**GOSPEL-CENTERED MINISTRY: SERVING IN WEAKNESS AND POWER**

**A Study in 2 Corinthians (Fall 2015)**

*But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest on me. For the sake of Christ then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

(2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

**Author**: The apostle Paul (1:1) along with "Timothy our brother" (1:1). Just what role Timothy played in the writing of the letter is not known, but he is probably mentioned not so much as an author, but as a fellow leader and minister to the Corinthian church.

**Date:** If we follow the chronology of all the events, travels, and correspondence between Paul, Timothy, and Titus and the church at Corinth, it seems that Paul wrote the letter about a year after writing 1 Corinthians and about a year before writing Romans (which he probably wrote from Corinth). That would place the date sometime in A.D. 55/56. The letter was written from somewhere in Macedonia, probably Philippi (2:13, 7:5).

**Correspondence:** 2 Corinthians is (as far as we know) the fourth letter Paul had written to the Corinthian church:

1) The letter mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:9

2) 1 Corinthians

3) The "severe" letter mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:3-4

4) 2 Corinthians

**Outline:** This outline is taken from *2 Corinthians* by George H. Guthrie (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, BECNT)

I. The letter opening and prologue (1:1-11)

A. Letter opening (1:1-2)

B. Prologue (1:3-11)

1. Praise God for his encouragement (1:3-7)

2. Paul's recent deliverance (1:8-11)

II. The integrity of Paul's ministry (1:12-7:16)

A. Why Paul did not come directly to Corinth (1:12-2:13)

1. The integrity of Paul's actions (1:12-14)

2. Misunderstanding Paul's change of travel plans (1:15-22)

3. Why Paul changed his travel plans, part 1: Confrontation would have been painful for the Corinthians (1:23-2:11)

a. A painful visit and a painful letter (1:23-2:4)

b. Forgive the one who caused the pain (2:5-11)

4. Why Paul changed his travel plans, part 2: An open door and an absent coworker (2:12-13)

B. Paul's reflections on authentic ministry (2:14-7:4)

1. Paul commends his authentic ministry (2:14-4:6)

a. Led in Christ's triumph (2:14-16a)

b. Qualified for ministry (2:16b-3:6)

c. The better ministry of the Spirit (3:7-18)

d. A ministry of integrity (4:1-6)

2. The suffering involved in Paul's authentic ministry (4:7-5:10)

a. Treasure and terra-cotta (4:7-15)

b. Perspective in the midst of suffering (4:16-18)

c. Longing to be "fully clothed" (5:1-10)

3. "Respond to authentic ministry": A series of exhortations to the Corinthians (5:11-7:4)

a. An opportunity for the Corinthians (5:11-13)

b. The ministry of reconciliation (5:14-6:3)

c. The impeccable apostolic credentials of Paul's mission (6:3-10)

d. A call for open hearts and pure lives (6:11-7:4)

C. When Titus arrived in Macedonia: The happy result when the Corinthians responded well (7:5-16)

III. The ministry of giving (8:1-9:15)

A. Paul's exhortation to finish the collection (8:1-15)

B. Titus' mission (8:16-9:5)

C. Reflections on resources for giving and the results (9:6-15)

IV. Paul confronts the malignant ministry of his opponents (10:1-13:13)

A. Present or absent, Paul's authority is the same (10:1-11)

B. Proper and improper boasting (10:12-18)

C. Paul boasts like a fool to stop the false apostles (11:1-12:13)

1. Bear with me, not them (11:1-4)

2. Paul and the "superapostles" (11:5-15)

3. Embracing fools (11:16-21)

4. Paul's countercultural "Fool's Speech" part 1 (11:22-29)

5. Paul's countercultural "Fool's Speech" part 2 (11:30-12:10)

6. Epilogue to the "Fool's Speech" (12:11-13)

D. Preparation for the third visit (12:14-13:10)

1. Concerns related to the third visit (12:14-21)

2. The third visit as stern accountability (13:1-10)

E. Closing exhortations, greetings, and benediction (13:11-13)