

## Psalm 77, II Corinthians 1-6 (#57) Revised 2023

**Psalm 77** — In the midst of national tragedy, Asaph remembers God's omnipotence. *Asaph describes his struggles to maintain his faith in God. How does he resolve this?*

**II Corinthians**— This book is the most personal letter of the apostle Paul and was written about 56 A.D. from Macedonia. The city of Corinth was famous for its sexual immorality (1000 temple prostitutes) and debauchery (drunken orgies), which affected the lives of members of the church. II Corinthians was Paul's fourth letter to this church (two have been lost), and touched on a lot of important themes necessary for the maturity of the church. After receiving good news from Titus that his third letter (severe and painful, 2:4) had resulted in the repentance of the members for their rebellion against him, Paul gave many words of comfort and direction to them. Some of the major themes of this book are; (1) the progressive transformation of the believer by the Spirit (Chapter 3), (2) the treasure of the gospel in jars of clay (Chapter 4), (3) the resurrection and judgment of believers (5:1-15), (4) the ministry of reconciliation given to believers (5:16-21), (5) defense of Paul's ministry (Chapters 6, 10-12), and (6) the collection for saints in Israel and motivation for giving (Chapters 8-9).

**II Corinthians 1**— Paul begins his letter, after his usual greetings, by speaking of the comfort he had received from the Lord during his extreme trials and suffering. In a very personal and transparent way, his desire was to pass along to them this overflowing comfort that he had experienced at a time when he suffered so much adversity that he expected to die. The lesson learned from this trial was to stop trusting in ourselves, but to trust only in God, who raises the dead (vv. 1-11). Paul was accused by some that he didn't come to Corinth when he said he would because he was afraid to face them or at best was not straightforward with his words or promises. Paul said that the real reason for not coming in person was to spare them a severe rebuke. He did not want to come as a domineering dictator, but a compassionate partner, since ultimately it was their own faith that would cause them to stand firm, not his faith (vv. 12-24). *This chapter speaks about the suffering and trials we experience as Christians. What are the byproducts of our trials and suffering? 1. Verses 4-7. 2. James 1:2-4 3. Romans 5:3-5.*

**II Corinthians 2**— Paul made it clear that the reason he delayed his visit was because he did not want another painful encounter. He felt that the severe letter was better than a distressing visit even though the letter's contents gave great anguish and tears to both he and the church. His purpose was not to hurt them, but he wanted to express his love for them (vv. 1-4). Now Paul urges the one disciplined by the church to be forgiven and comforted. The person disciplined most likely was the person who sinned in I Corinthians 5:1-5 or possibly the one who was leading the opposition against Paul (vv. 5-13). God put Paul on display to the world as he preached the gospel and spread the aroma of the knowledge of Christ in every place (vv.14-17). *1. Paul said that we must not be ignorant of Satan's schemes (v. 11). What were the two extremes that Satan would want us to take in the area of church discipline? 2. Explain the meaning behind the imagery Paul gave of the Roman triumphal procession (vv. 14-16).*

**II Corinthians 3**— Paul said he did not need to give letters of recommendation to them since they themselves are his recommendation letter that was read by everyone. This letter was not written with ink, but by the Spirit of God in their hearts which was evidenced by their changed lives. Paul declares that in himself he is not competent to do any type of spiritual work, but that his competency comes through the Spirit that produces life, not the letter of the law that only produces death (vv. 1-6). Paul then contrasts the Old and New Covenants where the Old was glorious in its inauguration when Moses brought the written law down from Mount Sinai, and his face shown with the glory of God even though this glory was fading away. The New Covenant that brought life, not condemnation, was more glorious because it remains forever, and produces righteousness and an ever increasing glory (vv. 7-11). Just like Moses had a veil over his face, the Jews who do not believe have a veil over their hearts when they hear the words of Moses read in the synagogue. The veil is only removed when they believe in Christ and receive the freedom that only the Spirit of the Lord gives. As a believer, without a veil covering his face, beholds the glory of the Lord, he is progressively transformed into the very image of Christ by the Spirit of God (vv. 12-18). *1. Explain the phrase, "The letter kills, but the Spirit produces life" (v. 6b). 2. What activities are necessary in the life of the believer to be progressively transformed into the likeness of Christ?*

