

2 Corinthians

Who, When, Where

Written by Paulus (Paul). Paulus was originally a fanatical Pharisee, persecuting, imprisoning, and even killing Christians for teaching what he thought was heresy; that Yeshua was the Anointed, (The Jewish Messiah). After meeting Yeshua in a miraculous way on the road to Damascus, Paulus became not just a Christian but one of Christianity's most fervent preachers and teachers. He spent most of his life as an itinerant missionary, with all the life threatening perils that that brought with it, to the towns and cities which lay along the route between Jerusalem and Rome. Paulus died in Rome somewhere in the 60's AD, and he wrote most of the letters which we have in the New Testament. In Acts 18 we read about Paulus' arrival in Corinth, (around AD51), where he stayed for a year and a half. That was his first visit. This letter references the second visit, and says he's soon going to visit a third time. So probably somewhere between AD55-57. Paulus actually says in this letter he's visiting the Macedonians, so for once we know for sure where a letter was written from.

Summary

A letter about being willing to suffer, but also about being consoled by the compassion of Yahweh when we do, and then learning from that to be compassionate ourselves, and to console those around us in their suffering.

It is very much about not relying on, or judging by, the flesh, but relying only on the spirit, judging only by the spirit. And even when we do need to judge others by the spirit... to do so in love so they are not crushed, but led instead to repentance.

How about you? Are you powerful?
Do you know your Bible?
You know it's not **your** Bible right?
And that any power you have at all is not because you're smart, or you spend a lot of time studying. It is only because the holy spirit has shown you something.

Before You Read

Do you ever wish you were dead?
Not in a suicidal kind of way, but like you just can't wait for this to all be over and you can live in your eternal body and be done with all this suffering and pain that is part of life on Earth?

What are the best ways we can reach the lost?
What "weapons" do we have at our disposal to do that?
How important are financing and training in that battle?

What's the difference between worldly sadness, and godly sadness?

How can you work out how "good" a Christian you are?
How can you work out how "good" a Christian someone else is?

Key Verses

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

God, the father of our lord Yeshua the Anointed, is blessed, the father of compassion and the god of all consolation, who consoles us in all our distress, so that we have the ability to console those who are in all kinds of distress, through the consolation with which we ourselves are being consoled by God.

When you suffer, God shows his compassion to you and consoles you. How can you use what you learn through that, to show compassion and console other people who are suffering?
Can you think of a way you can do that for someone today?

2 Corinthians 1:20

For as many as there are promises of God, in him they're "Yes", and in him they're "Amen", to the glory of God through us.

Yeshua is the fulfilment of every promise God ever made in the Old Testament. In him, everything is yes. It's all positive, there is no negative in him at all.
How awesome.

2 Corinthians 3:15-17

And even to this day, when Moshe is read, a veil lies on their hearts. Yet whenever they should turn around to the lord, the veil is lifted away. And the lord is the spirit, and where the spirit of the lord is, there's freedom.

Because our own thinking was veiled for so long, we really struggle to believe we can become righteous without fulfilling all those old commandments. But this is the liberating reality. Someone else fulfilled them for us. And in doing so he actually removed them completely. The Law was on the cross too. It also died that day. It is no more. Christians literally have freedom. And we are **not** under any law.

2 Corinthians 4:5

For we aren't proclaiming ourselves, but Anointed Yeshua, the lord, and ourselves your slaves because of Yeshua.

How about your church? Does it come across as more about promoting your denomination that it does promoting Yeshua, and ONLY Yeshua?

How about you, personally?
You OK with just being a slave to your church and not fussed if you never get any recognition for what you do?

2 Corinthians 4:7-9

And we have this treasure in earthenware vessels, so that the superiority of the power might be of God and not from us, being pressured in everything but not being crushed, being perplexed but not being in despair; being persecuted but not being abandoned, being knocked down but not being destroyed

Humans are actually pretty frail.
So when our enemies see us suffering greatly, but then we come through it. Time after time. It gets their attention. They ask, "How can this person endure this, when I know for sure I couldn't possibly?"
The answer is God gets us through, not our own resolve. And we must make sure that God is the one who gets the credit for it. The one who is glorified.

