

OpenTheo

2nd Corinthians Overview (Part 1)



Bible Book Overviews - Steve Gregg

This overview of 2nd Corinthians by Steve Gregg covers the planting of the church in Corinth, the conflicts and opposition faced by Paul, and his defense of his apostleship. Gregg discusses various themes within the letter, such as the importance of forgiveness and the contrast between the old and new covenants. He also explores the concept of comfort in times of suffering and the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding and fulfilling God's promises.

Transcript

We're going to be looking at 2nd Corinthians tonight. Last time we did this, we did 1st Corinthians. And a lot transpired between 1st and 2nd Corinthians.

And it's a little confusing. We have two letters of Paul to the Corinthians, but he almost certainly wrote four. We know there was one letter that he wrote before 1st Corinthians, because in 1st Corinthians 5-9 he mentions that he wrote them a previous letter.

That letter is lost. It was about urging them to avoid fornication and to not tolerate fornication in the congregation. Now, before that letter, of course, was Paul's own visit to Corinth.

Maybe I should mix in his letters with his visits, because there were a series of visits and a series of letters. In Acts 18, Paul first came to Corinth on his second missionary journey. He ended up staying there 18 months.

And he planted a church there. Up until that time, that's the longest Paul had spent in any church since his conversion. He had spent about a year in Antioch before his first missionary journey.

And then he didn't stay anywhere for probably more than a few months at the most until he came to Corinth. And he stayed a year and a half there. Now later, he's going to stay close to three years in Ephesus, but that hadn't happened yet.

He came to Corinth and probably had to spend that much time there for the simple

reason that they were troublesome. They were a troublesome church, a troublesome town, a very immoral culture in Corinth. Even the whole pagan Roman Empire viewed Corinth as a place of unusual immorality.

And so we do find when Paul writes to them in 1 Corinthians that he has to address the immorality. Also in the letter that we don't have of his that he wrote before that he had to address the immorality. So there's an issue with them.

But not only that, they weren't just immoral. They were also kind of arrogant, kind of very divisive. They were kind of enamored with a few gifts of the spirit to the exclusion of things that were more important.

They were even very irreverent at the Lord's Supper, even some of them even getting drunk at the Lord's Supper. So the Corinthian church had a lot of problems in it. And so after Paul left them, he wrote a letter that we have now lost.

No one has seen it. He mentions it in 1 Corinthians 5.9 that he had written it. And he has to clarify in that place that what he had said, even what he had said there had been misunderstood.

He says in 1 Corinthians 5.9, I wrote to you in an epistle not to keep company with fornicators. Then he has to clarify. I didn't mean the fornicators of this world or idolaters or blasphemers.

You'd have to leave the world to do that. He said, but if anyone calls himself a brother and is a fornicator or any of those things, don't have any company with him, don't even eat with him. So as to clarify that his earlier instructions did not apply to avoiding every sinner, but simply not allowing fellowship in the church with people who are supposed to be bearing the name of Christ and living like children of the devil instead.

So that was that first letter. Now, then he wrote a second letter, which is our letter, 1 Corinthians. And we took that last time.

We saw that the occasion of that letter, he was in Ephesus when he wrote this. And he was staying in Ephesus for close to three years. And during that time, a number of things happened between him and Corinth.

There's a map on the notes I've handed out that shows the region of the Mediterranean Sea and the region that Paul traveled in. I don't have lines depicting his travels, though, in the back of your Bible. Some of you probably have maps that do that.

I just gave this so that when we make reference to places, you can kind of see where they are in relation to each other. But Paul was after he left. Corinth was in Ephesus for this lengthy period of time.

And you can see that's across the Aegean Sea from Greece or from Achaia. Achaia was the southern part of the Grecian Peninsula, and that's where Corinth was. But while he was there, a lot of transactions happened.

First of all, somebody from one of the households of the Church of Corinth, a woman named Chloe, had a house church there. And someone from her house church came to Ephesus and told Paul there were divisions in the Church of Corinth. And notably, after Paul had left Corinth, Apollos had come there.

We read about that at the end of Chapter 18 of Acts. When Paul left Corinth, he went to Ephesus. Then he went from there back to Antioch.

And he left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus. And then Apollos came to Ephesus. Priscilla and Aquila kind of straightened him out about a few things and sent him on.

And he went to Corinth while Paul was away. And then in the meantime, Apollos had left Corinth too. But now there were some people in Corinth saying, I'm of Apollos.

And others say, no, I'm of Paul. Paul planted the Church. We're of Paul.

No, I like Apollos better. And some said, well, listen, the Church in Jerusalem that Jesus started is under Peter. We're of Peter.

And there was a fourth group saying, no, we're of Christ, which is, by the way, the right answer to give. But Paul had to write to them because this member of Chloe's house church had come from Corinth to Ephesus and reported this divisive thing was going on. And Paul wrote several chapters about that.

And there were a few other things that they had reported he had to address. He had to address the fact that they were tolerating a man in the congregation who was a fornicator. And that's when Paul has to remind them that he had written to them about this previously.

And now he does so again. He talks about that in Chapter five and also in Chapter six. Also in Chapter six, he said there was a problem that they were some of them had legal lawsuits against each other.

And they were taking each other to court before the the secular magistrates. He said, why can't you just settle this in house? Well, don't you have a wise man in your congregation who can arbitrate and settle these matters? Why do you have to go before unbelievers with the dirty laundry of the church? So that's what he did in the first six chapters of 1 Corinthians, addressing these things that Chloe's representatives had brought to him. But then also, apparently the same persons or someone else had brought him a letter from Corinth.

And in the letter, the Corinthians were asking Paul some things. Should they stay single or should they get married? In Chapter seven, verse four, he says, now concerning the things about which you wrote, it's good for a man to remain unmarried, but to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife and every woman, her own husband. Then he went on to talk about eating meat, sacrifice idols.

They apparently had asked about that, too. Is it OK to eat meat, sacrifice idols? The confusion over this was due to the fact that Paul had brought with him to Corinth when he first came there. The letter from the Jerusalem Council, which was written in Acts 15, which asked the Gentiles, although they were not under the law, asked them to abstain from idols and meat, sacrifice idols, that is, and from blood, things strangled and from fornication.

Now, Paul, apparently when he brought that letter, faithfully represented its contents to the Corinthians, as he was commissioned to do by the Jerusalem Council. But he must have also clarified a few things by saying, well, you know, a lot of these things they want you to do, avoid meat, sacrifice idols, blood, things strangled. That really only has to do with what you eat.

And frankly, what you eat isn't a big issue to God. The reason James wrote that in the letter and wants you to observe it is so you don't stumble people. James was concerned people, Jews would be stumbled if they saw Gentile Christians eating these abominable things.

