

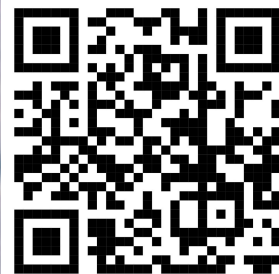
THROUGH THE BIBLE



2 Corinthians 1-6

Kristin Stansberry
May 14, 2025

<https://www.joshuatallent.com/bible/>



Corinthian Church Really Hopes That Embarrassing Letter Paul Wrote About All Their Sexual Immorality Doesn't Become Public

SCRIPTURE · May 12, 2025 · BabylonBee.com



Class Outline

2 Corinthians 1-6

I. CONTEXT & OVERVIEW

- A. About 2 Corinthians
- B. Timeline
- C. The City of Corinth
- D. Archeology
- E. Founding of the Church in Corinth
- F. Four Letters to the Corinthians

II. HIGHLIGHTS - 2 CORINTHIANS

A. Chapter 1

- a. Be Comforted so that We Might Comfort Others (2Co 1:3-7)
- b. Have Confidence in God Alone (2Co 1:8-11)
- c. Paul Had Reason for Not Coming (2Co 1:12-24)

B. Chapter 2

- a. Paul's Tears over the Church (2Co 2:1-4)
- b. Paul's Testimony to the Offender (2Co 2:5-11)
- c. The Fragrance of Christ (2Co 2:12-17)

C. Chapter 3

- a. Written on Hearts, Not Stones (2Co 3:1-3)
- b. Adequacy From God (2Co 3:4-6)
- c. The Glory of Two Covenants (2Co 3:7-18)

D. Chapter 4

- a. Determination (2Co 4:1)
- b. Honesty (2Co 4:2-4)
- c. Humility (2Co 4:5-7)
- d. Suffering (2Co 4:8-10)
- e. Death for Jesus' Sake (2Co 4:11-15)
- f. Focus on the Unseen (2Co 4:16-18)

E. Chapter 5

- a. Confidence of Heaven (2Co 5:1-8)
- b. Concern to Please Christ (2Co 5:9-13)
- c. Compelled By Love (2Co 5:14-15)
- d. Ministry of Reconciliation (2Co 5:16-21)

F. Chapter 6

- a. Continued Plea for Reconciliation (6:1-13)
- b. An Appeal for Separation (6:14-7:1)

OVERVIEW & CONTEXT

2 Corinthians



ABOUT 2 CORINTHIANS

The Big Idea

Jesus' willingness to humbly endure death by crucifixion should challenge our values and worldview. The elevation of humility, weakness, and service is the paradox of the Kingdom of God.

Context

The events described in 2 Corinthians take place in the city of Corinth. 2 Corinthians was likely composed between 53 and 58 C.E., about one year after Paul's first letter to Corinth.

Key Themes

- **Reconciliation** through Jesus
- God's generosity
- The upside-down way of the cross

