

DAILY READ – 2 CORINTHIANS

Devotional notes on 2 Corinthians adapted from Matthew Henry's Commentary.

Introduction

False teachers have sought to destroy the apostle Paul's reputation in the church at Corinth, so he writes to defend himself and his apostleship against their *"insinuations and accusations"*. Paul also has two other concerns. The first is that the incestuous person who was under discipline but has now repented is *"restored and received into fellowship as quickly as possible,"* and the Corinthians participate in making a contribution for the poor believers in Jerusalem.

2 Corinthians 1

v1-2: Grace and peace are two great and comprehensive blessings that we need because without grace there can be no lasting peace. Both grace and peace come from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, *"who gives those benefits to fallen humanity and who is prayed to as God."*

v3-6: The comfort God gives us in our sufferings, He intends for us to use to comfort others. *"Whatever favours God gives us are intended not only to make us cheerful ourselves but also to enable us to be useful to others"* by telling them about our experience of God's goodness and mercy.

v7-11: God can be trusted at all times. Often He will bring His people *"into great difficulties so that they may become aware of their own insufficiency to help themselves and may be led to put their trust and hope in his all-sufficiency."*

v12-14: When a believer in Christ is seen to be living lives that are *"holy, upright, and without blemish"* (in the sense of being above reproach rather than sinless), it is a cause for rejoicing. Members of a local church should rejoice when their leaders are seen to behave in this way, in the same way that leaders do when members are living godly lives.

v15-24: All of God's promises are "Yes" and "Amen." This is because they are the promises of God who cannot lie; they are made in Christ Jesus who is the Amen, and the true and faithful witness; and they are confirmed by the Spirit of truth who strengthens the faith of a Christian in them. *"The truthfulness of God, the mediation of Christ, and the activity of the Spirit are all committed to see that the promises will be certain to all Christ's descendants, and their fulfilment will be to the glory of God."*

2 Corinthians 2

v1-4: The motivation for warning and rebuking church members about their sin, even exercising church discipline if they refuse to repent, is love.

v5-11: When a church member under discipline repents of their sin, they should be restored quickly, because the purpose of church discipline is to reform not ruin. If this does not happen quickly, there is a danger *"that Satan might take advantage of the penitent by driving him to despair"* and also, that Satan might *"take advantage of the churches... or ministers of Christ by representing them as too strict and severe, and so frightening people from coming among them."* A local church needs wisdom so that it neither indulges sin or is too harsh toward sinners.

v12-13: We should give God our thanks every time He opens a door for our mouths to speak the gospel or He opens the hearts of our hearers to respond to it.

v14-17: The gospel will have varying success in the people who hear it. Some will be saved by it, while others will perish under it. Whether we see success or not, we are called to be faithful. Faithful in speaking the true gospel found in Scripture and faithful in actually speaking this gospel to people.

2 Corinthians 3

v1-5: We are reliant upon God *"to provide what we need for every good word and work,"* He has given us to do.

v6-11: The Law brings condemnation, for it condemns and curses everyone who does not keep it. The Gospel however brings righteousness by revealing the righteousness of God through faith, showing us *"that the just will live by their faith,"* and making known *"the grace and mercy of God through Jesus Christ for obtaining forgiveness of sins and eternal life."*

v12-18: When we believe in Jesus, *"the veil of ignorance is taken away"* and *"the blindness of the mind and the hardness of the heart are then healed."* We have freedom *"from the burden of the ceremonial law and from the slavery of corruption, free access to God and freedom of speech in prayer."* We also have light, being able to see more clearly the glory of the Lord, and as we look upon Him, we are transformed to be like Him *"from one degree of glorious grace to another."*

2 Corinthians 4

v1-2: Those who preach the gospel, whether they be ministers or not, are to be marked by sincerity and faithfulness. In their methods they are not to act deceptively or in underhanded ways. In their message they are not to distort the word of God.

v3-4: The devil keeps people from seeing the light of the glory of God revealed through Christ in the gospel. He *"darkens people's minds, increases their prejudices, and supports his influence by keeping them in the dark, blinding their minds with ignorance, error, and prejudices."*

v5-6: Lost people do not need to hear our *"own ideas and private opinions"* but Christ preached, for He alone is the Saviour of sinners as well as the Lord of all. It is through preaching Christ that the light of the knowledge of the glory of God comes to them.