So Paul apparently communicated to them that all things are lawful with reference to food. But then some in the church were saying, well, if all things are lawful in that letter, then fornication is lawful, too. And so Paul had to write back in chapter six and say, well, food's for the belly, the belly's for food, and God will destroy both it and them.

But the body is not made for fornication. That's a different kind of a law. What you eat is not on the same moral level as who you sleep with.

And so he had to clarify that. But in chapter eight and nine and 10, he discussed the subject of meat sacrifice to idols in which he essentially said, you know, there's nothing magically defiling about eating meat. That's the remnant of an animal that might have been sacrificed in idolatrous temple.

You buy those kinds of things in the marketplace all the time, not even knowing you're doing so. He said, just eat whatever you buy in the marketplace. Don't ask any questions.

That's not a big deal. God doesn't really care what you eat, essentially. But he said, but if you are informed that this meat was sacrificed to idols, then the person who informed you thinks that ought to be an issue to you.

And if they think it should be an issue to you, then treat it like it is because you don't stumble them. And don't go into the title temples and the feast there. He says you can't eat at the idols tables and God's Christ table, too.

So he talks about that in those three chapters. Then in chapter 11, he talks about women who were casting off their head coverings. And he also talks about misbehavior at the Lord's Supper.

Then chapters 12 through 14 talks about misbehavior with reference to the gifts of the spirit, disorderliness in the church, apparently among the things that he either heard about or they'd written about as well. And the final issue he brings up is in chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians, where he talks about the doctrine of the resurrection. There were some people denying the doctrine of the resurrection.

He said, well, if you've accepted the fact that Jesus rose from the dead, how can you say there's no resurrection of the dead? And so he lays out there in chapter 15 more than anywhere else in all of his writings or any other person's writings in the Bible, the longest and most complete chapter on the doctrine of the resurrection. Then chapter 16 is largely winding things down. And that's the end of 1 Corinthians.

Now, what happened after that? Well, Paul was in Ephesus when he sent that. And he apparently sent that letter with Timothy. And 1 Corinthians 4, 17, he mentions that he is sending Timothy to them.

And in 1 Corinthians 16, 1 through 11, he also is kind of winding things down. And he does say, you know, if Timothy comes to you, see to it that he's comfortable with you, because he tends to be a little shy at times and don't make him afraid. And so he sends Timothy to the Corinthians either with the letter or roughly at the same time that he sends 1 Corinthians.

We read nothing about how that turned out. There's no information about Timothy's arrival or how he was received or anything like that. But we now come to 2 Corinthians.

And it's very difficult to know what has happened because in 2 Corinthians, he refers back to several things we know nothing about, things that were not mentioned in 1 Corinthians or in the book of Acts. He apparently had made at least one trip back to Corinth, not recorded in Acts. It may have been a brief and even a disappointing trip.

There had arisen, it appears, some opposition to Paul in Corinth. We don't know much about it. But we know that he was concerned enough about it that he made a trip back to Corinth and it turned out badly for him.

And he left Corinth and went back to Macedonia, actually went back to Ephesus first. Then he was on his way to make another trip to Corinth. He got to Macedonia.

And in the meantime, some good news came to him from Titus that things were going better in Corinth. There are allusions to this in 2 Corinthians. We don't have a timeline of this, which makes it a little difficult.

In the notes, I kind of suggest a probable timeline with some references to 2 Corinthians. It is believed that Paul made an unplanned visit to Corinth, probably due to a disturbing report, but that it went badly for him due to the church's failing to stand with him against a notable critic. Scholars call this the painful visit.

Now, why do they speak of this painful visit? Because in 2 Corinthians 2, 1, he says, I determined this within myself that I would not come again to you in sorrow. Some translations say I would not make another painful visit to you. Now, the only visit we know that he'd had with them was when he planted the church and stayed 18 months and he left on good terms.

We have no reason to believe that was a painful visit. So there must have been a painful visit that has taken place. And he doesn't want a repeat of that.

Then going on, it's thought Paul had intended to go to Macedonia and then return to Ephesus via Corinth. And he says this in 2 Corinthians 1, 15, where he says, And in this confidence, I intended to come to you before that you might have a second benefit. But the painful visit led him to simply go back to Ephesus directly from Macedonia.

And he didn't want to risk that again. We see 1 Corinthians 1, 23. He says, So he made one painful visit to Corinth, was not happy about the outcome.

He apparently promised or intended to come back to Corinth and did not do so. And he says it was to spare you. I didn't come back to Corinth the third time to spare you.

But I'd have to be pretty harsh with you. He said, I did plan to come to Corinth again, but I changed my mind about that. So apparently some of the people in Corinth were now kind of, especially as critics saying Paul's a weak leader.

First of all, we chased him off when he was here a while ago. And now he's promised to come back. Now he doesn't dare come back.

He's vacillates. He's not as strong. He's not coming back.

So Paul actually in 2 Corinthians begins to defend himself. No, I have better reasons than, you know, for not coming. But I decided not to come after all.

We'll see that as we get into it. But once he was back in Ephesus, which was kind of his base camp at this point in his life, and probably around 87, 57, excuse me. Paul writes another letter that is lost now.

This would be his third letter to them that falls between 1 and 2 Corinthians. 2

Corinthians would be then his fourth. This gets confusing, obviously, because we use the terms 1st and 2nd Corinthians.

We're really looking at 2nd and 4th Corinthians. There was another one that he wrote, which he calls the sorrowful letter. Now, I think for a long time scholars assumed that the sorrowful letter he refers back to is 1st Corinthians.

And in this sorrowful letter, as we see in 2nd Corinthians, he was requiring them to deal with someone who's making trouble in the church. And they did so. And he thanks them for that in 2nd Corinthians.

And he expresses his confidence in them and says, now forgive the man and have him back. Now, many scholars in the years I was growing up seemed to say that the man that was causing the problem was the man who was living with his father's wife. That Paul mentions in 1st Corinthians 5 as needing discipline.

And that the sorrowful letter is 1st Corinthians, which Paul wrote very sorrowfully because he had to recommend this discipline. Now, and then of course they have fixed it now, and so he's telling them to receive him back. And so many preachers will say that the church discipline recommended in 1st Corinthians to this fornicator worked, and he was restored to fellowship.

And that may be true. But what they assumed is that Paul's referring to that in 2nd Corinthians, which he may not have been. For one thing, it's hard to imagine him referring to 1st Corinthians as a sorrowful letter.

True, he corrected them about a number of things. True, he had to be a little harsh on them for a few sentences there in chapter 5. But it was a long letter, not mostly made up of grief. Certainly, they were a bit of a grief to him, and he had to correct them about a lot of things.

