



# 2 Corinthians

TREASURE IN JARS OF CLAY

PART 2  
5:11-9:15

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# Introduction

Before writing the letter we know as 2 Corinthians Paul had found himself in an awkward situation. After writing our 1 Corinthians he had discovered that there were many in Corinth who were still living in flagrant sin. This had precipitated what Paul describes as a painful visit to them (2 Cor 2:1) in which he had to exercise some church discipline, followed by quite a strongly worded letter to them (which has been lost to history). Combined, these understandably caused significant strain in the relationship between Paul and the Corinthian church.

On top of this there were those who Paul sarcastically labels “super apostles” (2 Cor 11:5,12:11) who had crept into the church and were questioning and undermining Paul’s authority. It seems like these super apostles fitted the Corinthian mould, they looked impressive and were trying to build an impressive looking ministry. Part of their critique of Paul was that he wasn’t very impressive and therefore not that worth listening to. Unfortunately it seems that what they were advocating was a powerful and impressive Christianity which was out of step with the humble example of the crucified Lord Jesus.

So Paul had his work cut out for him. 2 Corinthians was written to try and restore the relationship he’d had with them previously. He’s also trying to correct some of their thinking about what authentic Christ-like ministry looks like compared with that of the super apostles. However, never one to miss an opportunity to build up his people, Paul includes, along with the justifications of his ministry, some gold about the nature of the Christian life, how God has acted toward us in Christ and how he calls us to respond to him and those around us.

I’m pretty excited for us to be working our way through this second chunk of 2 Corinthians together. Over the coming years I’m hoping to continue to come back and work our way through the rest of 2 Corinthians.

In Christ,

Chris

# 1 Ministry of reconciliation

2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2

## Getting started

1. Have you ever had someone misunderstand your motives for doing something?

## Explore

### Read 2 Corinthians 5:11-15

2. Have a look back at the previous section in 2 Corinthians. What is the fear of the Lord Paul is talking about? How does that motivate him?

3. The background to this letter is there are people in Corinth trying to undermine Paul's ministry. How does Paul defend the legitimacy of his ministry in verses 12 and 13 against his opponents? What might this tell us about how his opponents did ministry?

4. What does Paul go on to say is his primary motivating force? How and why does this motivate him?

### Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-6:2

5. How does Paul now view the people he tries to minister to?

6. What is the nature of the ministry that God has entrusted Paul with?

7. How does Paul call the Corinthians to respond to his ministry then?

### **Apply**

8. What does this passage tell us about what tactics are appropriate to use in our mission of making disciples?

9. What should we avoid doing in our disciple making?

10. What excites you about being an Ambassador for Christ? What terrifies you about it?

11. What should we remember from this passage so that we aren't crushed by this responsibility but instead motivated to fulfil it?

### **Pray**

# 2 Endurance and love

## 2 Corinthians 6:3-13

### Getting started

1. When someone tells you something, what criteria do you use to assess whether you should believe what they've said or not?

### Explore

#### Read 2 Corinthians 6:3-10

2. What does Paul want to make sure he doesn't do in verse 3?

3. Paul instead thinks that his behaviour has actually served to commend his ministry as legitimate in a number of ways. Summarise the following verses and discuss how they serve to commend the legitimacy of his gospel ministry:

a. v. 4b-5

b. v. 6-7

c. v. 8-10

#### Read 2 Corinthians 6:11-13

4. How has Paul acted toward the Corinthians? How does he want them to respond?

## **.Apply**

5. Are there ways of acting or relating to people that you think might actually be putting a stumbling block in their path to considering Jesus?
  
6. Are there areas in your life where endurance in the face of suffering commend the gospel?
  
7. Are there aspects of your character that you want to grow to better commend the gospel to those around you?
  
8. If Paul thinks that deep mutual affection among Christians also commends the gospel, how might you foster this deep mutual love with others? Who might you do that with?

## **Pray**

# 3 Unequally yoked

2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

## Getting Started

1. Can you think of an example where peer pressure got the better of you?

## Explore

### Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

2. What is the basic command at the beginning of this section? At first glance what do you think this looks like in practice?

3. This passage is often read narrowly to talk only about not marrying an unbeliever. What are the four rhetorical questions Paul asks to make his case? How do these (particularly the last one) help us see what specific activities Paul doesn't want Christians to partner with unbelievers in and why?

