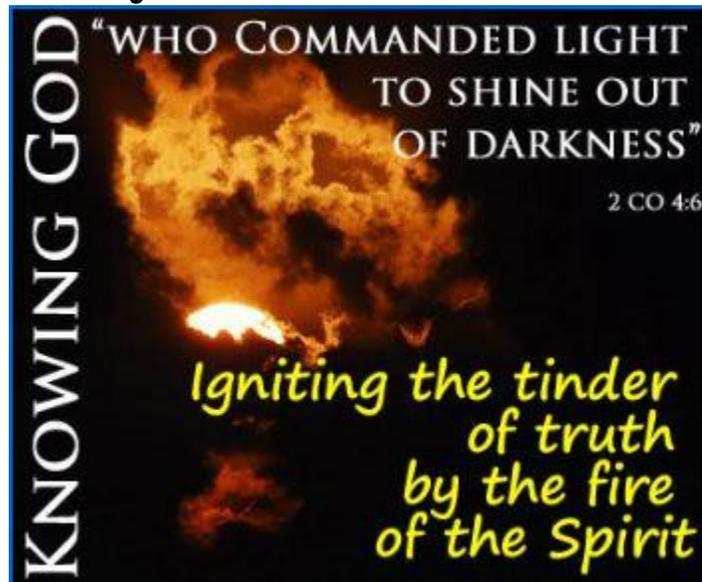


Basic Training Bible Conference

Knowing God: A Study of Second Corinthians



“For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” 2Co 4:6

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Knowing God: A Study of Second Corinthians

Moving Beyond Knowledge into Experience—
Igniting the Tinder of Truth by the Fire of the Spirit

Introduction

*“For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness,
who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge
of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” 2Co 4:6*

The relationship between the first and second Corinthian epistles is similar to that of Ephesians and Colossians. In those epistles, we see the Church as the Body of Christ (Ephesians) and Christ as the Head of that Body (Colossians). In the Corinthian epistles, we see the Church under correction toward what she should be (first epistle), and then Paul, as the example of what faithful service and ministry look like (second epistle).

But Second Corinthians is much more than just a defense and vindication of Paul’s ministry. It expounds the foundation of his life and service in the experiential knowledge of God in all His varied manifestations to Paul. In other words, Paul was who he was, and did what he did, because he continued to grow in his knowledge of God. This knowledge was not merely intellectual or academic. Rather it was essentially experiential, as Paul came to know the living Christ in his daily life.

In all the hardships, necessities, and disappointments of his life, Paul learned the all-sufficiency of his ever-present and powerful Savior through the indwelling of His Spirit. Every need represented to Paul an invitation and an open door to enter more fully into communion with the risen Lord who watches over our lives with infinite compassion and who provides for each need out of His matchless grace.

It is my abiding prayer that this study will encourage each of us to hear, in the circumstances of our lives, the knocking hand of Jesus Christ. May we learn to face the uncertainties of life with the certainty and assurance of His presence, participation, and power as He skillfully works to mold us in His own image!

The Theme Summarized

1. In the passage cited above (2Co 4:6), Paul compares the work of regeneration to the original creation. In both cases, God “*commanded light to shine out of darkness.*”
2. In the biblical record, God is seen in the initial work of creation, followed by His work in revelation, and culminating in the incarnation of His only begotten Son—Jesus Christ.
3. These three stages—creation, revelation, and incarnation—are also taking place in the life of every believer.
4. What is clear is that the creative power of God is inherent in His eternal and infallible Word, by which He brings about the incarnation of that Word into life and experience.

5. Note the key words: light, knowledge, glory. Revelation understood brings knowledge, and knowledge applied displays glory.
6. The implications for this study are great. To know about God is not the same as to know God. It will be the aim of this study to demonstrate that the true knowledge of God is never realized short of transformation by the power of His Word.
7. This spiritual transformation comes as we experience not only what God **says**, but also what God **does**, in accord with His Word.
8. The end result is an inner focus on “*the face of ... Christ*” which manifests itself in an external expression of “*the glory of God*” in demonstration of “*the power of His resurrection.*”

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2Co 3:18

“... that I may gain Christ and be found in Him ... through faith in Christ, ... that I may know Him ...and the power of His resurrection ...” Phi 3:8–10

An Illustration:

It is worth noting that in the Old Testament, all the compound names of God built on the word *Jehovah*, are developed what God said He would do, and then the actual experience of what He did!

1. *Jehovah-jireh*: The Lord will provide, Gen 22:8, Gen 22:14
2. *Jehovah-rapha*: The Lord that heals, Exo 15:25–26
3. *Jehovah-nissi*: The Lord our banner, Exo 17:8–15
4. *Jehovah-shalom*: The Lord our peace, Jdg 6:22–24
5. *Jehovah-ra-ah*: The Lord my shepherd, Psa 23:1
6. *Jehovah-tsidkenu*: The Lord our righteousness, Jer 23:6
7. *Jehovah-shammah*: The Lord is there, Eze 48:35
8. *Jehovah-macadescham*: The Lord who sanctifies, Exo 31:13; Lev 20:8
9. *Jehovah-sabaoth*: The Lord of armies, Jos 5:14; 1Sa 1:3; Psa 24:10

Through his experience of affliction, Job declared ...

“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You.” Job 42:5

He had learned that who God is (divine nature) is expressed in what God says (divine revelation) and demonstrated by what God does (divine intervention).

The guiding premise throughout this study is that the knowledge of God of which Paul speaks is experiential and results from not only knowing God’s promises, but by experiencing the reality of them through faith. In the spiritual intimacy that results, we gaze fully on the face of God in the person of Jesus Christ, and are transformed into His image.

I. 2 Corinthians One: The God of Comfort Knowing God through our Afflictions

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.” 2Co 1:3*

If you are now in the midst of some suffering situation, know that God invites you to share in “*the sufferings of Christ*” (2Co 1:5) through receiving by faith His comfort, strength, and hope. The “*God of all comfort*” (2Co 1:3) reveals Himself to those who are afflicted, who use their trials to seek His face.

