A PASSAGE THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT
PART SEVEN

Second Corinthians

by Jeff S. Smith
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6. What is the implication of disqualification?

Answer: Being lost again and disqualified from heaven.

7. (13:7-10) Was Paul’s boldness and sharpness authorized? By whom?

Answer: Yes, by Christ.

8. Can gospel preachers who are not apostles also be sharp in their rebukes when required (Titus 1:13)?

Answer: Yes.

9. (13:11-14) Paul concludes the epistle with a prayer for peace and unity. After studying these two epistles, do you think Paul desired them to believe and teach different things and follow after the teachings of various men?

Answer: Of course not.

10. Do people still obey the command to greet one another with a holy kiss?

Answer: Yes, but it is not the exclusive means by which we may greet one another.

Second Corinthians
Authorship: Paul, A.D. 57

The book of Second Corinthians is a letter written by the apostle Paul (1:1, 16:21) and addressed to the church in Corinth. It was likely written around the year A.D. 55, about six months to a year after he sent the first letter.

Because of Venus’s supposed presence, the city was given to sexual immorality and her temple boasted a hundred priestesses dedicated to harlotry. Even the most immoral cities and people of the world looked down on Corinth for her vice. Corinth had been founded as a Roman colony during the years before Christ’s birth, being strategically located between the Aegean and Adriatic seas, making it an ideal hub for the trade routes between east and west. This resulting prosperity, however, led to excessive lifestyles of luxury and immoral experimentation. “To live like a Corinthian” came to be an axiom for the immoral lifestyle.

The establishment of a church in this most inhospitable moral climate is described the historian Luke in Acts chapter 18. Paul arrived there from Athens and found Aquila and his wife Priscilla, and he began persuading both Jews and Greeks to accept Christ, initially by preaching in the synagogues where Jews assembled on the Sabbath for worship. Silas and Timothy joined him from Macedonia and notable converts included Justus who lived next to the synagogue and Crispus who ruled it. Paul remained there for 18 months in spite of terrific opposition from the local Jews.

Second Corinthians is a more positive letter than its predecessor because the church had responded with contrition and action. Paul is happily able to write and commend the church for doing the right things, but he also renews his warnings about false apostles who were threatening the congregation. He continues to urge them to complete their offering for the needy saints in Judea as well.
Second Corinthians is an intensely personal letter as it describes the improvement in Paul’s relationship with the deeply troubled congregation.

One of the chief issues in First Corinthians was the church’s tolerance of a member who had married his stepmother. Not only were they reluctant to do anything about his behavior, they actually seemed proud of how tolerant they were being. After Paul’s commands, however, they withdrew themselves from him and it becomes apparent that he had repented. Now Paul has to tell them to renew their fellowship with him.

Throughout the letter, Paul is compelled to prove his apostleship to the church that was being invaded by false apostles who denied Paul’s authority and exerted their own insidious influence. These false ministers taught a false gospel and Paul contrasts its fleshly message with the spiritual gospel that he had taught them in person and in letter. Paul confesses to being jealous over the church’s affection because they were being wooed away by those who taught error.

The discouragement and disappointment that Paul felt regarding the troubled church prevails throughout Second Corinthians. In addition to the persecution he suffered, the fact that these beloved brethren had come to doubt and even rebuff him was a source of great emotional pain. Still, in sizing up his sacrifices and hardships, he was thankful to serve Christ and to be able to look forward to eternity in Heaven.

As in Romans and Galatians, if not also in Hebrews where his authorship is questionable, Paul uses Second Corinthians to contrast the old and new covenants, arguing for the superiority of the latter. The glory that faded away in Moses’s era was intended to be permanent and deeper through Christ. In spite of the hardships in this tent – this life – the hope of heaven should renew the spirit day by day.

The collection to aid the needy saints in Judea is brought up again and Paul’s words help to form the pattern by which Christians give to the work of the local church even today. The first letter specified that a collection should be made each Sunday, but this letter gets more to the attitude that must be behind such sacrifice.