v7-12: When we face any kind of trouble, we do not despair because there is help in God and help from God does not leave or forsake us and who *"is able to support us and rescue us,"* so we can *"always put our trust and hope in him."*

v13-18: There are lots of good reasons why we should not lose heart when we are troubled or burdened or suffer. There is *"encouragement from the good words and examples of others";* the hope of our resurrection because Christ has been raised; the knowledge that our suffering is intended by God for our own good and the good of the church, as we learn to patiently endure them, and this brings glory to God; and also *"the prospect of eternal life and happiness."*

2 Corinthians 5

v1-5: We groan as believers because of the burden of life. *"The adversities of life are a heavy load,"* but another burden is our sinful nature *"and the many impurities that still remain and rage"* in us. But there is another reason for groaning. *"A groaning of desire for the happiness of another life,"* that the Lord is preparing us for and which the presence of the Spirit in our lives assures us of.

v6-8: Our home is not this world. We *"are pilgrims and strangers in this world... only visitors here."* in our earthly home. God is with us by His Spirit, but *"we are not at home with him as we hope to be."* At present we are called to walk by faith, but one day we will live by sight and we see and fully enjoy God.

v9-11: The certainty of God's judgment should increase our urgency in persuading people *"to repent and live a holy life, so that when Christ appears fearfully, they may appear before him with assurance."*

v12-15: *"Love has a compelling power to stir ministers and individual Christians to fulfil their duty. Our love for Christ will have this power, and Christ's love for us, revealed in his dying for us, will have this effect on us, if it is properly considered and rightly judged."* We should live for Christ, who died for us.

v16-17: The grace of God in the life of a Christian transforms them, giving them a new heart and a new nature so they act *"from new motives, according to new rules, with new goals, and in new company."*

v18-21: *"Just as God is willing to be reconciled to us, we should be reconciled to God. It is the great purpose and intention of the Gospel, that word of reconciliation, to persuade sinners to set aside their hostility toward God. Faithful ministers are Christ's ambassadors, sent to discuss with sinners the terms of peace and reconciliation; they come in God's name, with his proposal, and act on behalf of Christ."* God uses his people to *"urge sinners to set aside their hostility and accept the terms he offers, to be reconciled to him, to all his attributes, laws, and providences, to believe in the Mediator, to accept the atonement, and comply with his Gospel, in all its parts and intentions."*

2 Corinthians 6

v1-2: God's saving grace is offered to us in the gospel. *"The present time is the only proper season to accept the grace that is offered and make the most of the grace that is afforded,"* because we do not know what will happen or where we will be tomorrow. Now is the time to repent and believe.

v3-10: Whatever our circumstance or condition in this world, by our attitude and our actions, our aim should be to show ourselves faithful to God. This is especially true for those who are pastors and church leaders.

v11-18: Though *"we cannot wholly avoid seeing, hearing, and being with"* those who do not have faith in Jesus, we must take care that their ways do not become our ways.

2 Corinthians 7

v1-4: God's promises to us are a strong motivator to live a holy life, which involves both dying to sin and living for righteousness. *"There are sins of the flesh, which are committed with the body, and sins of the spirit, spiritual evils, and we must cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of both, because God is to be glorified with both body and soul."* Though we will always fall short of sinless perfection in this life, we must continue to seek to be holy as God is holy and perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.

v5-11: There is difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. Godly sorrow is a sorrow *"for sin as an offence against God, as an instance of ingratitude, and as a loss of the right to God's favour."* Godly sorrow comes from God and produces repentance which leads to reformation and ends in salvation. It is sorrow that produces in us *"a concern to avoid sin and please God."*

v12-16: *"Great comfort and joy follow godly sorrow. Just as sin brings general grief, so repentance and reformation bring general joy."*

2 Corinthians 8

v1-6: Generous giving flows from a true love for God and a confident trust that He will provide for our needs. Before we give to gospel ministry or to believers who are in need, we first must to give ourselves to the Lord by a fresh commitment of ourselves and all we have to the Lord Jesus Christ.

v7-15: Why should we be generous to those who have less than us? Because we are recipients of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ who became poor in order to make us rich, *"rich in the love and favour of God, rich in the blessings and promises of the new covenant, rich in the hopes of eternal life."* The love of Christ leads to Christian duties such as generous giving.

v16-24: Whenever God puts it into the heart of anyone to do us or others good, the right response is for us to give to Him our thanks. It is always *"a great encouragement to see those who have formerly shown zeal employed in further good works"* for the building up of the church and for the relief of others.

