

Message Guide

This Message Guide may be a little different from those that you have used before.

The purpose of these Notes is not an in-depth study of the scriptures used, but rather to assist you or your Study Group as you reflect on these messages given by Charles Price.

We present questions in order to stimulate discussion. Sometimes we will give you the answer ... sometimes not. At other times a statement or a theme is presented for your consideration.

As you allow the Holy Spirit to guide the direction of your study and discussions we pray the flexibility of this Message Guide will help you as you delve more deeply into Charles' message, and that you will unearth more lessons from the Lord that may not have been immediately obvious.

Message Guide & Questions

Strength In Weakness

Part 1 – Comforted To Be A Comforter 2 Corinthians 1:3 - 11

1. As we begin this first of 9 studies based on the 'Strength In Weakness' Series please read and consider 2 Corinthians 1:3 - 11

2. Do you know what is the 'spinal chord' [central theme] of the First letter to the Corinthians?

3. Do you know what is the 'spinal chord' [central theme] of the Second letter to the Corinthians?

4. What do you think had necessitated Paul writing Second Corinthians?

5. Why did some Christians question the validity of Paul's ministry, claiming that he could not be a 'real apostle'?

6. So what is it that had come into the Corinthian Church? Is there a parallel today?

7. Be challenged by this question. To what degree has the 'spirit of the age' crept into our society and churches?

8. Paul's model – the biblical model – was not the world's model, but the church then, as now, was increasingly modeling itself on the world.

9. Consider what Paul was teaching, as opposed to what people wanted to hear.

Read and consider 2 Corinthians 7:5

10. Are you depressed yet? Surely there has to be some point to all this?
Carefully read and consider the following scriptures:

2 Corinthians 12:9 – 10

2 Corinthians 12:4

Romans 5:3 – 4

Psalm 119:67 & 71

Hebrews 12:5 - 11

Final Thoughts

Be clear about this:

it is not our suffering that helps to enrich and comfort others.

It is what we experience of God in our suffering.

Yes, our sufferings help us to identify with others,
but it is our experience of God in them that uniquely equips us
and enables us to minister to others.

If our prayers are always to avoid troubles etc.
we can never be equipped able to minister to other people.

If our attitude is to always serve others,
then nothing we experience or have to go through will ever be wasted.

**Troubles, pains, anxieties – good or bad –
will uniquely drive us back to God,
and mold us and equip us to care for others.**

Message Guide & Questions

Strength In Weakness

Part 2 – The Source Of Integrity

2 Corinthians 1:12 to 2:11

1. Before you read the scripture, can you remember the context and circumstances that led Paul to write this letter to the church at Corinth?

2. What reasons are being given for this criticism of Paul?

3. The Corinthians felt that to be an Apostle meant that you should be free from the troubles common to man, but Paul was teaching something different. See what he says in the following verses in 2 Corinthians 1:4, 5 – 7, 6, 8-10.

4. This was an attack on the outward circumstances, but there were also more insidious attacks on what?

5. What was Paul's response to these attacks? Read 2 Corinthians 1:12 and 15 – 20.

6. Paul justifies his actions by making a very bold and important statement here. Do you know what that might be?

7. Does this mean that all we need to do is try to live an honest life as best we can?

8. After explaining the 'Grounds of his integrity', Paul goes on to explain **'The Expression of his Integrity'** Read chapter 2:1 – 4

There is clearly a place in scripture that gives a person the right to challenge a fellow Christian, to correct them, to discipline them, to point out their errors.

List 5 areas which give a person the right to challenge.

9. Read and consider 2 Corinthians 2 verse 4.
What is the all important ingredient that permits a person to discipline another?

10. To close read and consider the example of Jesus in Luke 13:34 – 35 & 19:41 - 42

Final Thoughts

Paul said that because he lived his life in dependence on God he has not operated with human skill or worldly wisdom, but rather from the presence and activity of God in him.

Most of us would not dare to make that statement of ourselves,
but in fact, this is what the gospel promises: *Not I but Christ living in me.*

Paul is just practicing what he believes to be true,
and is consistent with his writings elsewhere.
Human nature is bankrupt, so worldly ways based on human wisdom are empty;
but there is a wisdom and power that comes from God.

It is important that we never forget that the grounds of our own character,
truthfulness and honesty is the character of Christ Himself
– for He is our life and strength.

This is what makes a Christian change and be different;
the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit within us.
And this is how we know a genuine Christian –
they live in the power of a new life
.... The life of Christ in them.

Remember this: When people rebuke and criticize
we can attach value to their words in the measure
that the spirit of anguish and tears lie behind it.