You know, you don't just read 1st Corinthians and say, boy, is that a downer of a letter? Is that ever a sorrowful letter? Some think there was a letter between 1st and 2nd Corinthians that was truly a sorrowful letter. Based on the fact that after he had had the painful visit, and things had not gone well, he had to write a rather harsh letter. Which he refers to in 2nd Corinthians.

He said he regretted that he had written it, but now that it has done its job, he's glad he did it. He says that in chapter 7. But the idea here is there is another letter. And he was waiting for information about how that letter had been received.

Because he said, after I sent it, I was kind of grieved that I sent it. Not knowing how you guys would receive it. And he sent Titus to bring back a report about it.

And Titus traveled, as you can see on the map, you know, up across the Aegean Sea. He

probably traveled across to Philippi. And then moved down to Corinth.

He could have crossed the water just from Ephesus to Corinth. But Paul expected Titus to return through Macedonia and over to Troas. And then down into Ephesus where Paul had sent him from.

You can see those places on the map. Kind of a horseshoe there. From Corinth up to Berea and Philippi.

And then over to Troas and Ephesus. That would be the route that Titus was expected to take. Well, Titus didn't come back very fast.

And you have to appreciate the fact that in those days, if you sent someone on an errand and you didn't hear from them for weeks, you couldn't just make a phone call. You couldn't send an email. You couldn't say, you know, I'll check his Facebook page and see if he's still alive.

You'd have no way of getting information quickly. And so Paul said he got very concerned, very worried about Titus because Titus didn't return. And apparently intending to intercept Titus on his way back, Paul went up to Troas.

And when he was up in that area, he started ministering. He was planning to go across to Macedonia and look for Titus. But God opened the door of ministry for him there.

And so he ended up staying there a while. But then when Titus still didn't come there, he says he went over to Macedonia. Almost certainly he probably went to Philippi.

I mean, as these guys were traveling in these areas where they planted churches, it's obvious that the place to look for him would be in one of the churches. You're traveling through pagan world. You're a minister.

You're going to stop in the churches where you have your family, your Christian family there. So Paul probably went over to Philippi. And there he did find Titus.

Titus was, in fact, on his way back. And in Macedonia there where Philippi was, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians in a great sense of relief. Because Titus brought good news.

Titus brought news that the sorrowful letter had not offended them. It had sparked them to repentance. They had disciplined the person that was the problem.

And now they were all in Paul's corner again. So Paul's writing with great relief. In the first, frankly, the first 7 chapters, they're full of a tone of relief.

I was worried about you. I thought maybe something I'd said, maybe my painful visit had alienated us. Maybe we're in trouble.

I thought maybe Titus had gotten into trouble. But I find he's healthy. He's got a good report.

I'm happy I'm writing this letter to congratulate you for doing the right thing. That's what the first 7 chapters are about. And then, while he's got them on the horn, he talks to them about taking up a collection for the church in Jerusalem.

Which is what Paul was always doing among the Gentile churches. The Jerusalem church faced a famine in the days of Claudius. And Paul, in order to show unity between the Gentile and the Jewish churches, would gather collections from the Gentile churches.

And write to them saying, I'm coming through. Make sure your collection's ready. So he could take it to the Jews as a show of friendship and bond between the Jewish and Gentile churches.

Well, with all this problem between him and Corinth that had been going on, he hadn't dared bring that up. But now that things are good again, he returns in chapters 8 and 9, talking about, Okay, I'm going to come through. I want to pick up the offering you guys have.

So, that's what chapters 8 and 9 are. Now, interestingly, when you get to chapter 10, the tone changes completely. This is a very stark and noticeable thing.

The first 7 chapters, he's all encouraged, he's all happy. But now, in chapter 10, he starts defending his apostleship in a rather snarky kind of way. A lot of his more unpleasant, sarcastic remarks are found here.

He's clearly alarmed. He clearly thinks his reputation as an apostle is on the rocks in Corinth. And he writes some of the most uncomfortable writing you'll find in any of Paul's letters.

Where he's defending his apostleship and talking about those who are criticizing him, how bad they are, and things like that. It's just a different kind of letter. Now, there are some scholars who believe, I'm not saying I believe this, but some believe that chapters 10 through 13, which has this tone, is possibly the sorrowful letter that he had alluded to.

But that in the passing and on through generations, they got wrongly attached to the end of 2 Corinthians. That those 4 chapters are in fact the letter that he sent between 1 and 2 Corinthians. And it's not really part of 2 Corinthians.

That's one theory. It's a theory that could be true. I'm not saying it is.

Another theory is that Paul was ready to send 2 Corinthians with this spirit of joyfulness and celebration. And then before he sent the letter off, bad news came from Corinth

saying, oh, there's been another revolt against you, Paul. They're saying you're not an apostle.

And so he kind of comes back into battle mode again. That's possible. I mean, he definitely is in that mode in chapters 10 through 13.

And how he got there from where he was at in the first 7 chapters is a really interesting question. But if indeed he did get this bad news before he sent the letter, why would he send the first part of the letter? You think, oh, scrap that. I'm not going to congratulate you now.

You still have the same problem you had before. I'm not going to do all this rejoicing now. So it's really a troublesome thing.

I mean, scholars don't have all of the same opinion about this. It appears like chapters 10 through 13 are like a totally different letter on a totally different occasion. And either the occasion has changed between chapter 9 and chapter 10 in a way that Paul doesn't say what it is.

Or chapter 10 through 13 may indeed be that sorrowful letter that, as some scholars think, I can't commit to one view or another because we don't have enough information. All I can say, this is what we observe here. Now, there's another thing that makes this second Corinthians rather perplexing.

And that is there's a huge parenthesis in the first section of the letter, the first half. And there's a smaller parenthesis inside of it. Paul does that, you know, in Romans 5 too.

Paul in Romans 5 has a very large parenthesis. And then there's a smaller parenthesis within it. This is because Paul was not writing as a literary man.

He's writing as a man full of emotion, full of zeal, kind of a stream of consciousness. And, you know, he'd break off like many preachers do, off into some sideline, some rabbit trail, and then come back. And that's what he certainly does here.

Because what you'll see is in chapters 1 and 2, we have Paul, you know, starting his, you know, his happy letter. And kind of filling them in on what he's been doing, what's been happening with him. But then when you get to chapter 2, verse 13, he says in verse 13, 12 and 13, Now I just was giving that as part of the summary of what happened a moment ago.

But after this, he says nothing about what happened when he arrived at Mastona or whether he ever ran into Titus again. That story is resumed in chapter 7 and verses 5 and following. If you turn to chapter 7, and everything between this is parenthetical and has nothing to do with what he's been talking about.

