


2 Corinthians & Autumn Term: Study Notes



11th Sept	Powerful Weakness: 2 Cor 1.3-11 & 12. 7-10
18th Sept	Powerful Glory: 2 Cor 4
25th Sept	Powerful Faith: 2 Cor 5.1-10
2nd Oct	Harvest Festival: Colossians 1.15-20 <small>BRING & SHARE LUNCH AT 10.30 GATHERING!</small>
9th Oct	Powerful Ministry: 2 Cor 5.11-21
16th Oct	Powerful Fellowship: 2 Cor 7.2-16
23rd Oct	Powerful Generosity: 2 Cor 8.1-9 & 9.6-15
30th Oct	Powerful Orthodoxy: 2 Cor 10.1-5
6th Nov	Conflict?: Gal 2.11-14 & James 1.19-25
13th Nov	Remembrance Sunday <small>JOIN US FOR A SPECIAL OUTSIDE SERVICE IN THE MORNING ON Turnham Green</small>
20th Nov	BIG QUESTION SUNDAY: Sex in the Bible <small>AN ALTERNATIVE SERMON OPTION WILL BE AVAILABLE AT ALL SERVICES</small>
27th Nov	Song of Songs 7 <small>AN ALTERNATIVE SERMON OPTION WILL BE AVAILABLE AT ALL SERVICES</small>
4th Dec	The Gift of Advent: Jeremiah 33.14-16

STUDY 1: Powerful Weakness

Welcome:

Have you got a story to share of God working in a time or situation of weakness?

Worship:

This week why not listen to the Queens Favourite hymn: Praise My Soul the King of Heaven – use it to lift our eyes up to God and to thank God for the gift of faith.

Word:

Read 2 Cor 1.1-11 & 12.7-10

- Make a list of all the ways Paul has suffered and how he feels about it in this passage.
- Why does Paul love God rather than hate God because of all he has suffered?
- What's the connection between the sufferings of Christ and the comfort of Christ (verses 5-6)?
- We respond to suffering differently and we all need moments to shout, grieve, feel frustrated, cry, be angry or depressed – we can express how we feel before God and others. Sometimes though we can do two things which Paul avoids: deny the suffering or become so self-focused & isolate ourselves. What did Paul discover about the meaning of suffering in the Christian life (verses 8-11)?
- How does our experience of God's comfort enable us to comfort others?
- From Richard's sermons on the 4th Sept we heard about the Greek word for 'comfort' in this passage παρακαλέω it means to 'call near' and part of the word is the same as the 'Holy Spirit' – the sense is that this comfort is not about God wrapping us up in a fluffy blanket, nor about strengthening us (though God does at times do both of those things) rather it's a coming alongside and aiding us in our distress. What would a good 'coming alongside' look/feel like when someone is suffering?
- 'God won't give us more than we can bear' is something I've heard said in Christian circles and it comes out of this

verse 1 Corinthians 10.13 but here in 2 Corinthians 1.8-9 we hear Paul saying, 'We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure.' Look at the verses closely are they at odds?

- What hope, lessons & truth does Paul proclaim in verses 9-11? How would sharing his struggle as well as his comfort help those around him?
- What must we do to bring our hardest moments and allow God to take them and turn them for good? And how can we grow in allowing our hardships to draw us closer to God?

Witness:

Who could we get alongside this week and comfort? Pray for the alpha course and for opportunities to share faith at this time.

Below are the questions for each week. As you prepare to lead think about how you will welcome, worship & encourage witness. There are lots of different ideas in previous study notes on the website and so I've not written them down for each week.

For witness this term think about who you might invite to alpha, pray for the course and perhaps you could offer to help with food one week. We're also hoping to put on an outreach Sunday morning on Remembrance Sunday – if you'd like to help, please speak to Nicola but consider making it a priority to come along and support. As we head towards Christmas it can be easier to invite people to an outdoor carol service or to traditional carols – pray for opportunities to invite people along. You might want as a group to try and be accountable for praying for neighbours, colleagues and family & friends.

STUDY 2: Powerful Glory

Pray and Read 2 Cor 4

In 2 Corinthians Paul is still dealing with lots of accusations from the church. They're looking at him and wanting more from him – but it says they're missing the point – they need to look at the message and less at him the messenger. His weaknesses though actually point even more to the resurrection power at work.

Looking at verses 1-6 what accusations is Paul still dealing with? And how does Paul see his 'job description' from these verses?

Looking at verses 4-6 what does Paul communicate with the image of light? What forces are behind those who reject & those who accept the gospel?

In what ways does Paul contrast the glory of the gospel with the weaknesses of those who preach it (verses 7-18)? We often assume that our weakness will hinder the gospel and detract from it but how do our weaknesses reveal God's power?

How is it that both life and death can be at work in Paul at the same time?

