



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

1 & 2 CORINTHIANS

Week 4

Who Said Following Christ Was Easy?

DAY 22

2 Corinthians 6

“I can’t hear what you’re saying because the way you live speaks so loudly.” Does the life of Christ in you enable your walk to match your talk?

1. How does the catalogue of hardships in verses 4-10 “commend” the apostles who first brought the gospel to Corinth? What was their attitude in the midst of so many difficulties?

2. What is the pre-requisite for a healthy, mutually beneficial relationship (vs. 11-13)?

1. Since Christ has made us free, are there practices to which you have reverted and from which you need to depart?

2. Have you been a “stumbling block” to people you should be helping? How can you correct the situation (See Ro 14:13; 1Co 10:32)?

3. Do you tend to complain? If so, compare your troubles and hardship with those of Paul. Are the challenges you face hardening your attitudes, or are they making you wiser and stronger?

4. In your relationships with those who do not live in Christ as you do, by his grace, who is influencing whom the most?

*Verse 2, a quote from Isaiah 49:8, reminds us that **God has intervened to save his people throughout history, supremely in their Exodus from slavery in Egypt and their return from exile in Babylonia. Both of these dramatic interventions anticipated the greatest intervention of all—the coming of Christ as savior of the world.***

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

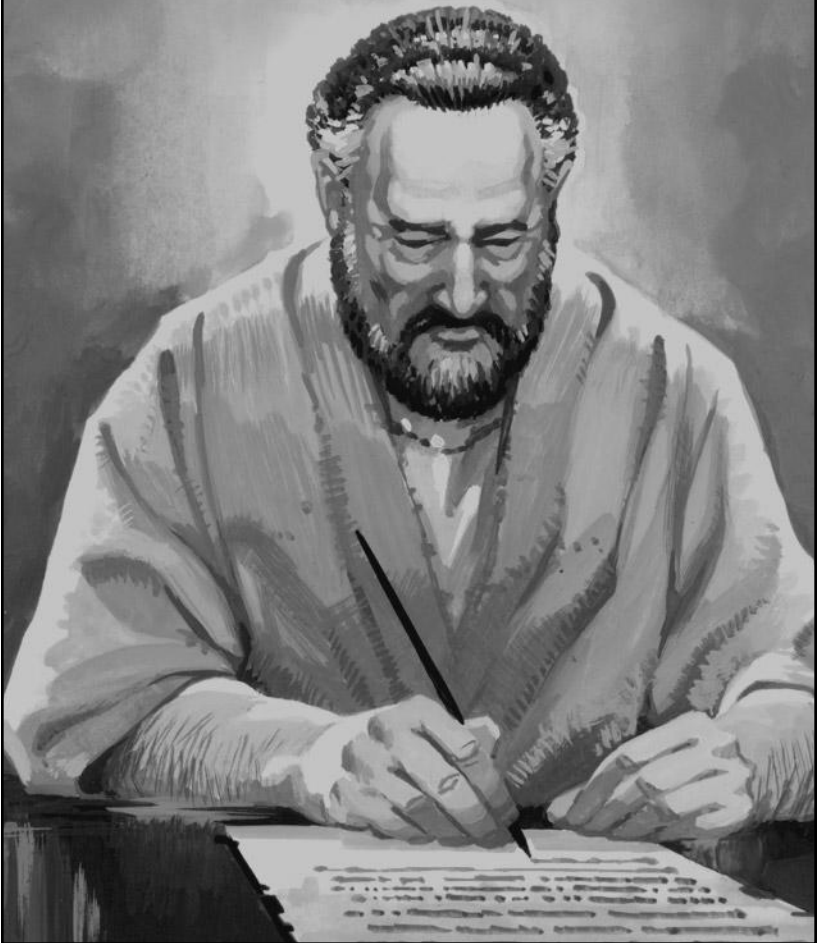
out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

“So even though I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did the wrong or of the injured party, but rather that before God you could see for yourselves how devoted to us you are. By all this we are encouraged.”

2 Corinthians 7:12-13



Artwork by Ken Tunell

Through Sorrow to Salvation

DAY 23

2 Corinthians 7

Sometimes dealing with spiritual problems is like surgery. A painful incision by a qualified and caring professional may be needed to get to the heart of the issue.

1. What conditions are needed for a relationship to go beyond mind-to-mind to become truly heart-to-heart? Reflect on Paul's dealing with the believers and his feelings for them (vs. 2-4)?

