An Overview of the Book of 2 Corinthians

Writer Of The Second Letter To The Corinthians:

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother," 2 Corinthians 1:1a

Paul is clearly the author of 2 Corinthians. This is made evident in the opening verse, as it is also in 2 Corinthians 10:1 where he wrote: "Now I myself, I, Paul . . ."

Paul included Timothy in the opening greeting and address. Timothy had worked at Paul's side in Corinth when Paul started the church there during his second missionary journey (see Acts 18:5; 2 Corinthians 1:19). From Ephesus, where Paul had written his First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul sent Timothy on a mission to the churches that would bring him to the church in Corinth (see 1 Corinthians 16:8, 10, 11). Paul anticipated that Timothy would arrive in Corinth after Paul's first letter had been received by the congregation. Timothy was then to rejoin Paul in Ephesus. Timothy did rejoin Paul, for he was with Paul when the Second Letter to the Corinthians was written. Timothy brought Paul the latest news of the troubled affairs in the Corinthian congregation. Whatever information Timothy brought to Paul was most likely made use of in writing the second letter. Thus, Paul included Timothy in the opening greeting and address as his co-worker, who was well known to the Corinthians and who assisted him in preparing the second letter.

For more information about Paul and his ministry, see An Overview of The Book of Acts at the beginning of The Book of Acts.

Recipients Of The Second Letter To The Corinthians:

"To the church of God in Corinth, together with all the saints throughout Achaia," 2 Corinthians 1:1b

The second letter was intended mainly for the eyes of the members of the church in Corinth. The problems Paul was addressing in the letter were problems within that congregation. Yet there were certain matters taken up in the letter, such as the collection for the saints in Jerusalem and the warnings about the false "super apostles", that Paul also wanted to share with the other churches in the southern province of Achaia, Greece. Thus ,he included in his address the saints throughout Achaia together with the church in Corinth.

For more information about the church in Corinth and the recipients of the second letter, see An Overview Of The Book of 1 Corinthians at the beginning of The Book of 1 Corinthians.

Occasion Of The Second Letter To The Corinthians:

Problems had arisen within the church in Corinth while Paul was in Ephesus on his third missionary journey. Paul left Ephesus briefly for a short visit to the Corinthian congregation to deal with those problems. His visit, however, failed to resolve them. Paul then wrote a letter, which has not been preserved, to address those problems. This now lost letter also failed to resolve the problems and only raised more questions within the congregation, as well as raise a challenge to Paul's apostolic ministry. Paul responded to the problems and questions by writing the letter we know as Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. Timothy arrived in Corinth after the congregation had received this letter. He then rejoined Paul in Ephesus and reported the latest news on the troubled affairs in Corinth.

Paul concluded his work in Ephesus at Pentecost (see 1 Corinthians 16:8) and then set out for the churches in Macedonia. Instead of crossing the Aegean Sea to pass through Corinth on his way to Macedonia, as he had planned to do (see 2 Corinthians 1:15, 16), he traveled north from Ephesus to Troas in Asia Minor to preach the gospel there (see 2 Corinthians 2:12). He went to Troas, instead of to Corinth, to also give the Corinthians more time to resolve their problems before visiting them for the third time. Paul expected Titus to meet him in Troas with a report of what happened in the Corinthian congregation after it had received his letter that we know as First Corinthians. Titus was delayed. Feeling anxious and fearful about the affairs in Corinth, Paul left Troas and crossed the Aegean Sea into Macedonia (see 2 Corinthians 2:13). There he met Titus, who brought him the good news that the majority of the Corinthians had taken his letter to heart. They had rectified many, though not all, of the problems. This good news lifted Paul's spirit and prompted him to write his Second Letter to the Corinthians. Paul then dispatched Titus back to Corinth to assist the congregation in completing its collection for the saints in Jerusalem (see 2 Corinthians 8:6, 16-24). Titus is likely the one to have delivered Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians.

The Place Where The Second Letter To The Corinthians Was Written:

Macedonia, very likely in Philippi.

The Date When The Second Letter To The Corinthians Was Written:

Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians was likely written in late A.D. 55. Given the information we have in 2 Corinthians 8:10 & 9:2 we know that Paul wrote Second Corinthians one year later. This would set the date of Second Corinthians in late A.D. 56.

Results Of Paul's First And Second Letters To The Corinthians:

After sending his second letter, Paul himself visited the church in Corinth for the third time. He spent the three winter months in Corinth (see 1 Corinthians 16:5-7; Acts 20:3). While there Paul wrote his Letter to the Romans. In that letter he indicated that he saw his work in the regions where he had been ministering as finished. He stated that it was time for him to move westward to Rome and Spain (see Romans 15:23, 24). This information, linked together with the tone in which Paul wrote it (see Romans 15:25, 26), seems to indicate that Paul's letters, plus his visits and those of Timothy and Titus, had resolved the problems in the Corinthian congregation. A God-pleasing order and peace had at last been brought to the church in Corinth.

Purpose Of The Second Letter To The Corinthians:

The purpose was threefold, as indicated by the three distinct parts of the letter:

1. To defend his past apostolic ministry to the Corinthians, so the Corinthians' misunderstandings would be cleared up.

2. To urge the Corinthians at the present time to complete their collection for the poor Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.