In chapter 7, 7, 5, he says, So he did run into Titus. So that I rejoiced even more. So as I said, Paul had been waiting for Titus to get back to Ephesus with a report how this harsh letter had been received.

Titus didn't come back. So Paul went up to Troas, kind of tracing the steps backward that Titus would be coming over. You're going to meet him somewhere in the road.

And he got all the way to Macedonia and still hadn't found Titus. He was still concerned. Then he met Titus.

But notice chapter 2, verse 13 ends with taking my leave of them. I departed for Macedonia. And then you have the story picked up in chapter 7, verse 5. When I came to Macedonia and the story picks up, we have it up with Titus.

Now, everything then between chapter 2, verse 13 and chapter 7, verse 5 is off on rabbit trails. Talking about other things that have not been in the discussion are not really relevant to telling the story he's telling. There are things that are on his heart to talk about, but he kind of gets distracted from the story and then remembers to come back to it.

That makes it a little interesting, a little bit difficult to follow the train of thought in the book, obviously. So we've got several reasons to be finding a little problematic. One is he alludes to letters and visits to Corinth that we don't have any record of elsewhere.

He doesn't explain them, but he makes reference to them. So we know they were there. He begins to tell a story, which is a story that we don't have any parallel for an axe, but he's telling it.

And then he breaks it off for like five chapters and then comes back to it to finish it off. And then in that long parenthesis, there's even a shorter parenthesis. And that shorter parenthesis is in chapter six.

I think verse 14. Through seven, one where he gets off on talking about not being unequally yoked with unbelievers. He talks about being holy, being separate, coming out from among them, being separate.

And in chapter seven, verse one, therefore, having these promises, let's cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. Perfecting holiness and the fear of God. This has nothing to do with the things before and after it.

At least nothing obvious to do. So Paul's rambling a great deal. And one other thing that makes this book a little tricky is that he speaks about certain mystical things more in this book than in most of his books.

I don't find much in First Corinthians that's very mystical or Galatians or some of his

other writes. That's not much mystical stuff. But here he talks about things like we bear in our bodies the suffering of the Lord so that the life of Jesus might be manifest in us.

And our light afflictions, which are but for a moment are working for us, exceeding weight of glory. And we're passing from glory to glory into that same image and all kinds of spiritual kind of stuff, which is beautiful stuff. I mean, some of some of my favorite verses in the book.

I wonder why is he talking about that here? Why is this coming up? It's not it's not clear why he's gone off on this tangent. Now, in saying that, I'm not making fun of him. He certainly had a reason.

The problem is mine. I don't know. I don't know what he knew why he went off at it.

But it's not obvious to me. I don't think it'll be obvious to most readers. But in any case, when we're studying this book, we have to kind of recognize the flow is here.

And here it's interrupted. It picks up again over here. And in the in-between part, there's another place where it's interrupted and picked up.

But we just kind of take the verses of the book for, you know, in their own right, you know what they teach. And we can, as I say, kind of put the story together a bit as I have tried to do for you. So.

The message of the letter is Paul's expression of relief, at least the first part of it, and the explanation of his earlier actions, why he didn't come when they thought he was coming. And he got criticized by them for that, apparently. But he explains why he was not worthy of being criticized on that point.

Then there's he also urges them twice in Chapter two and Chapter seven to forgive and to restore the offender who. Again, he speaks about the offender as if the offender was someone who offended Paul personally. Now, if this was the man who was sleeping with his father's wife.

That's offensive to any Christian, I suppose, but it's not a it was not an affront to Paul personally. It sounds the way he talks about this offender sounds like that person was out to get him. And that's what makes many modern Bible scholars believe that he's not talking about the same man that was excommunicated in Chapter five.

That man was living immorally and had to be confronted. This man, it sounds like, was maybe the leader of an opposition party against Paul in the church. I suppose it could be the same man who didn't like being excommunicated, became a leader for the opposition.

But there's nothing particularly to point us that direction. So let's let's look at the book

itself. Now that I've got you all confused.

That's partly why I gave you these notes. They do kind of explain it, but you'd have to kind of go through it slower on your own if you're going to. We can't go through it in detail here, but we'll start at the beginning here.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God and Timothy, our brother to the church of God, which is a Corinth with all the saints who are in all a kayak kayak. Again, is the southern part of the Grecian Peninsula. The Grecian Peninsula is divided into two parts.

The northern one was Macedonia. The southern was a kayak. Corinth was one of the major cities in the southern part in a kayak.

And so he's writing to the church in Corinth and and any other saints that may be in the general region. Grace to you and peace from God, our father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of mercies and the God of all comfort who comforts us in all our tribulation that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now, if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for the enduring of the same sufferings, which we also suffer. Or if we're comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

And our hope for you is steadfast because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation. Now, the word comfort in verse three and in verse four is the same Greek word as the word consolation in verses five, six and seven. So he's he's got one subject in mind comfort.

Now, you don't need comfort if you're not uncomfortable. Comfort is for something you offer to someone who's in some way or another emotionally or physically uncomfortable. You comfort them.

And Paul says he starts out by saying God is the God of all comfort. He says, first of all, he comforts us, us apostles in our affliction. But that's so that we can.

Ministers comfort to you and your afflictions or anyone else in afflictions. It's when you have received the comfort of God in affliction that you actually are in a position better than others to comfort others who are in affliction. It's really hard when you meet somebody who's just lost a child and you haven't lost any family members to sit with them and to try to comfort them.

You can, but it's it's much less comforting if they know you don't have a clue what you're talking. You've never been through this. There is when I was an elder at the church in the Calvary Chapel in Santa Cruz.

One of the deacons there before I came before I moved there, he had lost a wife just like the previous year in an accident. A wife and a I think a child, too. And the wife was pregnant, too.

There's actually and he was the driver. You can imagine how you feel. And I remember I had just married when I moved up there and I was thinking, oh, man, I imagine what it'd be like to lose a wife or a child, you know.

And I just thought, well, he's been through some deep stuff and I never brought it up with him because I had never been through anything really quite like that. But then a few months later, my wife was killed in an accident. I wasn't driving.

Somebody else was driving, but she was hit and killed by a pickup truck instantly. And all the people of the church came to my house to. Give their condolences and so forth.

And I knew that they didn't know what it was like to go through that. But then, Tom, this deacon who'd lost his wife came up and I remember thinking, here's somebody who's on the same page with me right now. He knows what this is like.

And I realized that his coming was so much different than that of all the others who were well wishers. I mean, they were sincere. But what can you say to someone who's going through excruciating pain and loss? Unless you've been through it and you've received comfort from God.