A. The Invisible Worker, 2Co 1:1–7

Both the Father and the Son are mentioned in each of the first three verses. The absence of any mention of the Spirit is obvious and typical. He is the One who is always present, but seldom seen. Yet the word “*comfort*” is from *parakleton*, which is a cognate title for the Holy Spirit as “the comforter/helper” (Joh 14:16). This word occurs ten times in 2Co 1:3–7. We should highlight three things concerning His ministry:

1. He comforts those who are of God’s household, 2Co 1:1–2.
2. His ministry is one of the greatest blessings of God, 2Co 1:3.
3. His comfort is not given or received without responsibility, 2Co 1:4–7.

B. The Master’s Workshop, 2Co 1:8–14

The ministry of comfort does not work in comfortable circumstances. In order to have a need for comfort, there must be some form of affliction. In these verses, Paul reveals vital truths concerning the arena in which we live:

1. The presence and nature of evil
2. What is meant by “*the sufferings of Christ*”
3. The hope and confidence of true faith

Out of this experience, Paul learned five great lessons that brought him into a deep communion with God:

- a. That God used extreme necessity to wean him of all trust in self, so that his trust was in God, who alone can raise the dead (2Co 1:8–9).
- b. That God is unchanging, and what He has done He will continue to do (2Co 1:10). Because God is immutable, His works, like His person and Word, never change.
- c. That no one suffers alone, and none are delivered alone (2Co 1:11). While some suffer, others pray. In the end, still others will give thanks for what God has done.

- d. That assurance in times of affliction derives from integrity in times of blessing (2Co 1:12). Past faithfulness to God’s Word is the foundation of “boasting” or assurance when the chips are down (see 1Jo 3:18–19).
- e. That we only truly reflect Christ to the world when what we say and what we do are in agreement (2Co 1:13–14). Consider this truth in Ezr 7:10 and Act 1:1 in relation to doing and teaching.

C. The Workmanship, 2Co 1:15–24

In Eph 2:10, Paul tells us that “*we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works.*” Every believer is the product of an instantaneous work of creation as well as an ongoing project of God’s grace. The tragedy is that we often misjudge what God is doing in other believers:

1. Wrongly perceived, 2Co 1:15–17
It is easy to misjudge what God is doing in others’ lives. God does not work according to our plans.
2. Rightly perceived, 2Co 1:18–24
The promises of God are certain, and are seen by the eye of faith. Note the three things God has done to assure us of their fulfillment: (a) He has anointed us; (b) He has sealed us; and (c) He has given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Note: Compare 2Co 1:24 with 2Co 13:10. These are what are called “bookends,” establishing a theme that runs through the epistle.

D. Great Lessons of 2 Corinthians One

1. We ought to be constantly praising God, for He never ceases in His work of showing mercy and giving comfort, 2Co 1:3.
2. We should be mindful that the ministry of comfort is specifically related to the Holy Spirit, “the Comforter,” Joh 14:16–17.
3. The word “*comfort*” implies so much more than just making us feel better. It means “to sustain, strengthen, stabilize.” The verb form, *parakaleo*, means “to call to one’s side so as to give aid.” In ancient writing, it has been found of a mother comforting her infant child, of a coach exhorting an athlete in the games, and of a commander who is stiffening the resolve of his troops.
4. There is a principle of Scripture and of life found in 2Co 1:8–10. We often need to be broken in order to be healed. Put another way, we have to reach the end of ourselves to see the beginning of God’s deliverance.
5. As “*the God of ... comfort,*” it is not something He gives, but rather **who** He is. Therefore, He will never change, nor will He ever cease to offer comfort in every time of trouble.

II. Second Corinthians Two: The God of Victory Knowing God through Sin and Shame

“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.” 2Co 2:14

The context of this chapter takes us back to 1 Corinthians 5—the story of the sinful brother. In light of what Paul said in 2Co 1:23–24, he explains that he did not return because he did not want to “dominate” their faith. Instead, he gave them time and freedom to respond to his earlier epistle. Based on their response, he writes this chapter.

A. Sinful Conduct in the Church—An opportunity for Victory, 2Co 2:1–6

God alone is able to turn defeat in the lives of believers into victory. The man who sinned was at fault, but so was the church in their initial response. Both needed to overcome failure and claim victory by faith.

1. Sin must be identified biblically. The Bible identifies sin—not what may or may not be socially acceptable at any given time.
2. Sin in the believer’s life calls for confession (1Jo 1:9) and correction (Pro 28:13). Confession without correction is a perversion of grace and a cover for evil (1Pe 2:16; Jud 1:4).
3. It is the mark of spiritual believers that they respond to sin in others’ lives with the desire to restore—not to condemn (Mat 18:15–20; Gal 6:1–5).

B. The Tactics of Spiritual Victory Never Change, 2Co 2:7–11

Five tactics from the cross that always lead to victory:

1. Forgiveness, Luk 23:34; Eph 4:32
2. Comfort, Luk 23:42–43; Joh 21:15–19
3. Affirmation of love, Joh 19:26–27; 2Co 2:4
4. Obedience, Mat 26:42; Phi 2:8
5. Overcoming the devil, Mat 4:1–17, Mat 6:13; Joh 19:30

C. Victorious Living Leads to Historical Impact, 2Co 2:12–17

Take note of the evidences of spiritual dynamic exemplified by Paul:

1. A keen awareness of spiritual conflict, 2Co 2:12–13. Here, external opportunity is in conflict with inner compulsion.
2. Conviction that God leads only to victory, 2Co 2:14. The picture here is from the Roman triumphal march following a great victory.
3. Certainty of the impact of a life of sacrificial service, 2Co 2:15–16a. This pictures the incense that surrounded the triumphal march, which signified glory to the victors, but death to the captives.

4. Consciousness of personal inadequacy, 2Co 2:16b. This produces an attitude of deep dependence upon the provisions of the Spirit.
5. Caution against manipulating or compromising God’s Word, 2Co 2:17. The moment we stray from accurate teaching we lose spiritual power! The word “*peddling*” speaks of deception in order to sell a product. It is *kapeleuo*, and is used in the Septuagint in Isa 1:22 of those who watered down their wine to make more profit.