2. What do verses 5-7 reveal about the depth of Paul's concern for the church, and his relief on hearing the news that Titus (2Co 2:12, 13) brought to him?

3. What two kinds of sorrow are described? How do they differ in their nature and outcomes (7:8-11)?

4. What was the main purpose of Paul's "painful visit" (vs. 11-13)? How was the need to discipline erring believers a test-case of a broader issue?

5. On the basis of the information in this chapter, in what ways was Paul's confidence in the Corinthian church strengthened (vs. 4, 14)?

1. Do you tend to keep people at a distance? How can you become more open to others? Can Paul's example help you?

2. Are there long-standing sorrows in your life? How has this affected your life and relationships?

Godly sorrow (v. 10) is not simply remorse, or shame at being found out and publicly exposed. It has a positive outcome that leads to repentance, which signifies a change of mind and change of direction.

OPENING

up to the Word

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Grace and Giving

2 Corinthians 8

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever helped to collect donations? In your experience, what kind of people sacrificed the most: (a) poor, (b) middle-class, (c) wealthy?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Why is *grace* associated with giving (vs. 1, 6-7, 9)?
2. What were the circumstances of the churches in Macedonia at the time they were asked to donate to the impoverished Christians in Judea? What excuses might they have offered (v. 2)? How *did* they respond (vs. 3, 5)?
3. How did the example set by the churches in Macedonia help Titus and Paul challenge the church in Corinth (vs. 6-7)?
4. Why was it necessary to send Titus to Corinth to address the issue of Christian giving (vs. 10-12)? Why do you think they had not performed as they had promised?
5. What is the underlying principle behind one church helping another (vs. 13-15)?
6. What measures did Paul take to ensure that the collection from the churches was safeguarded from criticism and corruption (v. 21)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. What most influences your own giving to God's work and human need?
2. Do you carry through with your financial pledges?

WINDOW
on the Word

"He who gathered much" (v. 15). *This is a reference to God's provision of the manna for the Israelites in the desert (Ex 16:14-17; Nu 11:7). They were to collect manna each day—but only as much as they needed for that day. They were to gather in order to meet need, not to satisfy greed.*

*“But just as you
excel in
everything—in
faith, in speech,
in knowledge, in
complete
earnestness and
in your love for
us—see that you
also excel in this
grace of giving.”*

2 Corinthians 8:7



*“Remember this:
Whoever sows
sparingly will also
reap sparingly, and
whoever sows
generously will also
reap generously.”*