When you see somebody else has made it through trials similar to those you're going through and that they have received strength and comfort from God in it. It makes it possible for them to speak into your life in a way that's meaningful and on the same level and so forth. That's what Paul seems to be saying.

We receive comfort so that we can comfort others who are in trials. And then he talks about what he had been through. Why did he need so much comfort? Well, glad you asked.

He says in verse 8, for we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble, which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened beyond measure above strength so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead. Who delivered us from so great a death and does deliver us in whom also we trust that he will still deliver us.

You also helping together in prayer for us. Now, he says, I want you not to be unaware of what we went through in Asia. Now, he doesn't say what it was, so they're going to remain somewhat unaware of it.

But Asia is where Ephesus was. So he's he's in Ephesus. He's had troubles there.

You know, when Paul wrote First Corinthians 15, he said, if there's no resurrection of the dead, why am I wrestling with wild beasts in Asia or in Ephesus? Paul may have been talking to people who he was likening to wild beasts, or maybe he actually did have a conflict with wild beasts. But he makes it very clear it was very, very dangerous for him in Ephesus. We know one story that's in the Book of Acts, how there was a riot in the city that the silversmiths started because they didn't like the fact that he was saying idols are nothing.

And it was so dangerous that the Christians wouldn't even let him get up in front of the crowd to defend himself. Instead, the city magistrate had to get up and calm the crowd and disperse them. But Paul did face various dangers in Ephesus.

He didn't say what they are in this case. He says, but we did despair of our lives. You know, I don't want you to be ignorant of the trouble we had.

It was serious trouble. In verse eight, it was we were burdened beyond measure. It was off the charts.

You couldn't measure it. There's just no way to measure how unspeakably horrible. And he says above strength, I mean beyond our strength.

Now, I thought God won't ever give you more than you can handle. Well, he won't. But he will give you more than your own strength can handle.

And why would he do that? Well, he says this. He answers why he says, yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves so that we should not trust in ourselves. But in God who raises the dead.

So I do tend to trust in myself reasonably well. I mean, for example, I drove here today. I didn't I didn't I wasn't terrified that I would get in a wreck.

I'm a reasonably competent driver. So I trusted myself to get here safely. I trusted myself to, you know, not slip in the shower and break my neck this morning when I showered.

I mean, there's you trust yourself to be able to do certain things. But when God puts you in a situation above your strength, out of your wheelhouse, you know, far beyond your ability, then you can't trust in yourself. And that's just how God likes it.

He says God put us in a position where we despaired of life. We had the sentence of death in ourselves. So that the reason God let us is so we wouldn't trust ourselves.

But in God who raises the dead. And so Paul says we literally were in a position that no human being would necessarily be competent to survive if it wasn't for God's intervention. It was beyond human strength is above measure.

And so he says, of course, so far, boasting is this the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God and more abundantly toward you. We're not writing any other things to you than what you read or read or understand. Now, I trust you will understand even to the end, as also you have understood us in part that we are your boast as you are also ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Now, he's basically saying we've we've endured some shameful treatment, but we got some things we can be confident about, boastful about in a way. One thing we can boast about is you. You're the fruit of our ministry.

If anyone says, Paul, you aren't an apostle, I can put you in a lot of these people. This church exists because of God using me. You know, God sent me and that's what happened.

He also says the the boasting is the testimony of his conscience. Now, what's that mean? It means he knows he didn't do anything wrong, even if he was being treated as a wrongdoer. Having a clear conscience when you're being persecuted for righteousness is a great strength.

No one likes to be persecuted, but it's far worse if things are going wrong for you. You realize you deserve this. You did something, you know, if let's just say a rumor begins to circulate about you and it's destroying your whole reputation, your whole ministry, your whole business, whatever your family.

And unfortunately, it's true. You know, that's really going. If the rumor spreading about you and you know there's no truth in it at all and before God, God knows I'm innocent.

Well, then, of course, the rumor is still going around. It's still a trial. But you've got great strength knowing that.

Well, at least the person who matters most knows. That I'm innocent of this. And whenever you go through any trial, often you'll note I brought this on myself by doing such and such a bad thing.

That makes it so much harder to go through. You have to accept it as the discipline of the Lord and say, no, better next time not to do that thing. Hopefully, unless I'm really stupid.

But when you know you did not do anything wrong, you know you were doing the right thing and that's what got you into trouble. Well, the trouble is still there. Nobody likes trouble, but it's so much easier.

You have the comfort of God in your trials when your conscience is clear. Having a clear conscience means you just know you've got no guilt in this matter. You've got no you

haven't done anything to bring this on.

So he says, and this is verse 15. And in this confidence, I intended to come to you before that you might have a second benefit. Now, he was planning to come to, as we see, he actually called that one off to pass by way of you to Macedonia and to come again from Macedonia to you.

He actually was going to go to Macedonia through Corinth. And then on his return from Macedonia to go through Corinth again, he is what he said he was planning to do. That's what he didn't do.

Apparently, he planned. He did go through it the first time, had the painful visit, went to Macedonia and decided not to go through Corinth again on his way back. It just went straight back to that.

This is that's apparently what he's saying happened. Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Apparently, some people were suggesting that he was a vacillator, that he didn't have backbone and he didn't couldn't you can trust him to take his word with any weight. Do I do it lightly or the things that I plan? Do I plan according to the flesh that with me there should be yes, yes and no, no.

Which apparently is the same thing like when Jesus said, let your yay be a your nay nay. When I say yes, I mean, no. Or I say yes, yes, but I really mean no, no.

I mean, it's not clear exactly this wording, but as God is faithful, our word to you was not yes and no. For the son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, by me, Sylvanus and Timothy. Was not yes and no, but in him was yes.

Now, it's a very weird way of talking, but he apparently saying it's when God said yes, it didn't he didn't really mean no. It wasn't yeah and no, it was it was just yes. He says for all the promises of God in him are yes and in him, amen to the glory of God through us.

Now, all the all the promises of God, I don't think he's referring only to the ones of the New Testament. The Old Testament promises that God would give Abraham a seed more than the sands of the seashore. That's fulfilled in us.

We're Abraham's children. The Bible says all who have the faith of Abraham are Abraham's seed. And we and there's great multitude.

The promises of God made in the Old Testament are fulfilled in us because they're fulfilled in Christ. And we are in Christ. We are the body of Christ.

And therefore, Christ is the fulfillment of all the promises of God. Now, he who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God who also has sealed us and given us the spirit in our hearts as a deposit. Moreover, I call God as a witness against

my soul that to spare you.

I came no more to Corinth. So I said I was going to come. You thought my promise was a yay nay kind of thing that I was saying yes, but meaning no.

But actually, I changed my mind because I realized I couldn't come in the right spirit at this time. The situation was not conducive. I had I'd have to come with harshness.