D. Great Lessons of 2 Corinthians Two

1. We come to know the God of victory when we allow Him to lead us in triumph over our sin and failure.
2. Paul’s expressed grief and sorrow over the sin in Corinth are an expression of the divine viewpoint toward all sin in believers’ lives.
3. The divine goal toward all sin is forgiveness and cleansing. This requires repentance and correction on the sinner’s part.
4. All sinfulness teaches us our helplessness apart from God’s grace and truth. Victory over sin is achieved by faith—not by personal effort.
5. In line with Jesus’ statement in Revelation, “*He who has ears, let him hear,*” it is true to say that “He who desires to overcome, let him overcome.”
6. Sin within the church body is a test, not only for the sinner, but of the genuine spirituality of that body (Mat 18:15–17; Gal 6:1–3).
7. The word “*devices*” (2Co 2:11) means “to outthink.” In 2Co 11:3, Paul uses the word “*craftiness*” meaning “to work every angle.” Consider how Satan worked in Corinth:
 - a. Toward the sinner (compare 1Co 5:1–5 with 2Co 2:5–8):
First he lured him into sin through lust. Next, when the man wanted to repent, he convinced him that his sin was too great to forgive.
 - b. In the church (compare 1Co 5:1–2 with 2Co 2:7–9):
At first, the church boasted of their “tolerance” of the sin (a distorted concept of “grace”). Then, when Paul rebuked them, they became overly judgmental, severe, and unforgiving.

III. Second Corinthians Three: The God of All-Sufficiency

How God May be Known to those who Serve

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.” 2Co 3:5

In this chapter, Paul answers his question of 2Co 2:16. We will only be “*sufficient for these things*” as we get to know the all-sufficiency of God. If we view ministry to God rightly, we are overwhelmed by our personal inadequacy for the task. Only the provisions of grace supplied by God’s Word and Spirit can enable us for the work.

A. Transformed Lives are the Evidence of God's All-Sufficiency, 2Co 3:1–6

It is most interesting that Paul points, not to himself, but to his converts and students, as the evidence of God's sufficiency at work in him.

1. Proof of every teacher is found in the spiritual quality of his students.
2. Every life transformed by the grace of God is a "living epistle." Many will never read the Bible, but they will read the transformed life.
3. Every believer must learn to have "*no confidence in the flesh*" (Phi 3:3), and thus to come to know the God of all-sufficiency.
4. The God who calls us into His service will never fail to empower for that service. "*God's will, done God's way, never lacks God's supply.*" Hudson Taylor

B. The All-Sufficiency of the Spirit vs. the Limitations of the Law, 2Co 3:7–15

Paul now contrasts the Old Covenant of the law with the new covenant of grace.

Consider how great the spiritual contrasts between the two:

1. The Law of Moses ministered death; the New Covenant brings life.
2. This is because the Law condemns, but the Gospel of grace justifies.
3. The glory of the old is fading, but the New Covenant is eternal.
4. Moses used a veil, not because they could not face the glory, but because they could not accept that it was fading away. Those who reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ remain blinded in heart and mind.
5. To the one who receives the truth, the Spirit of God gives life and spiritual liberation. With this comes "*access*" to God (Eph 2:18, Eph 3:12) and capacity to see His glory revealed through His Word, and reflected in our lives.

C. Spiritual Transformation Impossible Without Liberation, 2Co 3:16–18

This explains why legalistic believers never grow up to maturity. Note that the sufficiency of grace has a goal—that of spiritual liberation. As Paul says elsewhere, "*stand fast ... in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage*" (Gal 5:1). It is amazing how many seek a return to the law!

D. Great Lessons of 2 Corinthians Three

1. The genuine proof of any ministry is in souls saved and lives transformed.
2. Just as Jesus Christ—the living Word—was the incarnation of the written Word, so we—as believers—are to be incarnations of truth in life.
3. The Christian life is not what we produce, but what results from Christ living in us (Gal 2:20) by faith.
4. Our insufficiency is a vessel that the Spirit of God fills with God's all-sufficiency when we live by faith.
5. Any life or ministry that partakes of God's all-sufficiency will demonstrate a glory and power that only God can give.

6. The word “*glory*” speaks of a visible manifestation of the invisible nature and power of God (see 1Co 12:7 and 2Pe 1:3–4).
7. Spiritual blindness is the natural state of mankind (2Co 3:14, 2Co 4:4). Only by faith in Jesus Christ is that blindness removed.
8. The liberating work of the Holy Spirit through regeneration is the beginning of a life-long pursuit of conformity to Jesus Christ.

IV. **Second Corinthians Four: The God of Glory** **How God is known by the Spiritually Mature**

“For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” 2Co 4:6

The biblical concept of “*glory*” is some visible evidence of God’s invisible nature. An example is the “Shekinah glory” or the glory of God’s presence in the Old Testament (Exo 16:7, Exo 16:10). The greatest manifestation of God’s glory was in Jesus Christ, “*we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*” (Joh 1:14). It is God’s expressed will that every believer be a unique and personal reflection of the glory of Jesus Christ.

A. Occupation with Christ—the Only Path to Spiritual Maturity, 2Co 4:1–6

Seven evidences of spiritual maturity in believers lives:

1. A conscious recognition of spiritual gifting for ministry, 2Co 4:1a
2. A dependence on mercy that refuses to give up, lose heart, 2Co 4:1b
3. The renunciation of all forms of manipulation in ministry, 2Co 4:2a
4. Commitment to be a “living epistle” of the truth we teach, 2Co 4:2b
5. Recognition of the spiritual blindness of the lost and its source, 2Co 4:3–4.
6. The hiding of self behind the Person and work of Jesus Christ, 2Co 4:5
7. Reliance on the creative power of God to overrule in our life, 2Co 4:6

B. The Cost of Discipleship and the Ministry of Glory, 2Co 4:7–15

This section reaffirms the truth taught in 2Co 1:3–7, but on a more personal level. To reflect the glory of God in the devil’s world is costly!

1. Speaking of the “*treasure in [clay] vessels,*” Paul may have had Gideon’s lamps and the battle against the Midianites in mind (Jdg 8).
2. God’s “*strength is made perfect in weakness*” (2Co 12:9).
3. The purpose of sharing in the sufferings of Christ is threefold:
 - a. That God might receive the glory, 2Co 4:7
 - b. That resurrection power might be displayed, 2Co 4:10
 - c. That grace and gratitude might spread to many, 2Co 4:15

C. The Spiritually Mature See Life from the Divine Perspective, 2Co 4:16–18.

Note the five daily disciplines of spiritual maturity:

1. Maintain an attitude of spiritual invincibility, 2Co 4:16a
2. Daily spiritual renewal in the Word, prayer, and service, 2Co 4:16b
3. Balancing present suffering with eternal rewards, 2Co 4:17
4. Refusal to evaluate life based on outward appearance, 2Co 4:18a
5. Keeping the “eyes of faith” fixed on invisible realities, 2Co 4:18b

Note: These disciplines are received by faith—not produced by us. The rule of life for every child of God is, “*the just shall live by faith*” (Hab 2:4; Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38). God’s Spirit does the work!