**II Corinthians 4**— The ministry of the Spirit that God had given Paul was not one of deceit or a distortion of the truth, but the preaching of the truth with a clear conscience. The god of this world has veiled the minds of the unbelievers so that they are unable to see and understand the Gospel. Paul did not want to make anything great of himself, but instead he looked at himself as a slave and a clay jar. To him, the real important one was Jesus Christ, who is God's light that shines into our hearts, and God's power that transforms our lives (vv. 1-7). Though Paul was pressured, perplexed, and persecuted, he was never abandoned or destroyed. In fact, the more he suffered and was facing the danger of death, the more the spiritual life of Christ was produced in others. He had confidence that just as Jesus was raised from the dead, sometime in the future, the believers in the church of Corinth and Paul would also be resurrected together and would be in the very presence of God. Paul never gave up trying to reach more and more people so that God would receive more and more glory. Though the momentary light affliction may come, we focus by faith on the unseen realities of the eternal. *After reading this chapter, what actions and attitudes did Paul have where he showed himself to be a true servant of Jesus Christ?*

**II Corinthians 5**— Paul speaks of four great motivations for Christians to live a life that pleases the Lord (v. 9). First, the presence of the Spirit in us is a guarantee that even though our temporary earthly tent is destroyed, we will have a new eternal resurrected body (vv. 1-8). Secondly, every believer will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give account of the deeds done in his or her body, whether good or worthless (v. 10). A third motivation is the fear of the Lord. This is a reverential obedience to the Lord, knowing who He is, and the worship and honor that He deserves (v. 11). In the fourth place, it is the love of Christ that compels us. It is what He has done for us in saving us that spurs us on to fully devote ourselves to Him (vv. 14-15). Because of all of this, we are new creatures in Christ and ambassadors with a message of reconciliation. *1. Verse 10 says that one day you will stand before Christ to be judged by Him as to how you lived your life after becoming a believer. Do a realistic inventory of your Christian life up to now (from day of your salvation up to today). What would Christ say about your life and your obedience to Him? This question is personal. 2. Illustrate and explain the great exchange that is described in verse 21.*

**II Corinthians 6**— Paul was concerned that after all the time he spent with the church at Corinth, still many of them were rejecting God’s grace and were deceived by the gospel of works preached by the false teachers that had come to them. Paul declared that he was a servant of God and had put no obstacle in their path to keep them from believing and following the truth. In every way he had suffered and endured for their sakes. He had lived a life of purity, patience, and love as a true minister of Christ. As a faithful apostle, he expected to be rejected and accepted, hated and loved, and honored and despised (vv. 1-13). Finally, since we are the temple of the living God, we must not be in partnership with the ungodly influences of the world and Satan, but be wholly devoted to Christ. *Verses 14 to 18 teaches that believers are to be separated from non-believers and ungodly influences. Explain what this means and does not mean.*

Sources for summary and questions: 1. Serendipity Bible for Groups . c. 1988 Littleton, CO. 2. MacArthur Study Bible ESV, c. 1997 Thomas Nelson, Inc. 3. Life Application Bible HCSB c. 1988 Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 4. The Complete Bible Companion c.2014 Barbour Publishing, Inc. Uhrichsville, OH. 5. ESV Study Bible c. 2008 Crossway Bibles, Wheaton, IL. 6. The World Bible Handbook, Lawrence Richards, Word Inc. Waco, TX. 7. The Quest Study Bible NIV, c. 1994 Zondervan Publishing & Christianity Today, Grand Rapids, MI & Wheaton, IL. 8. The Transformation Study Bible, c. 2009, David C. Cook. 9. Halley’s Bible Handbook, c. 2000, Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI. 10. 500 Questions & Answers from the Bible, c. 2006- Barbour Publishing, Uhrichsville, OH. 11. Understanding the Bible c. 2000, Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN. 12. Homan Bible Handbook, c. 1992- Homan Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN. 13. Moody Bible Commentary, c. 2014, Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL.

### **Psalm 78:1-36, II Corinthians 7-12 (#58) Revised 2023**

**Psalm 78** — This is a psalm about God’s glorious deeds, both great in His deliverance from bondage, and terrifying in His discipline of sin. *In what ways does God provide for the needs of His people?*

**II Corinthians 7**— Verse 1 refers back to the previous 5 verses (6:14-18) and encourages believers to make a clean break with all kinds of sins of the flesh and of the spirit, with our eyes set on becoming progressively more like Christ. Paul was filled with apprehension after sending Titus with the “severe letter” to the church of Corinth and not knowing the reaction they might have to it. After searching for Titus and finally finding him in Macedonia, Paul felt great relief when he heard of their grieving for the wrongs they had done. Their grieving brought them to genuine godly repentance. He rejoiced in the way the Corinthian church showed obedience, love, and loyalty to him. *1. What is required to bring “holiness to completion” in the life of a Christian (v. 1)? 2. Give a comparison between the lives of Peter (who denied Jesus) and Judas (who betrayed Jesus) regarding godly grief and worldly grief. See verse 10.*