Criticism is Credible when there is Compassion behind it.

Message Guide & Questions

**Strength In Weakness
Part 3 – The New Covenant
2 Corinthians 3:6 - 18**

- 1. Please read and consider 2 Corinthians 3:7 - 18
- 2. Looking again at verses 7 and 8 what difference do you see?

- 3. So : Old Covenant on Stone E _____, I _____ = Condemns
New Covenant on Heart I _____, E _____ = Liberty

- 4. Can you remember why Paul wrote this particular letter to the church at Corinth?

- 5. Let's look first at the Old Covenant by reading and considering verse 7.
- 6. Why did the Old Covenant come with Glory?

- 7. Read and consider 1 John 3:4
- 8. Read and consider this familiar verse, John 1:14
What does it really mean?

- 9. So this leads us to the question "Why did it bring death"?

- 10. So what was different about the New Covenant? Read and consider chapter 3:9.

- 11. What is this New Covenant? Read and consider: Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:27 & 28
Colossians 1:25 - 27

Final Thoughts

**What was a command under the Old Covenant
is a Promise under the New Covenant!**

Message Guide & Questions

Strength In Weakness

Part 4 – Everyone In Ministry

2 Corinthians 4:1 - 18

1. Read and consider 2 Corinthians 4:1 - 18
2. It is a privilege for us all to be 'in ministry', and there are three aspects that we are going to look at today.

A. Ministry That Needs Correcting

Read and consider 2 Corinthians 4:2

Why does Paul feel the need to say this? Read verses 5 and 6

3. Can you identify some of the deception that is happening today?

4. The second thing we will look at is:

B. Ministry That Is Convicting

Read and consider verse 4.

5. When talking to others about Christianity we have to reply on more than just our arguments. We must give reasons and develop logical arguments.
See 1 Peter 3:15 However

6. And the third thing is:

C. Ministry That Is Competent

Read and consider 2 Corinthians 4:7 - 12

7. So what exactly is this treasure that we are carrying? Look at verse 8.

8. Do you feel intimidated by this thought?

Don't be! Read 1 Corinthians 1:27 – 29 and then 2 Corinthians 4:10

Final Thoughts

A 'minister' is a person who 'takes from God and gives to others'.
'Ministry' is the means by which God expresses Himself through His people.
God works through us. We are His agents, but our task is to work with Him.
'Ministry' is God making His appeal through us

Events, circumstances, thoughts, comments, observations and emptiness
all contribute to people's search for God;
but He uses Christians to step into their lives as ministers of the New Covenant.
That's you!

We are not sufficient in ourselves – we were never intended to be.
Our sufficiency is of God.

So let's enjoy the adventure of being workers together with Him
in the privileges of ministry.

**Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry,
we do not lose heart!**

Verse 1

Message Guide & Questions

**Strength In Weakness
Part 5 – Oriented To Eternity
2 Corinthians 4:13 – 5:10**

- 1. Read and consider 2 Corinthians 4:13 – to 5:10
- 2. Paul talks about death in 2 Corinthians, but he does not do so morbidly or fearfully, but rather positively and confidently; so let us look at 2 areas in which Paul is confident concerning death:

A. Confidence in the Future Based on Events of the Past

Read and consider 2 Corinthians 5 verse 1

- 3. Read and consider Ecclesiastes 3:11. What does this suggest to us?

- 4. Most religions speak of life beyond the grave.
Do you know what the following religions teach about this?

Hinduism _____

Buddhism _____

Animism _____

- 5. All these religions attempt to explain the mystery of life and death, and gives a sense of community, but they cannot all be right; so let's see what the Apostle Paul says in verse 5. Do you notice anything significantly different?

- 6. Interestingly this can create a restlessness within us. Read and consider verse 4.

- 7. Is this wishful thinking? Delusional? Or unrealistic Optimism?
Read what Paul says in Chapter 5 verses 1 to 5.

- 8. What does chapter 4 verse 14 tell us?

9. And the second thing is:
B. Confidence in the Future Based on the Experience of the Present
Read and consider 2 Corinthians 4:11 – 12
10. Read again 2 Corinthians 4:16 and John 5:24 - 25

Final Thoughts

In death we exchange the Mortal & Temporary
for that which is Permanent & Eternal.

For Paul, what happens when a Christian dies is not a matter of speculation,
but of a certainty based on certain facts.
Something tremendous had happened in history
that had taken the issue of 'life after death'
out of the realm of conjecture or superstition,
and moved it into the realm of established fact.

