

BOOK OF SECOND CORINTHIANS

1. This book covers the practical realities of life on Earth.
 - a) The power of the Gospel was declared beautifully in Romans. Christians are justified and reborn marvellously, yet, sanctification is a long and difficult journey.
 - b) Sanctification is not preached often, especially by those who sell a fake gospel to squeeze offerings from people. We saw the terrible spiritual state of the Corinthian church in the book of First Corinthians.
 - c) The book of Second Corinthians disclosed even more pains of the same Corinthian church. The journey of sanctification for us is similar to the journey of Jesus Christ; to reach Christ's likeness, we have to follow in His footsteps (in His sufferings). Paul's life was very tough as you will see in this book of the Second Corinthians.
2. After Paul wrote the letter of the First Corinthians, the people rejected the letter and preferred the false teachers. The Corinthian church rebelled against Paul. Paul rushed to visit them a second time. In 2 Corinthians 2:1, he said he decided not to make yet another painful visit. (His first visit was not painful as he stayed there for 18 months). He was rejected by the very people whom he led to Christ, just like Christ was rejected by His own people.
3. Paul then wrote another letter (as mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:2 after the second painful visit) hoping that with that letter, his next visit would be not be painful again. This letter, however, is not included in the Bible. Perhaps it is not yet found by archaeologists.
4. After the missing letter, many in the Corinthian church realised they were wrong, arrogant, and deceived by false teachers. They apologised to Paul and wanted to reconcile. So Paul wrote this letter of Second Corinthians to assure them of his love and reconciliation.

Structure of the Book of Second Corinthians

1. Chapters 1 to 7 are about Paul's assurance of reconciliation, unity in Christ, and forgiveness.
2. Chapters 8 to 9. Paul reminded them to be generous towards the Christian Jews in Jerusalem who were suffering from famine. They had promised earlier to give, but had forgotten about it with all their own church problems.
3. Chapters 10 to 13. Paul challenged the remaining Corinthians who refused to repent and accept his apostleship or ministry over the Corinthian church. False preachers were still hanging around. He warned that he would get to them (in a sarcastic tone).

Overview

1. So, in the epistle of the First Corinthians, Paul told them what was wrong (divisions, immorality, etc.) with their church.
2. In this epistle of the Second Corinthians, Paul asked, "You think I am wrong?"
 - a) It was Paul's defence.

- b) It was like Paul's autobiography describing what he suffered as a bond-servant in Christ because the false teachers claimed that Paul was very poor, not a full-timer and was merely a tent maker. They also claimed that he had been a prisoner, was unimpressive and faced persecutions. Therefore they claimed that Paul was not the real deal.
- c) Without this book or epistle, no one will know what a missionary life like Paul's was. Paul said to follow him who followed Christ.
- d) What should we be like? Listen to the New Living Translation version in audio form to hear the anguish and pains of Paul. Therefore, prepare for sufferings as Christians in this sin-cursed world. Even the Church will face problems. New believers tend to wonder why there are so many problems in churches and they are shocked at the first encounter with problems because they thought all will be well after justification.

Chapter 1

- 1. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 say we are to comfort others as God comforted us.
- 2. 2 Corinthians 1:5-6 remind us that as we share abundantly in Christ's suffering, so we should also share in comfort. The character of the Church is agape love. Love the unlovely and unloving. Love those who do not love you. It is not a bed of roses. Expect a lot of sufferings outside but great peace inside yourself. This is the opposite of unbelievers. Note that it is not possible to have peace both inside and outside.

Chapter 3

- 1. 2 Corinthians 3:1. Paul asked, "Do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you?" He did not need to be recommended because he was the one who founded the Corinthian church.
- 2. The Corinthian church would not have existed without Paul. And now they questioned the apostleship of Paul who serve God among people who are still sinful, and hence ungrateful.
- 3. This is a common sin of complaining and ingratitude amongst many Christians. God is used to this. Do not expect gratitude when you serve. If your motive is to receive appreciation in this world, then do not bother to serve. Appreciation from this world is a bonus, not a right. They never thanked Christ but crucified Him after His ministry of 3 years. We are not greater than our Master.

Chapter 4

- 1. 2 Corinthians 4:8-12. Paul said that as Christians, even when we are afflicted, we are not crushed. Persecuted but not forsaken. "Always carrying about in the body the death of the Lord Jesus!" as in verse 10. Whacked but not knocked out. That is the Christian life. It is not smooth-sailing. The God of mercy and comfort will sustain us in our journey towards Christ-likeness. Again in verse 10, "so that the life of Christ may be manifested in our body". The word "manifested" is mentioned again in verse 11. Why did Paul repeat this? People will see Christ's life manifested in you if you continue to show them love despite their repeated rejections or hostility. They will see Christ

manifested in you, not just preached by you. God wants us to demonstrate rather than talk. Walk the talk and not just proclaimed by you. We are to serve in spite of hostility and danger. This kind of preachers glorify God more than preachers with eloquent words. See Luke 24:34. We are to be living examples.