2 Corinthians 9:6

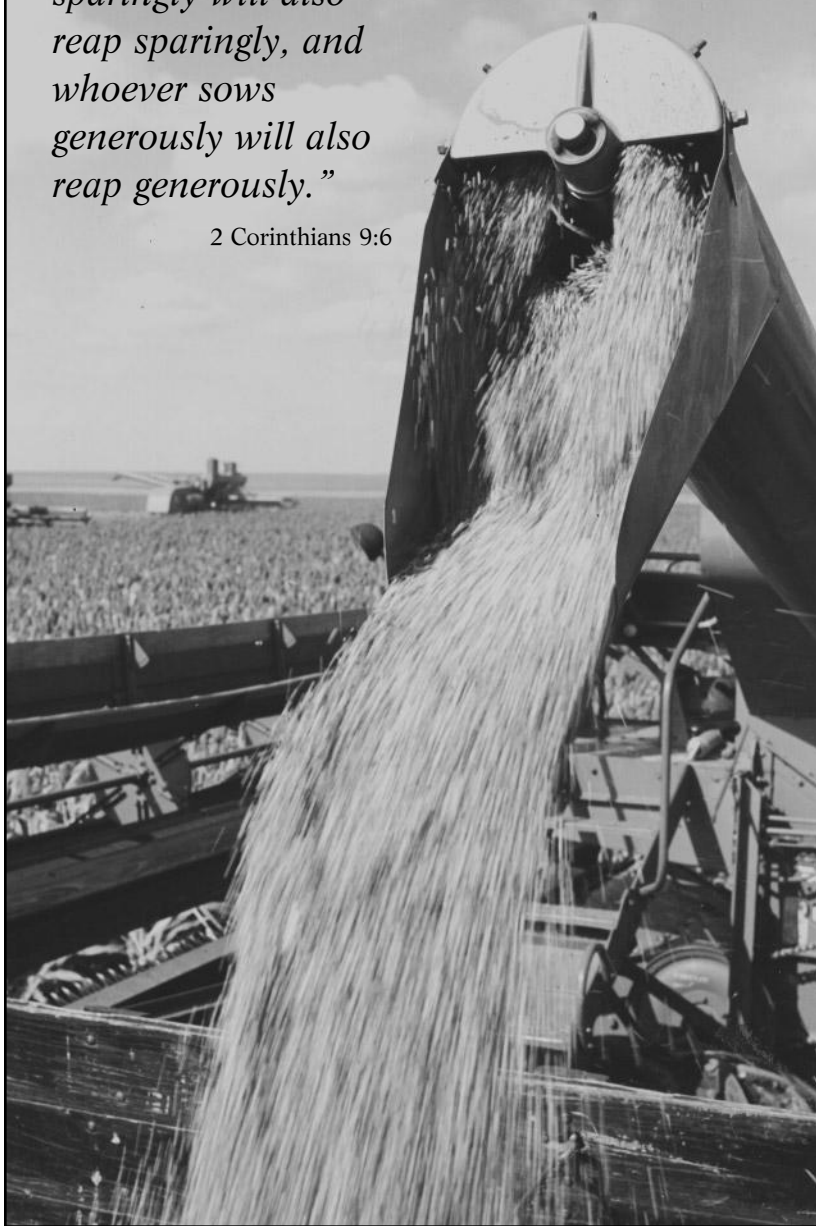


Photo by Bob Taylor

2 Corinthians 9

Can you remember a time when you were initially excited about a project, only to grow tired of it as time went on? Did you finally see the project through to completion?

1. What qualities did Paul acknowledge regarding the Corinthians' "service to the saints," (vs. 1-2)?
2. What concerns did Paul have regarding the Corinthians making good on their promises (vs. 3-4)? How would their failure to fulfill their promise have affected Paul's own ministry throughout Macedonia?
3. What practical steps did Paul take to make sure they didn't disappoint him in this matter (vs. 4-5)?
4. According to verses 6-9, how should a person give?
5. What two good things would happen as a result of the Corinthians' giving to the church in Jerusalem (9:12-15)?

1. Do you tend to be enthusiastic and eager to help when a need is presented to you, or are you more likely to respond with excuses?
2. Have you ever failed to deliver on promises you made? Did that cause embarrassment for those to whom you pledged your word?

*The **generosity of early Christians** was not confined to the Christian community. There are frequent references in the writings of the early Church fathers as well as secular sources documenting Christians feeding the hungry, caring for widows and orphans and nursing the sick, among neighbors and strangers alike.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Weighing Words

2 Corinthians 10

OPENING
up to the Word

“Nobody ever built a monument to a critic,” goes an old saying. You can probably name several movie stars from the first half of the 20th century—but can you name any movie *critics* from that era?

DIGGING
into the Word

- 1.** How did Paul’s opponents try to discredit him? Can you explain why Paul’s approaches differed in tone, depending on whether he was dealing with them face to face or later in writing (vs. 1-2,6)?
- 2.** Why is Christian ministry here described as “waging war”? What “weapons” does Paul choose in order to successfully engage his enemy (vs. 3-6)?
- 3.** How does Paul use his authority as an apostle in contrast with his opponents’ use of authority in claiming to be spiritually superior to him (vs. 7-11)?
- 4.** Why did Paul’s opponents have no qualms about boasting? By what standards did they measure themselves (vs. 12)?
- 5.** Why are there repeated references to “boasting” in this chapter (seven times)? What is Paul trying to accomplish by talking this way?

LIVING
out the Word

- 1.** In your dealings with other people are you more likely to take a hard line or to try to avoid confrontation? What can you learn from Paul?
- 2.** Would *taking every thought to make it obedient to Christ* (v. 5) have changed your actions in any recent situations?
- 3.** In setting standards of behavior, whom do you measure yourself against (Eph 3:19; 4:13)?

WINDOW
on the Word

The “weapons of the world” (vs. 4-5) may appear powerful, especially when they are backed by Satanic principles and powers, but their pretentious claims are always bigger than their actual performance.

Faithful Following

DAY 27

2 Corinthians 11:1-15

Have you ever had a “free lunch”? If you did, it wasn’t really free. Someone had to pay.

