



**2 CORINTHIANS  
DEVOTIONAL**

**By Pastor Phil Emerson**

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

## OUR DISCIPLESHIP FLOW

At Emmanuel Church, we are passionate about living out the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and make it our goal to see His Kingdom come in our lives and the world in which we live. We recognise that in Biblical times, a disciple was someone who followed a teacher or rabbi, not simply to gain head knowledge to pass an examination, but to be fully immersed in the life of the rabbi, and *learn his ways*, so that they in turn could replicate this to the world around them. As Christians, we are now those who have been invited to 'follow' Jesus and all of His ways, and we therefore call ourselves His disciples.

*"This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." 1 John 2:5,6*

We therefore want to take seriously the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples and also commit to an ongoing journey of teaching and discipleship together.

We all have differing personalities and learning styles. At Emmanuel, we recognise this diversity within the church body and therefore desire to support and journey together as we relate with God and each other in some of the following environments:

- **Public (20+)**

In the Bible, we see Jesus seeking to make disciples as He engaged with larger numbers of people, e.g., His interaction with the crowds (Matthew 4:25; Luke 14:25), and the 72 (Luke 10:1-24).

At Emmanuel, we want to use each of our **larger gathered environments** as an opportunity to make disciples, e.g., **Sunday services, Friday Youth/Kids'** environments, **men's/women's** gatherings.

- **Social (10-15)**

Jesus demonstrated the necessity for **smaller accountable relationships** as an essential part of the life of a disciple. He did this by teaching and doing life with his twelve disciples (e.g., Matthew 10).

At Emmanuel, small accountable relationships are offered through:

**Lifegroup 12s**

These are **gatherings of 10-15 people** who meet bi-weekly in homes or around specific interests, e.g., crafts, football.

- **Personal (2-5)**

As well as having smaller accountable relationships amongst His twelve friends, Jesus also seemed to go to even deeper levels of trust with three in particular – Peter, James and John (Matthew 17; Mark 9). At Emmanuel, we seek to do this through:

**Lifegroup 3s**

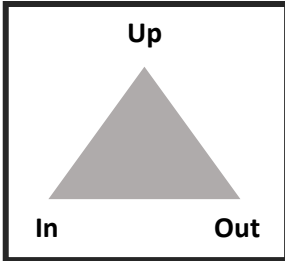
These are smaller **gatherings of 2-5 people** who are committed to transparent and accountable relationships in order to grow together in following Jesus. The aim for these groups is that after 1-2 years, each person in the group would be able to lead a smaller number of people themselves and replicate the process... **disciples making disciples!**

- **Intimate (1-1)**

Jesus regularly withdrew to spend time alone with the Father. This is the ultimate goal of discipleship, that each member of our church family would increasingly spend time alone with the Father and grow in devotion and desire to see the Kingdom come.

## A TOOL TO USE

As stated previously, 1 John 2:6 makes it clear that for those of us who call ourselves disciples of Jesus, our goal should be to daily *walk in the ways of Jesus*, our Rabbi. As we examine the New Testament we see that Jesus lived His life based on three relationships: **Up** – with His Father; **In** – with His chosen followers; **Out** – with the hurting world around Him. This is illustrated in the following triangle:



Jesus *taught* and *modelled* out to His disciples how to live into each of these areas in life.

### Up

Jesus frequently left the disciples to spend personal time with the Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). He taught them the significance of prayer, and how to pray and communicate with the Father (Luke 11:1-13). When comparisons with one another or insecurities presented themselves, He spoke into it in love and challenged them into a greater depth of living (Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 18:1-5).

### In

Jesus had significant relationships with others in which He intentionally invested (12s and 3s). When He went to engage with the Father He brought the three with Him (Matthew 17:1). He taught them and modelled out the significance of Sabbath and rhythms of rest (Mark 6:31). He demonstrated with His life the significance of generosity and sacrificial love for others (John 13:1-17).

