

# Outline of 2 Corinthians

We sincerely hope this outline of 2 Corinthians will help you as you endeavor to study God's holy Word — His letter to you.

2 Corinthians is the second of two letters to the Corinthians written by Paul that is preserved for us. It is the fifth letter of Paul's that we have preserved, following Galatians (49-50 A.D.), 1 & 2 Thessalonians (51 A.D.), and 1 Corinthians. At the time of writing Paul is in Macedonia on the way to Corinth near the end of his third missionary journey, somewhere around A.D. 56. (2 Corinthians 2:13; 7:5; 9:1-4).

Paul had first been in Corinth in 51 A.D. on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-18) and stayed for 18 months (Acts 18:11). He began the church there. Then, on his third missionary journey, Paul traveled to Ephesus and spent two years there (Acts 19:10). Sometime, apparently during this time, he wrote a letter to the Corinthians, in which he warned of keeping company with sexually immoral people (1 Corinthians 5:9). Thereafter, he received information from Chloe that there were divisions in the church. The church also requested more instruction in the area of marriage. Paul responded with the letter we know as 1 Corinthians.

Thereafter, on a journey that is not recorded in Acts, Paul left Ephesus and traveled to Corinth, on a trip we know as the painful visit (2 Corinthians 2:1; 12:14; 13:1-2). This was not a pleasant visit for Paul.

Paul then returned to Ephesus and wrote a sorrowful letter (2 Corinthians 2:4; 7:8) probably in the early part of 56 A.D. This letter is apparently carried by Titus to Corinth (2 Corinthians 12:18). Paul then went to Troas to find Titus and hear the news but Titus did not come (2 Corinthians 2:12-13). Paul crossed over to Europe and found Titus, who relayed the good news of the Corinthian acceptance of and repentance over Paul's third letter (2 Corinthians 7:5-16).

Paul then wrote a fourth letter (A.D. 56), which we know as 2 Corinthians, to express his thankfulness and to prepare the Corinthians for his third visit. He arrived in Corinth and apparently spent the winter there (Acts 20:3; 1 Corinthians 16:6).

Paul expressed a great deal of sorrow in this letter. He was led to defend his conduct again and again. The word "commend" is found nine times in this book (only 16 times in all of the New Testament). He felt compelled to explain his motives again and again (2 Corinthians 1:17, 23; 2:4, 9; 3:1; 4:15; 5:9, 12; 6:4-10; 7:2; 9:5; 10:1; 11:5-6, 22-33; 12:11-13; 17; 13:3, 6). This was very uncharacteristic of Paul. One word comes out again and again, and it is "you" in the accusative. Very seldom is the "you" used to exhort or command, but it is used to show Paul's concern. 59 times the plural "you" in the accusative is used, a third more than in any other book (Matthew is second with 37 instances). Paul spoke of grief or sorrow 18 times (the word is found only 42 times in all of the New Testament — almost 1/2 of the times in 2 Corinthians). Paul spoke of affliction or tribulation 12 times, more than in any other book (only 45 times in the New Testament — over 1/4 of the times in 2 Corinthians).

On the other hand, only Romans uses the term "grace" more (24 times in Romans, 12 times in 2 Corinthians and Ephesians). The same is true of the term "righteousness" (36 times in Romans, 7 times in 2 Corinthians). And the word "comfort" is found 136 times in the New Testament of which 29 instances (nearly one out of every four) is found in 2 Corinthians).

The book is about suffering and sorrow, but also about grace and comfort. But more than anything, it is a book about Jesus Christ, and Paul's focus on Him. There are somewhere around 89 references to Christ in these 13 chapters.

The book also mentions all three members of the Trinity in one verse, a relatively rare event in Scripture (2 Corinthians 13:14).

**Date:** 56 A.D.

**Structure:**

Paul begins his book by opening up his thoughts for their examination, his pain, his sorrow, and his motivation for service (1-7). He closes this section with a call for holiness (6:11-7:16). Paul then spends two chapters developing the subject of giving (8-9). He closes the book with preparations for his imminent arrival in chapters 10-13. Near the end of this last section, he again calls for personal examination (13:5).

**I. Salutation 1:1-2**

**II. An Open Heart 1:3-7:16**

A. Great Suffering 1:3-11

1. Enables us to extend comfort 1:3-5
2. Works for your salvation 1:6-7
3. Relieved through your prayers 1:8-11

B. Intent to Visit 1:12-2:11 (Not to have dominion)

1. I did not hesitate 1:12-24
2. But did not want to come in sorrow 2:1-11

C. My Motivation 2:12-6:10

1. The leading of God 2:12-17
2. The human epistles 3:1-6
3. The glorious covenant 3:7-18
4. The powerful light 4:1-6
5. The unconquerable soul 4:7-18
6. The eternal hope 5:1-8
7. The great aim 5:9-11
8. The compelling love 5:12-21
9. Total devotion 6:1-10

D. Your Holiness 6:11-7:16

1. Don't be yoked with the world 6:11-7:1
2. I am concerned for your holiness 7:2-12
3. I am confidence in you 7:13-16

**III. An Open Hand 8-9**

A. The example of the Macedonians 8:1-7

B. The example of Christ 8:8-15

C. Being accountable to be above blame 8:16-24

- D. Be prepared 9:1-5
- E. The joy of giving 9:6-15

#### **IV. An Open Visit 10-13:10**

- A. Taking on every disobedience 10:1-6
- B. Paul's authority 10:7-18
- C. Paul verses the false teachers 11:1-15
- D. Paul's boasting according to the flesh 11:16-33
- E. Paul's pleasure in weakness 12:1-13
- F. Paul's concern for the Corinthians 12:14-21
- G. Paul's warning to the church 13:1-10

#### **V. Closing 13:11-14**

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**Key Idea:** Suffering and Joy are two sides to Ministry

**Key Passage:** [4:10]

1:3-4; 2:14; 3:5, 18; 4:7, 16; 5:9-10, 20-21; 6:17-18; 7:1; 8:9; 9:6-7; 10:4-6; 11:2, 22-33; 12:9-10, 15; 13:4-5, 14

**Key Lesson:** Do everything to please Jesus Christ (5:9)