Structure

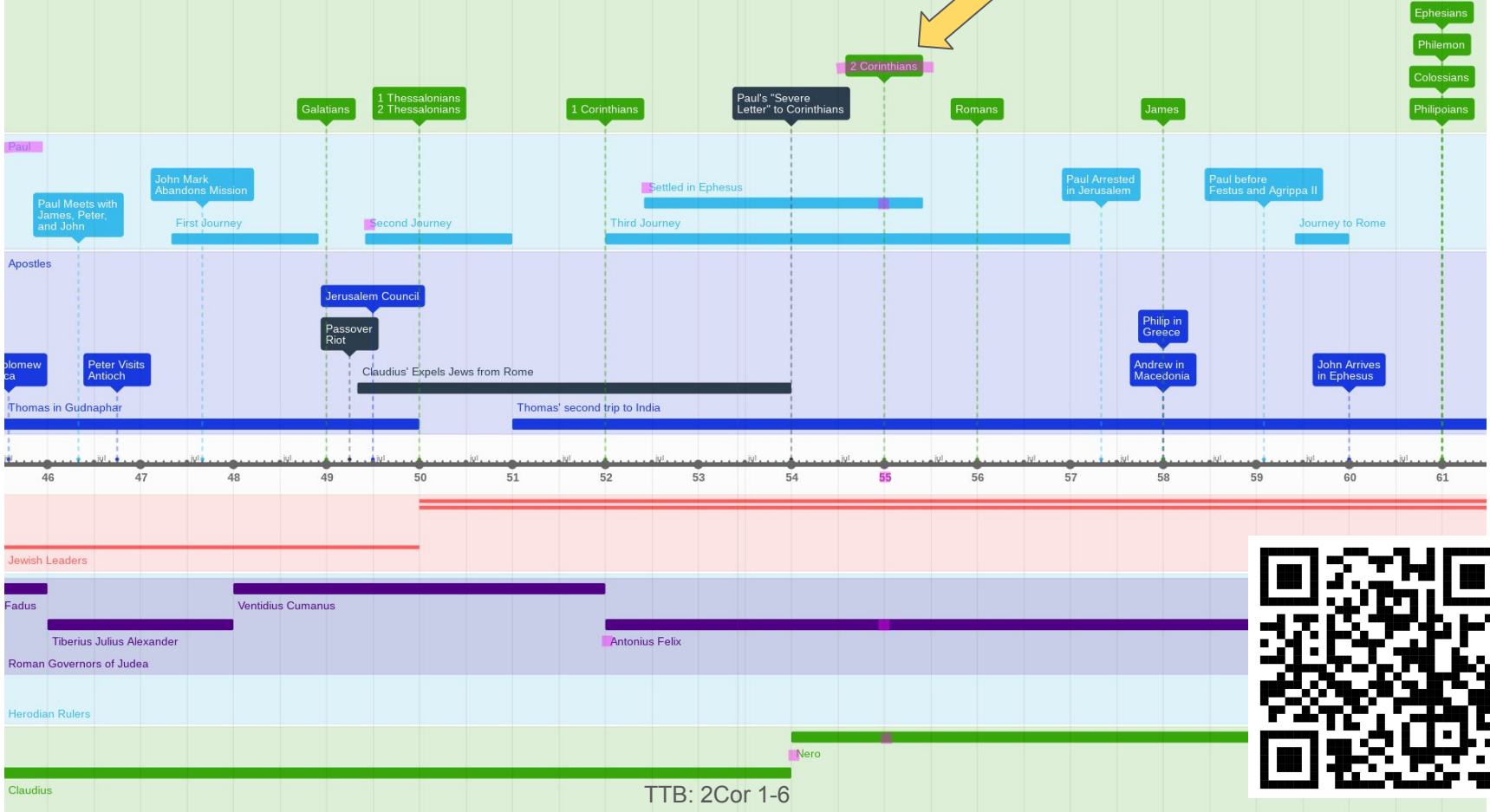
This book has been designed with three main sections, each addressing a distinct topic. In chapters 1-7, Paul finalizes his reconciliation with the Corinthians. In chapters 8-9, he addresses the topic of forgotten generosity. And in chapters 10-13, Paul challenges the remaining Corinthians who still reject him.

- 1. 2 Corinthians 1-7: Suffering and Poverty As Proof for Apostleship**
- 2. 2 Corinthians 8-9: A Plea for Gospel-Motivated Generosity**
- 3. 2 Corinthians 10-13: An Invitation to Humble Repentance**

TIMELINE

1973 years ago ● Jun, 53

Approximate Dates of the Apostolic Writings



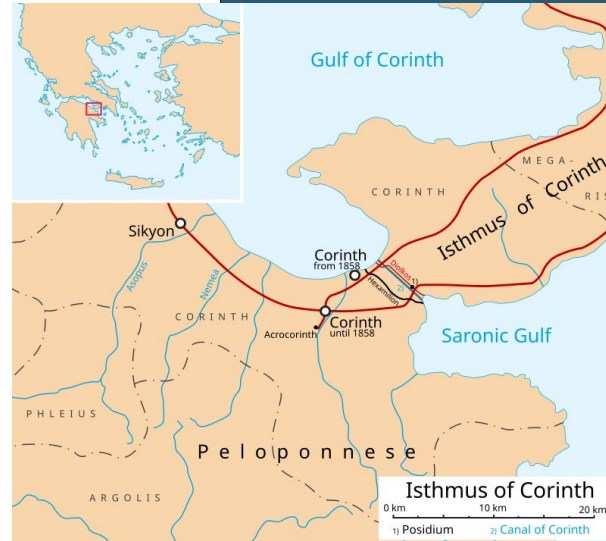
THE CITY OF CORINTH

1. Geographical & Economic Importance

- **Location:** Corinth sat on the narrow isthmus connecting mainland Greece and the Peloponnese, with access to two important ports—Lechaeum (to the west) and Cenchreae (to the east).
- **Trade & Wealth:** This location made Corinth a major trade hub. Its economy was robust, fueled by commerce, craftsmanship, and transportation.
- **Roman Colony:** It had been rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 44 BC after being destroyed in 146 BC, making it a relatively "new" Roman city by Paul's time.