D. Great Lessons of 2 Corinthians Four

1. The believer who truly understands the mercy received at salvation will be sustained by it throughout a life-time of ministry.
2. The work of accurately proclaiming the Word of God is the concern of the minister of reconciliation (see 2Co 5:14–21).
3. The work of opening the eyes of the unbeliever, and of bringing them to faith, is something only God can do (see Joh 16:7–11).
4. The work of regeneration (new birth) is far greater than the work of original creation, 2Co 4:6.
5. Every child of God is possessed with the divine treasure of the Gospel message. Like Gideon’s torches (Jdg 7:16–20) in clay jars, when the vessel is broken, the light shines out.
6. Every trial, affliction, sorrow, or suffering in the believer’s life is designed to provide an opportunity to reveal God’s glory through our brokenness.
7. Just as the resurrection of Christ followed the cross, so His resurrection power demands that we “*take up [the] cross*” and suffer with Him (Luk 9:23; Phi 1:29–30; 2Ti 2:12; 1Pe 4:13).

V. Second Corinthians Five: The God of Reconciliation
How God May be Known to Estranged Parties

*“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us,
that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2Co 5:21*

Whereas Chapter Four was focused on “hope” (not losing heart), this chapter deals with “peace,” resulting from Christ’s work of reconciliation: “*Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God*” (Rom 5:1). The finished work of Christ has the power to bring peace with God, and among men, wherever we are willing to receive God’s grace in simple childlike faith.

A. The Security of Those Who are Reconciled, 2Co 5:1–8

The great distinguishing factor among believers is not in their security, but rather in their assurance. While all believers share in the security in Christ, many lack assurance due to their spiritual immaturity. Here we see the tension of living with one foot on earth, and one foot in Heaven:

1. This present life is a pilgrimage, and we are tent dwellers, 2Co 5:1.
2. It is only natural that we long for our eternal home, which Jesus Christ is preparing for us, 2Co 5:2–3 (see also Joh 14:3). The third verse is literally, “[since] *having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.*”
3. All earthly sufferings for the believer express a longing for the eternal state, 2Co 5:4.
4. Every child of God is created for eternity and has been given the indwelling Holy Spirit as a “down payment” which guarantees our arrival at our eternal home, 2Co 5:5 (see also Rom 8:9–11; 2Co 1:22; Eph 1:13–14, Eph 4:30).

B. Mature Believers Who Understand Their Security in Christ Have a Three-Fold “Confidence” or Assurance, 2Co 5:6–8:

1. They live as pilgrims and strangers in this life, 2Co 5:6.
2. They walk by faith, not sight, 2Co 5:7, cf., 2Co 4:18; Hab 2:4.
3. They view death as the door leading them home, 2Co 5:8.

C. The Accountability of Those Who are Reconciled, 2Co 5:9–11
(See also 1Jo 2:28, 1Jo 3:18–19.)

Three evidences of the accountable life before God:

1. Life’s highest aspiration is to please God, 2Co 5:9.
2. Life is lived in light of the Bema Seat of Christ, 2Co 5:10, Rom 14:10.
3. The “fear of the Lord” (i.e., the fear of dishonoring and displeasing Him) motivates evangelism and exhortation of others, 2Co 5:11.

D. The Responsibility of Those Who are Reconciled, 2Co 5:12–21

In this passage are seven truths essential to ambassadors of Christ:

1. The true ambassador knows that attitude (motive) and not appearance, is the key, 2Co 5:12–13. The world views a biblical “*sound mind*” as being mentally imbalanced.
2. It is not our love for Christ, but His love for us that grips us, as we grow in faith, and compels us to serve His cause, 2Co 5:14.
3. It is one thing to grasp that Christ died for all. It is a far greater value to see that He died to make believers His servants, 2Co 5:15.
4. The transformed mind sees men with the eyes of Christ, 2Co 5:16. We learn to look on the value of the soul—not the outward appearance.
5. Every believer is a new creation in Christ and is accountable for the ministry of reconciliation—bringing men to Christ, 2Co 5:17–18.

6. As an ambassador of Christ, we are to call men to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ, 2Co 5:20
7. Our message is two-fold, 2Co 5:19, 2Co 5:21: God has not imputed men's sins to them, because they were all imputed to Christ and paid on the cross.

E. Great Lessons of 2 Corinthians Five

1. The believer who trusts implicitly in the work of Christ alone possesses an assurance of their security that the world cannot shake.
2. All sorrows in this life are reminders that this world is not our home, and make us long for our eternal habitation.
3. Our physical body is compared to a pilgrim's tent—a temporary dwelling.
4. One of our Lord's final promises was, "*I go to prepare a place for you*" (Joh 14:2).
5. When we have the proper biblical perspective, we see death as the door that leads us home, and we have a longing to be there.
6. Knowing that we will one day stand in His presence, our focus on earth is to be pleasing to our Father, and bring glory to Jesus Christ.
7. The best way we can show gratitude for our so great salvation is by fulfilling the ministry of ambassadorship, representing Christ in our lives, and the ministry of reconciliation—proclaiming the truth of the Gospel: "Christ Jesus died for our sins."
8. In sharing the Gospel, we should make clear that because all sins were poured out on Christ, sins are "not imputed" (2Co 5:19) to sinners. Only the sin of unbelief condemns the sinner to eternal condemnation (Joh 3:18–19).

VI. Second Corinthians Six: The God of Sanctification
Knowing God through Personal Repentance

*"Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord.
 Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.
 I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My
 Sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."* 2Co 6:17–18

The word "sanctify" (or "*be separate*") implies both a "setting apart" for special purpose, and a process of purification. Three phases of sanctification are presented in Scripture. At the point of salvation, we are forever set apart as God's personal possession. Then, by spiritual growth we are "being sanctified," that is conformed into Christ's image. Finally, by death and resurrection (or Rapture), we are fully glorified in the presence of Jesus Christ.