3. To inform the Corinthians of his future visit, for which his adversaries had better be prepared.

Theme Of The Second Letter To The Corinthians:

Paul's Defense Of His Apostleship To Win The Corinthians

2 Corinthians

Part 1: Introduction 2 Corinthians 1:1-11

The Address and Greeting 2 Corinthians 1:1, 2

1 ¶ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy the brother;
To the church of God that is in Corinth, together with all the saints[1] who are in all Achaia:
2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

God Comforts Us So We Can Comfort Others 2 Corinthians 1:3-11

¶ 3 Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,
4 who comforts us at the time of our every tribulation, so that we are able to comfort those in every tribulation with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God;
5 for just as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also through Christ does our comfort abound.
6 Now, if we are being afflicted, *it is* for the sake of your comfort and salvation; if we are being comforted, *it is* for the sake of your comfort that becomes effective in patient endurance of the same sufferings that we ourselves also suffer.
7 And our hope is firm concerning you, because we know that as you are partakers in our[2] sufferings, so you are also *partakers in* our comfort.
¶ 8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning our tribulation that happened in Asia,[3] because we had been oppressed to an extraordinary degree above and beyond *our* ability, so that we despaired of even living.

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[1] Lit. holy ones

[2] Lit. the; likewise later in this verse

9 Yes, we ourselves had within ourselves the sentence of death, in order that we may not have come to put confidence in ourselves but in God who raises the dead;
10 who rescued us from so great a death and will *always* rescue *us*, in whom we have put hope that he will even yet rescue *us*,
11 when you also join in helping us with your prayers[4] for us, in order that thanks might be given in our behalf by many persons for the favor bestowed to us through *the prayers* of many.

Part 2: The Past – Paul's Defense of His Apostolic Ministry to the Corinthians 2 Corinthians 1:12-7:16

A. Paul Defends His Change of Travel Plans 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:17

1. Paul's Godly Boast in His Past Dealings with the Corinthians 2 Corinthians 1:12-14

¶ 12 For our reason for boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in the sincerity and purity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but in God's grace, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.
13 For we do not write anything to you except what you are reading or what you also understand, and I hope that you yourselves will continue to understand *it* up to the end,
14 just as you did understand us in part, that we are your reason for boasting just as you also are ours in the day of our Lord Jesus.

2. Paul Defends Himself Against the Charge of Being Unreliable and Untrustworthy 2 Corinthians 1:15-22

¶ 15 And in this confidence I was intending at first to come to you, in order that you might receive[5] a second favor,[6]
16 and to come through you into Macedonia, and to return[7] from Macedonia to you, and to be helped by you on my journey to Judea.
17 Now while having this intention, I was not, then, vacillating, was I? Or, what I decide, do I decide according to the flesh, so that with me the "Yes" might be yes and the "No" might be no?
18 But God is faithful *in this respect* that our word to you is not "Yes" and "No."
19 For God's Son Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, by me and Silvanus[8] and Timothy, was not "Yes" and "No", but has been to the present time[9] "Yes" in him.
20 For as many promises of God as *there may be*, in him *is* the "Yes"; for this reason also *there is* through him the "Amen" by means of us for the purpose of *giving* glory to God.
21 Now the One who makes us firm in Christ with you and who anointed us is God,
22 who also marked us with a seal for himself and gave the down payment of the Spirit in our hearts.

3. Paul Explains His Change of Travel Plans 2 Corinthians 1:23-2:17

¶ 23 And I, I call upon God as a witness in addition to my soul, that because I wanted to spare you I did not come to Corinth again.
24 Not that we are trying to exercise lordship over your faith; on the contrary, we are helpers of your joy, for you are standing in the faith.
2 1 For I decided this for myself – the not coming back to you in sorrow;
2 for if I make you sorrowful, indeed, who is the one who gladdens me except the one who is being made sorrowful by me?
3 And I wrote for this very reason, so that when I came I might not receive sorrow from those from whom I ought to receive joy, having *this* confidence in you all that my joy is all of you.

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[3] Referring to the west coast province of what was Asia Minor

[4] Lit. with the prayer

[5] Lit. might get to have

[6] Or a second grace

[7] Lit. and to come back

[8] Silvanus is the Roman name of Paul's co-worker Silas

[9] The Greek verb denotes an action that started in the past and continues to the present time

4 For out of severe affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears, not in order that you might be made sorrowful, but in order that you might realize the love that I have especially for you.
¶ 5 Now, if someone has been causing sorrow, he has not been causing sorrow for me (but to some degree, in order not to say too much[10]) *but for* you all.
6 Sufficient for such a man is this punishment *that was inflicted* by the majority,
7 so that on the contrary you *ought* to rather forgive and comfort *him*, lest somehow such a man be overwhelmed with more sorrow than is necessary.
8 For this reason I urge you to confirm *your* love for him.
9 I wrote for this reason also that I might come to know your proven character, if you are obedient in everything.
10 Moreover, to whom you forgive anything, I also *forgive*; for what I on my part have also forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, *I have forgiven* because of you in the person of Christ,
11 in order that we may not be taken advantage of by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.[11]
¶ 12 Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ, and a door is *standing* open for me in the Lord,
13 I had no rest in my spirit because I did not find Titus, my brother, but after taking my leave of them I departed for Macedonia.
¶ 14 But thanks *be* to God who always causes us to triumph in Christ and who makes known the fragrance of his knowledge through us in every place;
15 for we are a sweet aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing,
16 to some a fragrance from death to death, to others a fragrance from life to life. And who is sufficient for these things.
17 For we are not as the many who peddle[12] the word of God, but as from purity of motive, but as from God, in the presence of God, we are speaking in Christ.