### Out

Jesus personally lived a life that engaged with the crowds and the broken world around Him. He healed the sick (Matthew 8:1-4), fed the poor (Mark 6:30-44), and cast out demons (Matthew 8:28-34). But with the people who were closest to Him, He challenged them to do the same (Mark 6:37), and when they took risks themselves He critiqued and gave honest feedback to call out more for them (Luke 10:17-20).

As we spend time alone or together in this devotional, we want to help and encourage you to engage in each of these ways – UP, IN, and OUT.

# HOW TO USE THE BOOK

## First

If you haven't already done so, please take a second to fill in your name on the inside of the front cover. There'll be a lot of identical books floating around, and we don't want yours to get lost.

## Prepare

Get ready for each session by spending some time to invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. The Bible is a written word (logos), which becomes a living word (rhema) as the Holy Spirit breathes upon it and speaks directly to our lives through it.

## Commit

Commit to the journey. Discipleship is not a commitment to a moment, but to a lifetime journey. As you personally commit to journeying with God daily, commit to others by sharing what you are learning (possibly in Lifegroup 12s or 3s), and in this way encouraging one another in what God is saying.

## Reflect & Respond

Each day, as you spend personal time with God, we encourage you to ask the following two questions:

- 1) What is God saying to me?
- 2) What am I going to do about it?

**This is how we become doers and not just hearers of what God is saying.**

## INTRODUCTION TO 2 CORINTHIANS

This letter was probably written from Macedonia around AD 57. Paul had to follow his first letter with a second because of issues that arose in the church. 2 Corinthians is the most personal and passionate of Paul's letters as he found himself having to defend his ministry. It was written at a vulnerable time in his life. He had learned that the church at Corinth was struggling and he had to take action to preserve the unity of that local body of believers. The letter is riddled with personal comments. Paul reveals details about the persecution he had suffered for the sake of Christ and he also refers to a mysterious "*thorn in the flesh*" that kept him reliant on God. This letter offers a great deal of personal insight into Paul's life, insight that is not present in any other New Testament book.

The church at Corinth had, in the past, struggled with divisions and quarrels; however, for a majority of the believers, the problem had been solved by the time Paul wrote 2 Corinthians. Many had repented of their sinful ways and had come back into unity with one another under the leadership of Paul. However, Paul still felt the need to articulate a defence of his apostleship and his message.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians in the wake of their repentance from divisions and quarrels, and the message for us today is clear: living in unity requires us to humbly forgive one another and to follow our leaders. This book reminds us that even as Christians, we hurt each other and need to forgive, quickly, those who wrong us – no festering and no holding on to hurts!

This is a great read, so let's get going! Gather your Bible, journal, pencil, and a brew.

Love and prayers.

Phil

## Read

# 2 Corinthians 1

## Live

The people at Corinth were God's special people and Paul wanted them to behave in the way that God desired. To 'share' the pains of Christ does not mean that His pains were not enough; rather, it means that we suffer because we follow Him. Paul's pain helped him to give comfort to other people because he could pass comfort on. The Corinthians were suffering pain for their trust in Christ just as Paul was, so they would also receive the comfort he had received. We are not sure what this trouble of Paul's was; however, Paul learned not to trust himself but God as God is more powerful even than death. There would still be dangers in the future and Paul asks the Christians at Corinth to pray for him.

Some of the Corinthians had said pretty bad stuff about Paul because he had promised to visit them and then he hadn't. After he had written 1 Corinthians, he made a painful visit that he hadn't intended to make and as a result of that visit, he wrote them a pretty stern letter. It would seem that Paul intended to visit on his way from Ephesus to Macedonia and then again on his return journey, but that didn't happen.

Paul goes on to say that God is trustworthy and His good news is true. We can be assured that Jesus is the 'yes' to all His promises, and Jesus is the living proof that all God's promises are true. I love this fact. When we pray anything in Jesus' name, we can say a hearty "Amen" to it. 'Amen' is a Hebrew word that means 'let it be' or 'firm, steady, and trustworthy'. Whatever pain, fear or danger lurks in your life today, be assured that God more often brings you *through* trouble than *around* it. You can trust Him today even if you don't understand Him.