We have 2 lives in existence:
One is mortal – that will end
One is eternal – that will not end.

And these 2 lives co-exist!

Message Guide & Questions

Strength In Weakness

Part 6 – The Judgment Seat Of Christ

2 Corinthians 5: 6-15

1. Read and consider 2 Corinthians 5:6 - 15
2. Why do you think there should be any kind of judgment at which we should appear?

3. God, the judge, has created a moral law that is not only revealed in scripture, but is naturally evident. Inherent within us is a moral consciousness that is not a result of conditioning, but of creation. It may subsequently be conditioned and distorted, but its basic requirements are already in our hearts.

The question is: by what criteria will we / the world be judged?

Read and consider Romans 2:14 - 15

4. Read and consider Acts 17:31 and Romans 14:10
What does the moral law inevitable lead to?

5. So today we will look at 2 things:
A. The Nature of the Judgment
B. The Effect of the Judgment

A. The Nature of the Judgment

There are two judgments spoken of in the New Testament.

One is based on our P _____ before God.

The other is based on our C _____ before God.

6. Read and consider Revelation 20:11 - 12
7. Read and consider 2 Thessalonians 1:8 - 10
8. From verse 10 we learn that the judgment based on our condition has four important aspects.

- i This judgment will be U _____
 - ii This Judgment will be V _____
 - iii This Judgment will be I _____
 - iv This Judgment will be I _____
9. Read and consider 1 Corinthians 3:11 - 15
10. So, this universal, visible, individual and impartial judgment raises two questions.
- a. What A _____ can we have?
 - b. What E _____ can we have?
11. **B. The Effect of the Judgment**
Read again verses 11, 15 and 20

Final Thoughts

The Judgment based on our **Position** in Christ
determines our eternal destination.

The Judgment based on our **Condition**
is not punitive, but determines our rewards.

There is a coming Day of Judgment.

For the unbeliever

– to be separated from God forever.

For the believer

– for the genuineness of our lives to be revealed
– and to be rewarded according to how we have lived.

Message Guide & Questions

Strength In Weakness

**Part 7 – Daily Grace For The Daily Grind
2 Corinthians 6:3 - 10**

1. Read 2 Corinthians 6:3 – 10. What is this a list of?

2. Now read 2 Corinthians 6:1 – 2. What is this saying to us?

3. We are all constantly being hit with ‘troubles’, sometimes unrelenting pressure and grind; List the areas where we typically find these.

W ___ F _____ H _____ F _____
R _____ T _____

4. In this study we will look at what our response to these troubles is?

We are going to look at 5 ways:

E _____ them. E _____ them. E _____ them.
E _____ them. Be E _____ by them.

5. **1. Endure them.** Read again verse 4

6. **2. Eliminate them.**

When Christians face troubles and problems what is it that mostly they ask God to do?

7. **3. Escape them.**

We learn to live with our troubles with patient endurance because a better day is coming. See 1 Corinthians 15:19

Consider the words passed down from generation to generation of slaves who had little or no hope in this life.

8. **4. Enjoy them.** Read and consider James 1:2 - 4

9. Finally:

5. We need to be Enriched by them

Read and consider 2 Corinthians 6:1

10. Now read and consider Matthew 5:45. What does this say to us?

11. Now read and consider Lamentations 3:22 – 24. This is very important.

Final Thoughts

Is it legitimate to pray and ask for miracles
to get us out of our troubles?

The answer is 'Yes',
as Paul himself remarked in 2 Corinthians 12:12 [please read].

But we should also note that **Paul never offered miracles
as a solution to his personal struggles and issues.**

**We need the pressures and trials of life to develop us into
all that God has saved us to be.**

Read also: 2 Timothy 2:3
2 Timothy 4:5
Hebrews 12:7

What kind of Jesus do you have?

Is He merely the patron of your Christianity In name only?

Is He the One who saved you from guilt, is waiting for you in heaven,
but is absent in your day to day life?

Or is He present and active every day in your life?

Message Guide & Questions

Strength In Weakness
Part 8 – A Messenger Of Satan
2 Corinthians 12:7 - 10

1. Read and consider 2 Corinthians 12:7 - 10
2. If you are studying in a group take a quick survey among yourselves:
 - a. How many of you strongly feel ‘Satan’ is only a symbolic term?
 - b. How many of you agree somewhat that he is symbolic?
 - c. How many of you don’t know whether the term is symbolic or not?
 - c. How many of you believe that Satan is a literal being?