[Corinth Map - Bible Odyssey](#)



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Corinth#/media/File:Isthmus_of_Corinth.svg

THE CITY OF CORINTH

2. Cultural Diversity

- **Multicultural Population:** Corinth was home to more than half a million people - Greeks, Romans, Jews, and people from across the Mediterranean. Over two-thirds of the population consisted of slaves. This made for a diverse but often morally lax society.
- **Languages:** Greek was the primary language, but Latin and various regional dialects were also heard.

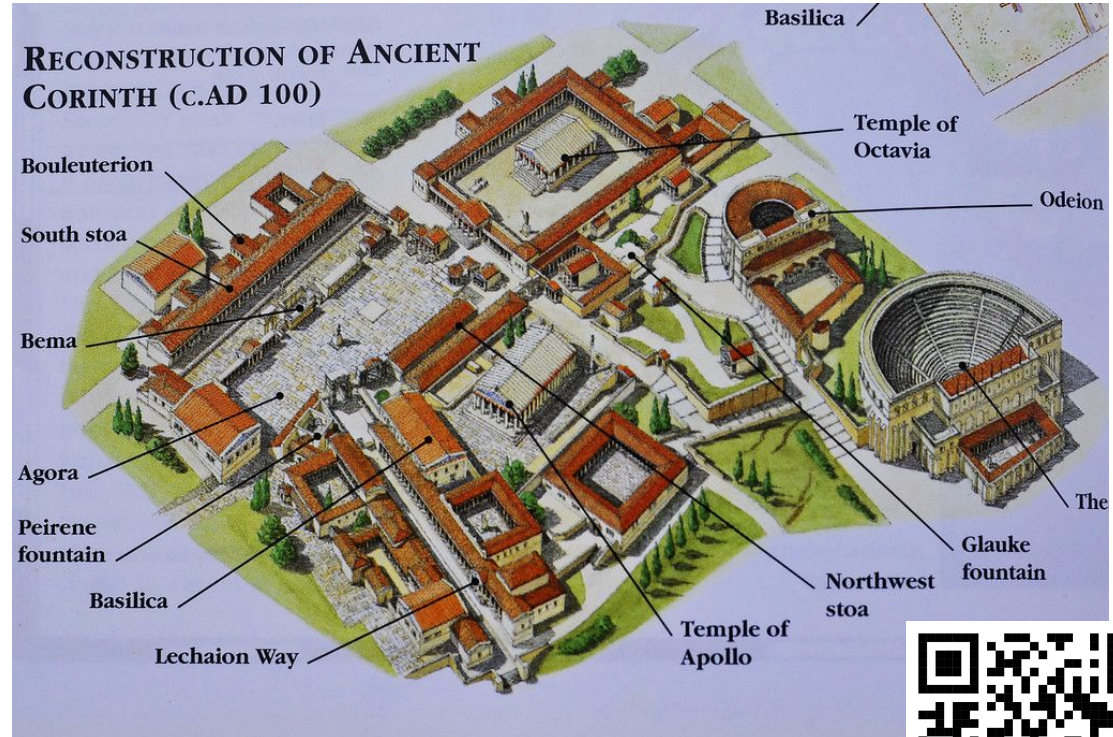
3. Religious Climate

- **Pagan Temples:** The city was filled with temples, most famously to **Aphrodite**, the goddess of love, whose temple was associated with ritual prostitution.
- **Idolatry:** Idol worship was common, and much of daily life was intertwined with pagan religious practices (which Paul frequently addressed in his letters).
- **Jewish Presence:** There was a Jewish synagogue, and some Jews converted to Christianity, though Paul faced opposition from others.

