qualify to have Christ in us? Is there some church leader or potentate who can quiz us to see if we have Christ in us? Is there some "**feeling**" we are supposed to have that signifies Christ is living in us?

Believe it or not----attending Bible School class has a lot to do with finding the **test** which tells you Christ is living in you. Remember, it's a **test** we are commanded to do continually! Come to Bible School and see!

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the **charge** Paul says must be sustained by evidence? 13:1
2. What is Paul going to **do** to those he warned if they persist in sin? 13:2-3
3. Why bring up the subject of Christ's **weakness**? 13:3-4
4. How do Christians **examine themselves**? 13:5 What is the **test**?
5. What is the **right** Paul prays the Corinthians will do? 13:6-8
6. What **improvement** does he want the Corinthians to make? 13:9
7. What place would apostolic **severity** have in building people up? 13:10
8. How much must Christians **agree with one another**? 13:11
9. If we have **the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit**, do we need anything more? What? How do we get it? 13:14

"If a man loves me, he will keep my word,  
and my Father will love him, and we will come to him  
and make our home with him."  
—Gospel of John, 14:23

Christ dwells in our hearts through faith, Ephesians 3:17

"All who keep his commandments abide in him,  
and he in us..."  
—1 John 3:24