**II Corinthians 8**— Paul speaks of the grace of God that was displayed by the churches of Macedonia who financially gave in their deep poverty beyond their ability, in order to send money to the believers in Jerusalem who were in greater poverty because of famine. He urges the church at Corinth to excel in this grace and to fulfill their promise to prepare a generous gift which will test the genuineness of their love. Paul said that the goal of the church is equality so that members will share material resources with other members in order that the needs of each will be met (vv. 1-15). He then explains that he is sending other brothers with Titus to collect the offering in order to avoid criticism on the way the funds are being administered (vv. 16-24). *1. In what way was Christ an example of giving in this chapter? 2. How does the way Paul showed fiscal integrity speak to us today? What safeguards do churches and Christian ministries need to take to show the same integrity?*

**II Corinthians 9**— Paul bragged on the church of Corinth to the churches of Macedonia on their desire to give of their resources to the impoverished believers of the church of Jerusalem. He sent Titus and other men ahead of him to make sure that the church was prepared to give the generous gift they had promised, but at the same time he didn't want them to feel they were being forced to give (vv. 1-5). Whether we reap sparingly or generously will depend how much we sow. The important thing is that each person decides in his heart how much to give and then do it cheerfully, not feeling under pressure (vv. 6-9). The benefits of giving were that thanksgiving went to God, and that the whole church was unified because of the generosity of the Gentile church (10-15). *Read verses 6 to 9 and Luke 6:38. What words describe how a Christian should give? What is God's promise if we give this way?*

**II Corinthians 10**— Starting with chapter 10, Paul begins to defend his apostolic authority showing that he appeals to the church at Corinth by the gentleness of Christ, and not using forceful and demanding methods like the false teachers that had come into their assembly. Though he lived in the body, he did not use worldly means of manipulation to produce godly results. On the contrary, he used spiritual weapons to destroy the evil strongholds of the mind and cause every thought to be taken captive to obey Christ (vv. 1-6). The authority God gave to Paul was for the building up of the church. He was not being two-faced by appearing to be a different person when he was writing them than he was when he was present with them (vv. 7-11). We should never get into the comparison game. These false teachers tried to compare themselves with others using external measurements, but God's mark of a successful ministry is the inward transformation that only the Spirit of God can produce in the heart. This is what the power of Christ accomplished in the believers of Corinth through Paul's ministry. Ultimately, our only boast is in the Lord, and only He can give to us true commendation and approval (vv. 12-17). *What are the weapons of our warfare that demolish the strongholds of the enemy? See verse 4.*

**II Corinthians 11**— Paul had a fatherly concern that he would be able to present the church of Corinth as pure virgin to Christ. As the serpent had deceived Eve, he was afraid that these false teachers had seduced these believers from a pure devotion to Christ. Because of his pastoral love and tenderness for this flock, he had to forcefully defend his apostolic calling against the abuse and accusations of the false apostles. First, he indicated that he had nothing but pure motives in planting the church which was manifested by the fact he did it free of charge to them. He labored with his own hands as a tentmaker (Acts 18:1-3) and received gifts from other churches to evangelize them. The false apostles that came into the church were peddlers of God’s Word (2:17), deceitful workers, disguising themselves as angels of light just as Satan had done. Paul then indicated that the sign of a true apostle of Christ is suffering. He then began to “talk like a fool” and chronicle his credentials and experiences of suffering including the daily pressure because of his care for all the churches (vv. 21-28). Another sign of a true apostle was a willingness to show weakness (vv. 29-33). *What were the practices mentioned by Paul in this chapter of these deceitful workers who masqueraded as apostles of Christ?*

**II Corinthians 12**— Paul continues to give his qualifications as an apostle. First, he speaks of visions and revelations and describes a time when he was caught up into the third heaven and heard things so astounding that no human being can tell them. He then speaks of his “thorn in the flesh” that a messenger of Satan sent to keep him from pride. He also reminds them of the other signs of an apostle he did among them which were wonders and miracles. Paul reminded them that he never burdened them with his financial needs, but only sought what was good for them and their building up. His one concern was that when he arrives he might still find them quarreling, jealous, selfish, arrogant, and unrepentant of their sexual immorality and promiscuity. *What lessons did God teach Paul by allowing him to have this “thorn in the flesh?”*

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## Psalm 78:37-72, II Corinthians 13, Philemon, II Samuel 1-4 (#59) Revised 2023

**Psalm 78:37-72**— This is a psalm about God’s glorious deeds, both great in His deliverance from bondage, and terrifying in His discipline of sin. What is one of the reasons why David was such a good king? See verses 70-72.