I didn't want any more harshness. I don't I had already had a painful visit with you. Maybe he'd already sent the sorrowful letter.

We don't know. But in any case, I just didn't want another bad scene. So I to spare you that I didn't come so that we have.

It's this is a great virtual book. Not that we have dominion over your faith, but our fellow workers for your joy for by faith. You stand.

Now, this is Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. He's not only an apostle. He's an apostle to the specific demographic that he's writing to.

And not only to that demographic to that very church that were his children in 1st Corinthians chapter 4. He says you have 10,000 teachers or instructors, but you don't have many fathers for in Christ Jesus. I begot you. He had a very special authoritative relationship with them.

And yet he says we don't have dominion over your faith. Now, how many pastors are there who don't have anywhere near the real authority Paul had? And they do act like they have dominion over your faith. If you don't agree with them, they get offended.

If you don't submit to everything they want you to do, they want you to leave the church. They discipline you. Now, there is such thing as church discipline, but church discipline is for people who are sinning, not people who disagree with the pastor.

Disagreeing with the pastor is not sinning. The pastor doesn't have authority to tell you what to do everything on. If he speaks the word of God, he speaks with authority.

If he speaks contrary to the word of God, he's not done everything. There's no authority. He doesn't wear a badge, doesn't wear a uniform.

He's just a man. Jesus said it's the rulers of the Gentiles who do that. They exercise dominion over people.

They exercise authority over people. He says you shall not do that. Among you, whoever will be chief is going to be the slave of all.

Paul's a slave. He's not domineering. These are people, as the apostles, the Gentiles, he

could crack down hard on if he wished.

He says that's not how I see our relationship. It's not that I have dominion over your faith. I believe you can stand by faith.

You don't need me. I'm not creating a bunch of babies who are going to be dependent on me forever. You can stand before God.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 3, he said the head of every man is Christ. Not the head of every man is a pastor or the apostle. You follow Christ.

I'm here to help you. When I give you these instructions, it's not with the mind that I have power over you. It's that you need some help here.

You need some instruction. You need some correction. You're going the wrong way, and I believe you can do the right thing.

That's why I'm giving you these instructions to steer you the right way. But I'm not your boss. Back in the 70s, there was a movement, especially in charismatic circles, called the Discipleship Shepherding Movement, where churches were set up throughout the United States and probably some other countries too under a group of leaders in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, who had a hierarchy of leaders from them.

They were like the popes, and down to local pastors. Everyone had to be submitted to somebody. If you were in a church, you had to submit to a small group leader.

And small groups, you had to submit to the pastor, and the pastor would submit to somebody else who submitted to somebody else who submitted to one of these guys in Fort Lauderdale. This was a huge movement. It wasn't just submit.

When I say you had to submit, if your small group leader says, What are you doing this weekend? You say, I was thinking about going to the beach. No, I want you to come over and mow my lawn and wash my car. Oh, well, I don't think I want to do that.

I want to go to the beach. You're a rebel. Rebellion is a sin of witchcraft.

You're a demonic. You have to repent of that. You have to obey me.

I mean, that's what it was like. These people, mere people, put in positions of dominion over other people. There's no man who has that kind of dominion over the church.

Christ is the head of the church. There's no other head of the church. And when pastors start getting that in them, they're so far from the spirit of the apostle Paul that it's terrifying.

But he said this in verse chapter two, But I determined this within myself that I would not

come again to you in sorrow. For if I make you sorrowful, then who is he who makes me glad? But the one who is made sorrowful by me. So I look for my happiness and your happiness and your well-being.

So why would I want to make you sorrow? That just takes away my joy. For out of much affliction, and I wrote this very thing to you, lest when I came I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote to you.

Now that's that sorrowful epistle. With many tears. See, 1 Corinthians doesn't feel like he wrote that with many tears.

It just doesn't sound like he was that grieved. I mean, he was alarmed, but this is a very different kind of description of emotion here. With many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.

But if anyone has caused grief, and this is a reference to the individual who needed discipline, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent, not to be too severe. This punishment, which was inflicted by the majority, is sufficient for such a man. He's suggesting that they actually came to the right side.

They did the discipline. Now the man is at the point where he's learned his lesson. And don't keep don't be hard on him.

Restore him back is what he's saying. He's repented. It is implied.

He says, so that on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him. Less perhaps such a one would be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore, I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.

Now, he comes at this subject again in chapter 7. And he says in verse 8, chapter 7, verse 8, he says, Again, the sorrowful epistle. Thank you. But sorrow of the world produces death.

And so here he's talking about how they responded in vindicating him with this opponent for observe this very thing that you sorrowed in a godly manner. What diligence it produced in you? What clearing of yourselves? What indignation? What fear? What vehement desire? What zeal? What vindication? In all things, you prove yourselves to be clear in this matter. Therefore, although I wrote to you, I did not do it for the sake of him who had done the wrong, nor for the sake of him who suffered the wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear to you.

So these are the places, chapter 2 and 7, that he actually talks about this person who has been disciplined. He implies that they they quitted themselves properly. He was disciplined as he should be.

And he's repented now, as he says in verse chapter 2, verse 8. Now I read you reaffirm your love to him. Then in chapter 2, verse 9, he says, for to this end, I also wrote that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient and all things. Now, whom you forgive anything.

And by this, he's referring to that man. I also forgive for if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one in your state for your sakes in the presence of Christ. Let's say you should take advantage of us for we are not ignorant of his devices.

That is, this discipline had to take place and forgiveness had to be restored upon repentance so that the devil doesn't put a wedge in the church. We know that we know how the devil likes to take advantage of these things. He says we know his devices and we don't want the devil to get an advantage over the church because of either the sin or the unforgiveness.

So the people have to manage repentance. So that's what he's arguing there. Verse 12.

Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel and a door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit because I did not find Titus, my brother. But taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia. And that's where the story breaks off until, as I pointed out, chapter seven.

Now, when you get to chapter seven and verse five, he says, now, when I got to Macedonia, I still didn't have any rest in my spirit. I had troubles interior and exterior. Outside I had troubles and interior I had worries.

So he said he was comforted only when he encountered Titus, who was, of course, the one he was concerned about. And it was all OK. But now that he breaks off from the story for a while, he goes into some other interesting things, though it's not entirely clear why.

But he says, now, thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ and through us diffuses the fragrance of his knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing to the one we are an aroma of death to death to the other aroma of life to life. And these and who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many who peddle the word of God, but of since as of sincerity, that is from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.

