

Quarter Three: *1 and 2 Corinthians*

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Lesson 9—Love-driven Ministry

Thursday: Triumph in Christ

August 27, 2026

- **Last Week:** “The Power of Christ’s Resurrection”
 - 1 Cor 15: Resurrection Power
 - The life, death, burial & resurrection of Jesus & our promise of the resurrection & eternity with Jesus
- **This week:** “Love-driven Ministry”
 - 2 Cor 1, 2, & 5
 - Hardships in Paul’s ministry and the love from Christ that gave him purpose and meaning and drove him to care for the Corinthian believers

Memory Text: “For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you” (2 Cor 2:4, NKJV).

The week in brief:

- 1. Sunday: Thanksgiving (James)
 - 2 Cor 1:3 – 11 – Paul’s love for the Corinthians was manifest as he comforted them in their hardships, just as he received comfort from God in his hardships
- 2. Monday: Simplicity and Sincerity (Rise)
 - 2 Cor 1:12 – 14, 2:17, 4:2 – Paul’s love for the Corinthians was demonstrated through the integrity & sincerity he displayed toward them (Paul’s defense of his apostolic ministry)
- 3. Tuesday: Changing Plans for Love (John L)
 - 2 Cor 1:15 – 2:4 – Paul’s change of travel plans; his visit to the Corinthians that went badly, so, instead of a visit, he wrote them instead
- 4. Wednesday: Forgiveness & Reaffirmation of Love (SQ)
 - 2 Cor 7:5 – 13; 2 Cor 2:5 – 11 – severe letter (3rd letter) brought Corinthians to repentance; Paul receives news from Titus of their change of heart; how churches should handle sin while loving the offender
- 5. Thursday: Triumph in Christ (Jill)
 - 2 Cor 2:12 – 17 – Paul’s joy in the change in the Corinthian believers; Paul’s passion to preach the gospel, because of love for Christ

Thursday: Triumph in Christ

2 Cor 2:12 – 17; 2 Cor 7:5 – 9; 2 Cor 1:12

- **Timeline:**
 - Paul wrote the lost epistle to the Corinthian church
 - 1 Cor 5:9 – “I wrote to you in my epistle...”
 - Wrote about need for separation from sexually immoral people
 - Either lost epistle or partially preserved in 2 Cor 6:14 – 7:1
 - Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in Spring of AD 55 from Ephesus
 - On 3rd missionary journey toward end of 3-year stay in Ephesus
 - Paul sent Timothy to assess the situation – Timothy returns with difficult news from the church
 - Paul made a painful visit to Corinth to assess the situation himself
 - Corinthians did not receive him well: strained relationship & questioning of Paul’s authority
 - Visit breaks Paul’s heart
 - Paul wrote severe / sad letter
 - Most likely sent with Titus
 - 2 Cor 2:4 – “For out of much affliction & anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears...”
 - Most likely letter was lost; but could be partially preserved as 2 Cor 10 – 13
 - Paul received report from Titus on positive developments in Corinth
 - Paul wrote 2 Corinthians in fall of AD 56 from Macedonia (Philippi)
 - 2 Corinthians is actually 4th Corinthians then (1 or 2 lost epistles)
- Paul has written severe / sad letter
 - 2 Cor 2:4 – “For out of much affliction & anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.”
 - Shelley’s day
- 2 Cor 2:12 – “Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord,”
 - Paul connecting thoughts from 2 Cor 2:4:
 - He sent painful letter with Titus from Ephesus
 - Paul went to Troas, to preach the gospel & eagerly wait for news from Titus
 - Paul is burdened with concern for his children in the faith (Corinthian’s)
 - Troas = important port city, connecting Asia & Macedonia
 - Paul was here briefly with 2nd missionary journey
 - Received vision: come over to Macedonia & help us
 - **Takeaway #1: Preach the gospel, at all times, in all places**
 - When waiting for news – doctor, family crisis, hardship
 - When struggling yourself – internal struggles
 - When encompassed with doubts
 - We wait for the right moment, “I’m in the right place” – just preach the gospel