B. The Glory of the New Covenant Gospel Ministry 2 Corinthians 3:1-7:4

1. Paul Clarifies the New Covenant Gospel Ministry Is Superior to the Old Covenant Ministry of the Law 2 Corinthians 3:1-18

3 ¶ Do we begin again to recommend ourselves? Or do we, as some people *do*, have need of letters of recommendation to you or from you?
2 You are our letter, having been written in our hearts, being known and read by all people;
3 being plainly recognized that you are a letter of Christ *who* were ministered to by us, having been written not with black ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on stone tablets but on tablets of human hearts.[13]
¶ 4 Now we have such confidence through Christ toward God.
5 Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as from ourselves; on the contrary, our capability is from God,
6 who made us capable ministers of a new covenant – not of *the* letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit makes alive.
¶ 7 Now if the ministry of death *that was* in letters engraved on stone came with glory, so that the sons of Israel were not able to look intently on the face of Moses because of the glory of his face even though it was fading away,
8 how will the ministry of the Spirit not be even more glorious?
9 For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, by much more the ministry of righteousness abounds with glory.
10 For indeed what had been glorified has not been glorified in this respect on account of the glory surpassing it.[14]
11 For if what is being done away with came with glory, by much more what remains *will remain* glorious.
12 Therefore having such a hope, we keep using great boldness in speech,

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[10] Lit. in order not to weigh down, or burden
[11] Lit. purposes
[12] Lit. the many peddling
[13] Lit. tablets made of hearts of flesh
[14] Lit. on account of the surpassing glory

13 and not as Moses used to put a veil over his face, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently on the end of what was fading away.
14 But their minds became dull. For to this very day the same veil remains during the reading of the old covenant, not being lifted, because it is *only* lifted up[15] in Christ.
15 But until today whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their heart.
16 Yet every time that it turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.
17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there is* freedom.
18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding for ourselves as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same likeness from glory to glory, as from the Lord *who is* the Spirit.

2. Paul Asserts He Sets Forth Plainly the Truth of the New Covenant Gospel Ministry
2 Corinthians 4:1-6

4 ¶ For this reason, because we have this ministry by virtue of God's mercy on us,[16] we do not lose heart,
2 rather we have renounced the shameful hidden methods,[17] not conducting ourselves in craftiness, and not corrupting the word of God, but with the disclosure of the truth commending ourselves to every person's conscience in the sight of God.
3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in those who are perishing,
4 in whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, so that the bright light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, did not shine forth in them.
5 For we are not preaching ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.
6 For God, who *once* said, "OUT OF DARKNESS LIGHT SHALL SHINE,"[18] is he who has shone forth in our hearts for enlightening *us with* the knowledge[19] of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

3. Paul States the New Covenant Gospel Ministry Is a Treasure in Clay Jars
2 Corinthians 4:7-5:10

¶ 7 But we have this treasure in clay vessels, in order that the extraordinary greatness of the power may be of God and not from us.
8 We are being pressed hard on every side but not being crushed, not knowing what to do but not being utterly at a loss,
9 being persecuted but not being forsaken, being struck down but not being destroyed,
10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, in order that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.
11 For we who are living are constantly being handed over into death because of Jesus, in order that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our mortal flesh.
12 So death is at work in us, but life *is at work* in you.
13 But having the same spirit of faith, according to what has been written, "I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE,"[20] we ourselves believe, therefore we also speak,
14 knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus and will present us with you.
15 For all things are for your sakes, in order that the grace, by being multiplied through the increasing number[21] *of believers*, might abound in the giving of thanks to the glory of God.
¶ 16 For this reason we do not lose heart, but even though our outer man is being destroyed, yet our inner *man* is being renewed day by day.
17 For our momentary light affliction[22] is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all measure and proportion,
18 while we do not keep our eyes on the things that are seen but on the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are not seen are eternal.

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[15] Lit. is done away, passes away, ceases

[16] Lit. because we have this ministry, as we have been granted mercy

[17] Lit. hidden things of shame

[18] Gen.1:3; Isa.9:2

[19] Lit. has shone forth in our hearts for the illumination of the knowledge

[20] Ps.116:10

[21] Lit. by being made more through the more

[22] Lit. our momentary lightness of the affliction

5 ¶ For we know that if our earthly tent-house is torn down, we have a building from God, an eternal house made without hands in the heavens.
2 For indeed in this *tent-house* we continue to groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling,[23]
3 since indeed after we put *it* on, we will not be found naked.[24]
4 And to be sure, we who are in this tent-*house* continue to groan as *people who are* being burdened, because we do not desire to take off *this tent-house* but to put on *our heavenly dwelling*, that death[25] might be swallowed up by life.
5 Now God, who prepares us for this very thing, is he who gave us the down payment of the Spirit.
¶ 6 Consequently, always being of good cheer and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are away from home with the Lord,[26]
7 for we live by faith not by sight –
8 and indeed we are of good cheer and choose rather to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.
9 For this reason also we have as our ambition, whether at home or away from home, to be pleasing to him.
10 For we all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, in order that each one might receive back according to the things which he did by means of his body whether good or bad.