## Pray

Father, oh, the wonder, the glory and the grace I find in You! In light of this great hope, free me from the pettiness and emptiness of living for myself. By Your compelling love, propel me into a life of living for Your glory, in Your story, with Your joy. I am free; I am loved; I am Yours! Hallelujah, what a Saviour. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Read

# 2 Corinthians 2

## Live

The original writers of the Bible did not divide the text into chapters and verses; this happened much later on. As we read 2 Corinthians 2, we can see that the last two verses of the previous chapter really belong to this chapter. It is important to note that Paul did not change his plans because he was afraid of the Christians at Corinth; rather, it was to avoid another painful visit. He was not there to rule over them like the false teachers who were among them. Jesus was their Lord and Paul was just someone who served them. He wanted to work with them so they could all share each other's joy but this would only happen when they all had the same purpose.

The letter mentioned in verse 3 was one that Paul sent after his visit and is probably not one of the letters recorded in the Bible. It was a stern letter with tears and great sorrow, not to make them sad but to show how much he loved them. All he wanted was the best for them. He now writes about the person who caused all the trouble. Most of the Corinthians had punished this man and made him leave the church for a time. Paul wanted this man to come back into the church; he didn't want Satan to divide or destroy the church. The devil's strategy is to prevent repentance and thus unity.

Paul was sincere in what he preached and he lived his life before God, remembering that one day God would be his judge. I'm sure you, like me, long for the day we will no longer be even tempted to look for peace, joy, and fulfilment anywhere else but in Christ, when we will see Him as He really is and be made like Him. This is our great hope, deep longing, and grand assurance. A simple test today: ask yourself who is your biggest influencer. Who do you wish to impress the most? The answer will tell you a lot. Let's live for Christ and Him alone.

## Pray

Father, I would still be blind to what brings me peace if You hadn't opened my eyes to see my need of You. The gospel would still remain hidden from my eyes unless You had given me sight to behold You as the Lamb of God who takes away my sin. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

It is so strange to think that Paul needed a letter of recommendation when he came back to these people. He had led them to Christ, and now they more or less say to him that the next time he comes, it would be good if he brought some letters from John or Peter or James or one of the 'real' apostles. Paul asks them, 'Don't you understand? *You* are our letter of recommendation. Christ has written it on your hearts. He didn't use paper or deliver it on stones as He did with Moses on Mount Sinai. He wrote it on your hearts, and the ink He used was the Holy Spirit.'

The veil that Moses wore is a symbol of the old covenant; that is, the Law, the Ten Commandments with their demand upon us for a certain standard of behaviour. The veil is also a symbol of our typical response to the Law: try to obey it, either to the point of convincing ourselves that we have achieved it or to the point of giving up and rebelling against it. When Moses came down from the mountaintop, his face was shining and that becomes the symbol of the glory there is in trying to keep the Law of God. But it was a fading glory, Paul tells us. He himself has found something even more exciting. It is what he calls the "*new covenant*", a new way of living provided by God in Christ. This gives us not only a right relationship with Christ from the very beginning, but it also gives us the excitement of expecting God to work with us and through us. This is not something we have earned but is given to us. This gives us a liberty. The person who is free is one who does not need works to hide behind. There is nothing they can do to provide such grace other than simply accept it. That is what true freedom is.

**Pray**

Father, I realise how many times I have been confused and blinded by the attitudes of the world around me which continually brainwash me into believing that something other than You is the secret of true power. I believe in Your ability to change and heal and restore and forgive me. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Read

# 2 Corinthians 4

## Live

We need to understand what is going on behind the scenes of world events. We know that, ultimately, there is God, invisible to the human eye, Lord of earth and heaven. And though we do not yet see Him, we love Him and follow Him. He is in control of history and as we approach the end of life, these things will become more and more significant to us.