THE CITY OF CORINTH

4. Moral and Social Issues

- **Reputation for Immorality:** Corinth had a reputation for sexual immorality and excess. “To Corinthianize” even became a slang term for immoral behavior.
- **Social Stratification:** The city had both extremely wealthy elites and very poor laborers or slaves, leading to social tensions—also reflected in issues Paul addresses (e.g., divisions at the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11).



ARCHEOLOGY

Theatre of Ancient Corinth



The first theatre was built on the slope of a natural hill around the 5th century BC. It could hold 18,000 spectators. It was rebuilt in the 1st century and renovated in the 2nd century. In the 3rd century, it was turned into a venue for gladiator and animal fights. After an invasion by [Alaric I](#) (c. 370-411) in 396, the theatre was never used again.

Ancient Corinth: A Brief
Look at The
Archaeological Site



ARCHEOLOGY

Temple of Apollo



Before entering the [Agora](#) (I'll explain what this is next) is the Temple of Apollo. It was built around 530 BC to replace an older temple built a century earlier. The temple was of the Doric order and originally had 6 columns on each end and 15 on the sides. Only seven columns stand today.

ARCHEOLOGY

Agora of Ancient Corinth



Function:

Primarily a marketplace for commerce, but also served as a space for public gatherings, political debates, religious ceremonies, and social interactions.

Architecture:

Typically an open space surrounded by shops, stoas (covered walkways), temples, and other public buildings.

The Agora, or Roman Forum, was the heart of Ancient Corinth.

It was rectangular in shape, measuring 175 yards by 77 yards. It contained shops on the north, west, south, and in the center. There were also several small temples. Before being converted to the Agora, the space served as a stadium and race track.

ARCHEOLOGY

West End of the Agora



In front of the West Shops were a series of small temples. They were built by the Romans in the 1st and 2nd centuries. The temples consist of Temple F ([Venus Genetrix](#)), Temple G ([Apollo](#) of Klaros), Temple H (probably dedicated to [Heracles](#)), Temple J (probably dedicated to [Poseidon](#)), the Monument of Babbius Philinus, Temple D, and Temple K (probably dedicated to [Tyche](#)).

ARCHEOLOGY

Lechaion Road



Paul's ministry in Corinth, and consequently the writing of his letters to the Corinthian church, occurred when the **Lechaion Road** was a major thoroughfare connecting the city (the Agora) to its western harbor about 1.5 miles to the north.

The Lechaion Road was unpaved and open to traffic during the reign of **Augustus**. Under **Vespasian**, it was pedestrianized and paved with limestone. It was lined with colonnades and pedestals with dedications as well as gutters to carry away rainwater.

It was 20 to 25 feet wide and flanked by raised sidewalks and shops.



ARCHEOLOGY

The Propylaia



The [Propylaia of Ancient Corinth](#) was the monumental entrance to the forum from the Lechaion Road.

A propylaia stood at the main entrance to the road from the Agora. It had three arches and was built in the 1st century. The gilded bronze chariots of [Helios](#) and [Phaethon](#) stood on top.

ARCHEOLOGY

Peirene Fountain



On the east side of the propylaia was the [Peirene Fountain](#). It was originally built over a natural spring in the 2nd century BC. It included six chambers, three pumping basins, and four cisterns.