1. What did Paul mean by the phrase, “I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy”? What concerns lay behind that statement (vs. 1-4)?
2. How was Paul able to preach the gospel in Corinth “free of charge” (v 7)?
3. How did Paul’s opponents, whom he sarcastically referred to as “those super-apostles,” interpret his sacrificial ministry?
4. In what way did Paul believe Satan was disguising his activities (vs. 13-15)?
5. What consequences become clearly evident when Satan removes the mask behind which he hides his true purpose?

1. Are you concerned for your own spiritual progress and for those who accompany you in your journey of faith?
2. Are you prepared to put yourself out for other people, expecting nothing in return?
3. Do you need to increase your financial and prayer support to organized efforts that attempt to reach physical and spiritual needs around this world?
4. Have you ever trusted someone, only to discover later that they represented evil, masquerading “as an angel of light”? What did you learn?

“If someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached...” (v. 4). It was easier for Jesus to be misrepresented before the writing and circulation of the four Gospels. Note Luke’s purpose in writing his Gospel and the book of Acts (Lk 1:1-4; Ac 1:1-3).

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

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on the Word

Who Gets the Glory?

2 Corinthians 11:16-33

OPENING
up to the Word

Who stands out as the biggest braggart you have known? Were you comfortable around him or her? Did you remain silent, or did you try to beat them at their own game?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Why is Paul so concerned about what the Corinthians were prepared to put up with? Why is he not prepared to put up with it?
2. Paul invited the Corinthians to compare his track record with that of his accusers. What do his experiences tell you about apostolic ministry in the church of the first century (vs. 21-33)?
3. What impact was Paul's list of hardships designed to have on his readers?
4. What burden was greater than any other Paul mentions in this list (v. 28)? What does that brief statement reveal concerning the key to the effectiveness of his missionary journeys?
5. How was God's power made evident in human weakness (see 1Co 2:1-10; Ac 18:9-11)?

LIVING
out the Word

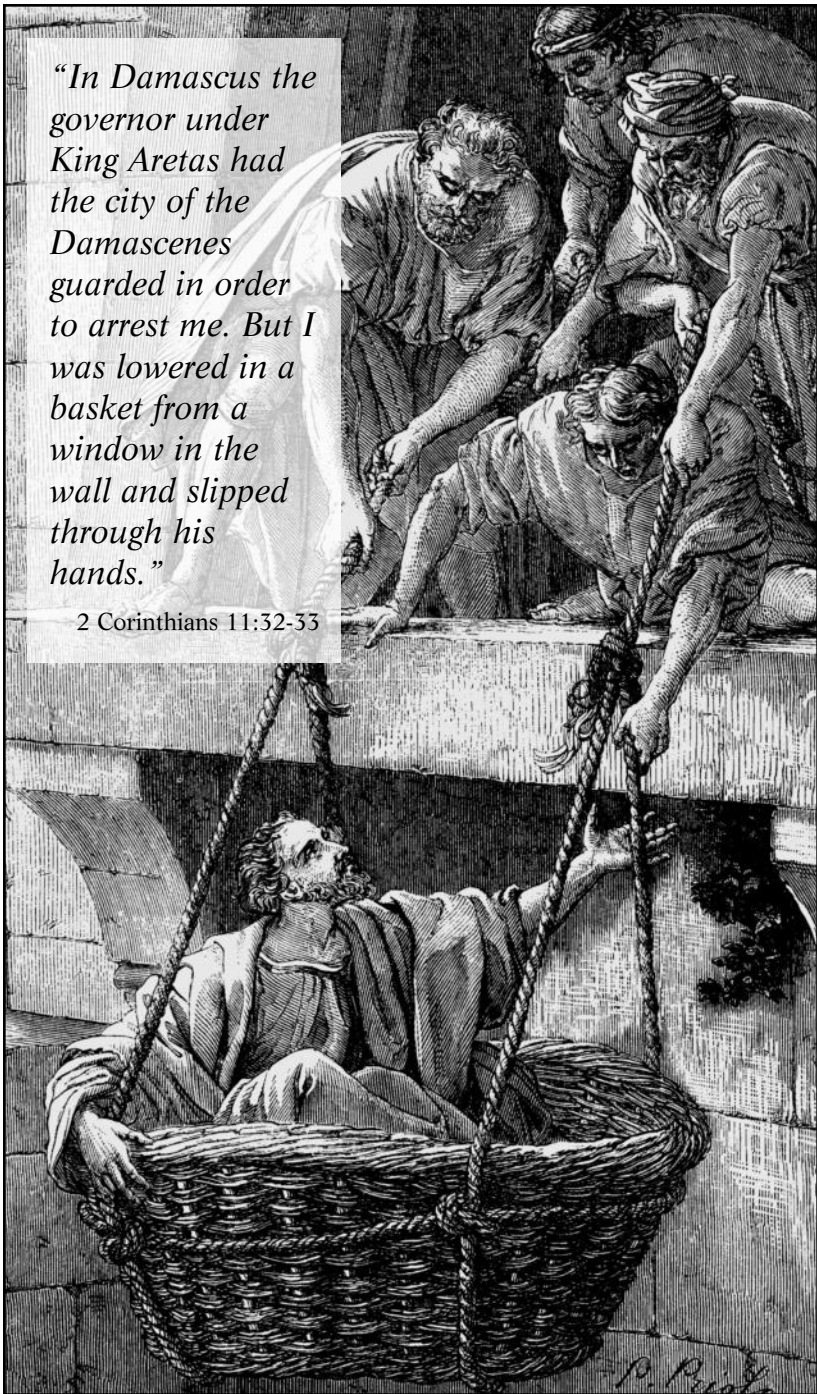
1. Have you seen God at work—not just through your strengths, but through your inadequacies—and at times when you felt weak and low?
2. Reflect on those times when you turned to another person for help during a time of need. Did you approach them at a moment that was convenient for them, or were they prepared to put aside what they were doing to come to your aid no matter how busy or tired they felt?