A compelling part of the letter takes up much of chapter 12 where the apostle humbly broaches the subject of a spiritual journey into the third heaven, or the abode of God. He acknowledges the temptation to take pride in such insight, but states that a certain thorn in his flesh was provided to keep him humble – a messenger of Satan which God refused to remove in spite of Paul’s pleas. The thorn seems to represent something other than the literal, but its exact identity is unknown, although there is some evidence that Paul did have a physical malady – possibly regarding his eyesight (Gal. 4:13-14).

Lesson 13: Examination
Second Corinthians 13:1-14

1. (13:1-4) What witnesses had Paul called?

2. Paul’s hope through these letters has been that his impending visit could be pleasant and without the need for his discipline. How much patience does he apparently still have?

3. What would Paul do with those who remained in sin when he arrived?

4. (13:5-6) They had spent so much time trying him that Paul now tells them to do what instead?

5. Is it possible to think you are in the faith and actually be out of it?
Lesson 1: Integrity
Second Corinthians 1:1-24

1. (1:1-2) This opening passage seems to have been written by a single-minded apostle. Is he an authority on suffering and tribulation (cf. Second Corinthians 11:23-29 and 2 Tim. 3:12).

2. This passage probably had a special importance to the faithful group in Corinth that eschewed the factions and doubters of Paul’s authenticity. What suffering might they have experienced because of their tenacity toward the factious?

3. How is the term “saint” used in scripture – to refer to a select group of meritoriously better Christians, or all genuine disciples of Christ?

4. (1:3-7) What word or idea is repeated continuously in this passage? How is it to be obtained?

5. (1:8-11) How did the Corinthians help Paul when he was in grave danger?

6. (12:11-13) How is Paul’s gift for biting sarcasm displayed here?

Answer: He had shown them the signs of an apostle at no charge; “forgive me for this great injury,” he cries.

7. (12:14-21) What did Paul seek in Corinth? What did he not seek?

Answer: He sought not their possessions, but their hearts and love.

8. In what ways did Paul act as a father to them in this letter?

Answer: He has disciplined them, encouraged them, cared for them and all without thought to compensation (First Corinthians 4:14-15).

9. How did some accuse Paul of catching them – getting their money?

Answer: He caught them through craftiness and cunning, they said, by sending others to take their money.

7. (1:12-14) The meaning of verse 13 is that Paul is not writing to them anything which they will be unable to understand. What significance has this in our age? Compare to Ephesians 3:4.

8. In what did Paul boast?

9. (1:15-22) What were Paul’s plans concerning a visit to Corinth (cf. First Corinthians 16:5-7). This passage implies that he had not made it there yet. What opportunity do you think this gave his detractors in Corinth?

10. What was given to these men as an earnest, or guarantee, of salvation?

11. (1:23-24) How was Paul sparing them by avoiding another visit to Corinth?

Lesson 12: Grace
Second Corinthians 12:1-21

1. (12:1-6) What vision did he receive?

2. (12:7-10) It is nearly universally held that Paul speaks of himself here but declines to name himself in humility. Because of the greatness of the experience, he was given a messenger from Satan. What was its purpose?

3. Why did God refuse Paul’s request to have it removed?

4. How is God’s strength made perfect in weakness?

5. How did this truth cause Paul to view his infirmities?
6. (11:12-15) Fed up with such a foolish attack, he goes on the offensive. What three fraudulent claims does Paul accuse such men of committing?

   a. false apostles
   b. deceitful workers
   c. transforming themselves into apostles of Christ

7. How do the works and temptations of Satan appear harmless today?

   Answer: Going to play ball or see the rodeo instead of services on Sunday, beer commercials and cigarette ads; abortion advocates and safe-sex promotions

8. (11:16-21) Paul endeavors to turn the tables once more on the boastful teachers. He judges their submission to false teaching in verses 19-21. Does he feel that they should sit meekly at their feet and continue to work with them?

