

2 Corinthians, Chapters 4-5

After writing 1 Corinthians (which included numerous reprimands), Paul had experienced considerable conflict and opposition from the Corinthian church. He wrote 2 Corinthians about a year after writing 1 Corinthians (there was another tearful letter in-between as mentioned in 2 Cor. 2:3-4). Paul's opponents had argued that Paul *suffered too much* to truly be a Spirit-filled apostle of the risen Christ; as a result a central theme of 2 Corinthians is the relationship between suffering and the power of the Spirit.

Chapter 4:1-6 The Motivation and Truth of Paul's Ministry

v.1 "... *having this ministry [of the Holy Spirit]*" (3:8) – In response to his critics, this section continues the prior chapter's theme by noting God's gracious provision of the Holy Spirit at work in Paul's service as an apostle. Jesus described the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 16:6-15) and later Paul described the evidence of that work (Gal. 5:22-23).

v.2 - How does this verse show that Paul is not proclaiming a "secret" or hidden gospel only to a restricted group?

v.3-4 - After presenting the gospel, who does Paul credit for the difficulty of those not recognizing Jesus as the Messiah?

Chapter 4:7-18 Momentary Affliction is Preceding Eternal Glory Beyond All Comparison

v.7 – Look at the words: "*to show*". What is in our possession, and what is to be publicly displayed? (1 Cor. 6:19)

v.10-11 - Why was Paul and others allowed to suffer for Christ? (2 Cor. 1:3-5; Hebrews 12:3; 1 Peter 4:12-14; Phil 3:10)

v.17-18 – How does Paul contrast his affliction with the glory he will encounter?

Chapter 5:1-5 The Promise of a Heavenly Dwelling from God

v.1-4 – Does this passage cause you to think more meaningfully in regard to your physical state/health? How so?

v.5 – Note the continued sentiment in this verse from the previous chapters. Paul is still on point: physical suffering and trials does not equate to an absence of the Holy Spirit as argued by those who opposed Paul (1 Cor.1:10-12).

Chapter 5:6-10 The Affect that God's Promise Has on Paul

v.8-9 – What is the (1) desire and (2) aim of the confident Christian?

v.10 – How does Paul emphasize the fact that present-day behavior has eternal consequences?

Chapter 5:11-17 Paul is Motivated by the Fear of the Lord and the Love of Christ

v.14-15 – What resource is mentioned; how does it affect us; what lifestyle is condemned?

(Prov. 25:28; Gal. 5:22-23; 1 Peter 5:8)

v.16-17 – What is Paul trying to express in verse 16, and how does that inspire the "*therefore*" in verse 17?

Chapter 5:18-21 Paul Pleads with His Readers to be Reconciled With God

v.18-20 - Paul is sent to announce God's "peace treaty" (Isa. 53:5) with those who will trust in Christ to free them from the penalty and power of sin; "*be reconciled to God*" is a summary of the gospel message to unbelievers.

v.21 - This then is the heart of the doctrine of *justification*: God *regards* believers as forgiven and God *declares* and *treats* them as forgiven, because God the Father has imputed the believer's sin to Christ and because God the Father likewise imputes Christ's righteousness to the believer.

"...*the righteous one, my servant, [shall] make many to be accounted righteous*" - Isaiah 53:11