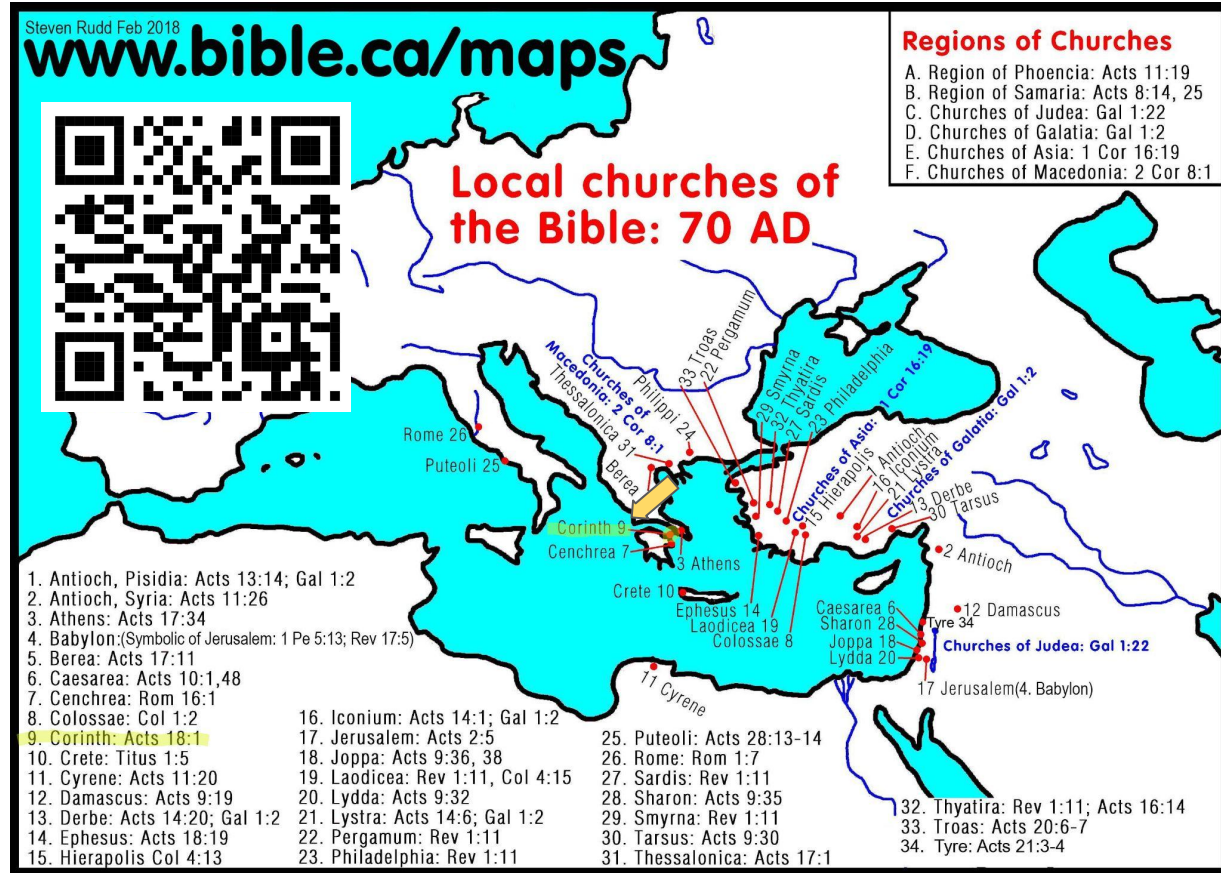
The Peirene Fountain was rebuilt by the Romans in the 1st century BC, enclosing it within a large rectangular courtyard.



FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH IN CORINTH

See Acts 18

- Paul met Aquila and Priscilla, fellow tent-makers
- Began teaching in the Jewish synagogue in 50 CE
- Left the synagogue and opened a new house-synagogue in Gaius' home - a God-fearing Gentile
- Leaders of Jewish community seized Paul, brought him before the proconsul, but case was thrown out
- God promised Paul protection and he spent 18 months in Corinth (50-51 CE)



FOUR LETTERS TO THE CORINTHIANS

- **1st letter** has been lost - referred to in **1 Corinthians 5:9-11**
- **2nd letter** is what we call **1 Corinthians**. This was written from Ephesus.
- Then Paul visited Corinth for a short time in what was a “**painful visit**” (see 2 Cor 2:1)
- **3rd letter** is at the end of **2 Corinthians** in chapters **10-13** sometimes called the “severe letter” (Joshua will discuss this next week)
- **4th letter** is found in **2 Corinthians 1-9** and is more appealing in tone - we are covering 1 through 6 tonight
- After the 4th letter Paul stays for the winter of 56-57 CE in Corinth

(Reference: Daniel Lancaster, Chronicles of the Apostles)

HIGHLIGHTS

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 1

I. Be Comforted so that We Might Comfort Others (2Co 1:3-7)

The God of Comfort

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.

- 2 Corinthians 1:3 (CSB)

II. Have Confidence in God Alone (2Co 1:8-11)

Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death, so that we would not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.

- 2 Corinthians 1:9 (CSB)

III. Paul Had Reason for Not Coming (2Co 1:12-24)

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 2

I. Paul's Tears over the Church (2Co 2:1-4)

II. Paul's Testimony to the Offender (2Co 2:5-11)

III. The Fragrance of Christ (2Co 2:12-17)



Exploitation in Antiquity

We do not want to be exploited by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes (2 Corinthians 2:11).