The first six verses of this chapter answer a lot of questions as to why so many people do not believe the gospel when they first hear it, or even after they have heard it many times. These verses answer questions about why many who *do* believe the gospel quit after they have been walking in the Christian way for some time, and also why some people whom you think will never believe, suddenly do. C.S. Lewis said that when he became a Christian, he did so as an intellectual agnostic. He said that when he came to Christ, he came as though he were dragged kicking and screaming, darting his eyes around in every direction, trying to escape. His mind was fighting it all the way, but his conscience succumbed to the Word of God. He said that the night he came to Christ he was the most reluctant convert in all of England.

The fact that God can reach the conscience is what Paul counts on. Paul is saying, 'I don't have to depend on my personality and my ability to persuade people. I go with a simple statement of the truth and the conviction that God is able to reach the conscience even though the mind and the emotions may reject what I have to say.' Paul says the devil's tool is the veil and it's the devil who is responsible for the unbelief of people who are helpless victims in the hands of the god of this age. That veil is the delusion that we are adequate to handle life by ourselves – nothing but a filthy lie of the enemy.

## Pray

Father, it gives me great encouragement, hope, and freedom to acknowledge that I need the gospel today as much as the first day I believed it. This will be just as true tomorrow, and the next day, and the next. I love and need You, Lord. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

When I read this chapter, I think about life with an eternal perspective. Try it and see. Keep looking at yourself in God's big plan rather than imagining Him in your wee plan. You will find it exciting stuff. Paul uses two different descriptions to explain a Christian's attitude to death: death is like someone who leaves a tent in order to move into a permanent house; it is like someone who puts on new clothes. Paul made tents to earn a living and here he uses tents as a picture of our bodies. When someone pulls our 'tent' down, we will have a house – a house that God has made which will last for all time. After we die, we will rise again and we will have new bodies that will not grow old or get weak. We will be more completely alive in heaven than we are now. Paul had hope for the future, so he was always confident.

In verse 10, we see the Lord as our judge who will look at our lives. Even though our good works will not save us, we have been saved to do good works. We will not lose our salvation in this judgment. God accepts us if we trust in Jesus. But we will get a reward if we serve God loyally and will lose a reward if we don't.

Paul used to estimate Christ's value the same way as everyone else. However, after his experience on the road to Damascus, he changed his ideas. When a person trusts Christ, he is completely different; the old life is gone and the new life has begun. The death of Christ satisfied the demands of God's justice as Jesus took the punishment for people's sin. Although Jesus didn't sin, He took our sin and He gave us His goodness instead so we could become sons and daughters of God and joint heirs with Christ Himself!

**Pray**

Father, thank You for Jesus who gave Himself for me that He might live within me and manifest His presence and His life in this present day and age. I thank You, Lord, that when that moment of glory breaks upon my startled heart, I shall at last see Him whom I have long loved and served. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

It's easy to get stuck in a rut. Different days, same place, same thing, same responsibility. Settling into a rut can be dangerous and even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there. There are three P's that are common motivators to get us moving. Pain motivates us to change. It's not 'seeing the light' that gets us going, but 'feeling the heat'. You delay the dentist appointment until the pain is unbearable. Pressure moves us too, like when the doctor says, "*Lose weight or else...*" or the boss says, "*Improve performance or get fired.*" The problem with pressure as a motivator is that it doesn't last. When the pressure subsides, so does the motivation. There is a better motivator: Perspective – when you see the big picture or when you are inspired by a challenging vision or purpose. You realise you are wasting your potential and seek to step up.

Paul did not want anything in his life to turn people away from God. Although he had to suffer, he didn't complain. He writes a list of the things that tested him. There were troubles, lack of basic necessities, and great sorrow. There were difficulties caused by other people: they had beaten him, put him in prison, protested against him. On top of all that, there were personal difficulties: overwork, lack of sleep, and hunger. Paul tried to live in a way that showed God's nature to other people. His moral life was pure and he knew by experience the truth of Jesus. I love how he writes to the Christians at Corinth as a father writes to his children. He loved them as a father loves his child. Unfortunately, the Christians at Corinth did not love him in the same way and actually welcomed those who brought a false message. This, I'm sure, broke his heart.