4. Do you think this means that you can't have anything to do with unbelievers? Why/why not?

5. What promises of God does Paul remind the Corinthians of to help them follow this command?



**Read 2 Corinthians 7:1**

6. What positive command does Paul give them in this verse? Why?

**Apply**

7. What are some of the idols of the communities that you live and work in?

8. What does it look like to live alongside unbelievers yet not partner with them in their idolatry? Be concrete.

9. What makes this worth it?

**Pray**

# 4 Godly Sorrow

2 Corinthians 7:2-16

## Getting Started

1. Can you think of a time when you felt relief when someone decided to change their mind on something?

## Explore

### Read 2 Corinthians 7:2-4

2. What does Paul long for the Corinthians to do?

3. What do his denials tell us about some of the things people must have been saying about him in the Corinthian church?

4. Despite being slandered by some within the church, how does Paul choose to respond and what does he focus on?

### Read 2 Corinthians 7:5-13

5. What was Paul experiencing in Macedonia? Why do you think he's experiencing these things?

6. What was it about the news Titus carried back to Paul that encouraged him so much in verses 6 & 7?

7. From verse 8 Paul is talking about the severe letter that he wrote them between this letter and 1 Corinthians. Why is he happy in the end he sent it?

**Read 2 Corinthians 7:14-16**

8. What further encouragement does Paul get from the Corinthians? How can this be an encouragement to us?

**Apply**

9. Are there times where you find it easy to fixate on the negative or ungodly aspects of church or other Christians? How might you foster a deep love for your flawed brothers and sisters in Christ instead?

10. When confronted with your own sin how might you foster godly sorrow instead of worldly sorrow? What might that look like in practice?

**Pray**

# 5 Rich Generosity

## 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

### Getting Started

1. Have you ever been wowed by someone else's generosity?

### Explore

#### Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-7

*The background to this passage is that Paul was collecting money from the churches around the Mediterranean to support the struggling Jewish churches who were facing persecution as well as a famine.*

2. What is the grace of God given to the Macedonian churches that Pauls wants the Corinthians to know in verse 2?

3. What does the Macedonian's generosity look like? What characteristics does it have?

4. What does he want the Corinthians to do in light of the Macedonian's generosity?

#### Read 2 Corinthians 8:8-12

5. What does Paul remind the Corinthians of in order to spur them on to generosity?

6. What is the significance of verse 12?

**Read 2 Corinthians 8:13-15**

7. What is Paul's overall desire for this collection for the Jerusalem saints?

**Apply**

8. Is there anything that makes you uncomfortable from this passage? Why?

9. Is it comforting knowing that generosity isn't an absolute thing but proportional to what you have?

10. If you struggle with generosity where is a good place to look?

**Pray**

# 6 Above reproach

2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5

## Getting Started

1. It isn't just important to be above reproach but appear to be above reproach. Discuss?

## Explore

### Read 2 Corinthians 8:16-24

2. Why is Paul thankful for Titus?

3. What are we told about the 'brother' who Paul sends with Titus?

4. Why is it so important that Paul has sent the 'brother' and 'our brother' (v.22) to accompany Titus as he collects their financial gift for the church in Jerusalem?

### Read 2 Corinthians 9:1-5

5. How have the Corinthians themselves been an encouragement to other churches?

6. What is Paul afraid of though?

7. In verse 5 what does Paul want to ensure?

### **Apply**

8. How important is it that churches have good transparent money handling procedures?  
Why?

9. Why is it so important to follow through on commitments to the gospel? Are there ways for you to grow in that?

10. How can you guard your heart so that your giving toward gospel work is generous rather than grudging?

### **Pray**

# 7 Sowing and Reaping

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

## Getting Started

1. What are the big worries that often lead to a lack of generosity?

## Explore

### Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

2. What does Paul call the Corinthians to do? What should be their attitude as they do that?
3. What does he tell us about God that can help give us confidence to be generous?
4. In verse 11 Paul says the Corinthians will be enriched in 'Every' way so they can be generous. What things other than money does God need to give them for true generosity to result?
5. How do you think this passage could be misused? What motives underly this?



6. How might those wary of the prosperity gospel fail to do this passage justice?

**Read 2 Corinthians 9:12-15**

7. What is the outcome Paul wants their generosity to produce?

**Apply**

8. What do you find challenging about this passage? What things do you struggle to believe?

9. How does this passage answer the fears discussed in question 1?

10. How can you grow in your desire for people to thank God for the way you live?

**Pray**







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