A. Initial Salvation by Faith in Christ is Only the Beginning, 2Co 6:3.

These Corinthians are believers in Christ. What Paul means by "*receive the grace of God in vain*" (2Co 6:1) is that he fears they will not go on to maturity in their Christian lives (see 1Co 3:1–4). While their initial faith in Christ was indeed "*the*

day of salvation,” they needed to understand that “[today] *is the day of salvation,*” in the sense of ongoing deliverance from sin.

B. This Ongoing Salvation/Sanctification is Exemplified by Paul and His Missionary Team, 2Co 6:4–10.

Here are four spheres of sanctification:

1. Personal conduct, 2Co 6:3–4
2. Adverse conditions, 2Co 6:5
3. Spiritual resources, 2Co 6:6–7
4. Conflicting reports, 2Co 6:8–10

C. The Inclusions and Exclusions of Sanctification, 2Co 6:11–18

There are many today who argue that the Corinthians were “not really saved,” or that their salvation was in doubt. Nowhere does Paul suggest such a thing. Otherwise, how could he seek to embrace them (2Co 6:11–13), while at the same time calling on them to separate from “*unbelievers,*” 2Co 6:14? Here, we learn that the quality of our spiritual life is defined by what we include and what we exclude!

1. Emotionalism has become a hindrance to the growth of the Corinthians (v.12). In an emotional reaction, many of them have shut him out of their hearts. He appeals to them to openly receive him (2Co 6:11–13, 2Co 7:2).
2. On the other hand, the Corinthians were happy to engage with the unbelieving dregs of Corinthian society, 2Co 6:14–16a. All of Corinthian society revolved around the Corinthian temple and included idolatry, drunkenness, gluttony, prostitution, and every form of sexual perversion. Paul calls on them to separate from this crowd.
3. In the closing quotes (2Co 6:16b–18; Lev 26:12; Jer 32:36; Eze 20:34; Eze 37:27; Isa 52:11; 2Sa 7:14), Paul reveals the reciprocal obligations of believers, and the blessing of knowing God in the Father/son relationship for those who separate themselves from this world.

D. Great Lessons from 2 Corinthians Six

1. If we are to get to know the God of holiness, we must be progressing in conformity to His nature and character, 1Pe 1:16; Lev 11:44–45.
2. The biblical concept of holiness is much more than just the absence of sin. It refers to a spiritual “wholeness, completeness” of character and conduct that is a true reflection of Jesus Christ (“complete in Christ,” Col 1:22, Col 1:28, Col 2:10, Col 4:12).
3. The work of sanctification belongs to the Holy Spirit, and is realized in the believer by faith, submission, and obedience to the Word of God.
4. This sanctifying work progresses from the spirit, through the soul, and outward through the conduct of the body, 1Th 5:23–24.

5. The term “*sanctification*” is a one-word summary for the comprehensive will of God for every believer, 1Th 4:3, 1Th 4:7.
6. Three words that express the scope of sanctification are: salvation, sanctification, and glorification. They take us from the cross, through the Christian experience, and into eternity.
7. In the Bible, the words “saint, sanctify, holy” all come from the same root word. Again they reveal the phases of the work of God on behalf of the believer.

VII. **Chapter Seven: The God of Holiness** **Knowing God by His Cleansing Power**

“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” 2Co 7:1

In this chapter, Paul builds on the truths laid down in Chapter Six, looking at the practical effects of purification in his experience with the Corinthians. If we desire to know God in all His holiness, we must learn the provisions for partaking of that awesome quality.

A. The Goal: Perfecting of Holiness, the Process of Spiritual Advancement, 2Co 7:1

There is a three-fold process presented in this verse:

1. We must begin by receiving and believing the promises of God, 2Co 7:1.
2. We claim the promises by faith and apply them to life—purging out all that is contrary to God from our lives.
3. We then embark on a life-long process of “*perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*” Two questions arise:
 - a. How do you perfect what is perfect? Jesus Christ was holy, yet He “was made perfect” (Heb 2:10, Heb 5:9) through sufferings. That is, He applied His holiness to His suffering situations in preparation for the cross. We are naturally unholy, yet holiness is the essence of our new nature (Eph 2:10, Eph 4:23–24), which we are to apply by faith to life.
 - b. What is meant by “*the fear of God*”? The most basic definition is reverence for God. This includes love for Him and the desire to please Him. I like the explanation of G. Campbell Morgan, “*Not that I fear Him hurting me, but that I fear hurting Him.*” Think of Peter after denying the Lord, and you get the idea.

B. The Process: Purification in Holiness, 2Co 7:2–12

1. By means of affliction, 2Co 7:2–7:

Here, we have a personal vignette in the life of Paul that illustrates his teaching from 2Co 1:3–10. Every painful situation in life involves the potential for comfort (strength/stability) because “*God ... comforts the downcast,*” 2Co 7:6. Instead of

complaining, we should see our trials as opportunities to further purification that we might know the God of holiness!

2. By means of repentance, 2Co 7:8–12:

Not all sufferings are directly due to sin, but often they are. Paul’s rebuke in his first epistle had brought at least some Corinthians to repentance (a change of mind from carnal to spiritual, resulting in changed conduct). What he calls “*godly sorrow*” and “*regret*” are not the same. Judas “regretted” what he had done (Mat 27:3); the Greek word here is *metamelomai*, which means “to feel sorry,” rather than *metanoeo*, “repentance.” Only “*godly sorrow*”—the ability to see our sin as God does—brings repentance (2Co 7:10) from which there is no regret. Again, the sinful man of 1Co 5:1–5 is in view in 2Co 7:12.

C. The Product: Lives Worthy of Praise, 2Co 7:13–16

For the child of God, failure is never final! The sinful man in Corinth had repented of his actions (2Co 2:6–8). The church members who had been out of line had also repented of their attitudes (2Co 7:9–12). The effects of this repentance are:

1. Obedience on the part of the Corinthians
2. Comfort to both Corinthians and Paul
3. Joy shared by Corinthians, Titus, and Paul
4. Increased confidence by Paul in the Corinthians’ spirituality

D. Great Lessons of 2Corinthians Seven

1. A true appreciation of God’s promises recognizes that conditions apply for the promises to be claimed. All of God’s promises come with conditions. We cannot claim the promise if we do not meet the condition.
2. Paul’s rebukes caused some in Corinth to become “closed” to him (2Co 6:11–12, 2Co 7:2–4). The cause of this response was emotional reaction (2Co 6:12) rather than humble submission.
3. Paul found comfort in the knowledge that God was not through with the Corinthians yet, and Paul knew that grace would prevail wherever it was met by faith.
4. Some in Corinth were sorry (ashamed) but not repentant. But some had “*godly sorrow*” resulting in repentance, followed by joy.
5. Every believer’s life produces a dynamic, based on the core reality of that life (i.e., the true state of the inner man), that either brings blessing or cursing to those around us.
6. Paul was greatly comforted by those whose lives had been purified by his rebuke. He could only continue to grieve for those who had not.