4. Paul Proclaims the New Covenant Gospel Ministry Is a Ministry of Reconciliation 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:13

¶ 11 Knowing, then, the fear of the Lord, we are busy persuading people. Now we have been made plainly apparent to God, and I am hoping we have been made plainly apparent in your consciences also.
12 We are not commending ourselves to you again; on the contrary, we are *writing these things* to give you[27] an opportunity for boasting about us, in order that you may have *something* over against those who keep boasting in the appearance they present but not *about what is* in *the* heart.
13 For if we have been out of our senses, *it was* for God; if we are in our right mind, *it is* for you.
14 For the love of Christ drives[28] us, because we have come to conclude this, that one died for all; so, then they all died;
15 and he died for all in order that those who are living no longer keep living for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.
¶ 16 And so from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; if also we have recognized Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him *in that way* no longer.
17 So if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things have passed away, behold, new things have come.
18 Now all these things *are* from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,
19 that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting people's[29] sins against them, and established among us the word[30] of reconciliation.
20 Therefore we are working as ambassadors in Christ's behalf, as though God is appealing to *you* through us; we beg you in Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.
21 God[31] made him who knew no sin *to be* sin in place of us, in order that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

6 ¶ Moreover, being *God's* fellow workers we also are appealing to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.
2 (For he says,
"AT THE ACCEPTABLE PERIOD OF TIME I LISTENED TO YOU WITH FAVOR,

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[23] Lit. to put on our dwelling, the one *that is* from heaven
[24] This translation of v.3 is based on the Nestle Greek text rather than on the United Bible Society's Greek text
[25] Lit. the mortal; referring to being subject to dying and death
[26] Lit. from the Lord
[27] Lit. giving you
[28] Or, urges, impels, controls
[29] Lit. their
[30] Or, the message
[31] Lit. he

AND IN THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU;"[32]
behold, now is the acceptable period of time! Behold, now is the day of salvation!)
3 *We are* giving no occasion *to anyone* for taking offense in anything, in order that the ministry might not be faulted;
4 on the contrary, *we are* commending ourselves as ministers of God in everything, in much patient endurance, in tribulations, in calamities, in extreme afflictions,
5 in beatings, in prisons, in riots,[33] in toils, in sleeplessness, in hunger,
6 in purity, in knowledge, in forbearance, in goodness, in a holy spirit, in genuine love,
7 in the word of truth, in the power of God; *we are commending ourselves* by means of the weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left,
8 through honor and dishonor, through bad report and good report; as deceivers and yet truthful,
9 as being unknown and yet well known, as dying and yet – behold – we go on living, as being disciplined with punishment and yet not being put to death,
10 as being grieved yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things.
¶ 11 Our mouth has opened and remains open to you, Corinthians; our heart has been enlarged and is still stretched out for you.[34]
12 You are not lacking room in our hearts,[35] but you are lacking room in your own hearts.[36]
13 Now in the same way in exchange, I am speaking *as* to *my* children, as for you, you have your hearts enlarged *for us* also.

5. Paul Urges the Corinthians to Separate Themselves from Unbelievers
2 Corinthians 6:14-7:4

¶ 14 Do not become yoked[37] together with unbelievers; for what fellowship does righteousness and lawlessness have? Or what association does light have with darkness?[38]
15 And what agreement does Christ have with Belial?[39] Or what does a believer have in common[40] with an unbeliever?
16 And what agreement does the temple of God have with idols? For we ourselves are the temple of the living God. Just as God said:

"I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM,
AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD,
AND THEY WILL BE MY PEOPLE.[41]
17 THEREFORE COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST
AND BE SEPARATE, says the Lord,
AND STOP TOUCHING WHAT IS UNCLEAN,
AND I WILL WELCOME YOU,"[42]
18 And I will be a father to you,
and you will be my sons and daughters,[43]
Says the Lord Almighty.

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[32] Isa. 49:8
[33] Lit. in disturbances, disorders
[34] The Greek verb tenses in this verse indicate an action that took place in the past and continues up to the present
[35] Lit. you are not being cramped, or crowded, or restricted, in us
[36] Meaning for the gospel and for Paul and his coworkers
[37] Lit. unequally yoked
[38] Lit. what fellowship for righteousness and lawlessness? Or what association for light with darkness?
[39] Lit. what agreement of Christ with Belial?
[40] Lit. what part for a believer with an unbeliever
[41] Lev.26:12
[42] Isa.52:11
[43] Ref. 2 Sam.7:14; Isa.43:6

7 ¶ Therefore having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of flesh and spirit, bringing holiness to its goal in the fear of God.
¶ 2 Make room for us *in your hearts*; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one.
3 I am not saying *this* to condemn you,[44] for I have said before that you are in our hearts so that *you and we* died together and are living together.
4 I am speaking quite frankly to you,[45] I do much boasting about you;[46] I am filled with the comfort, I am overflowing beyond measure with the joy above all our tribulation.