3. So, what does the Bible say about Satan or The Devil? **i. Who is he?**

4. Read and consider Ezekiel 28:12 – 29, and 28:17

5. How did the pride of Satan [Lucifer] manifest itself?
Look at verses Isaiah 14:13 – 14 and then name the list.

6. Compare these claims of Satan with the way that Jesus conducted Himself;
and what were the consequences?

Read Philippians 2:6 – 11 and Isaiah 14:12 and 15

7. Next we ask – **ii. Where is he?**

Read and consider the following scriptures:

Ezekiel 28:17b; Isaiah 14:12, Luke 10:18 and Revelation 12:9

8. **iii. What does he do?**

Read and consider the following scriptures:

1 Peter 5:8; 2 Timothy 2:26; 2 Corinthians 4:4

9. **iv. How do we respond?**

Read and consider: Job 1:12, Job 2:6; Luke 22:31; Matthew 4:1 - 3

10. This begs the question: WHY? Why does God allow Satan to have this activity?

Final Thoughts

God did not create what we call The Devil.

What God created was the most beautiful and perfect angel, but this angel rebelled because of pride, and was cast down to earth in opposition to everything that is from God and is of God. The Devil – Satan – is characterized by **Violence**.

It is important to note that God and Satan are NOT two equal forces.

GOD		SATAN	
Had no beginning	Genesis 1:1	Was created	Exodus 28:25
Is Omnipresent	Psalm 139	Is only local	Has to 'roam to and fro'
Is Omnipotent	All powerful	Needs permission	As in the book of Job
Is Omniscient	Knows everything	Is ignorant of some things	

Carry these truths with you always

Temptation is common to man

No temptation will ever seize you that is not common to all men and women.

Temptation is Controlled by God

God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.

Temptation is Conquerable by you

When you are tempted he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Message Guide & Questions

Strength In Weakness

Part 9 – A Thorn in the Flesh

2 Corinthians 12:7 - 10

1. Before we get into the meat of today's study here is a question for you.

When you check out at a supermarket or large drug store, what is it that you usually see? And what does that tell you about our society?

2. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7 – 10
What is this personal matter that Paul shares with us all?

3. What is this 'personal struggle' that Paul has to contend with every day?

4. Why do you think Paul is willing to be so open and transparent about this?

a. Is it to show us that he is N _ _ _ _ _ just like us?

b. Is it because it is T _ _ _ _ _ to expose all his troubles and faults?

Or is there another, more compelling reason to expose himself and be transparent?

5. There are 3 things to focus our attention on here.

1. A Trouble to Prevent. Read again verse 7a

Can identify what that potential trouble is?

6. **2. A Trail to Protect** Read again verse 7b

What can you learn from this?

7. Remember – the thorn was 'given', not 'inflicted' ... it was a 'gift'.

What images come to you when you think of a thorn?

-
-
8. **3. A Triumph to Promote** Now read verses 8 & 9

What did this thorn drive Paul to do?

9. So Paul prayed that the Lord will take the thorn away.
How did God respond, and what can we learn from that response?
-
-

10. Read again very carefully verse 9.

11. Read and consider chapter 10:12, 11:30 and 13:9

Final Thoughts

We must remember that:

Great times, are often followed by great troubles and trials.

Great victories, can lead to deep valleys.

Great triumphs can lead to great temptations.

Times of exaltation can lead to times of depression.

Remember also that:

The worse trial that we go through could be our best possession
because often the most important values are formed through trials.

Please read and consider: Jeremiah 9:23 - 24

Finally remember this:

Anything that drives us to prayer is a blessing.

We can never be too weak for God, but we can be too strong.

We can never be too poor for God, but we can be too rich.

We can never be too simple for God, but we can be too clever.

Leader's Message Guide & Answers

This Leader's Guide is prepared to help the Study Group Leader to keep the discussions moving along. Maybe your people will come up with different answers, or perhaps they will need a little prompting from you.

Remember, you want to encourage your people to fully participate. This is not a 'teaching session' by the Group Leader, but rather a discussion group. This may at first seem like a contradiction, but you will need for the Lord to give you wisdom to keep the discussions 'on track' while also allowing the Holy Spirit to direct your path.

Leader's Message Guide & Answers

Strength In Weakness

Part 1 – Comforted To Be A Comforter

2 Corinthians 1:3 - 11

1. Paul did not write his letters for a particular reason; rather he was responding to questions about false teaching or poor behaviour as two examples.

There is a **spinal chord** that runs through each letter, and out of that flows various secondary issues all related to the main theme.

2. The First letter to the Corinthians is about the church being *instructed* and *corrected*.
3. The Second letter to the Corinthians is about Paul himself being *disciplined* and *matured*.

