

NT SURVEY: PAULINE EPISTLES

Week 3 : Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians

INTRODUCTION

- The goal of these individual overviews of Paul's letter is to give you information about the book which can give you more insight into what Paul meant when he wrote it. Another hope is that you will now have a resource to use when you are studying an individual book.
- As we look at these individual books, we are going to get the technical information out there first.
- Secondly, we are going to dive into the book and look at some of the specific passages that make the book unique, some passages that may be harder to understand or have been misunderstood, and finally, how this relates to the church today.

GALATIANS

Author and Date¹

- There is no reason to question the internal claims that the apostle Paul wrote Galatians (1:1; 5:2).
- Paul addressed this letter to the churches in Galatia, which he founded during his first missionary journey in Acts 13–14.
- In Galatians 2, Paul described his visit to the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 (2:1), so he must have written Galatians after that event. Since most scholars date the Jerusalem Council about A.D. 49, the most likely date for Galatians is shortly thereafter.
- This would put the date of the letter around A.D. 49–50, making it Paul's first canonical writing.

Background and Setting²

- In Paul's day, the word Galatia had two distinct meanings.
 - In a strict ethnic sense, Galatia was the region of central Asia Minor inhabited by the Galatians.
 - There were a Celtic people who had migrated to that region from Gaul (modern day France) in the third century B.C.
 - Galatia became a Roman province in A.D. 25, incorporating some regions not inhabited by ethnic Galatians (e.g., parts of Lycaonia, Phrygia, and Pisidia).

¹ <https://www.gty.org/library/bible-introductions/MSB48/galatians>

² Ibid

- In a political sense, Galatia came to describe the entire Roman province, not merely the region inhabited by the ethnic Galatians.
 - Paul founded churches in the southern Galatian cities of Antioch (13:14–50), Iconium (13:51–14:7; cf. 16:2), Lystra (14:8–19; cf. 16:2), and Derbe (14:20, 21; cf. 16:1)
 - These cities, although within the Roman province of Galatia, were not in the ethnic Galatian region.
- Those two uses of the word Galatia make it more difficult to determine who the original recipients of the epistle were.
 - Some interpret Galatia in its strict racial sense and argue that Paul addressed this epistle to churches in the northern Galatian region, inhabited by the ethnic descendants of the Gauls.
 - Although the apostle apparently crossed the border into the fringes of ethnic Galatia on at least two occasions (Acts 16:6; 18:23), Acts does not record that he founded any churches there.
- Because neither Acts nor Galatians mentions any cities or people from northern Galatia, it is reasonable to believe that Paul addressed this epistle to churches located in the southern part of the Roman province.
 - The churches Paul addressed had been established before the Jerusalem Council (2:5), and the churches of southern Galatia fit that criterion, having been founded during Paul’s first missionary journey before the Council met.
 - Paul did not visit northern (ethnic) Galatia until after the Jerusalem Council (Acts 16:6).
- Paul wrote Galatians to counter Judaizing false teachers who were undermining the central NT doctrine of justification by faith.
- Ignoring the express decree of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:23–29), they spread their dangerous teaching that Gentiles must first become Jewish proselytes and submit to all the Mosaic law before they could become Christians (Gal 1:7; 4:17, 21; 5:2–12; 6:12, 13).
 - Paul wrote this letter to defend justification by faith and warn these churches of the dire consequences of abandoning that essential doctrine.
- Galatians is the only epistle Paul wrote that does not contain a commendation for its readers—the omission reflects how urgently he felt about confronting the defection and defending the essential doctrine of justification.