The verb “exploit” means to take advantage of, defraud, or cheat. This kind of problem was sometimes encountered in the marketplace, and one of the measures taken to counteract it was the installation of standard measuring tables in the public square. The measuring table shown here, known as a *mensa ponderaria*, was used to provide a standard unit of measurement against which the measurement of dealers could be gauged.

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 2

I. Paul's Tears over the Church (2Co 2:1-4)

II. Paul's Testimony to the Offender (2Co 2:5-11)

III. The Fragrance of Christ (2Co 2:12-17)

A Ministry of Life or Death

14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in Christ's triumphal procession and through us spreads the aroma of the knowledge of him in every place. 15 For to God we are the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. 16 To some we are an aroma of death leading to death, but to others, an aroma of life leading to life. Who is adequate for these things? 17 For we do not market the word of God for profit like so many. On the contrary, we speak with sincerity in Christ, as from God and before God.

- 2 Corinthians 2:14-17 (CSB)



Incense

Through us he spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of Him in every place (2 Corinthians 2:14).

The word "fragrance" refers to that which stimulates the sense of smell; depending on the context, it can refer to a sweet aroma (as here) or to a bad odor, like the smell of a corpse. Elsewhere Paul twice uses the same word in the context of sacrifice (Phil 4:18; Eph 5:2). While this could simply refer to the smoke of a burnt offering, it could also refer to the popular Roman custom of burning incense to the gods, a practice that was valued solely for the fragrance it produced. This bronze incense burner dates to about AD 100. Coals would be added to the bowl, and incense would be sprinkled on top of the coals, producing a fragrant smoke.

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 3

I. Written on Hearts, Not Stones (2Co 3:1-3)

II. Adequacy From God (2Co 3:4-6)

III. The Glory of Two Covenants (2Co 3:7-18)

15 Yes, down to this [very] day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies upon their minds and hearts.

16 But whenever a person turns [in repentance] to the Lord, the veil is stripped off and taken away.

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (emancipation from bondage, freedom).

18 And all of us, as with unveiled face, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another; [for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit.

- 2 Corinthians 3:15-18 AMPC

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 4

- I. Determination (2Co 4:1)
- II. Honesty (2Co 4:2-4)
- III. Humility (2Co 4:5-7)
- IV. Suffering (2Co 4:8-10)
- V. Death for Jesus' Sake (2Co 4:11-15)
- VI. Focus on the Unseen (2Co 4:16-18)

Treasure in Clay Jars

Now we have this treasure in clay jars, so that this extraordinary power may be from God and not from us.

- 2 Corinthians 4:7



Treasure Hoarded in Clay

But we have this treasure in clay jars (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Earthen vessels, or clay jars, were both common and easily broken. They are found in virtually every archeological dig in the ancient world. This is because clay, after being fired, was not susceptible to rot or decay. In fact, they were a common container in which the ancients stored valuables, particularly if they were buried in the ground. This display was photographed at the Museum of Prehistory and Early History in Berlin.

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 4

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II. Honesty (2Co 4:2-4)

III. Humility (2Co 4:5-7)

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A Narrow Space

We are pressed on every side, yet not distressed (2 Corinthians 4:8).

The word translated "pressed" here is sometimes used in Greek literature to refer to being hemmed in, to being in a constricted or narrow place. [Petra](#) was a Nabatean stronghold that was near the height of its power in Paul's day. Access to the hidden valley was only by a narrow canyon, known as the Siq, making the city easily defensible. Walking down this narrow gorge can give the sense of being constricted or pressed upon.



Temporal Decay

For the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18).

This object was once a beautiful, shiny bronze jug, probably highly polished and of high value. Its temporal nature is clear from the corrosion and deformation it has experienced over the centuries. This jug was photographed at the Merida Archaeological Museum.

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 5

I. Confidence of Heaven (2Co 5:1-8)

II. Concern to Please Christ (2Co 5:9-13)

III. Compelled By Love (2Co 5:14-15)

IV. Ministry of Reconciliation (2Co 5:16-21)

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!

18 Everything is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

19 That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed the message of reconciliation to us.

20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God."