4. Paul had come under personal attack from some Christians who challenged his authority, suspected his motives and they questioned the validity of his ministry.

5. In Corinth, at the time, the prevailing Greek culture demanded that to be a success
 - You had to excel as an athlete, an orator, a soldier or an actor.
 - You had to project a high-powered image of confidence, eloquence, achievement and success.

Paul projected none of these qualities, and his message was one of acknowledging that we need to be weak for the Lord's strength to be manifested in us. We need to acknowledge our complete dependence upon the Lord rather than trust in our own abilities.

6. 'The Spirit of the age' had come into the Corinthian Church.
Does any of this sound familiar today?

7. We gravitate towards 'idols' and celebrities; people who project strength and confidence; people who interestingly charge large fees for their personal appearances. It would be inappropriate to 'name names' but can you think of any secular or church people who receive such adulation?

See how Paul contrasts himself with such people in 2 Corinthians 11:7 - 9

8. So Paul courageously opened his heart, revealing in a very transparent way his many struggles, battles, hardships and the pain of God's dealing with his inner heart.
9. People wanted to hear positive things about promised health, wealth and status; but Paul spoke of troubles, sufferings, distress, hardships, pressure, despair, deadly peril, fights on the outside, and fears on the inside.
10. Some people have completely missed the mark in that the Christian life is not all about 'Me', but it is about allowing Christ to minister to others **through** us.

Leader's Message Guide & Answers

Strength In Weakness Part 2 – The Source Of Integrity 2 Corinthians 1:12 to 2:11

1. Paul is in trouble with some of the leaders of the church who have tried to expose Paul as not being a true apostle.
2. Because their expectations conformed to the values of the Greek culture they wanted leaders who were impressive, forceful, with strong personalities, whereas Paul was considered to be weak and unimpressive. Read 2 Corinthians 10:10
3. v.4 troubles v.5-7 sufferings v.6 distress & endurance v.8 hardships, pressure, & despair v.9 sentence of death v.10 deadly peril

Because Paul taught that the Christian life may involve all of these things, he was attacked and undermined in his absence. So Paul is writing somewhat on the defensive.

4. There were also more insidious attacks on his personal character, as they said he was dishonest and double-minded. He had failed to fulfill some promises to visit them, and although the reasons were circumstances beyond his control, they used this to add to their preconceived ideas about who Paul was and how he should act.
5. Paul responds by explaining the '**Grounds of His Integrity**'.
6. Paul states that his integrity is a consequence of his dependence on God, and that the moral qualities found in Paul derive from the moral qualities in God.

If they challenge Paul's motives and behaviour, then they are challenging God.

7. No – It is only when we live in an 'active relationship' with God that an honest life becomes inevitable. It is not a product of our own efforts, but the work of God's grace in us.
8.
 1. A good understanding of doctrine.
 2. A good understanding of ethics.
 3. The ability to discern truth/error.
 4. If you have been personally effected.

But while the above are all important and valid there is one other ingredient that far outweighs the others.

9. **Before you criticize anyone, whether sinner or saint, whether outside of Christ or in Christ – let your heart be broken in love for them first.**

10. We must remember that discipline and love must go together to become effective.
If it doesn't hurt you to discipline – it won't be effective.
Remedial punishment is only effective when it is done in love – not anger.

Leader's Message Guide & Answers

Strength In Weakness Part 3 – The New Covenant 2 Corinthians 3:6 - 18

1. In this study we shall be contrasting the Old Covenant with the New Covenant.
2. In verse 7 the Old Covenant was engraved in stone, and it was externally imposed.
In verse 8 the New Covenant was re-written on the human heart, and it was internally empowered.
3. So: Old Covenant on Stone **External** **Imposed** = Condemns
New Covenant on Heart **Internal** **Empowers** = Liberty
4. He wrote this letter to answer critics in the church who were claiming that his unpalatable message of Christians having to face troubles and distresses was evidence that he was not a genuine apostle of Jesus Christ.
5. It says here that the 10 Commandments 'brought death' yet 'came with glory'
6. We need to understand – why did God give the Law, a law that we cannot keep?
7. This leads us to 2 questions: 1. Why is the law of God what it is?
2. What is the glory of God?
8. These 10 Commandments are not an arbitrary set of rules, but they reveal the 'character' of God so that human beings, being made in His image, know what they are to be like. So the 'Glory of God' equals the 'Character of God'.

The Law reveals the Character of God.

