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# THE HOLY BIBLE **NKJV** REFERENCE GUIDE

**NEW TESTAMENT**

**BOOK 47**

**2 CORINTHIANS**



**Miracles Of St. Paul At Ephesus by Jean Restout**

## SUMMARY

Paul is the author of this letter. It is stamped with his style and contains more autobiographical material than any of his other writings.

The available evidence indicates that the year AD. 55 is a reasonable estimate for the writing of this letter. 2 CORINTHIANS was written from Ephesus before Pentecost (in the late spring) and that 2 Corinthians may have been written later that same year before the onset of winter. It was probably written from Macedonia.

The opening greeting of the letter states that it was addressed to the church in Corinth and to Christians throughout Achaia (the Roman province comprising all of Greece south of Macedonia).

After writing 2 CORINTHIANS Paul continued his ministry at Ephesus until he heard that his letter had not completely accomplished its purpose. A group of men had come to Corinth who presented themselves as apostles. They were false teachers who were challenging, among other things, Paul's personal integrity and his authority as an apostle.

In the face of this serious situation, Paul decided to make a quick trip to Corinth to see whether he could remedy the situation. The visit turned out to be painful and did not accomplish its purpose.

When Paul returned to Ephesus, he wrote the Corinthians a severe letter out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, probably sending it by Titus. After writing the severe letter, Paul had second thoughts.

He was deeply concerned about how the Corinthians might react to it. After the riot caused by Demetrius and his fellow silversmiths, he left Ephesus and set out for Macedonia by way of Troas.

He expected to meet Titus in Troas to get news of the effect of his severe letter on the Corinthian church, but Titus was not there. Still deeply concerned and despite the fact that the Lord had opened up an opportunity to preach the gospel at Troas, Paul said good-bye to the believers there and moved on to Macedonia, where he met Titus.

To his relief, the news from the Corinthian church was basically good. The severe letter had brought its intended results. The encouraging report of Titus of the improved situation at Corinth is the immediate occasion of the writing of 2 Corinthians.

How, then, does one explain the harsh tone of chapters 10 - 13, which is so different from the rest of the letter? Some think that when Paul had just completed writing the first nine chapters, a report came to him that a strong and vocal minority was still causing trouble at Corinth.

Before sending off the letter he added the last four chapters to address this troublemaking group. Others hold that chapters 10 - 13 were written some time after Paul had sent the first nine chapters and that they constitute a separate letter. There is, however, no manuscript evidence that warrants splitting 2 Corinthians into two parts.

## SUMMARY Continued

Because of the occasion that prompted this letter, Paul had a number of purposes in mind:

1. To express the comfort and joy Paul felt because the Corinthians had responded favorably to his painful letter.
2. To let them know about the trouble he went through in the province of Asia.
3. To explain why he had changed his travel plans.
4. To ask them to forgive the offending party.
5. To warn them not to be yoked together with unbelievers.
6. To explain to them the true nature (its joys, sufferings and rewards) and high calling of Christian ministry. This is the so-called great digression, but it turns out to be in some ways the most important section of the letter.
7. To teach the Corinthians about the grace of giving and to make sure that they complete the collection for the poor Christians at Jerusalem.
8. To deal with the minority opposition in the church.
9. To prepare the Corinthians for his upcoming visit.

The structure of the letter relates primarily to Paul's impending third visit to Corinth. The letter falls naturally into three sections:

1. Paul explains the reason for the changes in his itinerary chapters 1 - 7.
2. Paul encourages the Corinthians to complete their collection in preparation for his arrival chapters 8 - 9.
3. Paul stresses the certainty of his coming, his authenticity as an apostle and his readiness to exercise discipline if necessary chapters 10 - 13.

The so-called painful letter contains Paul's defense of himself and of his work to the charges made against him by his enemies, including the Jewish legalists who said that Paul was an impostor who had not been authorized by the proper authorities to work among the churches.

The legalists supported their charge by pointing out that Paul had a thorn in [his] flesh, some physical defect that, according to ancient Jewish regulations, would have barred a man from the priesthood.

They further maintained that Paul supported himself by doing manual labor rather than by accepting support from the members of the church. This labor, in their judgment, was an admission on his part that he was not qualified to be supported in the way that was customary for duly authorized missionaries.

The legalists also accused Paul of cowardice on the grounds that he was bold so long as he was writing letters, but he was very mild when present with the legalists in person.

Other charges of a similar nature were made in an all-out attempt to discredit the religious work that Paul was doing. To all of these charges, Paul makes a vigorous reply.