2 Corinthians 5:7

For we walk by faith, not through what's seen.

This one is pretty self explanatory right?
But it's good to be reminded. What you see in front of you, as where your life is heading, might look pretty bleak. But if you're relying on God, you will be OK. (Not that you won't suffer, but that you'll be OK even if you do). You might even die. But God will be using your life to glorify himself and even to save others.
Trust him.

2 Corinthians 5:17

So that if anyone is in the Anointed they're a new creation, the original has passed away. Look. All things have become new.

Most of us can remember the day we became Christian. Some just grew up in a Christian family and really they've basically always been Christian.

But either way, we can see that we're a new creation. We've been changed by God. We aren't like the people around us.

2 Corinthians 5:21

For God made the one who didn't know sin to be sin for us, so that we may become the righteousness of God in him.

This is the fundamental statement of the gospel. We didn't earn our forgiveness and eternal life. Yeshua sacrificed himself, even to the point of becoming the one thing his father detested, and paying the consequence of that, so we could have eternal life with them, for free!

Chapter 8, verse 9 says pretty much the same thing: "because of you he, being rich, became poor, so that you, by that poverty, should be rich"
Some people are rich because they worked hard all their lives and built a business. Some people are rich because it was just given to them.
That's us. We have spiritual, eternal riches, because they were given to us.

2 Corinthians 6:16

For you're a temple of the living god, just as God has said, "I'll make my home among them, and I'll walk among them, and I'll be their god, and they themselves will be my people."

The important thing here is that the "you're" is plural.
We are a temple. Not me as an individual, but us as a group, are a temple of God. I've heard many people mis-quote this verse and lead themselves and others astray. We are a temple. We are the body of Christ. We need to work together as that temple. We are not independent from each other.
But also then, the verses around this one are not saying anything about evil living in me or you, they're about evil living in that temple.
Your church shouldn't have anything to do with evil. It shouldn't be yoked together with unbelievers. It shouldn't be run like a business. It shouldn't be using marketing and worldly methods and techniques.
It should be clearly set apart as a temple of God, run by God, in God's ways.
(Compassion, consoling, suffering, loving).

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

"The one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows in blessedness will also reap in blessedness." Just as each one produces from what's stored in their heart, not from sadness, or from necessity. For God loves a cheerful giver.

How about you? You give from what's left over, (if anything), after you look after yourself first?
Do you give 10%? Are you legalistic about that?
Are Christians under the Law?

If you're not cheerful, if you feel pain every time you give and wish you could keep it. You may as well, because you're not pleasing God anyway.

Be generous. That's the measure. 1% or 50% is not the issue. Are you being generous?
If you are, I think it's pretty much guaranteed, you will soon feel cheerful about it too.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

For walking in the flesh, we don't wage war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare aren't fleshly, but powerful to God for pulling down fortresses, pulling down reasoning, and every high thing which is lifted against the knowledge of God, and capturing every thought into the obedience of the Anointed.

How much more powerful is prayer than arguing? Even if you're an expert
<s>manipulator</s> arguer. Prayer can beat you every time.

And that last bit, "capturing every thought into the obedience of the Anointed". It is NOT talking about your thoughts. It's the thoughts of the people trying to stand against you.
You can pray that their thoughts will be captured. That those thoughts will submit to Yeshua.
I have done this. It really does happen.

2 Corinthians 10:12

For we don't dare reckon or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves, but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves to themselves, don't understand.

So, how good a Christian are you? Rate yourself out of 10.
How did you do that? Who did you compare yourself to?
Paulus? I think I'd give myself a 1.
Yeshua? Definitely I'm a zero.
Myself? Well... I'm a 9 after all!

Some people just love judging others. They just seem unable to help themselves. What they don't realise is that those of us in the spirit, can see this a mile off and it makes them look very poor in our eyes, even while they think they're making themselves look so puffed up and important.

Which one are you?
Do you need to change?

2 Corinthians 11:2

For I prepared you for one man, to present you a pure virgin to the Anointed.

So the you here is plural again. This is not talking about you. It's talking about us. Our church.

Paulus is saying he did everything he could so the church at Corinth would be a pure virgin bride for Yeshua.