WINDOW
on the Word

Paul's **list of hardships** can be illustrated from the account of his ministry in Acts. It is also evident that some of his sufferings are omitted in Luke's account in Acts because they occurred previous to Luke's travels with Paul. His shipwreck on the way to Rome happened after the writing of this letter.

“In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.”

2 Corinthians 11:32-33



Artwork by P. Priolo

“When I Am Weak, Then I Am Strong”

2 Corinthians 12

OPENING
up to the Word

Sarcasm, when used to hurt or belittle other people, has been described as the lowest form of wit and the highest form of ignorance. Do you employ sarcasm? Is it often used on you?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. If the “man in Christ” (v. 2) was Paul, what can you learn from the manner in which he spoke about this special experience of God (vs. 1-6)?
2. How was his experience counter-balanced, and why does he boast about that more than his experience (vs. 7-10, 2, 3)?
3. In what ways did Paul demonstrate his love for his brothers and sisters in Christ (vs. 14-18)?
4. How did his ministry among them stand in contrast to that of the “super-apostles”?
5. What was Paul afraid he would find when he arrived in Corinth? How does this explain his heavy use of sarcasm in chapters 11 and 12 (for example, see 12:19-21)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Have you ever felt “put down” by the way someone has shared his or her spiritual experiences?
2. Is verse 9 important to you at this time in your life, or has it had significance for you during some past painful or traumatic experience?
3. Do you know individuals who have set aside their own interests and ambitions in order to give their lives to provide extended care for a loved one? How might you help and encourage them?

WINDOW
on the Word

There has been much speculation about Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” (v. 7). Most commentators take it to mean some physical affliction, while others think it refers to the opponents who constantly dogged his path.

Christ in Us— Our Only Hope

DAY 30

2 Corinthians 13

Have you ever worked for abusive leaders or managers? Have you ever been abusive with power? Either way, what were the results?

1. When is it appropriate to take strong disciplinary action (vs. 1-2)?
 2. How is weakness transformed into strength in Paul's experience (vs. 3-4)? Why are the Corinthians urged to test themselves? In what areas should that test have been applied in the light of the issues raised by Paul in these two letters (vs. 5-8)?
 3. Why does Paul invite them to apply that same test to his own ministry and to compare?
 4. What is Paul's intention toward the Corinthians in using his apostolic authority among them?
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1. How can you exercise authority in a Christ-like manner to correct a difficult situation?
 2. Do you apply the same standards to yourself as you expect or demand of others?
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***“Greet one another with a holy kiss”** (v. 12). Such was the form of public greeting among close friends. In the context of worship in the early church it was much more than a social gesture. It demonstrated how the gospel had broken down rigid social barriers to form a community of love, trust and mutual commitment.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

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out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word