He shows wherein the charges are false, and he recounts for the people at Corinth the many trials and hardships that he suffered for their sake and for the sake of the gospel. Although he apologizes for seeming to boast of his own attainments, he explains the necessity for doing so.

## SUMMARY Continued

He indicates further that his greatest disappointment lies not in the fact that charges of this sort have been made against him but that the members of the Corinthian church have apparently been persuaded by them.

The first nine chapters of what is now called 2 Corinthians are a letter that appears to have been written after the "painful letter" was received and accepted by the church. This letter contains an expression of gratitude for the change that has taken place among the Corinthian believers.

Paul rejoices that they are now on the right track again, and he summarizes for them the essential meaning of the gospel that he first proclaimed to them.

Using the language of the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, Paul tells them that the Christian gospel is none other than the New Covenant, written not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Toward the close of the letter, he again reminds them of the collection to be taken for the poor in Jerusalem.

## NKJV SELECTED SCRIPTURE

- 4:3** But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,  
**4:4** whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.
- 4:5** For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.
- 4:6** 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.
- 4:7** But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.
- 4:8** We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;
- 4:9** persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed--
- 4:16** Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.
- 4:17** For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,
- 4:18** while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.
- 5:5** Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.
- 5:6** So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.
- 5:7** For we walk by faith, not by sight.
- 5:8** We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.
- 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.



## NKJV SCRIPTURE Continued

- 5:18** Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,
- 5:19** that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.
- 6:16** And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ***I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people. Therefore Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.***
- 6:17** ***I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.***
- 7:1** Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.
- 9:6** But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.
- 9:7** So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.
- 9:8** And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.
- 9:9** As it is written: He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.
- 12:7** And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.
- 12:8** Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.
- 12:9** And He said to me, **My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.** Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
- 12:10** Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
- 13:11** Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.
- 13:12** Greet one another with a holy kiss.
- 13:13** All the saints greet you.
- 13:14** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

## CHARACTER Definitions

**TITUS** - Titus was an early church leader, a trusted companion of the apostle Paul, and a faithful servant of the Lord. Titus was a Gentile who was led to faith in Christ by Paul.

He was drawn to the ministry and became a co-worker with Paul, accompanying him and Barnabas from Antioch to Jerusalem. At the Jerusalem Council, Titus would have been a prime example of a born-again Gentile Christian.

## CHARACTERS Continued

Titus was living proof that the rite of circumcision was unnecessary for salvation.

Later, Titus went to Corinth to serve the church there. On Paul's third missionary journey, which took place from AD. 53–57, Paul arrived in Troas and expected to meet Titus there.

Not finding his friend, Paul left for Macedonia. Titus rejoined Paul in Philippi and gave him a good report of the ministry in Corinth. When Titus returned to Corinth, he hand-delivered the Epistle of 2 Corinthians and organized a collection for needy saints in Jerusalem.

Several years later, Titus and Paul traveled to the island of Crete, where Titus was left behind to continue and strengthen the work. Titus' task was administrative, mostly: he was to maintain sound doctrine and straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town.

When Artemas and Tychicus arrived in Crete to direct the ministry, Paul summoned Titus to join him in Nicopolis, a city in the province of Achaia in western Greece.

The last mention of Titus in the Bible indicates that he was with Paul during Paul's final Roman imprisonment. From Rome, Titus was sent to evangelize Dalmatia, an area which later became known as Yugoslavia and is now called Serbia and Montenegro.

As a Gentile Christian, Titus would have been particularly effective in combating the heresy of the Judaizers. The Judaizers insisted that all Christians were bound by the Mosaic Law.

Usually, the Judaizers honed in on circumcision: Gentiles must be circumcised, they said, in order to truly be saved. Titus knew this teaching well, for the subject had come up in Syrian Antioch, leading to the Jerusalem Council, of which he had been a part.

Titus was a faithful servant of the Lord and a dedicated aide to Paul. He must have been trustworthy and dependable, since Paul appointed him to lead works in Corinth, Crete, and Dalmatia.

Indeed, Paul calls him my partner and fellow worker. Knowing the difficult situations in both Corinth and Crete, we can infer that Titus was an insightful man who could handle problems with grace.

Scripture says that Titus had a God-given love for the Corinthian believers; in fact, in returning to Corinth, Titus went with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative.

May we have the same zeal for the Lord that Titus showed. Every believer would do well to model Titus's commitment to truth, fervor in spreading the gospel, and enthusiastic love for the church.

## BIBLE TIMELINE

57 AD

Paul Writes again to the Corinthians

2 Corinthians 1 - 13

MAP REFERENCES

