

# Intro to II CORINTHIANS

**Author:** This is the third of 13 NT books written by the Apostle Paul, and the second of two letters sent to the church at Corinth.

**Purpose for the second letter to Corinth:** The subject matter of this second letter to the Corinthian church is the apostolic ministry and Paul's defense of it. It is a continuation of the discussion that he began in I Corinthians, and is divided into two distinct sections. Our discussion will center on those two divisions.

## Section One: The Apostolic Ministry (Chapters 1—9)

### Chapter 1 / Intro

Paul begins by giving praise to God for being the Father of all comfort in times of distress and trial. It sets the stage for the rest of the intro, as Paul shares concerning the hardships they endured in the province of Asia. In the rest of the chapter, as well as into **Chapter 2 and Chapter 3**, Paul explains some of his methodology as an ambassador of the Gospel, and why he chose not to make a return trip to the church. In this context he declares that he operated with pure motive. "Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom, but according to God's grace." (1:12) He ends this discourse by saying that "our competence comes from God. He has made us ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter, but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (3:5,6)

With that, he introduces the apostolic ministry of the new covenant in verses 7—18 of chapter 3—a covenant based, not on the law of the Old Testament, but upon Christ, and the Spirit that he sent to dwell within the hearts of men.

### Chapter 4/ Jars of Clay

Paul shares his heart as to his true and sincere motive for sharing the gospel. In chapter 4, he shares some of the better known scripture passages in this book, as he declares that we have this treasure in "jars of clay" to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not from us.

### Chapter 5 / On the Heavenly Dwelling

Paul makes the case that we, as believers, walk by faith and not by sight, and that the true reality for the believer is the eternal world of heaven, not the temporal world of earth. This is what fuels his quest to take the gospel of reconciliation to as many people as he can.

### Chapter 6 / Being "in" the world but not "of" it

In light of this eternal reality, Paul urges the Corinthians to maintain their steadfast ministry, despite the hardships and trials that it may bring. He warns them, however, to not be unequally "yoked" with unbelievers, meaning that our most intimate relationships should not be with those who would seek to sway us in our beliefs.

### Chapter 7/ Paul's Personal Notes

Paul shares some personal thoughts in regard to his first letter and the pointed honesty from which he wrote it. If they were hurt by it, Paul says, then he is confident that the hurt led to their repentance.

### Chapters 8 and 9/ Paul Encourages Generosity

Here, Paul discusses the topic of giving and encourages the Corinthians to be generous in their giving and joyful in their generosity. In Chapter 9, he reminds them of the principle of the farm by saying that "he who sows sparingly will reap sparingly and he who sows generously will reap likewise"

## **Section Two: Paul's Defense of the Apostolic Ministry (Chapters 9—13)**

### **Chapter 10 / Paul and His Defense**

Paul establishes the true enemy of the ministry. It is not flesh and blood, rather it is spiritual strongholds. Here Paul emphasizes that the true enemy is the negative attack on the mind. He stresses that he “takes captive every thought and makes it obedient to Christ.”

### **Chapter 11 / Paul and the False Apostles**

Paul distinguishes his actions and his methodology from those who would come into their fold and preach a doctrine other than what he preached to them. What differentiates him from the rest, he says, is the reality of his sincere and genuine love for the Corinthians.

In the latter part of Chapter 11, Paul makes his case even more bona fide by pointing out the various sufferings and trials he has faced by his advancement of the gospel. To summarize his appeal, Paul seems to be saying, “I was entitled to be taken care of financially for what I do...I waived that right. On top of that, I continue to suffer because of the work I do. What would be my motive unless the motive was pure and genuine?”

### **Chapter 12 / Paul and His Thorn**

Paul begins chapter 12 by revealing a magnificent vision that God gave him, allowing him to see things in the “third heaven,” as Paul calls it. To keep him from being too prideful about it, God allowed Paul to suffer a “thorn in the flesh.” Paul prayed three times for God to relieve him of it, but God’s answer was “My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in your weakness.”

### **Chapter 13 / Paul's Final Thoughts**

Paul’s final remarks challenge the Corinthians to set for themselves a higher bar, a higher standard for living. And he also asks them to examine themselves, test, or evaluate themselves, to see where they stand in light of this walk of faith. “Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, and live in peace”

#### **II Corinthians Key Verses:**

**II Corinthians 4:3-4** “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

**II Corinthians 4:17** “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”

**II Corinthians 6:2** “For he says, “In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.” I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.”

**II Corinthians 8:9** “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”

**II Corinthians 10:5** “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

**II Corinthians 12:7, 9-10** “because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”