Historical and Theological Themes³

- Galatians provides valuable historical information about Paul's background, his trip to the Jerusalem Council (2:1–10; cf. Acts 15:1–29), and his confrontation of Peter (2:11–21).
- As already noted, the central theme of Galatians is justification by faith.
 - Paul defends that doctrine (which is the heart of the gospel) both in its theological (Gal 3–4) and practical (Gal 5–6) ramifications.
- He also defends his position as an apostle (Gal 1–2) since, as in Corinth, false teachers had attempted to gain a hearing for their heretical teaching by undermining Paul's credibility.
 - Paul's ministry was in direct contrast to the Judaizers, who were taught through human interpretation and traditions. Rather, Paul received revelation from Christ (1:1, 12).
 - Paul's motives for his defense are not to boast in himself, unlike the false teachers (6:12–13), but rather to boast in Christ (6:14).
- The main theological themes of Galatians are strikingly similar to those of Romans:
 - The inability of the law to justify (2:16; cf. Rom. 3:20)
 - The believer's deadness to the law (2:19; cf. Rom. 7:4)
 - The believer's crucifixion with Christ (2:20; cf. Rom. 6:6)
 - Abraham's justification by faith (3:6; cf. Rom. 4:3)
 - That believers are Abraham's spiritual children (3:7; cf. Rom. 4:10, 11) and therefore blessed (3:9; cf. Rom. 4:23, 24)
 - That the law brings not salvation but God's wrath (3:10; cf. Rom. 4:15)
 - That the just shall live by faith (3:11; cf. Rom. 1:17)
 - The universality of sin (3:22; cf. Rom. 11:32)
 - That believers are spiritually baptized into Christ (3:27; cf. Rom. 6:3)
 - Believers' adoption as God's spiritual children (4:5–7; cf. Rom. 8:14–17)
 - That love fulfills the law (5:14; cf. Rom. 13:8–10)
 - The importance of walking in the Spirit (5:16; cf. Rom. 8:4)
 - The warfare of the flesh against the Spirit (5:17; cf. Rom. 7:23, 25)
 - The importance of believers bearing one another's burdens (6:2; cf. Rom. 15:1)

³ <https://www.gty.org/library/bible-introductions/MSB48/galatians>

Challenging Verses

- **Galatians 3:27 – For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.**
 - This verse is often used as a support for baptismal regeneration, meaning that baptism is necessary for salvation.
 - Is Paul implying that baptism is required for salvation?
 - Paul wrote Galatians to defend justification by faith, rather than by a works-based salvation (2:16, 3:26).
 - To add anything to the gospel is to say that Jesus’ death on the cross was not sufficient to purchase our salvation. To say that baptism is necessary for salvation is to say we must add our own good works and obedience to Christ’s death in order to make it sufficient for salvation. Jesus’ death alone paid for our sins (Ro 5:8; 2 Cor 5:21). Jesus’ payment for our sins is appropriated to our “account” by faith alone (John 3:16; Acts 16:31; Eph 2:8–9). Therefore, baptism is an important step of obedience after salvation but cannot be a requirement for salvation.⁴
 - Paul isn’t talking about water baptism, but rather baptism of the Holy Spirit
 - The indwelling of the Holy Spirit which marks those redeemed by grace, through faith, in Christ.
 - **Romans 8:9** – However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.
- **Galatians 5:3–4 – And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.**
 - Some have questioned whether this verse talks of someone losing their salvation.
 - What does Paul mean when he says they have fallen from grace?
 - It cannot mean that they’ve lost salvation, but they have fallen away from the grace that is offered without the law. In other words, they have fallen from that gracious provision of salvation through faith alone in Christ and what he did on the cross. Why would they do this? **Because they were truly not regenerate** – otherwise, they would not be seeking to be made right with God by keeping the Law.⁵
 - **1 John 2:19** – They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

⁴ <https://www.gotquestions.org/baptism-salvation.html>

⁵ <https://carm.org/about-salvation/does-galatians-54-teach-that-we-can-lose-our-salvation/>

- **John 6:39** – This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.
- **Galatians 6:15–16** – **For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.**
 - What is Paul referencing when he talks of the “Israel of God”?
 - Is the “Israel of God” talking of New Covenant believers (i.e., the church)?
 - Paul isn’t teaching replacement theology – meaning the church replacing Israel
 - **Romans 11:1** – I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!
 - The “Israel of God” are believing Jews
 - There are Jews who are who are circumcised on the outside, but not circumcised in the heart.
 - **Romans 9:6** – For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel.