Now, when he talks about being a fragrance of Christ, he's talking about a custom that was well known to people in the Roman Empire that, you know, the Roman armies were always out fighting against the barbarians and conquering people. Most of Europe had been conquered, but there were outlying areas still called barbarians that were not conquered. So the Romans were still conquering them when they would conquer.

For example, when Titus destroyed Jerusalem in 70, they would set up an arch of triumph in Rome to congratulate and to celebrate his victory. He would return to Rome with some of the leaders of his captives in chains, and they would parade through Rome, humiliating their captives and celebrating the victory of the Romans. And there would be pagan priests and such going before the parade with incense burners.

Now, these incense burners were just part of what's part of worshiping pagan gods. But to the generals who had won the victory, that incense was a smell of victory to them. They were celebrating their victory.

But to the captives, usually when that parade was over, the captives were slain. So that incense was an aroma of death to them. And it's interesting because Paul says that God leads us forth in triumph, which is interesting because he's speaking of we are we're the captives.

In verse 14, thanks be God who always leads us in triumph. He doesn't mean we're triumphant. We are the ones he has triumphed over.

We are the ones he has conquered. Christ has won us over. We are now his.

We belong to him. We're his captives. Now, he uses this image of the aroma of the incense to suggest that, you know, our captivity is is kind of spreading the aroma of the knowledge of God, because now that we belong to Christ, we're spreading the knowledge of God.

So it's like our ministry is like an aroma of life coming to the world. But there are still some who resist our Lord. And this is an aroma of death.

His victory is not promising for them because they're still his enemies. So the same aroma of the knowledge of God is a wonderful celebrating thing for us. But to unsaved, the knowledge of God is not good news to them as they see it.

Now, in Chapter three, it's interesting, he says, do we begin again to commend ourselves? I'm going to read this. I quickly take this chapter. I would take a break.

And when I come back from the break, we'll scan through the rest of the book. But I want us to look at this chapter because it's very important. He contrasts the new covenant with the old covenant.

And that is not done in very many passages in the New Testament. There's a new covenant that Jeremiah said would come that would replace the old covenant. The book of Hebrews tells us the new covenant has come and replaced it.

But Paul doesn't use the term new covenant very much. Most of the New Testament doesn't make reference to it. Quite those terms he does here.

He says, do we again begin to commend ourselves or do we need some some others? As some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you. Now, when people travel from one church to another, a stranger coming to a church who is not a stranger from the church, he left the church. He left my give a letter of commendation.

So when he arrives at the new church, and this especially if he's a preacher, but even if he's just going to join the church, the new church will know. Oh, OK. The brothers over in Ephesus, they they know this guy.

They recommend him. We don't have to be suspicious of him. He can be accepted without suspicion immediately.

Paul sent, for example, Romans as a letter of commendation for Phoebe. He said she's been a good servant to the church here in century. And now we're sending her to you and in Rome.

And the idea is that, OK, so receiver recognize that she's not a total stranger to the church. She's a stranger to you, but not to us. And letters of commendation were sent for that purpose.

He says, do we need those letters from you or to you? When I come to you, do I need a letter of commendation? He says, aren't I your founder? I'm your I'm your the apostles. You don't need that. You don't need me to write a letter commending myself or anyone else to do so.

You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men. Anyone can read what kind of Christians we are, what kind of ministers we are. We're looking at you because you're the epistle.

You're a human epistle. You are manifestly an epistle of Christ, ministered by us. As we wrote this letter on your hearts, as it were written, not with ink, but by the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of flesh.

That is of the heart. And we have such trust through Christ, through toward God, not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of as being of ourselves. But our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter, but of the spirit for the letter kills.

But the spirit gives life. There's a couple of things here to know. This statement, the letter kills, but the spirit gives life is sometimes quoted quite mistakenly by people, especially charismatic people and Pentecostal people, because there's a great emphasis among charismatic and Pentecostals, of which I am one.

I'm a charismatic, a great emphasis on the spirit of God and on God speaking and on

prophecies. And that is prophecies in the church and in the voice of God giving you guidance. I mean, charismatic talk this way all the time.

And in some cases, they look at somebody who goes to the Bible for direct guidance as kind of not quite as spiritual. That's just the letter. That's just the written letter.

I just let the spirit lead me. I don't I don't need the Bible. I've got Christ inside.

I've got the Holy Spirit gives me life. And they'll say the spirit is life, but the letter is, you know, death. The letter kills, but the spirit gives life.

They're totally misunderstanding Paul's point. Paul's point when he talks about the letter is what he's been talking about. The law written on stones.

He's just mentioned it twice. The law written on stone is contrasted with the letter written on their hearts, which is by the spirit. He's saying that the old covenant was a covenant that was simply written down.

It's just letters. I mean, it was words and it had meaning, but it was like like you pick up any book. It's external to you.

You can accept or reject it. It can tell you what to do. You might have a hard time doing it.

You might not even want to do it, but the spirit changes your heart and he tells you what to do. That's what the that's what Jeremiah said. When the new covenant comes, God will write his laws on your heart.

Well, what does that mean? Does it mean you don't need the Bible anymore? No, it means that your heart is now by the spirit of God inclined toward obedience to what God has to say. He's not imposing simply a book or written code or stone tablets on you against your will. He's changed your will.

He's changed your heart. He's made your heart compliant. He's made you agreeable.

That's the change that took place in the Corinthians. He says, that's the letter I've written on your hearts through the spirit is you've got you've got changed hearts. Now, how do I know that this was true of the Corinthians? Well, because in First Corinthians, he said, First Corinthians six, nine through eleven, he said, do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived.

Neither fornicators or idolaters nor adulterers nor homosexuals nor sodomites nor thieves nor covetous nor drunkards nor revilers nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed.

You were sanctified. You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the

spirit of our God. The spirit of God has brought a change in them.

They were all these things before. They're not anymore. Such were some of you, but you've changed.

That's the change. Your heart's changed. And that's why you don't do those things anymore.

It's not because a law of commandments was imposed on you. It's because the spirit of God has changed your orientation toward obedience. And that's what he's saying.

What the letter does. Is to change your life. It gives life.

The letter simply condemns if your heart's not in it. If your heart's in a rebellion against the law and he imposes the laws of written code, then that condemns you to death. And the letter, the letter and the spirit are not talking about two different ways of getting guidance, per se.

It's talking about different covenants. The old covenant was the covenant of the letter. The new covenant is the covenant of the spirit and written on the heart.

But the ministry of death, meaning what he's just referred to the law written on stones. And he says here, written and engraved on stones was if it was glorious so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away. How will the ministry of the spirit not be more glorious for if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.

For even what was made glorious, meaning Moses face had no glory in this respect because of the glory that excels. And I say there's two covenants with different degrees of glory. There was a glory in the old covenant.