Paul says he was 'persecuted but not abandoned...' and he says this with hindsight – at the time he felt 2 Corinthians 1.8. How is this an encouragement when we go through persecution, temptation, suffering etc?

Twice Paul says 'do not lose heart' on what basis can we be confident that our lives and ministry will not be pointless (verses 13-18)?

In verse 13 Paul quotes Ps 116.10 – look over the psalm – how does it fit with verses 13-18?

In verses 16-18 it can be easy to think Paul doesn't care at all about bodily/outward things, but the next chapter makes it clear that is not the case – so what two worlds are being contrasted here?

Paul sets out a picture of the glorious future resurrection – how can this help us face present sufferings?

STUDY 3: Powerful Faith

Pray and Read 2 Cor 5.1-10

How does Paul use the images of a house and clothing in the first few verses?

The same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus bodily from death is verse 5 the same Spirit we have. How does this help us understand 2 Cor 3.10-12?

Why do we so often live as though we would prefer to be 'at home in the body', squeezing all we can out of life now?

What does it mean to live by faith not sight?

How can all of this help us to come to terms with our own weaknesses and mortality?

How do verses 5.7-9 stress the significance of both faith and behaviour?

What would it look like to live out verse 9 today in your life?

Harvest Festival Week

This week why not stop and have an extended meal together or go out and do a fun activity as a group. I love that Jesus spent time having fun with his friends. You may also want to take the opportunity to go around everyone in your group sharing a bit more deeply and praying for one another.

STUDY 4: Powerful Ministry

Pray and Read 2 Cor 5.11-21

Looking at verses 11-15 – why does Paul behave in that way?

What does verse 16 mean?

What has now changed because of the Messiah?

What does it look like to be a 'new creation'?

In 5.16-6.2 what else is revealed about Paul's ministry?

What does it mean to be reconciled to God? Why does Paul tell the Corinthians who are already Christians to be reconciled to God?

In what ways can we live out being ministers of reconciliation today?

STUDY 5: Powerful Fellowship

Pray and Read 2 Cor 7.2-16

In 2 Cor 7.2-16 Paul recalls how comforted he was when he met Titus in Macedonia and heard news of the Corinthians – what makes Paul ‘confident,’ ‘proud’ and ‘encouraged’ about the Corinthians?

What is Paul’s main concern/desire for the Corinthian church in verses 2-10?

What’s the difference between ‘worldly sorrow’ and ‘godly sorrow’? What are the constructive results of godly sorrow?

How does 7.2-10 compare with your vision of the ‘successful’ or ‘normal’ Christian life?

In 2 Corinthians 2.5-8 Paul talks about a person the church had to discipline. In 7.11-13 he mentions the situation again and reassures them they acted properly. Any kind of confrontation can be difficult – why though is it sometimes necessary?

What can we learn from these verses about reconciliation?

What do you want to take away from this passage?

STUDY 6: Powerful Generosity

Pray and Read 2 Cor 8.1-9 & 9.6-15

How do you react when someone begins to preach/teach about financial giving?

What methods does Paul use to encourage giving to the poor – what motives does he appeal to?

In these chapters Paul never uses any of the Greek words for ‘money’ – he speaks indirectly – why is this?

In verses 6–15 how is Paul trying to expand their minds?

Some people have taught that if you give to God’s work you will be blessed and get more money for yourself. What does Paul say about the personal benefits of giving?

Where is God calling you to be both a cheerful and generous giver? Does anything hold you back?

Are you holding on to resources that could be used for the Kingdom of God?

STUDY 7: Powerful Orthodoxy

Pray and Read 2 Cor 10.1–5

Looking at verses 1–6 what is Paul’s strategy in the battle for the mind?

What does verse 5 look like in daily practice?

Looking at verse 3 – what worldly weapons do you think Paul envisages? Where might we be tempted to use those tactics?

What arguments does Paul need to demolish (see verses 7 & 10)? What similar arguments oppose the knowledge of God today? How should we go about doing this?

The battle for the mind has to be fought outside and inside the church. Paul is doing this in verses 1-11, what challenges is Paul still being confronted with?

Many people find Paul's boldness off putting but many also accuse him of being weak – leadership in the church isn't easy often leaders find themselves simultaneously being accused of not being strong whilst also being told they're too directive. How can we pray for our leaders? And how can we encourage in each other a beautiful combination of boldness and humility?

Looking at the end of the chapter – how does our boasting in the Lord help us in the battle for the mind?

Conflict

Some separate notes will be provided on this – contact me if you'd like them.

Remembrance Sunday Week

This week pause and reflect on what you would like to take away from this past series. Spend some time going back to look at 2 Corinthians and ask God to help you take to heart what you need to hear. This could be a good week to share some food together!

As we end November decide if your small group will stop for two weeks in order to go together to the discussions on the same sex marriage debate that are happening in church. OR

continue to meet and I've got lots of suggestions for you if needed so please contact me or James if you need any ideas.