VIII. Chapter Eight: The God of Grace How God May Be Known through Giving

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” 2Co 8:9

Following the topics in Chapters Six and Seven, it is imperative that we understand that God is the God of grace. He makes provisions for us to live victoriously, and also provisions for when we fail. The more we understand all He has given to us in Christ, the more giving we become in every area of life.

A. The Evidence of Grace Received is Grace Given, 2Co 8:1–7.

Isn't it interesting that in speaking of the offering of the Macedonians (note Phi 1:7–8; Phi 4:14–17), Paul calls it *“the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia,”* 2Co 8:1. The truest evidence of God's grace received is that one becomes a channel of grace to others:

1. They gave out of their joy.
2. They gave in time of great affliction.
3. They gave out of deep poverty.
4. They gave voluntarily.
5. They gave with a sense of urgency.

B. The Condescension of Christ is the Standard of All Grace, and the Motive for All Giving, 2Co 8:8–15.

The ninth verse is a perfect summary of Phi 2:5–9. Jesus Christ impoverished Himself to make us rich. By doing so we became His greatest wealth and joy (Mat 13:44; Heb 12:2).

1. Christ displayed grace by giving, not by clinging.
2. The desire to give, without the completion of giving, is worthless.
3. Giving is always reciprocal, blessing others by the gift, and bringing blessings to the giver in time, and reward in eternity.

C. The Administration of Funds Given is an Opportunity to Demonstrate Grace, Truth, and Honor, 2Co 8:16–24.

Paul used extreme care in handling finances, lest there be any perception of misuse. Titus and *“the brother”* (probably Luke) were men who had gained a reputation for faithfulness.

D. Great Lessons of 2 Corinthians Eight

1. God's grace is never received without the spreading outward of that grace into the lives of others.

2. Our giving is an accurate barometer of how much we have received and appreciate the grace of God.
3. Christ alone is the true standard and example of grace-giving, 2Co 8:9.
4. Giving to those in need is a means of becoming a channel of God's grace.
5. When we give we light a spark of gratitude in others that shows itself in thanksgiving to God, and prayer for those who have given.

**IX. Chapter Nine: The God of Giving
Knowing the Giver through His Gift**

"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" 2Co 9:15

We will never understand biblical giving until we come to some level of comprehension of the cross of Christ. Until we are overwhelmed by the gift of God, we will never rejoice in the opportunity for giving. Ponder on the path Christ took to enrich you for eternity (2Co 8:9; Phi 2:5-9), and you will find that you can never give enough!

A. The Motive for Giving, 2Co 9:1-5:

1. It is a means of participating in ministry to those in need.
2. When done willingly, joyfully, it becomes an example to others.
3. If we commit to give and fail to follow through, our "eagerness" becomes an empty show, and a cause of shame.
4. Biblical giving is always voluntary and free of any coercion.

B. The Principle of Sowing and Reaping, 2Co 9:6-9:

1. It is well known that the more you sow, the more you reap.
2. Also important is not only how much you sow, but your motive.
3. Here, in 2Co 9:8, is one of those promises with a condition. Paul says to the Corinthians, "*God is able*" to supply their needs. To the Philippians he said, "*My God shall supply all your needs*" (Phi 4:19). Why the difference? Because the Philippians had met the condition of grace-giving, the Corinthians had not.

C. The Always-Giving God, 2Co 9:10-15:

1. God is faithful to supply seed to the sower, and bread to the eater.
2. If we consume what God gives us, we only need enough for bread. If we give what God gives us, we need enough to sow. We choose whether God's gifts to us will be bread or seed by what we do with it.
3. All true giving is an expression of thanksgiving for the gift of Christ.

D. Great Lessons of 2 Corinthians Nine

1. There are those who graciously give, and there are those who talk about it.
2. When the Macedonians heard of the need of the poor in Jerusalem, they begged with great urgency for the opportunity to support them (2Co 8:1–5).
3. On the other hand, the Corinthians, who talked about it a year earlier, had yet to come up with any offering.
4. Again, God’s rich blessings on the Philippian believers (reflected in the repetition of ‘joy’ and ‘rejoice’ in the epistle) was directly linked to their gracious giving in response to the need.

Note: It is crucial to understand that God always blesses those who give out of gratitude for the grace they have received. **But** this does not mean He “repays” in kind (i.e., a tenfold return in the same currency). The ways in which God returns blessings are infinite, and cannot be reduced to money!

5. Once again, our giving (not only of money, but time, energy, care, prayer, sharing) is a true indicator of how much we value what God has given us in Christ Jesus.

X. Chapter Ten: The God of Armies **How God Reveals Himself through Our Spiritual Warfare**

*“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal
but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.” 2Co 10:4*

“The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is His name ...” Exo 15:3

Here, Paul must address some who questioned his authority and who exalted themselves, while excluding him. In every church, there will be those who love “*to have the preeminence*” (3Jo 1:9). Paul meets their self-exaltation by the invincible “*meekness and gentleness of Christ.*” He has won already!

At some point in life, every believer must come to see Jesus Christ as Joshua did, as “*Commander of the army of the Lord*” (Jos 5:14). Until we are willing to follow Him in our spiritual battles, we will know only defeat and shame. He alone can lead us to victory (2Co 2:14). If defeat is the trend of your life, let the “*Lord of armies*” take charge and turn your worst defeats into glorious victories!

A. The Weapons, Strategy, and Tactics of Spiritual Warfare, 2Co 10:1–6

1. The spiritual war demands spiritual weaponry, 2Co 10:1–2.
2. The mind of Christ is “*meekness and gentleness*” (Mat 11:29).
3. The strategy is to “*walk [by] the Spirit,*” 2Co 10:3–4 (Gal 5:16).
4. Here is the “*obedience of Christ,*” His life through us.
5. The tactics are two-fold: “*casting down*” and “*bringing ... captive,*” 2Co 10:5.