   Answer: No.

9. (11:22-29) In this passage, does Paul boast of the usual points of pride (number of baptisms, revered writings, successful debates, marvelous miracles)?

   Answer: No.

10. (11:30-33) According to verse 30, of what does he boast?

   Answer: He boasts of his infirmities.

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**Lesson 2: Forgiveness**

Second Corinthians 2:1-17

1. (2:1-4) Was the corrective nature of the first epistle an easy thing for Paul to do? Why do you think he did it anyway?

2. (2:5-11) Who is the one likely spoken of in verses 5-11 (cf. First Corinthians 5)? Describe his case.

3. Is it sufficiently apparent that he man in question had repented? What did Paul instruct the church to do with him now?

4. It seems that Paul’s difficult instruction to withdraw had been a test of sorts to see if the Corinthians would be obedient. What might this tell us about the importance of exercising church discipline?
5. What are some of Satan’s devices?

Answer: Satan will take advantage of any situation, including one like this in which a person may believe he is beyond forgiveness.

6. (2:12-17) What is the smell of Christians carrying God’s word to a lost world?

Answer: To those who love grace, saints are the aroma of life; to those content with sin, they are the aroma of death.

7. Paul wrote the first epistle to the Corinthians from Ephesus. Describe his subsequent travels as detailed here. How does Paul compare himself to the self-interested teachers (verse 17)?

Answer: He left Ephesus for Troas where Titus was to meet him and give him a report from Corinth following that first letter. Not finding him, Paul traveled on into Macedonia. He offers the gospel freely to any who would find it.

8. How are some guilty of peddling the gospel today?

Answer: They use it to make money off poor and ignorant people or craft the message in the most marketable manner.

Lesson 11: Deception
Second Corinthians 11:1-33

1. (11:1-4) What is godly jealousy?

Answer: Godly jealousy is a protectiveness of those one has seen come to Christ and a desire to make certain they are not lost to the devil.

2. What happened to Eve and can also happen to us?

Answer: We can be deceived by the devil’s craftiness and have our minds corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

3. Should they have put up with those teaching another gospel or another Christ (cf. Gal. 1:6-9)?

Answer: No, they should have rejected them.

4. (11:5-6) Paul confesses that what criticism is accurate?

Answer: His speech.

5. (11:7-11) The apostle brings up the argument that he had accepted no payment for preaching because his conscience would not allow him to accept an apostle’s reward. How was Paul’s livelihood provided for when he preached in Corinth?
Lesson 3: Ministry of the Spirit
Second Corinthians 3:1-18

1. (3:1-3) Paul takes up the issue of letters of commendation. His opponents boast that they had them while Paul, for some reason, was unable to produce any like them from other apostles or churches. How does Paul answer this request here and in First Corinthians 9:1-2?

Answer: He says that they do not need a letter because he performed the wondrous works of an apostle before them and they became the very seal of his apostleship. He was as a father to them and needed no introduction now.

2. What famous code of law was written on tablets of stone?

Answer: The ten commandments.

3. (3:4-6) From where does sufficiency come?

Answer: God.

4. What does Paul mean when he says, “the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life”?

Answer: The law of Moses had no component of eternal grace, but remembered one’s sins continually and forever. The law of Christ and the Holy Spirit is built upon grace through Christ’s blood.

5. (3:7-11) What was it about the glory reflected on Moses’s face that caused him to veil it?

Answer: The glory faded away when he went back from God to the people.

6. (10:12-18) Paul sets up a model of contrast between himself and the false brethren who opposed him. How did the false measure themselves?

Answer: The teachers in Corinth measured themselves by themselves and among themselves and are not wise (verse 12).

7. How did Paul measure himself?

Answer: Paul measures himself by God’s rule. The teachers had built themselves up on another man’s work while Paul gloried in the Lord (verse 17).