KEY VERSES

- **Galatians 2:16** – Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So, we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.
- **Galatians 2:20** – I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
- **Galatians 3:11** – Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, ‘The righteous will live by faith.’
- **Galatians 3:24** – Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.
- **Galatians 5:22–23** – But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let’s follow the Spirit as well. Let’s not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.
- **Galatians 6:1–2** – Brothers and sisters, even if a person is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual are to restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you are not tempted as well. Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

1 CORINTHIANS

Author and Date⁶

- As indicated in the first verse, the epistle was written by the Apostle Paul.
 - Internally, the apostle claimed to have written the epistle (1 Cor 1:1, 13; 3:4–6; 4:15; 16:21).
 - Externally, this correspondence has been acknowledged as genuine since A.D. 95 by Clement of Rome, who was writing to the Corinthian church.
 - Other early Christian leaders who authenticated Paul as author include Ignatius (ca. A.D. 110), Polycarp (ca. A.D. 135), and Tertullian (ca. A.D. 200).
- This epistle was most likely written in the first half of A.D. 55 from Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8, 9, 19) while Paul was on his third missionary journey.
 - The apostle intended to remain on at Ephesus to complete his 3 year stay (Acts 20:31) until Pentecost (May/June) A.D. 55 (1 Cor 16:8). Then he hoped to winter at Corinth (1 Cor 16:6; Acts 20:2). His departure for Corinth was anticipated even as he wrote (1 Cor 4:19; 11:34; 16:8).

Background and Setting⁷

- The city of Corinth was located in southern Greece, in what was the Roman province of Achaia.
 - Corinth is near the middle of a 4-mile-wide isthmus and is prominently situated on a high plateau.
 - For centuries, all N-S land traffic in that area had to pass through or near this ancient city.
 - Since travel by sea around the Peloponnesus involved a 250-mile voyage that was dangerous and time consuming, most captains carried their ships on skids across the isthmus directly past Corinth.
 - Corinth understandably prospered as a major trade city, not only for most of Greece but for much of the Mediterranean area, including North Africa, Italy, and Asia Minor.
 - The Isthmian games, one of the two most famous athletic events of that day (the other being the Olympic games), was hosted by Corinth, causing more people-traffic.
- Even by the pagan standards of its own culture, Corinth became so morally corrupt that its very name became synonymous with debauchery and moral depravity.
 - To “corinthianize” came to represent gross immorality and drunken debauchery.
 - In 1 Cor 6:9–10, Paul lists some of the specific sins for which the city was noted and which formerly had characterized many believers in the church there. Tragically, some of the worst sins were still found among some church members. One of those sins, incest, was condemned even by most pagan Gentiles (5:1).

⁶ <https://www.gty.org/library/bible-introductions/MSB46/first-corinthians>

⁷ Ibid

- Like most ancient Greek cities, Corinth had an acropolis, a “high city”, which rose 2,000 feet and was used both for defense and for worship.
 - The most prominent edifice on the acropolis was a temple to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love.
 - The priestesses, who were “religious” prostitutes, lived and worked there and came down into the city in the evening to offer their services to male citizens and foreign visitors.
- The church in Corinth was founded by Paul on his second missionary journey (Act 18).
 - His ministry began in the synagogue, where he was assisted by two Jewish believers, Priscilla and Aquila, with whom he lived for a while and who were fellow tradesmen, with Silas and Timothy joining soon after.
 - When most of the Jews resisted the gospel, he left the synagogue, but not before Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, his family, and many other Corinthians were converted (Acts 18:5–8).
- After ministering in Corinth for over a year and a half (Acts 18:11), Paul was brought before a Roman tribunal by some of the Jewish leaders.
 - Because the charges were strictly religious and not civil, the proconsul, Gallio, dismissed the case.
 - Shortly after that, Paul took Priscilla and Aquila with him to Ephesus. From there he returned to Israel (vv. 18–22).
- The church at Corinth was exceptionally factional (1:11, 11:18), showing their carnality and immaturity.
 - After Apollos had ministered in the church for some time, his admirers established a clique and had little to do with the rest of the church. Another group developed that was loyal to Paul, another claimed allegiance to Peter (Cephas), and still another to Christ alone (1 Cor 1:10–13; 3:1–9).
- The most serious problem of the Corinthian church was worldliness, an unwillingness to divorce the culture around them.
 - Most of the believers could not consistently separate themselves from their old, selfish, immoral, and pagan ways.
 - It became necessary for Paul to write to correct this, as well as to command the faithful Christians not only to break fellowship with the disobedient and unrepentant members, but to put those members out of the church (5:9–13).
- Before he wrote this inspired letter, Paul had written the church other correspondence (5:9), which was also corrective in nature.
 - Because a copy of that letter has never been discovered, it has been referred to as “the lost epistle.”
 - The Corinthians responded with a letter of their own, requesting clarification on some issues (7:1).
 - To their letter, as well as the reports given about the Corinthian church, Paul responded with the letter of First Corinthians.