So with this, perhaps new, understanding read again 2 Corinthians 3:7

9. It brought death because, simply put, no human being could possibly live up to it. Remember, this is 'external', it was written on stone; it could demand righteousness, but it could not accomplish righteousness. But what it did not was expose our unrighteousness.

*With the 10 Commandments God did not learn anything new about man –
but Man learned something new about himself.*

So to recap; the Old Covenant came with Glory because it expressed the moral character of God, but it brought death because what it demanded did not meet with a capability to obey. **So its result was condemnation.**

10. The Old Covenant exposed unrighteousness
The New Covenant brings righteousness.

The Old Covenant came with Glory [v.7]
The New Covenant *imparts Glory [v.18]*

11. Here is what you could call the 'punch line' **Go to Final Thoughts.**

Leader's Message Guide & Answers

Strength In Weakness

Part 4 – Everyone In Ministry

2 Corinthians 4:1 - 18

1. Many Christians feel intimidated at the thought of being 'called into ministry'. They think that it is for other people, whereas in fact all believers in Christ are in ministry [whether we like it or not]. The verse says 'because **WE** have this ministry', not 'because **I** have this ministry'.

2. There is a danger that we can become corrupted in ministry. We can take 'ownership' of it and it becomes 'my ministry'. Then it is used to further our own interests, and we give ourselves status.

There is evidence that some of Paul's antagonists [see previous study] were guilty of deception, distortion and manipulation. This is still happening today.

3. One deception is that we need an intermediary to get through to God. It is arrogance for anyone to suggest that their prayers are better than ours. Anyone who claims or implies that his or her prayers will be more effective is deceiving you.

There are many other deceptions at large today but it is not the purpose of this study to focus on them.

4. People have been blinded by the God of this age – most likely the devil himself.

This is a spiritual issue rather than an intellectual issue.

The message depends not on argument, but on Revelation.

Read again 1 Corinthians 2:14 - 15

5. Although we explain with intellectual vigor, we must always remember that we need 'revelation' [see verse 6] as the Holy Spirit alone is the one who reveals.

6. We possess this precious treasure in ourselves – frail human beings that we are. The modern equivalent to 'jars of clay or earthen vessels' would be cheap plastic bags. Imagine carrying jewels or banknotes around in a cheap plastic bag.

7. The treasure is that although, yes, we do live in a broken world, **WE** can be an exhibition of the Lord Jesus Christ.

8. It is our 'trouble' that keeps us dependent.

There is nothing thrown at us for which the resurrection life of Christ indwelling the believer is not adequate.

Leader's Message Guide & Answers

Strength In Weakness

Part 5 – Oriented To Eternity

2 Corinthians 4:13 – 5:10

1. You may well have already heard this quote from Benjamin Franklin in the 18th century; “In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.”

When you think about death, how does it make you feel?

2. In speaking of our earthly bodies, when Paul uses the word ‘tent’ he is evoking an image of something flimsy and temporary. But is that it! Are we just a combination of atoms, genes, chromosomes and DNA that are here today and gone tomorrow?

3. This verse suggests that there is something inside of us that knows there has to be more to life than what we can touch, see, feel, smell, taste and hear.

We have a sense of something bigger – of eternity.

4. **Hinduism** Believes in reincarnation. We come back in a different form dependent on the quality of life we have lived in this life.

Buddhism Teaches the idea that one life candle leads to another. It is the light that carries on, not the person.

Animism Looks to ancestors. Life is passed down genetically and spiritually through the generations.

5. Previously, when speaking about our bodies, Paul had spoken about a tent, but now he says ‘as a building from God, an eternal house in Heaven’. Gone is the flimsy, temporary tent, to be replaced by a ‘house’ – firm and stable – in fact, an ‘eternal house’.

6. This presents an interesting dilemma where, rather than instinctively cling to this life, Paul would rather be free of it in exchange for something far richer and better.

7. Well, when we talk about death it is usually with fear and foreboding, but when Paul talks about death he is fearless and positive.

8. The resurrection of Christ – an historical act in time and space - is a precedence of our resurrection. So Paul argues that our resurrection is based on the historicity of Christ’s resurrection, of which there is repeated testimony in Scripture.

This takes it out of the realm of wishful thinking or escapism, to a measure of certainty. Read Chapter 4 verse 14.

So. – we have **Confidence in the Future Based on Events of the Past**

9. We need to understand 2 things in the present tense. Death is already at work in us. Physical life is terminal.

However, there is something else going on at the same time.

10. We have the resurrection life of Christ which makes us the recipients of eternal life and **simultaneously co-exists with our human life – NOW!**

Read and consider the following scriptures: 2 Corinthians 4:3; 2 Corinthians 2:15;
1 Corinthians 1:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:10

All of these are in the present tense.