C. Paul Delights in the Good News from Corinth 2 Corinthians 7:5-16

¶ 5 For indeed since we came into Macedonia our flesh has had no relief; on the contrary, we were afflicted in every way – conflicts from without and fears from within.
6 But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us with the arrival of Titus;
7 moreover, not only with his arrival but also with the comfort with which he had been comforted on the basis of you, reporting to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.
8 For even though I grieved you in my[47] letter, I am not regretting *it now*; although *for a while* I was regretting it, for I see that that letter grieved you, although *only* for a short time.
9 Now I am rejoicing, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved to repentance; you see, you were grieved in accordance with God's *manner for doing so*,[48] so that in no way did you suffer injury from us.
10 For grief in a Godly manner works repentance without regret for salvation, but the grief of the world brings about death.
11 For behold what great earnestness this very fact that you were grieved in a Godly manner has brought about for you! Indeed defense, indeed indignation, indeed fear, indeed longing, indeed zeal, indeed righting the wrong! In every respect you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in this case.
12 So then, although I wrote to you, *I did not do so* on account of the man who did wrong, nor on account of the man who suffered the wrong, but in order that your earnestness for us might be brought out into the open to yourselves in the presence of God.
13 For this reason we have been comforted.
¶ Moreover, in addition to this[49] comfort of ours we rejoiced especially over[50] the joy of Titus, for his spirit has been given rest with respect to you all;[51]
14 for if I have boasted somewhat to him about you, I was not put to shame; on the contrary, just as we had spoken everything to you truthfully, so also our boasting before Titus turned out to be true.
15 And his affections are especially for you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.
16 I am rejoicing that I have confidence in you in everything.

Part 3: The Present – Paul Encourages the Corinthians to Complete Their Collection 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15

A. Paul Cites the Example of the Macedonian Christians 2 Corinthians 8:1-7

8 ¶ Now, brothers, we make known to you the grace of God that has been given in the churches of Macedonia,
2 that in a great ordeal of affliction the abundance of their joy and the depth of their poverty[52]

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[44] Lit. for the purpose of condemnation
[45] Lit. great is my frankness toward you
[46] Lit. great is my boasting about you
[47] Lit. the
[48] Lit. in accordance with God; likewise v.10 & 11
[49] Lit. the
[50] Or, because of, at
[51] Lit. from you all
[52] Lit. down from their deep poverty

overflowed into the richness of their single purpose.
3 I bear witness that according to *their* ability, even beyond *their* ability, voluntarily,
4 with much pleading begging us for the grace and the fellowship of this[53] ministry to the saints[54] –
5 and not as we had expected, but they gave themselves first of all to the Lord and to us by the will of God,
6 so that we urged Titus that just as he had previously begun *the work among you* so he would also finish for you as well this grace.
7 But just as you abound in everything, in faith and confession[55] and knowledge and all eagerness and in love from you to us,[56] so[57] continue to abound in this grace also.

B. Paul Urges the Corinthians to Finish the Collection They Had Started
2 Corinthians 8:8-15

¶ 8 I am not saying *this* as a command but as testing the genuineness of your love by means of the eagerness of others;
9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that although he was rich he became poor [58] for your sakes, in order that you on your part might become rich through his poverty.
10 And I am offering an opinion in this matter; for this is helpful to you – such ones as you who had previously begun a year ago not only to carry *it* out but also to desire *to do it*.
11 And now finish carrying *it* out also, in order that just as there is the readiness of desiring *to do it*, so in the same way there is also the *readiness of* finishing it from the funds that you have.[59]
12 For if the readiness is present, *it is* acceptable according to what *a person* has, not according to what he does not have.
13 For *this collection is* not that others may have relief, *and* you hardship;[60] on the contrary, it is for[61] equality –
14 at this present time your abundance *may provide* for their deficiency, that their abundance may provide [62] for your deficiency, in order that there may be an equality;
15 as it is written: "HE WHO HAD MUCH DID NOT HAVE TOO MUCH, AND HE WHO HAD LESS DID NOT HAVE TOO LITTLE."[63]

C. Paul States He Is Sending Titus to Assist the Corinthians
2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5

¶ 16 Now thanks be to God who puts[64] the same eagerness for you in the heart of Titus,
17 for on the one hand he accepted my[65] urging, but on the other hand being very eager he went to you on his own accord.
18 And we sent together with him the brother whose praise in *the work* of the gospel *is* through all the churches
19 – and not only *this* but he was also chosen by the churches to be our traveling companion with this grace that is being ministered by us to the glory of the Lord and our own readiness –
20 while trying to avoid this, that anyone may find fault with us during this bountiful collection being ministered by us;

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[53] Lit. the
[54] Lit. holy ones
[55] Lit. word
[56] Lit. in
[57] Lit. so that you also continue to abound
[58] Lit. became a beggar
[59] Lit. from the having
[60] Lit. tribulation, affliction
[61] Lit. in accordance with
[62] Lit. may be or become
[63] Ex.16:18
[64] This present tense follows Nestle's Greek text
[65] Lit. the