Historical and Theological Themes⁸

- Although the major thrust of this epistle is corrective of behavior rather than of doctrine, Paul teaches on many doctrines that directly relate to the matters of sin and righteousness.
 - Paul deals with the cross, divine wisdom and human wisdom, the work of the Spirit in illumination, carnality, eternal rewards, the transformation of salvation, sanctification, the nature of Christ, union with Him, the divine role for women, marriage and divorce, Spirit baptism, indwelling and gifting, the unity of the church in one body, the theology of love, and the doctrine of resurrection.
- Paul understood that wrong living always stems from wrong belief.
 - Sexual sins for example, including divorce, are inevitably related to disobeying God’s plan for marriage and the family (7:1–40).
 - Proper worship is determined by such things as recognition of God’s holy character (3:17), the spiritual identity of the church (12:12–27) and pure partaking of the Lord’s Supper (11:17–34).
 - It is not possible for the church to be edified faithfully and effectively unless believers understand and exercise their spiritual gifts (12:1–14:40).
 - The importance of the doctrine of the resurrection, of course, cannot be overestimated because if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then preaching is empty and so is faith (15:13, 14).
- In addition to those themes, Paul deals briefly with God’s judgment of believers, the right understanding of which will produce right motives for godly living (3:13–15).
 - The right understanding of idols and of false gods, in general, was to help the immature Corinthians think maturely about such things as eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols (8:1–11:1).
 - The right understanding and expression of genuine, godly love was mandatory to right use of the gifts and even to right knowledge about all the things of God (13:1–13).

Challenging Verses

- **1 Corinthians 9:19–23**
 - Becoming all things to all men (e.g., Jews, those under the Law, those without law, the weak)
 - Is Paul seeking to compromise with various peoples in order to spread the gospel?
 - Some have seen this as evidence for what’s known as the “seeker-sensitive” movement.
 - Becoming like the world to draw people in and give opportunity for them to hear the gospel.
 - At face value, it sounds effective, so what’s the problem?
 - Though we’re called to witness in the world, we are not to be “of the world”
 - **John 15:18** – If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If

⁸ <https://www.gty.org/library/bible-introductions/MSB46/first-corinthians>

you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

- Rather than compromising God’s Word and commands for how he is to live, Paul is talking about giving up his liberties for the sake of the gospel. (9:23)
 - In 1 Cor 8, Paul writes of limits to our Christian liberties, giving the example of eating meat sacrificed to idols.
 - Though a believer may not have issue with eating eat, they should be careful not to become a stumbling block to a weaker brother (8:9–11).
 - In 1 Cor 9, Paul then talks of giving up his own liberties so that it would not hinder his ministry to others.

- **1 Corinthians 11:2–16**

- This passage discusses head coverings for women.
 - Is this text *prescriptive or descriptive*?
 - Should Christian women wear head coverings today?
- What was the purpose for the head coverings in Corinth?⁹
 - A veil or covering on the head of a believing Corinthian wife showed that she was under the authority of her husband, and therefore under submission to God.
 - Paul is teaching the Corinthians that hair length or the wearing of a covering by the woman was an outward indication of a heart attitude of submission to God and to His established authority.
- This was a cultural symbol (*descriptive*) to illustrate the principle of obedient submission to God’s authority (*prescriptive*).
- This emphasizes that while men and women are valued equally to the Lord (9:11–12), there is distinction in that they have be given different divinely mandated roles.

- **1 Corinthians 12–14**

- 1 Corinthians 12–14 deal with the use of spiritual gifts in the church.
 - Speaking Gifts (prophecy, knowledge, wisdom, teaching, and exhortation)
 - Serving Gifts (leadership, helping, giving, mercy, faith, and discernment)
 - Sign Gifts (miracles, healings, tongues, interpretation of tongues)
- Are all of these still in effect today?
 - Cessationists – All but the sign gifts are still in operation
 - Continuatonists – All gifts are in effect until the coming of Christ
- What is the purpose of the spiritual gifts?