Thus, our **Confidence in the Future (is) Based on the Experience of the Present.**

Leader's Message Guide & Answers

Strength In Weakness

Part 6 – The Judgment Seat Of Christ 2 Corinthians 5: 6-15

1. In today's study we are going to look at **The Judgment Seat of Christ**.

There is probably no other verse in the bible that challenges us so much.
If it doesn't – it should!

2. The injustices of life on earth demand that there will come a day when right is vindicated and wrong is condemned. There is a judge to whom we are all accountable.
3. Even before they had been given the 10 Commandments peoples knew that murder, theft and adultery were wrong and destructive because the 'moral law' was written on their hearts. So the whole human race is judged by the moral law.

The 'moral law' is like the laws of nature; they are not created but are inherent within the human psyche/consciousness

4. The moral law inevitable leads to the Judgment Day. See 2 Corinthians 5:10

5. One is based on our **Position** before God.
The other is based on our **Condition** before God.

6. There are books with names in them.
This judgment will determine the **position** of each person before God.

7. The nature of the judgment will be in terms of our relationship to Christ.
There will only be 2 possible destinies; to be present with the Lord, or to be absent from the Lord forever shut out from His presence.

This judgment is based on our **Position** [relationship] **with Christ**.

8. From verse 10 we learn that the judgment based on our condition has four important aspects.

- i This judgment will be **Universal**
Read also Acts 10:42 and Romans 14:11 & 12
Whether we believe it or not...
Whether we like it or not
Whether we want it or not it will happen.

- ii This Judgment will be **Visible**
Read verse 10 and also 1 Corinthians 4:5
The whole truth will come out. Read Luke 8:17. All secrets will be laid bare.
This Judgment will be deeper than actions. It will be about motives and

intentions. Read Matthew 7:21 - 23

iii This Judgment will be **Individual**

Read Romans 14:12

We will stand completely responsible for ourselves.

There will be no blaming others.

iv This Judgment will be **Impartial**

Read again 2 Corinthians 5:10

There will be no favorites or specially privileged people,

9. Things that are held to have importance will not be worth very much on that day. Superficial surface things of our lives will not survive.

10. a. What **Assurances** can we have?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:8

Paul spoke with confidence, but what are the grounds for that confidence?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 – 19 and then verse 21

This alone is grounds for confidence; that because He was declared sin, we are declared righteous. Read 1 John 4:17

b. What **Expectations** can we have?

If we all receive different rewards will we all be happy in heaven?

To some degree this is a mystery; we will not be the same kind of people governed by the values of this world.

It has been suggested that our heavenly rewards will not be about levels of possession, but about levels of appreciation.

11. This should lead us to **action**.

The phrase 'to fear the Lord' means that we take God seriously, so ...

a. We persuade people.

b. We no longer live for ourselves, but for Him.

c. We are Christ's

If this does not affect how we live we surely have not grasped it.

If it does not drive us to be compassionate and caring and serving others – we have not grasped it.

Leader's Message Guide & Answers

Strength In Weakness

Part 7 – Daily Grace For The Daily Grind 2 Corinthians 6:3 - 10

1. This is a list of 'Troubles'
Without referring back to your Bibles see how many you can remember of the 'troubles' Paul mentions here.

Answers:

great endurance,	hardships,	distresses,	beatings,	imprisonments,
sleepless nights	riots,	hard work,	hunger,	regarded as imposters
dishonor,	dying,	beaten,	sorrowful,	regarded as unknown,
bad report,	poor,	having nothing.		

These are all specifically mentions in verses 4, 5 & 8

2. No matter how hard the 'daily grind' of life is, the Lord has provided us with more than enough grace to endure it and be victorious in it.

3. Work Family Health Finances

Relationships Temptations

4. 1. **Endure** them. 2. **Eliminate** them. 3. **Escape** them.

4. **Enjoy** them. 5. **Be Enriched** by them.

5. Paul says that we must 'endure', but not in a suffering way or a manner of 'just grin and bear it'.

Our endurance is not a passive endurance, but rather one that perseveres and pushes on through difficulties – without complaining.

6. Most of all we tend to ask God to: Stop it, Change it, Heal it. Improve it, Fix it. We frequently ask for a miracle, asking God to fix it quickly and fully.

We are seeking a fast, instant, immediate, easy and final way out of our dilemma.

Quick, easy answers are not always what is best for us.

And read and consider 1 Corinthians 1:22 – 23.