8. What is the measure of genuine commendation?

Answer: Whether it comes from God or from oneself.
6. How does Paul describe the law of Moses, under which he had spent most of his life?
   a. verse 7: the ministry of death
   b. verse 9: the ministry of condemnation
   c. verse 11: it is passing away

7. (3:12-13) According to verse 13, what was Moses concealing when he veiled his face from the children of Israel?
   Answer: He was veiling what was passing away, the Mosaic law was never intended to be permanent nor was its glory, but Christ is. Moses could not permit them to look at the future result of the old covenant which was Christ for it would distract them.

8. (3:14-18) How is it evident that non-Christian Jews were reading the Old Testament with a veiled heart?
   Answer: They were not seeing Christ in those prophecies.

9. What is found where the Lord is? What does this mean (cf. Romans 6:15-20)?
   Answer: Liberty is there—freedom from sin.

Lesson 10: Spiritual Warfare
Second Corinthians 10:1-18

1. (10:1-6) Paul begins his defense by calling on his readers to think spiritually and beyond outward appearances. Did he wage warfare physically?

2. How did he war?

3. What does Paul mean by “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”?

4. (10:7-11) What did some people say about Paul’s letters and appearance?

5. What did Paul say about the contrast between his letters and his appearance?
6. Verse seven contains two positive and two negative aspects of giving. List the positive ones first:

a. purposed in heart  
b. cheerful

7. List the negative aspects:

a. grudging  
b. out of a sense of necessity

8. (9:10-14) What was to be their reward?
   Answer: Fruits of righteousness.

9. Look back to 8:4 and 9:1, 12 – for whom was this gift? Is there any indication this collection was for non-saints?
   Answer: It was for needy saints and there is no indication otherwise. “Unto them and unto all” signifies unto the Judean saints and all saints.

Lesson 4: Earthen Vessels
Second Corinthians 4:1-18

1. (4:1-6) Whom does Paul call the god of this world?
   Answer: Satan is blinding the hearts of the unbelieving as he tries to prevent the light of Christ from illuminating them.

2. What is he busy doing according to verse 4? What light does he wish to prevent from shining?

3. What methods had Paul and the other saints renounced?
   Answer: The hidden things of shame, walking in craftiness, handling the word of God deceitfully.

4. What method had they adopted?
   Answer: Manifesting the truth to every man's conscience for judgment.

5. (4:7-12) Explain what is meant by the phrase “treasure in earthen vessels”?
   Answer: God's power was implanted into the bodies of men who worked miracles and revealed the truth.
6. What did they manifest in their own bodies? How can we do this today?

Answer: The life of Jesus Christ can be manifested in our own bodies when we do as he would do.

7. (4:13-15) Paul’s life as a Christian was a perilous one and yet he persevered. He relates the source of his confidence in verse 14 – what is it? Compare to Second Timothy 1:12.

Answer: He knows that God will raise him up just as raised up the Lord and promises us all. Paul says that he trusts in God's promises.

8. (4:16-18) With what attitude did Paul view his afflictions?

Answer: They were momentary and light in comparison with the glory in the future and upon which he was focused.

9. How can we renew our inward selves day by day?

Answer: We must throw ourselves into God's work day by day, be given to prayer and meditation.

10. What is 20/20 Christian vision like?

Answer: It must focus well on things that are in the distance of time while keeping the present distress in proper perspective.

Lesson 9: Generosity
Second Corinthians 9:1-15

1. (9:1-5) Paul says that he has boasted of the Corinthians and used them as an example of giving to the Macedonians, too. Why has he sent the brethren ahead now to Corinth?

Answer: He wanted to be certain that the collection would be ready so he and the Corinthians would not be embarrassed nor would he seem to be personally ordering them to offer it.

2. What can the zeal of one person do?

Answer: Stir up the majority.

3. What would make Paul ashamed?

Answer: If the Corinthians were not prepared to give, Paul would be ashamed for boasting of them.

4. What would cause people to give as a grudging obligation?

Answer: Some people give against their will because they think they have to in order to be accepted as religious by the rest.