⁹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/head-coverings.html>

- **1 Corinthians 12:7** – But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.
 - The spiritual gifts are for the edification of the body (12:12–30, Romans 12:4–8)
 - Do the sign gifts fulfill this purpose?
 - In Exodus 7, when God gave Moses miraculous signs for Pharaoh, it was so that “the Egyptians shall know that [He is] the LORD.”
 - In 1 Kings 18, Elijah prayed that the LORD would send fire to consume the altar, he did it so the “people may know that You, O LORD, are God (1 Ki 18:36–37).
 - When the nobleman in John 4 asks Jesus to heal his son, Jesus responds, saying, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe” (John 4:48).
 - Even in the context of 1 Corinthians, Paul explains that “tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers” (1 Cor 14:22).
 - The purpose of the sign gifts is not the edification of the church, but rather as a means of authenticating the work of the prophets and apostles and their message as the true word of God.
 - Because we have the completed canon of Scripture, these gifts are no longer needed.
- **1 Corinthians 15:22** – **For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.**
 - Is this text teaching universal salvation for all mankind?
 - The issue comes when we see the word “all” describing those in Adam and those in Christ.
 - What is the context of the passage?
 - In v. 21, we see the reason for the comparison of Adam and Christ, and through this, the necessity of Christ’s human nature.
 - Because of Adam’s sin, he brought sin and death upon the whole human race.
 - Through Christ and His resurrection, life is offered to the human race.
 - Who will receive this resurrection?
 - V. 23 – Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming...
 - This passage is not supporting universal salvation but is simply giving the means by which all who are called will be made alive (Gal 3:26–29, Eph 1:3–14, Tit 3:7).

2 CORINTHIANS

Author and Date¹⁰

- That the Apostle Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, this highly personal, biographical epistle, is uncontested.
- Several considerations establish a feasible date for the writing of this letter.
 - During Paul’s third missionary journey (A.D. 52), he ministered in Ephesus for about 2 1/2 years (Acts 19:8–10).
 - Paul wrote 1 Cor from Ephesus toward the close of that period (1 Cor 16:8), most likely in A.D. 55.
 - Since Paul planned to stay in Ephesus until the following spring (1 Cor. 16:8), and 2 Corinthians was written after he left Ephesus, the date for 2 Corinthians is likely late A.D. 55 or early A.D. 56.

Background and Setting¹¹

- Planning to remain at Ephesus longer (1 Cor 16:8, 9), Paul sent Timothy to Corinth (4:17; 16:10, 11).
 - News reached Paul of further difficulties at Corinth, including the arrival of false apostles.
 - To create the platform to teach their false gospel, they began by assaulting the character of Paul.
- Temporarily abandoning the work at Ephesus, Paul went immediately to Corinth.
 - This “painful visit” (2:1), was not a successful one from Paul’s perspective; someone in the Corinthian church (possibly one of the false apostles) even openly insulted him (2:5–8, 10; 7:12).
 - Saddened by the Corinthians’ lack of loyalty to defend him, seeking to spare them further reproof (1:23), and perhaps hoping time would bring them to their senses, Paul returned to Ephesus.
 - From Ephesus, Paul wrote a more “severe letter” (2:4) and sent it with Titus to Corinth (7:5–16).
- Leaving Ephesus after a riot sparked by Demetrius (Acts 19:23–20:1), Paul went to Troas to meet Titus.
- But Paul was so anxious for news of how the Corinthians had responded to the “severe letter” that he could not minister there though the Lord had opened the door (2:12, 7:5).
 - So, he left for Macedonia to look for Titus (2:13). To Paul’s immense relief and joy, Titus met him with the news that the majority of the Corinthians had repented of their rebellion against Paul (7:7).
- Knowing that some rebellious attitudes still smoldered under the surface, and could erupt again, Paul wrote the Corinthians the letter known as 2 Corinthians.
 - In this letter, though the apostle expressed his relief and joy at their repentance (7:8–16), his main concern was to:
 - Defend his apostleship (1–7)
 - Exhort them to resume preparations for the collection for the poor at Jerusalem (8–9)
 - Confront the false apostles head on (10–13)