21 for we are taking into consideration what is morally good not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the sight of people.
22 And we sent together with them our brother whom we have recognized often in many tests as being eager, and he is now even more eager with complete confidence in you.
23 Whether concerning Titus, my partner and fellow worker for you, or our brothers, *they are* delegates of churches, and *they are* the glory of Christ.
24 So show to them before the churches the proof of your love and of our boasting about you.
9 ¶ For it is unnecessary for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints,[66]
2 for I know your readiness about which I boast to the Macedonians that Achaia has been ready since last year, and your zeal stimulated most of them.
3 But I sent the brothers, lest our boasting about you in this matter prove to be so many empty words,[67] that, as I was just saying, you have *indeed* been ready,
4 lest if *some* Macedonians should come with me, *as is probable,* and find you unprepared, we on our part, not to mention you as well,[68] would be put to shame in this confident boasting.[69]
5 Therefore I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and to arrange in advance your previously promised generous gift,[70] this is to be ready in this manner as a generous gift[71] and not tainted by covetousness.[72]

D. Paul States the Collection Will Be a Blessing All Around 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

¶ 6 Now *consider* this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows generously[73] will also reap generously.
7 Each one *is to give* just as he has chosen beforehand in his own heart,[74] not grudgingly[75] or out of compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, in order that you, having in all things at all times all sufficiency, may continue to abound in every good work;
9 just as it is written,
"HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR LABORERS,
HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER."[76]
10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for eating will supply and multiply your seed and will increase the fruits of your righteousness;
11 as Christians[77] who are being enriched in every way in complete[78] singleness of purpose, of such a nature as keeps producing the giving of thanks to God through us –
12 because this[79] ministry of this sacred service *of giving* is not only helping to replenish the needs of the saints,[80] but *is* also abounding through the thanksgivings of many to God –
13 *being motivated* by the tested approval[81] of this ministry, they are glorifying God for[82] your confessional obedience to the gospel of Christ and for *your* single purpose of fellowship to them and to all,

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66 Lit. holy ones
67 Lit. be made empty
68 Lit. not that I say you, or, not to say you
69 Lit. in this confidence
70 Lit. previously promised blessing
71 Lit. as a blessing
72 Lit. and not as covetousness
73 Lit. on the basis of a blessing
74 Lit. the heart
75 Lit. out of sorrow, or pain, or grief
76 Ps.112:9
77 Lit. ones
78 Lit. all
79 Lit. the
80 Lit. holy ones
81 The Greek word means an approval that is gained by testing

14 while they also with prayer on your behalf are longing for you because of the extraordinary grace of God upon you.
15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Part 4: The Future – Paul Informs the Corinthians of His Coming Visit 2 Corinthians 10:1-13:10

A. Paul, the True Apostle, Versus the "Super-Apostles" 2 Corinthians 10:1-11:15

1. Paul Pleads Not to Have to Exert His Courage and Weapons When He Comes 2 Corinthians 10:1-6

10 ¶ Now I myself, Paul, am pleading with you by reminding you of[83] the meekness and gentleness of Christ, *I* who on the one hand am humble when face to face with you, but on the other hand I am bold toward you when I am absent;
2 now I beg you that when I am present I *do* not *have* to be bold with the confidence with which I propose to deal boldly against some who keep considering us as *men who* conduct ourselves according to the flesh.
3 For although we live in the flesh, we are not fighting according to the flesh,
4 for our weapons for warfare are not weak[84] but are powerful *weapons* for God for tearing down fortresses. *We* are wrecking false arguments[85]
5 and every height that is being raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we* are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,
6 and we are ready to correct every disobedience, as soon as your obedience shall be brought to completion.

2 Paul Urges the Corinthians to Look at the Obvious Facts 2 Corinthians 10:7-11

7 Look again and again at the things right before your eyes![86] If anyone has reached the conviction for himself that he belongs to Christ, let him on the other hand consider this repeatedly for himself,[87] that just as he belongs to Christ, so do we also.
8 For if in addition I shall boast about something over and beyond *that*, namely about our authority that the Lord gave for building you up, and not for tearing you down, I shall not be put to shame,
9 that I may not appear as if frightening you by means of my[88] letters;
10 for "his[89] letters, to be sure," he says, "are weighty and strong, but his[90] bodily presence is unimpressive[91] and his[92] manner of speaking[93] is contemptible."
11 Let such a fellow[94] as this consider this repeatedly, that such as we are by our[95] word through letters when we are absent, such men *we are* also in our[96] work when we are present.

3. Paul Clarifies How To Measure Who Really Measures Up 2 Corinthians 10:12-18

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[82] Or, on the basis of
[83] Lit. by means of
[84] Lit. belonging to the realm of the flesh, meaning weak and sinful
[85] Lit. reasonings, meaning false reasonings
[86] Lit. to the face, or, before the face of
[87] Lit. upon, or, on the basis of, himself
[88] Lit. the
[89] Lit. the
[90] Lit. the
[91] Lit. weak
[92] Lit. the
[93] Lit. word
[94] Lit. a one
[95] Lit. the
[96] Lit. the

¶ 12 You see, we do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who recommend themselves; why, when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves to themselves, they lack common sense![97]
13 Now as for us, we shall not boast about things that cannot be measured, rather *we shall boast* with regard to the measure of our mission work[98] that God assigned to us for a measure, *namely* to come even as far as you.
14 You see, we are not overextending ourselves *in our boasting*, like men who have not come to you, for we first came even as far as you with the gospel of Christ;
15 *now we are* not boasting about things that cannot be measured in connection with other men's labors, but having *the* hope, as your faith continues to grow, *that* with regard to *the measure of* our mission work *it* will be made so much greater[99] by you,
16 *namely* to bring the gospel into the regions beyond you, so we do not boast about[100] what has been accomplished in connection with other men's mission activities.
17 But let him who boasts boast in the Lord.
18 For not the one who recommends himself is approved,[101] but the man whom the Lord recommends.