**Pray**

Father, by the power of the gospel, help me to mind Your ways more than I mind the way men normally think. May the cross get bigger and bigger to me and may my boast in it grow louder and louder. Jesus, You're the only hero in the Bible, and I'm more than fine with that. We matter, but You alone are the point. In Your strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Read

# 2 Corinthians 7

## Live

In this chapter there is a call to cleanse ourselves of the flesh and strive for holiness in light of all the promises of God. Holiness is twofold; it is turning away from sin and turning towards God. Poor Paul; the Gentiles thought his message against idols was too strict, and the Jews thought it was not strict enough! Paul says that he had not wronged them in any way. He had not taken their money for himself. He loved them so much that he was willing to live or die with them. He also considered that he could trust them. It's kinda weird because he was actually very proud of the Corinthians. They comforted him and they made him joyful although he had many troubles.

During this time, Paul suffered greatly. Perhaps he was unable to sleep or he had trouble from those who opposed him. Perhaps he worried about Titus's safety. However, God brought him comfort when Titus arrived and brought good news with him. In verse 8, Paul explains the real reason for his worries at Troas and Macedonia. It concerned the severe letter he had written to the Corinthians. He was sorry that he had to write it and wondered how it might affect them. He knew it had hurt them. However, that was only for a short time, and it had an encouraging result because they were really sorry and they changed their ways. Paul had told Titus how proud he was of the Christians at Corinth and they had proved his words true. Paul writes like a father who is proud of his children.

Before we judge the church at Corinth it is important to remember that each one of us is an easy target for temptation. We are all prone to wander and are quite capable of acting in very destructive ways. With all of our being, let's trust in the grip of God's grace and the eternal security He provides for us. Let's help our fellow believers to know how to hold each other accountable for believing the gospel.

## Pray

Father, help me to take other people's heart struggles seriously and bear other burdens gladly. Don't let me ever minimise or marginalise the deceitfulness and hardening power of sin in others or in myself. I want to finish well, Lord. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Read

# 2 Corinthians 8

## Live

In Acts 11, a prophet prophesied a famine and so the disciples requested money for the churches in Judea. In 1 Corinthians 16, Paul had told the Christians at Corinth how to do this. According to verse 10 in this chapter, they had begun but not completed this work and Paul reminds them to do so. He tells them what the Christians in Macedonia had done even though they had many troubles and were also very poor. The Christians at Corinth were not poor, and Paul encourages them to do what the Macedonians had done. He reminds them that God had given them many skills, called “*gifts*” in chapter 12. One of these was the opportunity to give to other people. Paul is not issuing an order; he suggests that they imitate the Christians in Macedonia, for in doing this, they would show the reality of their love.

I love how Paul reminds the Corinthians of what the Lord Jesus Christ did. “*He was rich*” refers to His glory in heaven before He came to earth. And yet, “*He became poor*”. Paul advises them to finish what they have started and give as much as they are able. God didn’t care about the amount they gave but He did care about how willing they were to give. The apostle tells them how he would organise the gift; Titus was coming to receive it. He was also sending a friend whom the Macedonian Christians had chosen. Paul doesn’t say who this person was, though many people think it was Luke. It is so important to put others first, regardless of our personalities. When I read these chapters I take note of all the different people. I am an introvert who loves people (which is a bit of an oxymoron) but here is my prayer...

## Pray

Father, I’m so grateful for the good friends You have woven into my life. As an introvert, the journey of investing my heart in long-term relationships requires a lot of Your grace – grace that You have been faithful to supply. I’ve already stood at too many of my friends’ gravesides, and other friends will do the same at mine one day. More than ever, I want to serve You well and love You powerfully. I am not an island and was never designed to live this life alone. So, I thank You for those life-changing relationships You’ve brought into my life. I love You, and them. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Read

# 2 Corinthians 9

## Live

My little wondering at the outset today is this ... is Paul being careful not to offend the Christians at Corinth? Is he slightly afraid that they may not have their gift ready? He says there was really no need for him to write to them as he knew they were willing to help. He had told the Macedonians how eager the Christians at Corinth were to give which encouraged them to give also. Paul's words in this chapter sound like an invitation and a reminder wrapped into one. Maybe it's my suspicious mind, but I wonder if some Christians at Corinth were not willing to share, so Paul reminds them about a farmer who sows seeds. The more he sows, the greater his harvest will be. Someone who gives to God is like that farmer and God will reward the giver.