¹⁰ <https://www.gty.org/library/bible-introductions/MSB47/second-corinthians>

¹¹ Ibid

Historical and Theological Themes¹²

- Second Corinthians contains important biographical data on Paul throughout.
- Although an intensely personal letter, written by the apostle in the heat of battle against those attacking his credibility, 2 Corinthians contains several important theological themes.
 - It portrays God the Father as a merciful comforter (1:3; 7:6), the Creator (4:6), the One who raised Jesus from the dead (4:14; cf. 13:4), and who will raise believers as well (1:9).
 - Jesus Christ is the One who suffered (1:5), who fulfilled God’s promises (1:20), who was the proclaimed Lord (4:5), who manifested God’s glory (4:6), and the One who in His incarnation became poor for believers (8:9; cf. Phil. 2:5–8).
 - It portrays the Holy Spirit as God (3:17, 18) and the guarantee of believers’ salvation (1:22; 5:5).
 - Satan is identified as the “god of this age” (4:4; cf. 1 John 5:19), a deceiver (11:14), and the leader of human and angelic deceivers (11:15).
 - The end times include both the believer’s glorification (4:16–5:8) and his judgment (5:10).
 - The glorious truth of God’s sovereignty in salvation is the theme of 5:14–21, while 7:9, 10 sets forth man’s response to God’s offer of salvation-genuine repentance.
 - It also presents the most concise summary of the substitutionary atonement of Christ found in Scripture (5:21) and defines the mission of the church to proclaim reconciliation (5:18–20).
 - Finally, the nature of the New Covenant receives its fullest exposition outside the book of Hebrews (3:6–16).
- Another major theme in 2 Corinthians is suffering.
 - Two hardship lists attest to Paul’s sufferings as an apostle (2 Cor 6:4–10; 11:23–29).
 - Paul speaks of a recent, unspecified affliction that left him without hope of survival (2 Cor 1:3–11).
 - Paul speaks of a “thorn in the flesh” that was tormenting him (2 Cor 12:7)
 - He notes that in the midst of his affliction he received God’s gracious deliverance, and he is confident that he will receive God’s deliverance again if the Corinthians pray (1 Cor 1:10–11, 12:9–10).
 - Paul viewed his entire ministry as following the model of the suffering Christ, noting that throughout the letter Paul identifies the difficulties he endures “on behalf of” Christ (e.g., 2 Cor 4:5; 5:20; 12:10).
 - But the apostle also recognizes the temporary and relative nature of suffering when compared with eternal glory (2 Cor 4:17).¹³

¹² <https://www.gty.org/library/bible-introductions/MSB47/second-corinthians>

¹³ Brown, D. R., Twist, E. T., & Widder, W. (2013). *2 Corinthians*. (D. Mangum & J. D. Barry, Eds.). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Challenging Verses

- **2 Corinthians 1–9 & 2 Corinthians 10–13**

- As Paul's tone in 1 Corinthians 10 seems to change, some have wondered if chapters 10–13 were not originally part of the same letter as chapters 1–9.
 - Some say chapters 10–13 were originally part of the sever letter (2:4) that Paul sent prior to writing 2 Corinthians.
 - Some say that these chapters were part of a letter that came after 2 Corinthians, in response to further news that Paul received about the false teachers in Corinth.
 - Some say that they are part of the same letter, but that there was a pause in Paul's writing between chapters 9 and 10, where he received further news from Corinth.
- Some evidence against this claim:
 - There is no historical evidence (early translations, early church fathers) that this portion of the letter was ever circulated separately
 - All Greek manuscripts have them following chapters 1–9
- So, while Paul was writing to those in Corinth who had repented, he understood that there were still those swayed by the false teachers that needed to be addressed.

- **2 Corinthians 5:10 – For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive compensation for his deeds done through the body, in accordance with what he has done, whether good or bad.**

- What is the judgment that Paul is speaking of?
 - The Greek word used here for the judgment seat is “bēmatos”
 - This was traditionally where Olympic athletes would go to receive their prizes
- Paul is not speaking of the judgment of sinners, as Christ has paid the penalty of sin for all those who believe
- Rather, Paul is talking of the bema judgment where believers will receive rewards for their obedience in life (i.e., deeds of the body...whether good or bad)
 - **1 Corinthians 3:12–15** – gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw

- **2 Corinthians 12:7 – Because of the extraordinary greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!**

- What is the identity of Paul's “thorn in the flesh”?
- The identification can be narrowed to three categories:
 - Physical issues that Paul suffered – migraines, malarial fever, epilepsy, or an issue with Paul's eyesight (Gal 4:13–15)