One of the big issues of our current generation, is that churches have mostly become very worldly. They're run like businesses, or corporations, with prayer kind of tacked on to make it look otherwise.
Basically the church, (the virgin), is flirting with the world, (NOT her fiancé). She should be keeping herself pure. But we can all see that she's not. (She thinks she's getting away with it, or it's just harmless flirting, but honestly, it's making her look like a bit of a slut.

And some of the things I see happening the last few years with gays, abortion, transsexuals, gender issues... I wonder if she's gone too far, and she's actually having an affair?

How is your church leadership?
Is your church a pure virgin? Or is she flirting with the world?
Who can you talk with to change that?
How can you take those thoughts captive?

2 Corinthians 11:24-27

I received forty lashes minus one from the Jews five times. I was beaten with rods three times. Once I was stoned. I was shipwrecked three times, spending a night and day in the deep. To journeys, many times, dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own people, dangers from non-Jews, dangers in towns, dangers in desolation, dangers at sea, dangers among false brothers. In trouble and labour, in sleeplessness many times, in hunger and in thirst, in fasts many times, in cold and nakedness.

I'm just left speechless every time I read this. Can you even comprehend what he went through!
40 lashes is already worse than anything I've suffered. He endured that 5 times. Each time knowing that it wasn't because he had committed any crime, but just because people were trying to shut him up and intimidate him. They were the ones committing the crime!

And that's just the beginning of his suffering. It's just amazing what he endured. And each time, instead of making him give up, it made him stronger and more determined.

How does your suffering for Yeshua compare to his?
How do you feel when you read of Paulus' suffering being so extreme?

The way the world is going, and governments enacting laws to silence opposition. It's possible that our generation might again go through things like this if we want to stand up for our faith, and for what is right.

Are you ready?
Are you willing to endure things like this just for being a Christian?
It's our turn.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

And because of the superiority of the revelations, so that I wouldn't be exalted, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan, so that he may buffet me, that I wouldn't be exalted. Concerning this, I entreated the lord three times that it should be withdrawn from me. And he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you-. For my power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly then, I'll boast even more in my weakness, so that the power of the Anointed should set up camp over me. That's why I'm delighted in weakness, in insolences, in constraints, in persecutions, in distresses on behalf of the Anointed. For whenever I might be weak, then I'm powerful.

Paulus was obviously shown things none of us ever has been. Presumably to motivate him to never give up, and to truly embrace his faith and his mission.
But so he couldn't arrogantly just go round saying, "I've seen more than you, so you have to listen to me and do what I say"... God gave him a thorn. A messenger of Satan. A demon. Not to live in him, but to follow him around and give him a hard time. And even prayer from Paulus wasn't enough to remove it.
So he had to endure it, but in doing so he realised that because of this demon companion he had been "cursed" with... it was actually a blessing because it meant that the power of the Anointed was camped over him as well.
And this apparent weakness, had meant he instead was blessed with power and the Anointed worked through him.

How can you have more power in your ministry?
Are there two ways?

2 Corinthians 13:5

Test yourselves if you're in the faith, discerning yourselves. Or don't you= realise yourselves that Yeshua the Anointed is among you? (Unless you fail the test).

Again, the "you" hear is plural.
We need to test ourselves. Our church. Is it faithfully following Yeshua?
How can we know?
And what would that mean if we are?
What would it mean if we're not!

After You Read

What verses really stood out to you?

How would you summarize this book in a sentence or two? What is it about? What is God trying to say to us?

What are the best ways we can reach the lost?
What "weapons" do we have at our disposal to do that?
How important are financing and training in that battle?

Where is your hope?
How can you be more powerful?
How do you feel about suffering now?

How can you know if you're a Christian?
How about the people around you? How are they doing?

What role does pride have in the Christian life?

How much would you be willing to suffer to serve Yeshua?

Where would you be if he had only been willing to suffer as much as you are to save you?
Lost?

How does worldly sadness lead to death, while godly sadness lead to life? What is our response to that sadness which makes the difference?

Do you know any of those "false Ambassadors"?
Would you recognise one if you met them?

How does your church rate on contentions, jealousies, furies, self interests, slanders, whisperings, puffings up, rebellions?