God is generous and His people should be generous as well. When we give, we should give freely, not because we have to but because we ought to. God loves people who give with great happiness in their minds. The amazing thing is that those who give money to other people will have enough for themselves as God will provide all that they need.

Paul repeats Psalm 112:9. This is not a promise of money or wealth; it is a promise of spiritual fruitfulness and the help of Christians who care. The fact that the Corinthian church were giving was a proof of their belief. As Martin Luther said, *"Good works do not save us. But we do not have salvation if we do not have them."* Paul thanks God for His gift of Jesus Christ. This gift was much greater than any we may give. It was so great that Paul couldn't describe it in words. The gospel is attractive all by itself; God does not call us to spice it up, put a bow on it, or add anything; there's no such need. We simply must be careful not to hide its beauty by our selfishness and lack of generosity.

## Pray

Father, continue to show me what it means to do all things in line with the truth of the gospel by the liberating power of Your grace. Help me to do *everything* as unto You and to give generously whether others are watching or not. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Paul talks about the way the false teachers in Corinth had opposed him, declaring themselves to be powerful. They were full of self-praise, and, as the old saying goes, 'Self-praise is no praise at all.' These false teachers said that Paul was forceful in his writing yet "unimpressive" in person. I love how Paul replied that his "weakness" showed Christ's gentleness and kindness. He asks them to look at the facts. These slanderers had done nothing but compare themselves with themselves. It was Paul who had birthed the church in Corinth, not them. He certainly wasn't ashamed but was proud of his authority as Christ gave it to him on the road to Damascus. Paul's looks and speech were not impressive; actually, people who lived around AD 200 described him as short and bald (I'm feeling better already) and his legs were not straight. This may have been why they opposed him; he was not the handsome great speaker that the people expected.

Paul warns the Corinthians that there was no difference between his actions and the words in his letters. Soon he would be with them, and he would do what he warned in his letters. Then Paul takes a go at the false teachers who visited the Corinthians, those who called themselves apostles and compared themselves with Paul. They said they had travelled a much greater distance than Paul in order to visit the Christians at Corinth. They even pretended that they were responsible for Paul's success in Corinth. They had letters of recommendation from Christians in other churches. They also said that they had special gifts from God and that Paul had nothing to commend him.

Paul's hope for the saints at Corinth is a powerful hope for us all today, that our trust in God will be firm. I love this man, not wanting to boast or build in another person's territory. These are incredible lessons for the church today.

**Pray**

Father, on the morning of the first day of the week, Jesus arose and the King inaugurated a resurrection that would extend to all of His people. At the ascension, my King ascended, and we are told that He ever lives to intercede for us – for me. I rest in HIS finished work today and not in a title, promotion at work or what anyone thinks of me. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Paul uses the picture of marriage; the church at Corinth like the bride and Jesus like the bridegroom. Paul was like the bridegroom's friend who had to make sure the bride was ready for the wedding. The false teachers said that they were superior apostles and better Christians than Paul. The problem and sad truth was that the people in Corinth were all too willing to follow the false teachers rather than follow Paul. The old enemy doesn't take long in sending in his people to thwart the purposes of God. Good speakers can easily impress us, but it is important that a speaker has the right message.

It's really weird that the believers at Corinth didn't like the fact that Paul didn't accept their money while the false teachers took it no problem. These false teachers were the devil's servants who pretended to be servants of righteousness. They taught that people had to obey the Jewish law to become righteous. Paul taught that people obtained righteousness by trust. This trust was in what Jesus had done for them on the cross and on that alone. Paul says that they had allowed others to make them like slaves. By this, he means that they were willing to obey all the old Jewish laws again, going backwards in their faith. The false teachers took money from them and said that in order to get a place in heaven, the church should pay the teachers. Some theologians suggest they could even have used physical force. 'Yes,' says Paul, 'I was too weak to do those kinds of things to you!'