- In Galatians 4:13–15, Paul describes a bodily illness that was a trial to the Galatians as they received him. Some have considered if it was an issue with his eyesight.
- Oppositional issues in the form of persecution from false teachers or demons throughout his ministry
 - A term used in apposition (grammatically parallel, referring to the same thing) to ‘thorn in the flesh’ is ‘messenger of Satan’.
 - The word for messenger, *angelos*, often refers to angels. An angel of Satan would, then, be referring to a demon.
 - Also, given the context of this portion of the letter, where Paul is speaking against false teachers in Corinth, it’s possible that it could be persecution that Paul faced.
- Psychological issues either from sinful temptations or spiritual trials (Ro 7:22–24)
 - Roman Catholic writers often adopt this view, as the Latin Vulgate translates ‘thorn in the flesh’ as *stimulus carnis*, pointing to a besetting sin that Paul struggled with.
 - Martin Luther, however, viewed the thorn as spiritual trials that Paul was facing.
 - This could fit the context, given the distress from the Corinthian church.
- Regardless of the identity of the thorn, we see the purpose of Paul including this in the letter.
 - As Paul was defending his ministry, he was not boasting in his own strength, but the Lord’s.
 - Paul was able to boast in his weakness, understanding that the Lord’s grace is sufficient to sustain him (2 Cor 12:9–10).

KEY VERSES

- **1 Corinthians 1:10** – Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.
- **1 Corinthians 1:30–31** – But it is due to Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written: “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”
- **1 Corinthians 2:14–16** – But a natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. But the one who is spiritual discerns all things, yet he himself is discerned by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.
- **1 Corinthians 3:6–7** – I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters are anything, but God who causes the growth.
- **1 Corinthians 6:9–11** – Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor those habitually drunk, nor verbal abusers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such

were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

- **1 Corinthians 6:18–20** – Flee sexual immorality. Every other sin that a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought for a price: therefore, glorify God in your body.
- **1 Corinthians 9:25–27** – Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. So, they do it to obtain a perishable wreath, but we, an imperishable. Therefore, I run in such a way as not to run aimlessly; I box in such a way, as to avoid hitting air; but I strictly discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.
- **1 Corinthians 10:13** – No temptation has overtaken you except something common to mankind; and God is faithful, so He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.
- **1 Corinthians 11:23–29** (The Lord’s Supper)
- **1 Corinthians 12:12** – For just as the body is one and yet has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.
- **1 Corinthians 13:13** – But now faith, hope, and love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.
- **1 Corinthians 15:3–4** – For I handed down to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures
- **2 Corinthians 4:16–18** – Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer person is decaying, yet our inner person is being renewed day by day. For our momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.
- **2 Corinthians 5:17** – Therefore if anyone is in Christ, this person is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.
- **2 Corinthians 6:14** – Do not be mismatched with unbelievers; for what do righteousness and lawlessness share together, or what does light have in common with darkness?
- **2 Corinthians 9:7** – Each one must do just as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
- **2 Corinthians 10:5** – We are destroying arguments and all arrogance raised against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ
- **2 Corinthians 12:9–10** – And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in distresses, in persecutions, in difficulties, on behalf of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

HOW DO THESE BOOKS RELATE TO AND HELP THE CHURCH TODAY?

Galatians

- It discusses the centrality of justification by faith and sanctification by the Holy Spirit, and that it should affect how we are living (Gal 2:20; 5:22–25).
- It shows the purpose of the Law (Gal 3:19–26)
- It reminds us that as believers, we are free from the bondage of sin (Gal 4:3–9).
- It gives instruction on how to handle fellow believers walking in sin (Gal 6:1).

1 & 2 Corinthians

- They stress the application of salvation to the life of the church, including:
 - The necessity of unity within the body (1 Cor 1:10), even if that means giving up our liberties (1 Cor 8:9–12), understanding that we are all one body, with Christ as the head (1 Cor 12:12–27).
 - The use of spiritual gifts for the building up of the body, in an attitude of loving others more than ourselves (1 Cor 12–14)
 - Those who minister in the church are completely dependent on the Lord for all things (1 Cor 1:30–31; 3:6–7; 2 Cor 3:4–5; 12:9–10)
- They stress the importance of thinking and living rightly, as those redeemed in Christ (1 Cor 6:9–11, 18–20; 9:25–27; 2 Cor 5:17; 10:5).
- They provide hope for those who are suffering (1 Cor 10:13; 2 Cor 4:16–18; 12:9–10).
- They give instruction on, and the significance of, taking the Lord's table properly (1 Cor 11:23–29).
- They're helpful in evangelism, knowing that the natural man cannot understand the things of God without first having his heart changed (1 Cor 2:14).