2. 2 Corinthians 4:17 says that our current light momentary affliction is nothing compared to the great eternal glory to come. God sees all our sins but He also sees our labour.

Chapter 5

1. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says born-again Christians are a new creation in Christ. We should be someone like Christ with agape love. Giving with sacrificial love to those who do not love us in return. We are to help even if they seem unworthy and even if they curse you because we ourselves were just as unworthy before we were saved. Be prepared to wear His crown of thorns.
2. 2 Corinthians 5:20 reminds us that we are now given a new ability to love others. We can now be ambassadors for Christ. Christ is the first ambassador from heaven to Earth.

Chapter 6

1. 2 Corinthians 6:4-10. We are to have endurance in afflictions. It is the paradox of a Christian life to rejoice in suffering. It is the ministry of being like Jesus. Therefore, know what a new creation in you should do.

Chapter 7

1. 2 Corinthians 7:10 speaks of true repentance of the Corinthian church though some rejected. Those who repent are the ones with godly sorrow and want to be more like Christ and Paul.

Chapters 8 to 9

1. Forgotten generosity: When Paul was with them, the Corinthian church promised to make contributions to the Christian Jews who were suffering from persecution and the famine in Jerusalem. However, they had forgotten about this promise when other problems arose in the church. Paul had to remind them of the promise they had made. One of the evidences of Salvation is generosity to the undeserving and to those we do not know or have never met. That is the heart of God.
2. 2 Corinthians 8:8-9. Christ for our sake became poor. That should be our motivation for generosity. He came to Earth and lived in voluntary poverty as in Matt 8:20. Another evidence of Salvation is the willingness to sacrifice our comforts for others so that they can be blessed even though we may never hear any expression of “thanks” from them. This is the heart of mercy.
3. 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 is about Christian giving. Sow sparingly, and you will reap sparingly. Whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. God loves a cheerful giver. These are the principles of giving:
 - a) Give generously to lay up rewards in heaven
 - b) Be cheerful, not tithing; give out of a grateful heart

- c) Give confidently as in verse 8. The word “all” is emphasized here. As you give, your resources will not be depleted because God will provide and take care of you in all ways.

Chapters 10 to 13 – Paul’s Sarcasm to the Unrepentant

1. 2 Corinthians 11:3 speaks about minds led astray by Satan. Note the following principles:
 - a) The Devil is real. He will not leave you alone even after you have believed in Christ, especially as you draw close to Christ’s likeness.
 - b) Satan walks within the Church to deceive those who do not know the word of God.
 - c) Do not be shocked by false teachings within the Church.
2. Who brings in this deception?
 - a) 2 Corinthians 11:13 says that Satan even disguises himself as an angel of light so it is not surprising that his servants will disguise themselves as servants of light.
 - b) These people who come in to deceive are impressive and look like angels of light. They are also very good at misquoting the Bible out of context.
 - c) Be aware and learn the truth, for the truth will set us free. See John 17:17 and John 8:31-32.
 - d) Satan knows the scriptures better than us. God will protect us if we bother to study the scriptures.
3. 2 Corinthians 12:9 speaks about the secret of Paul’s success. “My grace is sufficient for you for My strength is made perfect in weakness”. We need to realise how weak we are, especially in biblical knowledge. Even matured Christians need to learn. Even as a teacher of the Bible, you need to continue learning. (Paul Choo said that he did this series on the beautiful book because he needed to know more about Christ and the Bible; as he teaches, he is also forced to learn.)
4. 2 Corinthians 13:5 reminds us to examine ourselves to know if Jesus Christ is in us. The people in the Corinthian church were over-confident and very rich, so Paul asked them to check themselves. The Bible is so deep and rich, and we are only scratching the surface. If we think we know the Bible, we are fools. See 1 Corinthians 8:2.

What have we learnt in this Book of the Second Corinthians?

1. It is about God’s love, not about Paul. Paul reflected Christ’s love in his sacrifices and sufferings for undeserving sinners. Paul did not get a single cent from the church. See Christ in Paul.
2. The Church is a mess. People think they know a lot; the Church is full of arrogant who do not understand God’s ways. God’s ways are that of an “upside down” world. Our mind measures success by worldly ways, but we should measure it by God’s way.
3. Identify the true servants of God. They are not the scholars or the brilliant Bible commentary writers. They are the people whose life reflects Christ. They may be illiterate but their lives are Christ-like, unlike some PhD and theology degree holders whose lives do not reflect Christ.
4. See the agape love of God in a horrible and ungrateful Church.