2 Corinthians 9

v1-5: *"When we want others to do what is good, we must act wisely and tenderly toward them and give them time."* This is what Paul does here, as he encourages the Corinthians Christians to give relief to their poor brothers and sisters in Jerusalem.

v6-15: How are we to give? We are to give generously, thoughtfully, and freely. *"We should give generously, with open hands, and cheerfully, with an open heart, being glad we have the ability and an opportunity to be charitable."* Remember God *"can cause us to have enough in everything, to be content with what we have, to make up what we give, and to be able to give even more."* He can *"give us not only enough for ourselves but also the resources with which we may supply the needs of others."*

2 Corinthians 10

v1-6: Ministry is war. It is a spiritual war against spiritual enemies. The devil want to keep people from faith in Jesus and obedience to the gospel. *"Ignorance, prejudice, and sinful desires are Satan's strongholds in the souls of some people."* But the Word of God accompanied by the grace and power of God is able to demolish these strongholds.

v7-11: We must not think that we are the only ones who belongs to Christ and no-one else does except us. *"There is room in Christ for many, and those who differ much from one another may still be one in him. It would help heal the differences among us if we remembered that however confident we may be that we belong to Christ, nevertheless, at the same time, we must allow that those who differ from us may also belong to Christ, and we should therefore treat them accordingly."*

v12-14: When comparing ourselves with other Christians we must take care. Whilst comparing ourselves *"with others who outshine us would be a good method to keep us humble"* and to spur us on to grow in godliness, there is a real danger that it leads to pride and arrogantly thinking we are better they are.

v15-18: To boast about our godliness or gifting *"is often as foolish and vain as it is proud,"* because any progress or success has been given to us by God. We should be pleased and thankful for what we have been given but the praise and glory must all go to God.

2 Corinthians 11

v1-4: *"Faithful ministers must be afraid and concerned for their people, that the people will not lose what they have received and turn away from what they have accepted."* It is good to have elders who love you and who will pursue you if they see you backsliding in your faith and drifting away from Christ or if you are being deceived by false teaching and believing what is error.

v5-15: In the Old Testament the false prophets wore the clothes and spoke the language of the true prophets of God. In the New Testament the false apostles were in many ways like the true apostles of Christ. In the church today, there are false teachers who appear to be like those who faithfully teach His Word. This is because *"just as Satan can turn himself into any shape, put on almost any form, and look sometimes like an angel of light in order to advance his kingdom of darkness, so he will teach his ministers and instruments to do that same."* So, be on guard.

v16-21: *"In obedience to the command and example of the Lord, Christians must and ordinarily will humble and deny themselves. But wisdom must guide them as to the circumstances in which it is necessary to do what we may do lawfully, including speaking of what God has done for us, in us, and by us."*

v22-33: Paul did and suffered so much for the cause of Christ. But what lay heaviest on him, more than all the persecutions of his enemies and the great toil and hardship he went through, was his concern for all the churches. It is a great blessing to have leaders who care for the souls of church members, and which this responsibility lays heavy on them.

2 Corinthians 12

v1-5: We should *"make the most of the revelation God has already given to us in his Word"* rather than desiring knowledge of what He has not made known to us. Paul had been caught up to the third heaven and yet did not make known what he heard there, instead his concern was for the teaching of Christ, and it is this *"we must build our faith and hope on."*

v6-10: *"This is a Christian paradox: when we are weak in ourselves, we are strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; when we see that we are weak in ourselves, then we depend on Christ, are qualified to receive strength from him, and experience most of the supplies of divine strength and grace."*

v11-19: A faithful minister of the gospel is not after the money of those they serve but is seeking to win them for Christ. They are willing to suffer loss for their good, using their *"time, gifts, strength, privileges,"* their all, to serve them in any way. Even if those they serve are unkind or show ingratitude toward them, their love for them will not lessen.

v20-21: There are some sins that are sadly too common amongst God's people. These include quarrelling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorder. Those guilty of committing these sins are to be rebuked (privately, and when necessary, publicly) and are to respond in repentance.

2 Corinthians 13

v1-6: It is *"the great duty of all who call themselves Christians to examine their own spiritual state."* The reason why we should examine ourselves to see whether we are in the faith is *"because it is something in which we may be easily deceived and in which deceit is very dangerous."* Are you in the faith? Is Christ in you?

v7-10: A prayer we should often pray, both for ourselves and for our friends, is *"to be kept from sin, that we and they may commit no wrong,"* and for God's grace *"to keep us, because without this we cannot keep ourselves."*

v11-14: *"It is the gift of the Holy Spirit that qualifies us to enjoy the privilege of sharing in the grace of Christ [as Redeemer] and the love of God [who sent the Redeemer], and we can desire nothing more to make us happy than the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit."*