5. (9:6-9) From what does Paul draw an illustration for monetary contributions?

Answer: He suggests that financial sowing is like planting seed and that the less you sow, the less you will reap. That is, the less preaching that can be done by sending evangelists out.
6. (8:10-15) Paul applauds the fact that the Corinthians had begun this work nearly a year ago, but now advises them to “complete the doing of it” (verse 11). Did Paul teach that good intentions are good enough?

7. He sets forth a policy from the Old Testament that should ensure that some Christians do not die from poverty while others bask in luxury. Explain this policy.

8. (8:16-21) Who traveled with Titus?

9. (8:22-24) Why was trust so important?

Lesson 5: Reconciliation
Second Corinthians 5:1-21

1. (5:1-5) Paul did not particularly worry about dying for he trusted in what reward?

2. Can we share his hope of a heavenly home, eternal above?

3. (5:6-8) What does it mean to walk by faith, not by sight?

4. For how long will we be present with the Lord when this life is over?

5. (5:9-11) In a way, he issues a challenge to his detractors in Corinth to test themselves. What is the goal of a Christian (verse 9)?

6. What will be judged in the last day?
Lesson 8: Collection For Needy Saints
Second Corinthians 8:1-24

1. (8:1-7) We often study passages on the collection in general. Where had Paul brought up the collection for the needy saints in Judea before?

2. According to verse 3, what had been the attitude of the Macedonians in their giving?

3. Define the word *fellowship* as it is used in the Bible. Then define the word as it is commonly used in the world today. Which practice should the Lord’s church employ and uphold?

4. Why did Paul then send Titus to Corinth?

5. (8:8-9) Paul gives another example of free giving in verse 9—what is it? Refer to Philippians 2:5-8—what is the admonition and example there?
6. (7:8-12) Did Paul regret making the Corinthians feel bad with his first letter? Why or why not?

Answer: Paul did not regret it because it led them to be right with God again.

7. Why is it sometimes beneficial to feel badly (cf. Matthew 5:3, James 4:8-10)?

Answer: God promises blessing upon those who recognize their sins and seek to make correction. Without correcting sin, we will simply die in them.

8. What does godly sorrow produce?

Answer: Repentance leading to salvation.

9. What does worldly sorrow produce?

Answer: Excuses, justifications, false confessions.

10. What was Paul’s main concern in writing his first, stern letter?

Answer: To correct the church.

11. (7:13-16) How had the Corinthians received Titus? Why?

Answer: They received Titus with fear and trembling because they did not want to appear to have drifted or remained in sin that required another scathing rebuke.

Lesson 6: Unequally Yoked
Second Corinthians 6:1-18

1. (6:1-2) What are the implications of verse 2?

Answer: Paul says that the plan of God, known to Him then and kept by the prophets is now revealed in its glory. The justification and salvation for which man pleaded is now evident and must be accepted quickly.

2. (6:3-10) Was it possible for someone to blame his lack of faith on Paul’s habits?

Answer: No.

3. Briefly summarize the report Paul gave on his own ministry here.

Answer: Paul describes the joys and sorrows of his ministry.

4. (6:11-13) What did Paul ask of the Corinthians as they read this letter?

Answer: Open hearts to consider objectively what he was saying.

5. (6:14-18) What is Paul’s command in verse 14? What is his initial reasoning?

Answer: The instruction is to not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. This passage deals with fellowship and condemns joining in another’s sin because righteousness should have no fellowship with lawlessness, nor light communion with darkness.
Lesson 7: Repentance
Second Corinthians 7:1-16

1. (7:1) How do we cleanse ourselves from filthiness (First John 1:9, First Peter 3:20-21)?

2. (7:2-4) What three accusations does Paul deny in verse 2?
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 

3. How had Paul’s boldness of speech been revealed in these two letters?

4. (7:5-7) What brought comfort to Paul when he was in Macedonia?

5. Why was this a source of comfort?