- 2 Cor 2:13 – “I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them; I departed for Macedonia.”
 - Titus didn’t show up in Troas; Paul distressed
 - Open door to the gospel (vs 12) = ministry was effective
 - Yet, Paul still struggling
 - Departs for Macedonia to meet up with Titus (2 Cor 7:5 describes Titus’ report from the Corinthians on the painful letter)
 - **Takeaway #2: Even giants in the faith struggle**
 - Elijah ran in discouragement after his Mt Carmel victory
 - Jonah ran in disobedience from Ninevah
 - Gideon wondered whether the Lord was with him to defeat the enemy
 - Moses feared whether he could actually lead God’s people
 - Naomi felt forgotten by God – call me “Mara”
 - Martha allowed fear and anxiety to overtake her peace
 - We assume Paul was a stalwart of the gospel & faith
 - Yet, he had no rest in his spirit over his distress over the believers in Corinth
 - Showcase the deep love he had for the church
- 2 Cor 2:14 – “Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the **fragrance** of His knowledge in every place.”
 - 2 Cor 2:14 – 7:4 = a speech, sandwiched between 2:13 & 7:5
 - In 2 Cor 7:5, Paul resumes the discussion in 2:13, where Paul is said to have left Troas for Macedonia to meet with Titus & receive report of the Corinthians
 - **Takeaway #3: God is the One who triumphs**
 - It’s not our works or efforts or labors – God is the Leader
 - He is the One who triumphs
 - God spreads this gospel message; God is the One in charge; He is all powerful
 - **Takeaway #4: God uses us to spread His gospel message**
 - God is in charge – yet God uses us
 - Fragrance = Gk, “smell, aroma, fragrance”
 - OT reference – sacrificial system was a “pleasing aroma to the LORD”
 - While idolatry was compared to a stench
 - *Diffuser – can’t see the particles in the air, once it’s spread out, but can smell the essential oils
- 2 Cor 2:15, 16 – “For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. (16) To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life.”
 - The fragrance is the same:
 - To one, the odor of death & demise; to the other, a fragrance that brings life
 - *Picture is of a Roman triumph, where incense wafts through the streets.
 - The victors smell the perfume of victory
 - The captives heading to death smell it as portent of doom
 - The gospel, carried by frail messengers, diffuses Christ Himself
 - **Takeaway #5: Our task is faithfulness, not manipulation of outcomes**

- We are called to preach the gospel: we're not responsible for the outcome
 - Same sermon softens one heart yet hardens another
 - *Sun – melts ice yet hardens clay
- 2 Cor 4:6, 7 – “For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (7) But we have this treasure (the gospel / Jesus Christ) in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.”
 - God commits the gospel to us, weak & feeble as we are (earthen vessels)
 - All glory goes to Him
- 2 Cor 2:17 – “For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.”
 - **Takeaway #6: Preach the gospel out of love for God, not from any self interest**
 - Paul isn't selling the gospel for gain
 - Paul is preaching the Word of God because of wholehearted love for Christ
 - Motivation matters
 - *Called to preach the gospel out of love
 - Unlike peddlers of the gospel, Paul doesn't need any letter of recommendation to establish his authority.
 - As founder of the church in Corinth, the only necessary testimony of his apostolic credibility was the changed lives of the Corinthian believers
- **6 Takeaways of Paul's ministry**
 - 1: Preach the gospel, at all times, in all places
 - 2: Even giants in the faith struggle
 - 3: God is the One who triumphs
 - 4: God uses us to spread His gospel message
 - 5: Our task is faithfulness, not manipulation of outcomes
 - 6: Preach the gospel out of love for God, not from any self interest

“Those who have borne the greatest sorrow are frequently the ones who carry the greatest comfort to others, bringing sunshine wherever they go. Such ones have been chastened and sweetened by their afflictions; they did not lose confidence in God when trouble assailed them, but clung closer to His protecting love. Such ones are living proof of the tender care of God.” (*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 122)