B. The Aims of Spiritual Warfare are Edification, not Destruction, 2Co 10:7–11.

Here, Paul addresses his attacker (“*such a person*,” 2Co 10:11—a term of contempt) who judges his authority based on external appearances.

1. Compare 2Co 10:8 with 2Co 1:24 and 2Co 13:10. These “bookends” encapsulate Paul’s theme of the authority of God given for ministry.
2. Those who judge any ministry based on outward appearances are inevitably wrong. So the Pharisees judged Jesus (see Joh 7:24 with 1Sa 16:7; 2Co 5:12).
3. The authority given to Paul was great, but he wielded it in humility. He warns that if necessary, he will demonstrate it in person.

C. The Battle for Souls Versus the Struggle for Prominence, 2Co 10:12–18

While his opponents “measure” themselves by comparison to others (here he uses the word *metreo*, from which we get meter), Paul is content to work within his “*sphere*” (*kanon*, a divinely appointed sphere). Paul labors for the edification of his hearers, while the false apostles strive for personal prominence and recognition.

1. There is no lack of envy, competition, and jockeying for position in the ministry today, and these things existed in Paul’s time as well.
2. While Paul evangelized the Corinthians, and gave them whatever spiritual growth they had, these so called “teachers” followed behind like jackals trying to bring down the true “Lion.”
3. The passage of 2Co 10:14–16 is crucial. Paul declares that his continued expansion into further regions is being hindered by the Corinthian carnality. These verses further explain 2Co 10:6, “*when your obedience is fulfilled.*”
4. Quoting Jeremiah (Jer 9:24; 1Co 1:31), he concludes the section with a warning to those who commend themselves.

D. Great Lessons in 2 Corinthians Ten

1. Jesus Christ is “commander in chief” of the armies of God (Jos 5:14).
2. As the “*Lord of Sabaoth*” (Jam 5:4), He leads all of God’s warriors—both angels and men—to sure and total victory.
3. Spiritual battles require spiritual warfare and weapons. These are supplied through the Word of God.
4. The key to victory is obedience to the authority of God as expressed in His Word.
5. Those who get caught up in games of competition and appearance will never be true victors in the spiritual arena.
6. Carnal believers actually become a hindrance to the spread of the Gospel, and are like “friendly fire” to advancing believers.

XI. Chapter Eleven: The God of Simplicity Knowing God through the Fog of Deception

“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” 2Co 11:3

When we speak of “getting back to the basics,” what we are really saying is that we have forsaken foundational principles. One of life’s basics is that purity tends toward simplicity, while corruption leads to complexity and confusion. Jesus defines what we mean by simplicity in that He is “*holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*” (Heb 7:26). In Him, there is no duplicity and because of this “*He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him*” (Heb 7:25). The essence of all true spiritual life is simplicity.

A. The Security of Simplicity, 2Co 11:1–4:

1. The Church is the “bride of Christ,” now in the engagement phase.
2. Just as Satan deceived Eve, so he seeks to corrupt the Church. Just as in the Garden, this will destroy simplicity and introduce duplicity, and thus complexity.
3. To accomplish this, the devil uses false teachers, preaching a “Jesus” that is not biblical, enabled by a lying spirit, proclaiming a strange “*gospel*” (cf., Gal 1:6–9).
4. Yet the tragedy is that immature and undiscerning believers are often accepting of these deceivers and their false doctrines.

B. The Ministers of Duplicity, 2Co 11:5–15:

1. The “*most eminent apostles*” is sarcasm. Paul coins a word that could be translated “extra-super apostles.”
2. Along with the criticism that Paul wrote tough letters when he was away (2Co 10:1), and tried to terrify people through letters (though in presence he was weak and had speech that was contemptible, 2Co 10:10), in these verses we see that they accused him of being untrained in sophisticated discourse.
3. But Paul’s “*boast*” was always that he served at his own expense, provided his own needs, asking nothing in return (cf., 1Co 9:4–18).
4. Finally, in 2Co 11:13–15, he drops all pretense of civility—identifying his critics as false apostles, serving Satan, and by his power presenting themselves as Christ’s apostles.

C. The Boasting of Necessity, 2Co 11:16–33:

1. Here, Paul accepts the challenge: since they seem to be impressed with the boasting of false apostles, he will also boast.
2. From 2Co 11:22–33, he boasts—not in intellect or power—but in his weakness and total dependence upon the power of God to sustain him. This sets the stage for 2Co 12:1–10.

3. In 2Co 11:23–33, we have only a partial list of the sufferings endured by Paul for Christ’s sake. It was through all these—and more—that Paul learned to value “the God of simplicity,” and the transparency and power of divine truth.

D. Great lessons in 2 Corinthians Eleven

1. There are three things in this chapter that are inseparable: truth (2Co 11:1–4), simplicity (2Co 11:5–21), and power (2Co 11:22–33).
2. Simplicity is born out of honesty, transparency, and straightforwardness.
3. Since the truth never seeks to deceive, it has no double meanings, therefore, no duplicity.
4. To say that truth is simple is not to imply that it is not deep, as the Gospel and epistles of John demonstrate.
5. All of this goes back to the “*let your ‘yes’ be ‘yes,’ and your ‘no,’ ‘no’*” argument of 2Co 1:17–20, along with Mat 5:37.
6. We come to know the God of simplicity as we humbly seek truth, and banish all double-mindedness (Jam 1:5–8) and duplicity from our lives.

XII. Chapter Twelve: The God of Unexpected Power Knowing God through our Times of Weakness

“And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” 2Co 12:9

If we desire to know the God of unexpected power, we must learn to seek Him in unexpected places. Go to the place of your greatest weakness, humble yourself there as you search His Word, and you will find—by His indwelling Spirit—the power of which Paul speaks.

A. The Restraint of True Power, 2Co 12:1–6:

1. In speaking of his past experience—possibly at Lystra (Act 14:19–20)—Paul uses the third person, so he would not appear to be exalting himself.
2. The phrase “*caught up,*” in 2Co 12:2 and 2Co 12:4, is from *harpazo*, the verb used in 1Th 4:17, when speaking of the Rapture.
3. We also conclude that since “*Paradise*” and “*the third heaven*” are one and the same, that the saints in “*Abraham’s bosom*” (Luk 16:22) have been transferred into Heaven.
4. This is the meaning of leading “*captivity captive*” of Eph 4:8.
5. Yet note that Paul does not tell of what he saw or heard in Heaven. Instead, he chooses to boast in his infirmities, lest anyone should magnify him. This is the restraint of true power and greatness!