Paul suffered much more than what we read about in the book of Acts. The list of his troubles here shows that he suffered terrible pain. Finally, he talks about his escape from Damascus by being lowered in a basket from a window. There is no doubt that Paul had many harrowing and humbling experiences.

**Pray**

Father, give me true humility, a meek and quiet spirit, a loving, holy manner of life, bearing the burdens of my neighbours, denying myself, and studying to benefit others and please You in all things. Grant me to be righteous in performing promises, loving my relatives, slow to anger, and readily prepared for every good work. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Read

# 2 Corinthians 12

## Live

Today we read about an experience Paul had fourteen years earlier. It was something he could not explain in human language. I don't think he is blowing about this experience, nor is he saying it is proof that God had sent him (although that's probably what his opponents would have claimed). Many assumptions have been made about Paul's thorn in the flesh. The word refers to something sharp and painful that sticks deeply in the flesh and you cannot get it out. We are not told what this was for Paul; therefore, it is pointless to surmise. Every Christian has experience of some physical or psychological problem. God allowed this thorn to keep Paul humble and therefore fruitful in His service. It was a messenger from Satan that God allowed to attack Paul; Job was attacked in a similar way. Paul prayed three times for God to remove the thorn but God told him that His free goodness was all that Paul needed. We may pray that God will set us free from troubles but sometimes He doesn't because they can keep us closer to Christ and we can know His power working in our weakness.

Paul tells the Corinthians he was preparing for a third visit and he tells them why he did not want to accept help from them. They thought he wanted their money, cheating them in order to make a profit. Titus had collected the money and they thought that Paul had taken some of this. Paul uses a cracker illustration that parents should help their children, not the other way around. He then compares this to him being like their father in Christ and says how he would spend all his money and strength to help them. I don't know about you, but I am learning so much about Paul's integrity as a servant of the Lord.

## Pray

Father, today I thank You that You sent Your Son to save me. You stepped into time so that You might save me, even while I was in my sin. You bore even death itself for me and the cost to me is "PAID IN FULL". As I read today of the saints at Corinth and how they bickered over money, I remind myself of the price You paid for me. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Read

# 2 Corinthians 13

## Live

Paul warns the saints at Corinth that he is coming to them for the third time and declares that every accusation must be proven by two or three witnesses. This doesn't make for a pleasant 'how are you' type of visit. As a matter of fact, Paul is hopping mad and he said that he would punish those who had done wrong. He ends with a final warning that just as they have been testing him, they should now test themselves and see that Christ is in them. This will be the true test of spirituality. Paul had certainly not failed the test and now they must prove that they had become Christians by doing what was right; then Paul would not need to show his authority in punishing them.

Paul prays that they may be perfect. The word "*perfect*" here has a special meaning; it describes how people repair an object so they can use it again; the word often referred to fishermen who mended their nets. Paul hoped that by warning them, he would not need to be severe with them. He wanted to encourage them, not punish them. So, he says goodbye and urges them to change their ways. He appeals to them to live in peace and greet one another in a friendly way. His final prayer is that they may know the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. This is an incredible blessing on these people who were giving him so much heartache.

The gospel should be all the motivation we need for living as a compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, and patient person, especially when we consider this is how God relates to us 24/7, 365 days a year in full view of our ill-deserving ways. There are some things that are essential if you are serious about finding your destiny in God. I love Psalm 37; it is full of instruction for life: "*Trust in the Lord and do good ... so shall you dwell in the land and be fed ... Commit your way unto the Lord, trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass.*"

## Pray

Father, I'll never experience You as insensitive, unkind, proud, harsh or impatient. Indeed, through the gospel, I've become a member of Your chosen, holy, dearly loved people. Help me to live as such. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