7. "Swing low sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home"

"The Gospel train is coming"

"There's a land that is fairer than day"

"In the sweet by and by, we shall meet on that beautiful shore."

This is a wonderful truth and hope, but it does make Christianity an escapism from the present.

This is why Karl Marx, the creator of communism, said that Christianity is the 'Opium of the People' in that it soothed their troubles, calmed their fears, and let them be content with the present instead of fighting for a better life now.

8. James tells us to respond to our troubles with joy. There is a testing, strengthening and developing that comes through trials and troubles - but we must open our eyes to that possibility.
9. This verse says that we should not consider troubles to be illegitimate intruders in your life. We should not fail to receive the resources of God Himself, for when we face these trials, difficulties and hardships, the resources to God's Grace are in God, not ourselves.

To us the problems of life can be overwhelming, but to God, His grace is ALWAYS sufficient.

10. Many of our trials are not sent deliberately to us; it is just how life is.
11. We cannot live off a stale experience of God. Verse 23 says 'they are new every morning', but that cannot be a reality in your life if you do not have daily communion with God.

8. Essentially Satan will do anything that is designed to destroy our dependence on God, and to destroy us.

Warning!

Although it is true Satan will seek to tempt us to sin, we must be careful of not always blaming Satan for our sin. Read and consider James 1:14 and 4:1.

If the Devil died tonight we would still sin tomorrow.

Our sin derives from our own corrupt nature - admittedly sometimes aided and abetted by Satan - but we are still responsible.

9. It is very important to note that Satan cannot act without permission. In the scriptures that you have just looked at

Job 1:12, Job 2:6	God set the boundaries on what Satan could do.
Luke 22:31	God allowed Satan's request to test Simon.
Matthew 4:1 – 3	It was the Holy Spirit who led Jesus out to be tested by Satan. This was initiated by God, not by Satan

10. God's purposes are always for His Glory and for Our Good.

In all the temptations God is accomplishing something.

Remember: Luke 4:14. When **Jesus** was tempted something went on in the temptation, and His resistance to it, that empowered Jesus – and He then began to show power.

Job 42:5 With **Job**, something had gone on through his temptation and attacks that gave him a new revelation of God.

Luke 22:31 We could argue for **Peter** that Satan sifting him, leading to his denial, was a breakthrough moment for him, making him who he was to become.

2 Corinthians 12:7 – 10 In **Paul's** case it was

⁷ To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ 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 about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.** ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. **For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

And that remains true for us all still today.

Leader's Message Guide & Answers

Strength In Weakness

Part 9 – A Thorn in the Flesh

2 Corinthians 12:7 – 10

1. Magazines that specialize in gossip about the rich and famous. Society seems to have an insatiable appetite to know the private details about the lives of the famous.

Why do we mention that here?

Well, Paul comes out into the open with a big struggle in his life that we would have not known about had he not been willing to share it with everyone.

2. The personal matter that Paul shares with us all is that he lives continually and constantly with a big personal struggle in his life.
3. Paul calls it 'a thorn in my flesh' and even more dramatically, 'a messenger of Satan to torment me'.
4. a. Is it to show us that he is **NORMAL** just like us?
b. Is it because it is **TRENDY** to expose all his troubles and faults?

Neither of those are Paul's reasons.

Paul wants to show us how **these threatening issues became an avenue for God to work in a new way in his life.**

5. Paul was in danger of becoming conceited. Why was this?

Well, Paul had received great revelations, and human nature being such as it is, Paul could have become conceited and taken credit for the fact that the revelations had come through him.

If this can happen to Paul it can happen to us too. Guard against that!

6. The 'thorn' was preventative in its purpose. There was no malice, no spite, no suffering for its own sake. It had a purpose – to keep Paul from becoming conceited.
7. Thorns are small, but they are painful; they irritate; if they are not dealt with they can fester, poison and swell.

Despite much speculation we don't know what Paul's 'thorn' was, and that is not important because what IS important is that we identify our own thorns – acknowledge their purpose, and deal with them appropriately.

8. The 'thorn' drove Paul to prayer.

Consider this: When all is well, our prayer life usually suffers.
When troubles hit, our prayer life usually deepens.

9. God declined to take the thorn away. Why? Because there was something else that Paul [and we] can only learn in this way.
10. The work of Satan can become a highway for God into your life. There can be things in our lives that have the fingerprint of Satan all over them, but they become the thing that humbles us, weakens us, and reduces us to a point of utter dependence on God.
11. It is so important that we **embrace the things that God allows into our lives as channels of His Grace.**