- 2 Corinthians 5:17-20

2 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 6

I. Continued Plea for Reconciliation (6:1–13)

II. An Appeal for Separation (6:14–7:1)

Therefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord; do not touch any unclean thing, and I will welcome you.

And I will be a Father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.

- 2 Corinthians 6:17-18

So then, dear friends, since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every impurity of the flesh and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

- 2 Corinthians 7:1



Combat Equipment

By the weapons of righteousness, for the right hand and for the left (2 Corinthians 6:7).

The word “weapon” could refer to military equipment used either offensively or defensively. The typical Roman soldier carried an offensive weapon, such as a sword or spear, in one hand, and a defensive weapon, such as a shield, in the other. This relief found at [Pisidian Antioch](#) depicts both a spear and a shield.

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Unequal Yoking

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14).

The term “unequally yoked” means literally to yoke together two different kinds of draft animals. An unequal yoking like this was naturally difficult, as two different species had different height, speed or pace, and different pulling abilities. While it could be done, it was far from ideal. Deuteronomy 22:10 explicitly prohibited plowing with an ox and a donkey yoked together. This photochrom image from the Holy Land was taken in the 1890s.



Temple Idols

For we are the temple of the living God (2 Corinthians 6:16).

Pagan temples housed a statue of the god they were built to venerate, creating a visible connection with that world. Paul adopts this imagery to describe the relationship between God and the believer. Inside a full-scale replica of the Parthenon in Nashville, Tennessee, sculptor Alan LeQuire created a statue of Athena Parthenos. This provides a striking visual of the way that the Corinthians would have imagined a deity residing in a pagan temple.

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

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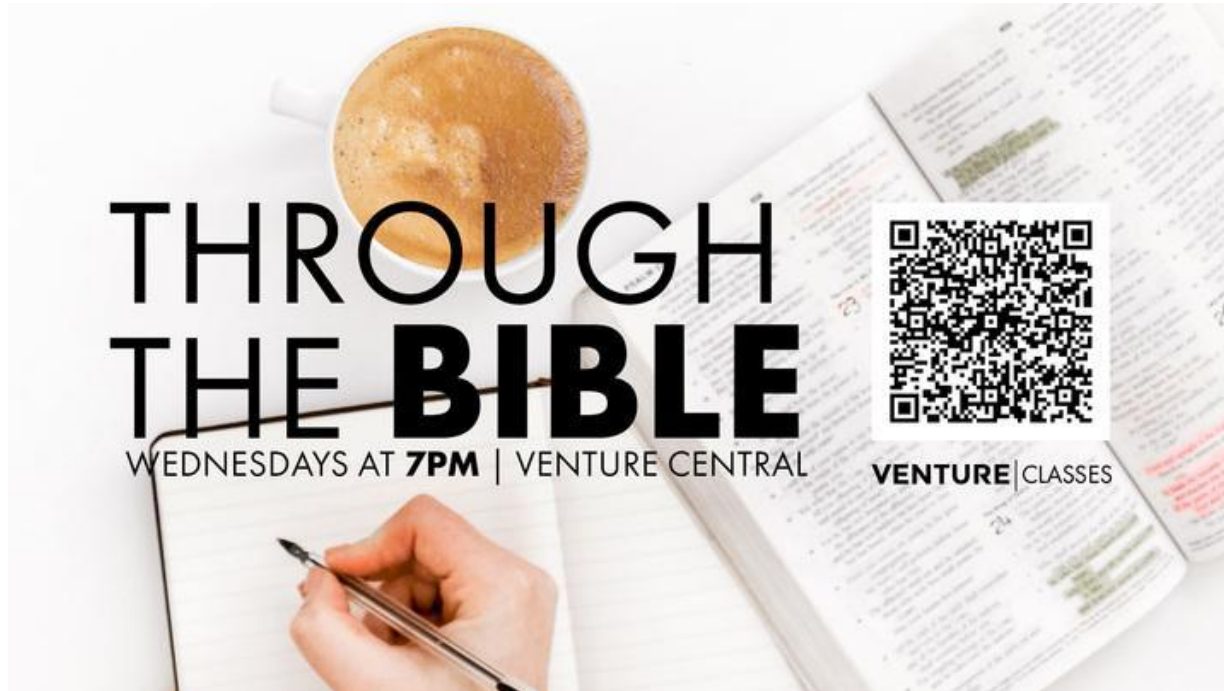
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