B. The Weakness of True Strength, 2Co 12:7–13:

1. Note the twice-repeated phrase, “*lest I be exalted above measure*” (2Co 12:7), which amplifies the ending of 2Co 12:6.
2. Because of the “*abundance of revelations*” that Paul received, God went to work to keep him and others from exalting him.
3. The “*thorn in the flesh*” was something that was painful, humiliating, and offensive. At first, Paul saw it as a hindrance, and prayed for its removal. In every truly great minister of truth, there is something like this given. It is truly a gift of grace!
4. In God’s response to his prayer, “*My grace is sufficient for you,*” Paul realized a great secret of the spiritual life. It is not our “strengths” that God uses, but our weaknesses (see 1Co 1:26–31).
5. If we are to know the God of unexpected power, we must find Him in the sufficiency of His grace, undertaking in the place of our greatest weaknesses. Never forget that Phi 4:13 comes out of Phi 2:5 and Phi 3:10!
6. While his opponents drew attention to Paul’s personal weaknesses (2Co 10:10), he urges the Corinthians to rather look at the impact of his ministry in their midst.

C. The Cost of True Love, 2Co 12:14–21:

1. Like a loving father or grandfather, Paul exhorts his children to press on in the life of growth and productivity. True love seeks to “*spend and be spent*” for the sake of others.
2. His boast was that he never sought, nor received, financial gain through the ministry (2Co 12:14–15; 1Co 9:18).
3. This tactic was designed to remove a possible area of attack (1Co 9:12, 1Co 9:15), but was also a “*crafty*” and “*cunning*” way of gaining a hearing. Here he uses the same word translated “*craftiness*” in 2Co 11:3, also used of Satan. Paul was “*wise as [the] serpents*” (Mat 10:16).
4. In all of Paul’s dealings with the Corinthians and each of the helpers he sent, he was careful to “*have regard for good things in the sight of all men*” (Rom 12:17).
5. Once again, the goal in all his conduct was the spiritual edification of his hearers, even if that included rebuke and discipline.

D. Great Lessons in 2 Corinthians Twelve

1. The mark of true greatness is that it can afford to be truly humble.
2. The power of God will not mingle with human strength or boasting.
3. God permits us to be made weak, that His power may be displayed in us.
4. The possession of God’s grace, riches, and power, places on us a great responsibility to spend them on behalf of others.
5. The ministry of grace should never be for hire, nor come with a price tag.
6. The true evidence of the power of God at work is the edification, growth, and transformation of souls and lives.

7. With all his vested power as an apostle, Paul reluctantly wielded the rod of discipline on those to whom he ministered. He was painfully aware of how gracious and patient God had been to him.

XIII. Chapter Thirteen: The God of Judgment Knowing God Leads to Accurate Self-Knowledge

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? —unless indeed you are disqualified.” 2Co 13:5

Believers who do not consistently “walk in the faith,” or put another way “abide in Christ,” lack the conscious presence of His fellowship. They are “*disqualified*” from such communion by their grieving and quenching of the Spirit (Eph 4:30; 1Th5:19). Instead of “testing” everyone else’s life, Paul suggests they test themselves.

A. The Warning of Judgment, 2Co 13:1–6:

1. The biblical standard of testimony is “*two or three witnesses*” (Deu 19:15).
2. Paul is challenging those who question his authority to a spiritual showdown, making it clear he is capable of severe chastisement.
3. The “*weakness*” of the crucifixion (see 1Co 1:25) was followed by the power of the resurrection. While the cross is the symbol of our salvation, it is the resurrection that is the standard of our life.
4. Now 2Co 13:5 is crucial! Paul is not questioning their salvation. He has already stated that Christ was “*mighty in you*” (2Co 13:3) and “*we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you*” (2Co 13:4). What he questions is their spirituality. Are they “abiding in Christ”?
5. The word “*disqualified*” is repeated in 2Co 13:5, 2Co 13:6, and 2Co 13:7. It was first used in 1Co 9:27 where he spoke of the possibility of losing reward by a lack of spiritual discipline and diligence. The Greek word *adokimos* means “to fail the test.” It is the opposite of “approved faith” in 1Pe 1:7.
6. Every believer must be objective in evaluating his/her life by the truth of God’s Word. That is the standard, and life itself is the test.

B. The Aim of Judgment, 2Co 13:7–10:

1. Paul himself had been severely tested (2Co 11:23–33) and his faith proved. Yet his concern is not his reputation, but rather the approval of the lives of the Corinthians before God.
2. The truth of God’s Word will always stand, and anything we do “*against the truth*” is doomed to be burned (1Co 3:11–15).
3. His prayer is that they “*be made complete*,” the Greek verb *katartizo* means to “be set right,” like setting an out-of-place joint (see Heb 12:13). He does not want to have to “set things right” in person when he comes.

C. The Profit of Self-Judgment, 2Co 13:11–14:

1. Biblical self-evaluation, in light of God’s Word, followed by corrective action, becomes a healthful and invigorating exercise.
2. The results are comfort, unity, peace, and power.
3. Note, that if they “*become complete*” (i.e., spiritually restored) both “*the God of love ... will be with you,*” and “*the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ ... [will] be with you all.*”
4. The book concludes on the theme we have followed. If we are to “know God,” we will do so only as we utilize every situation of life to come to know Him in all the many ways He chooses to reveal Himself to us!

D. Great Lessons in 2 Corinthians Thirteen

1. Although He is the “God of judgment,” our God is gracious, patient, merciful, and compassionate. He delays long in executing discipline.
2. When God does discipline, it can be severe and painful (Heb 12:3–11). However, if we respond with humility, He will always lift us up (Jam 4:4–10).
3. Objective self-examination, confession (1Jo 1:9), and correction (Pro 28:13) bring spiritual restoration to fellowship and usefulness (2Ti 2:20–21).
4. The path of the spiritual believer is always onward and upward—ever striving for greater biblical understanding, faithfulness, and effectiveness as a servant of God.
5. What God extends to every believer is the potential of enjoying “*the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit*” (2Co 13:14).
6. The book begins (2Co 1:3) and ends, with each member of the Trinity in view.