4. Paul Asks To Be Permitted To Boast 2 Corinthians 11:1-6

11 ¶ O that you would put up with me in a little foolishness! But indeed you are putting up with me.
2 For I am deeply concerned for you with the concern of God, for I have given you in marriage to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ;
3 but I am afraid lest in some way, as the serpent utterly deceived Eve with his craftiness, your thoughts might be led astray from the singleness of purpose and purity in regard to Christ.
4 For if indeed the one who is coming *to you* preaches another Jesus whom we did not preach, or you get a different spirit whom you did not get *from us*, or you get a different gospel which you did not get *from us* – you put up with it *very* well!
5 For I do not consider myself to be inferior to those super-apostles in anything.[102]
6 Now if in fact *I am* untrained in speaking, nevertheless I am not *untrained* in knowledge; yes, in every way we have in all things made *the truth* known to you.

5. Paul Points Out the Non-Mercenarian Nature of His Apostolic Ministry 2 Corinthians 11:7-12

¶ 7 Or did I commit a sin by humbling myself in order that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge?
8 I robbed other churches by receiving support for the ministry to you,
9 and while I was present with you and was going without things, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brothers came from Macedonia, they replenished what I needed;[103] and in every way I kept myself from being a burden to you and shall keep myself from burdening you.[104]
10 The truth of Christ is in me, and this boasting will not be silenced[105] for me in the regions of Achaia.
11 Why? Because I do not love you? God knows *I do*!
12 Moreover, what I am doing and will continue doing,[106] *I do and will do* to cutoff the pretext of those who are looking for[107] a pretext, that in the matter in which they boast[108] they may be found just as we are also.

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[97] Lit. they have no understanding

[98] The Greek word is canon, which meant a straight stick or rod that was used for measuring; a measuring rod, or rule; its meaning also then became a rule and a standard; in this and the following verses it referred to the work God assigned to Paul, his mission work

[99] Lit. to be made great superabundantly

[100] Lit. not to boast about

[101] Lit. himself, that one is approved

[102] Lit. For I consider to have been inferior to the super-apostles in respect to nothing

[103] Lit. replenished my need

[104] Lit. in every way I kept myself unburdensome to you and shall keep

[105] Lit. stopped, or shut, or closed

6. Paul Clarifies What His Adversaries Really Are 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

¶ 13 For such kind of men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ.
14 And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light;
15 it is no great thing, then, if his servants also masquerade as ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

B. Paul Boasts as a "Fool" 2 Corinthians 11:16-12:13

¶ 16 Again I say, let no one think I am *actually* a fool;[109] otherwise at least receive me even as a fool, in order that I myself may boast a little.
17 What I am saying in this confident boasting of mine,[110] I am not saying as the Lord would,[111] but as in foolishness.
18 Since many are boasting according to the flesh, I shall also boast.
19 For you, being so intelligent, gladly put up with fools!
20 For you put up with it if someone reduces you to slavery, if someone devours you, if someone takes *possession of* you, if someone exalts himself over you, if someone slaps you in the face!
21 To my shame I must confess,[112] that by comparison, as for us, we have been and still are weak.[113]
¶ But in whatever someone *else* is daring to boast, I am speaking foolishly, I myself am daring to boast as well.
22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.
23 Are they ministers of Christ? I am speaking as one who is insane – I *am* even more; in labors much harder, in prisons more frequently, in floggings beyond measure, in danger of death often;
24 five times I received at the hands of the Jews forty *lashes* minus one,
25 three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I suffered shipwreck, I have spent a night and a day in the open sea;
26 *I have been* on journeys frequently, in dangers from rivers, in dangers from bandits, in dangers from my countrymen, in dangers from Gentiles, in dangers in the city, in dangers in the wasteland, in dangers on the sea, in dangers in connection with false brothers;
27 *I have been* in toil and hardship, without sleep[114] frequently, in hunger and thirst, often in involuntary fastings, in the cold and without sufficient clothing;
28 apart from *these* secondary matters *there is* the pressure on me every day, *namely*, the worry about all the churches!
29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is led into sin, and I am not set ablaze?
¶ 30 If it is necessary to boast, I will boast about the things of my weakness.
31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus knows, who is blessed forever, that I am not lying.
32 In Damascus the governor of King Aretas was guarding the city of the Damascenes to arrest me,
33 and through a window in a basket made of ropes I was let down through the city wall and escaped from his hands.

12 ¶ It is necessary to go on boasting. Although it may not help *your faith,*[115] yet I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.
2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago – whether in *his* body I do not know, or outside of *his* body I do not know, God knows – such a man as this was snatched away up to the third heaven.