There certainly was a glory. It's seen in the fact that it was reflected from Moses face when he received the law. He had a bit of a vision of God, not the front side, just the backside.

But that was enough to impart some degree of glory. There's a glorious, but that was a covenant of death. If that covenant had glory, how much more glory is there in the covenant of righteousness, the covenant of life? He's basically saying, I'm not denying that there was something of God's glory manifested in the law.

But how much more is manifested through the spirit in Christ as we see him, his, and he's going to say at the end of this chapter, he's going to say that we are, as we look at the glory of the Lord Christ, we're changed from glory to glory. Moses glory in his face faded away. Ours increases from glory to glory.

The new covenant is not fading. It's increasing. And so he said in verse 10 or actually verse 11, for if what is passing away was glorious, he's referring specifically to the law written engraved on stones.

What remains is much more glorious. Now, some people say, you know, we still have to keep the Ten Commandments. You know, the rest of all those laws we don't have to keep, but the Ten Commandments we still have to keep.

But Paul said, no, that was passing away. It's been replaced. There's some, there's a new covenant now.

Oh, yeah, but he didn't mean the Ten Commandments. Yeah, he did. He said the law written on stone.

That was the Ten Commandments. Paul does not say that all the law has passed away except the Ten Commandments. All the law has passed away.

Now, what has remained? Well, of course, Christ's words. He said, Heaven, Earth pass away, but my words will never pass away. Jesus words continue.

If you follow Christ's words, you'll do fine. You won't need the Ten Commandments because if you follow Christ's words, you'll love your neighbors. You love yourself.

That's his command. You'll love each other as he loves us. Well, then you're not going to murder anyone, certainly.

Or committed adultery or steal or bear false witness or covet or dishonor your parents. You can't, you won't be doing that stuff if you're loving your neighbors, love yourself. You see, you don't need the Ten Commandments.

We need Christ and the Spirit of God. Yes, I would say this, that if we find ourselves violating those commandments, it may be a sure indicator. We're not walking in the Spirit or in love because those commands are a description of love in some measure.

Love goes beyond them, but love doesn't fall short of them. In other words, if there's a command, don't murder. Well, if I love you, I might go further and not only not murder, I might save your life when you're about to die.

Even though I could murder you. But love will not fall short of keeping the command, you shall not murder. There's no way you're going to murder if you love somebody.

So, I mean, love goes beyond the law, but it doesn't fall short of those moral issues. So we have him saying that that's passing away, that which is written on stone. He says, verse 12, therefore, since we have such a hope, we use great boldness of speech, unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.

There's the glory on his face was eventually fading. He covered that up. But we don't cover our faces.

We don't we don't speak obscurely like the law does. We speak more boldly, more plainly. And we're not speaking of riddles and types and shadows.

We're we're speaking quite boldly. The law spoke in many ways that was obscure, especially through types. But their minds were hardened.

For until this day, the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament because the veil is taken away in Christ. Now, who's they? Some of the Jewish people. There was a veil between Moses face and the Jewish people.

They couldn't look on the glory of his face, which was essentially the glory of the law and that he brought. And he says that veil is still there. The Jews to the state still have that veil there until they turn to Christ.

He says that veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when the Jew, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless, when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

Now, the Lord is the spirit. And where the spirit of the Lord is, there's liberty and there's not bondage under the rules. There's liberty.

But that's where the spirit is. You say, well, there's you. If you're walking in a spirit, you can do whatever you want.

Why? Because the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, self-control, faithfulness. There's no law against those things. Paul said, if you walk in the spirit, you won't be doing the kinds of things that the law forbids people to do.

So you've got liberty. Now, liberty would be being able to do what you want to do. Well, that's just it.

You can do what you want to do either by God arranging his laws to be what he what you would already want to do or by changing your heart so that what you do is agree with his law. It's the latter that he does. Once he's changed your heart so that you want to do those things, you're still doing it.

But you're doing out of liberty. You know what you want to do. And anyone who's really follows Christ knows what that is.

You don't you're not happy when you fall into sin because you really wanted to do the right thing. That's what's in your heart when you're a new newborn person, reborn person. And so he says, but we all with unveiled face.

And this is, of course, in contrast to Moses veiling his face. Paul says, we don't do that. We don't veil our faces.

We behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord. Now, as in a mirror, we have to take that not to me. Not that we're looking at ourselves.

They didn't have glass mirrors. Corinthians 13. Now we see through a mirror darkly, but then face to face a mirror.

When I look in a mirror, I see myself. And no doubt they did, too, if they looked at me, but they didn't have mirrors like we have. They had polished bronze plates.

If they want to see a reflection, they couldn't get a clear reflection. The point is, the reflection is not a clear image. It's like looking at something like if you're looking at your face in a polished bronze plate, which is all they had for mirrors in those days.

You're not really seeing the picture clearly. And that's how we're seeing Christ. Not clearly.

We see through a glass darkly or a mirror vaguely. He says, we with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror, or, you know, that kind of unclear image, the glory of the Lord are being transformed into that same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. The word transformed there is found in three other places in the Bible.

One is in the Synoptic Gospels, where it says that Jesus was transfigured on the Mount to his disciples. The same word in the Greek. Metamorphosis, we would say.

Transfigured, his glory shown, his face shown like the sun, the Bible says. His clothes were so white that no fuller, no launderer could get them that white. He was transfigured and the glory of the Lord was seen on his face.

He says, now we are looking at that glory and we are being transfigured from glory to glory into that same image. There's only one other place besides those that Paul uses that word metamorphosis, and it is in Romans chapter 12 and verse 2. And do not be conformed to this world, but be metamorphosis by the renewing of your mind. As our minds are renewed, looking on Christ, learning from Christ, we are changed into his image.

We are metamorphosis, like a caterpillar becomes a butterfly. It's a totally different kind of creature. Same animal, but a totally changing kind.

And in nature, a caterpillar is destructive to your garden. A butterfly will pollinate your flowers. I mean, it's like a butterfly spreads life, caterpillars spread death.

A totally different, it's like a different kind of creature altogether. But the change is called metamorphosis. And we are metamorphosis by the renewing of our minds more and

more toward the image of Christ.

So we're becoming more like him. And it says in 1 John chapter 3, beloved, now we are the children of God. It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.

For we shall see him as he is. See, right now we're looking on through as through a glass darkly, but then we'll see him as he is. And we will be like him because even seeing him vaguely is causing us to become more like him.

How much more once we see him as he is, is what John tells us. And Paul would imply here too. I'm going to stop right there, but I'm not done.

In about 10 minutes, I'm going to come back and I'm going to finish the book. I don't know if any of you will be here, but I'm going to be. And so we'll give you a good escape route.

.