**II Corinthians 13**— Paul tells the church that this will be the third time he is coming to them and will deal with the sin in the church if they haven’t already dealt with it by the time he arrives. Those in the church that don’t believe that Paul had Christ’s authority are warned that when he arrives in Corinth, God’s power will be with him to discipline them. They must test themselves to see if their faith was genuine, but should recognize that he has not failed the test of his apostolic authority, and will make a show of Christ’s power if it is necessary. Paul closes his letter with his final greetings encouraging the church to grow in maturity, comfort one another, and live in unity and peace. *1. Paul said, “Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine (NLT).” What evidences are there that we really are born again and a member of God’s family? See Romans 8:9,16; I John 3:14; I John 2:29, 3:9; and I John 5:4. 2. What major doctrine of scripture is found in verse 14?*

**Philemon**— This personal letter was written by the Apostle Paul to Philemon in about 60 A.D., while he was in house arrest awaiting a trial before Caesar in Rome. Philemon was a wealthy Christian businessman in Colossae who hosted a church in his home. His slave Onesimus ran away to Rome where he came into contact with the apostle Paul and was soundly converted to Christ. Paul then sent Onesimus back to Philemon in Colossae with this letter asking him to forgive Onesimus and also be willing to call him his brother in the Christ. Paul also personally guaranteed payment for anything he might have stolen or wrongs he committed. *After reading this chapter, what are the steps that Paul took in order to appeal to Philemon and rebuild his trust in his runaway slave Onesimus?*



**II Samuel**— The book of II Samuel contains the history of King David just after Saul’s death and ends toward the close of David’s life. The time of David’s reign and that of his son Solomon is the very zenith of Israel’s history and will never become more prominent or powerful until the future reign of David’s greater son, Jesus the Messiah. The key text is II Samuel 7:16, “Your house and kingdom will endure before Me forever, and your throne will be established forever.” This book shows God’s grace in choosing David, His love in promising him an everlasting covenant, and His mercy and forgiveness when David commits adultery and murder.

**II Samuel 1**— This chapter is the description of the death of Saul as told to David by an Amalekite who claims to have been with Saul in the final moments of his life, and at Saul’s request, finished killing him. David and his men mourn, and fast for those who died, and slay the Amalekite for killing the Lord’s anointed. David then writes a lament for Saul and Jonathan remembering how the mighty have fallen. *What did David mean and not mean when he said that his love for Jonathan was more wonderful than the love he would have for a woman? See verse 26.*

**II Samuel 2**— After Saul’s death, David first goes to Hebron with his wives and troops and is anointed king over the house of Judah. The men of Jabesh-gilead are blessed by David for honorably burying the remains of Saul (vv. 1-7). Abner, the commander of Saul’s army, installs Saul’s son Ish-bosheth as King of Israel. As time passes, David grows stronger while his rival becomes weaker. Abner’s army and Joab’s army fight each other, and finally Israel is defeated by Joab and David’s soldiers. Abner then decides to deliver Israel over to David in order to form a united Israel (vv. 8-32). *Before going to Hebron to be anointed king, what was the first thing David did? How important is this in making decisions in our lives? Extra Question: What types of persons were Abner and Ish-Bosheth? See also 3:6-11.*

**II Samuel 3**— After seven years in Hebron, David’s kingdom finally extends to all of Israel. Abner, the commander of Saul’s army, is angry with Ish-bosheth for accusing him of disloyalty, and so he determines to turn all of Israel over to David. Upon Abner’s return of David’s wife Michal to him, David makes a covenant of peace with him. After Abner left David, Joab returns with his men from battle and is furious that David made a pact with Abner. Because of the blood feud with Abner due to his brother’s death, Joab plots the assassination of Abner without David’s knowledge. David disassociates himself with Abner’s murder and calls for a national day of mourning. *Why did David allow Joab’s murder of Abner go unpunished?*

**II Samuel 4**— Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, is murdered by two of the captains of his army, Rechab and Baanah, in his own bed while he was taking a nap. Thinking they would be rewarded by David, they are instead executed for the murder of their master. *Why did David react the way he did?*

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