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[106] Referring to Paul's preaching the gospel free of charge without accepting any salary; this he would continue doing to cut off any chance of the false super-apostles saying they were only doing what Paul himself did

[107] Lit. who want, or who desire

[108] Referring to the false super-apostles' taking money from the Corinthians for preaching the gospel; they preached the gospel to gain an income for themselves, which Paul refused to do

[109] Lit. I am senseless, or foolish, or stupid

[110] Lit. in this confidence of the boasting

[111] Lit. in accordance with the Lord

[112] Lit. according to shame I am speaking

[113] The Greek verb denotes an action that was completed in the past and continues on to the present

[114] Lit. in sleeplessness

[115] Lit. although it may not be a helpful thing

3 And I know such a man as this – whether in *his* body or apart from his[116] body I do not know, God knows –
4 that he was snatched away to paradise and heard unspeakable words, which are not lawful[117] for a man to speak.
5 I will boast about such a man as this, but I will not boast about myself except in my[118] weaknesses.
6 For if I shall *someday* wish to boast, I shall not be a fool, because I shall speak *the* truth; but I refrain *from doing so*, lest anyone consider me[119] *to be* more than what he sees me *to be* or what he hears from me.
7 So, in order that I may not lift myself up *with pride*, because of the extraordinary nature of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, in order to keep afflicting[120] me, in order that I may not lift myself up *with pride*.
8 Concerning this I pleaded three times with the Lord that it might depart from me;
9 and he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you; for its[121] power is brought to the end *of its work* in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast in my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may rest[122] upon me.
10 Accordingly I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in calamities, in persecutions and extreme afflictions for Christ's sake; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.
¶ 11 I have become a fool *by my boasting*; as for you, you forced me *to do it*! For I on my part ought to be commended by you. For I was not inferior to the super-apostles in anything, even if I am nothing.
12 To be sure, the signs of an apostle, not only signs but also wonders and deeds of power, were performed among you with all perseverance.
13 What, then, is it in which you were treated worse than[123] the rest of the churches, except that I myself was not a burden to you? Forgive me for this injustice!

C. Paul Announces His Coming Third Visit 2 Corinthians 12:14-13:10

¶ 14 Behold I am ready to come to you this third time, and I will not be a burden *to you*; for I am not seeking your possessions[124] but you, for the children are not obligated to store *things* up for their[125] parents, but the parents for their children.
15 Now I will most gladly spend freely, indeed, will be spent completely, for the sake of your souls. If I love you so much the more, am I being loved less?
16 But let that be as it may, I was not a burden to you; but being a crafty fellow I took you by cunning.
17 I have not taken advantage of you through any of those I have sent to you, have I?
18 I urged Titus and sent along the brother; Titus did not take advantage of you, did he? Did we not walk in the same spirit? *Did we* not *walk* in their footsteps?
¶ 19 All this time have you been thinking that we have been speaking to you in our own defense? In the presence of God we are speaking in Christ; and everything, beloved, is for the sake of building you up.
20 For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish *you to be*, and I may be found by you not as you wish *me to be*, lest *there* perhaps *be* strife, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambitions, slanders, *instances of* gossiping, cases of self-conceit, disorders;
21 lest when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many who have sinned previously and have not repented of[126] the impurity and illicit sexual intercourse and unbridled lust that they have committed.

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[116] Lit. the
[117] Or possible
[118] Lit. the
[119] Lit. in regard to me
[120] This is the figurative meaning as Paul intended it; the Greek word literally means to keep beating with the fist
[121] Lit. the
[122] Lit. may fix its tent, or, habitation
[123] Or, were made less than, or, were made inferior to
[124] Lit. things
[125] Lit. the
[126] Lit. on

13 ¶ This is the third time I am coming to you. "BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY MATTER WILL BE ESTABLISHED."[127]
2 I have told you before and I am telling you in advance as being present the second time and *as* being absent now to those who have sinned previously and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare *anyone*,
3 since you are seeking a proof of the Christ speaking in me; who is not weak towards you but is strong among you.
4 Yes, you see, Christ[128] was crucified out of weakness, but he lives because of God's power. Yes, you see, we are weak in him, but we shall live in union with him because of God's power toward you.
¶ 5 Start putting yourselves to the test *to see* if you are in the faith, start proving yourselves by testing; or do you really not know your own selves, namely that Jesus Christ is in you – unless indeed you are failing to stand the test?
6 Moreover, I hope that you will come to know that we are not men who fail to stand the test.
7 And we are praying to God that you do nothing evil, not in order that we ourselves may appear to be approved, but in order that indeed you may begin doing the morally excellent thing, and that we on our part may be as men who have not proven themselves.
8 For we are unable to do anything against the truth; on the contrary, we *can only do things* for the truth.
9 For we rejoice whenever we are weak, but you are strong; and we are praying for this, your complete restoration.
10 Because of this I am writing these things while I am absent, in order that when I am present I may not act severely according to the authority that the Lord has given to me – for building up and not for tearing down.

Part 5: Closing 2 Corinthians 13:11-13

¶ 11 Finally, brothers, farewell. Let yourselves be restored, let yourselves be admonished, keep setting your minds on the same thing, keep living in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.
12 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints[129] greet you.
¶ 13 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

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[127] Dt.19:15
[128] Lit. he
[129] Lit. holy ones