

November 23, 2025

God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing

The Book of 2 Corinthians – Part 10

Closing Words – People Get Ready

Grace-Fueled Transformation

Today we continue on our multi-year journey through the New Testament where we are seeking to understand the historical, chronological & missiological of the 1st Century Church so that we in the 21st Century Church can keep the “CHURCH ALIVE & GROWING”. Paul wrote **the letter we know of as 2 Corinthians** about 1 year after he had sent them 1st Corinthians.

Approximately 55/56 BC. In this letter Paul has been addressing various issues that will help them to fulfill their ... **Call to be Ambassadors of Christ and be active in a Ministry of Comfort & Reconciliation.**

It is important as we come to the last section of this Letter to slow down and consider carefully Paul's Closing Words. This ending gives some final warnings and final instructions for the recipients of the original letter, but also for us today. “Paul has written this letter to the Corinthians to spiritually build them up before he arrives. He wants them to make changes in their lives by looking at how Paul has treated them and model a life in Christ. One of the primary messages of this book is that we are made perfect and complete through our weaknesses, sufferings, trials, and difficulties. Paul opened this letter by reminding the Christians that the God we serve is the God of comfort. God is the God of all comfort, who comforts us in our afflictions (1:4). Further, all of God's promises find their fulfillment (their “yes”) in Christ (1:20). So, we find our life and hope in

Christ even though we are led in a triumphal procession, spreading the aroma of Christ (2:14-16). We are beholding the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image (3:18). We are clay jars, but we possess the treasure of the gospel which we share with others (4:7). We know that our earthly tent, this body, is being destroyed as we sacrifice it for the Lord. But we know that we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (5:1). We are AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST, imploring people to be reconciled to God (5:20). We give of our possessions and wealth because we know that God gave us our blessings for the work in his kingdom (chapters 8-9). So though people criticize the suffering and trials experienced for Christ's sake (chapters 10-12), we know that this is what we were called to be as servants of Jesus. This is what it looks like to be a disciple of Jesus. This is what it means for us if we are going to call ourselves Christians. With these images firmly placed in the minds of the Corinthians, the call for this final section as Paul closes the letter is for Christians to examine themselves”.

<https://westpalmbeachchurchofchrist.com/new-testament/2-corinthians/examine-yourself.html>

Today's message is entitled People Get Ready. It is a call to Spiritual Readiness and Self-Examination. Paul shows the need of **GRACE-FUELED HUMILITY** (last message) to set the stage to bring about... **GRACE-FUELED TRANSFORMATION.**

In 2 Corinthians 12 and 13, Paul is sounding a theological trumpet. He's calling the church to **GET READY**— not just for Paul's 3rd Visit to them but to **GET READY TO BE TRANSFORMED,**

1. Get Ready by Embracing Weakness & Pain (12:1–10)

In my last message on Nov. 9th, I alluded to a vision or a supernatural experience where Paul was taken up into heaven and heard from Jesus great and inexpressible words. He had every right, humanly speaking to boast about this experience that no one else had ever had. But he didn't. Listen to [verses 7-10](#).

⁷ Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! ⁸ Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. ⁹ And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰ Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Key Verse: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (12:9)

- Paul shares his “*thorn in the flesh*”—a reminder that spiritual strength doesn't come from self-sufficiency but from surrender.
- Readiness begins not with boasting in our gifts but boasting in our **dependence on Christ**.

- **Ask yourselves:** What weakness are you trying to hide that God wants to use? Readiness means letting grace shine through the cracks.

Consider this ...Pain happens. Pain has a purpose. Pain has power.

Illustration: The beauty of a single pearl, or a string of the precious stones, is unmistakable. Few Jewels capture the eye quite like a perfect pearl. Know how the pearl came to be? In the beginning, it's only a grain of sand. That tiny little irritant slips inside the tight seal of an oyster's shell and immediately causes discomfort. With no way to expel the grain of sand, with no way to ease the pain, the oyster coats the sand with a layer of the inner lining of its shell to make the sand smooth. This still does not ease the oyster's suffering. Again, and again the oyster coats the sand, but all the attempts to get rid of the irritant have little effect. As far as an oyster is concerned, what we call a "pearl" is nothing more than great suffering. But one day the oyster is fished from the water and opened. The gem inside has amazing beauty and holds great value – all because the oyster went through great suffering.

2. Get Ready by Walking in Integrity (12:11–21)

Authentic ministry is marked by endurance, humility, and sacrificial love. Paul reminds the Corinthians that his apostleship was authenticated not by charisma or status, but by perseverance and the power of God. He had performed miracles, but more importantly, he had endured with patience.

Listen to these verses 14-18...¹⁴ *Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.* ¹⁵ *I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls.* *If I love you more, am I to be loved less?* ¹⁶ *But be that as it may, I did not burden you myself; nevertheless, crafty fellow that I am, I took you in by deceit.* ¹⁷ *Certainly I have not taken advantage of you through any of those whom I have sent to you, have I?* ¹⁸ *I urged Titus to go, and I sent the brother with him. Titus did not take any advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same steps?* ¹⁹ *Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? Actually, we have been speaking to God as followers of Christ.* *Everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening.*

Note the underlined verses 15 & 19.

Paul is preparing for a third visit, not to take from them, but to give. He's not after their money—he's after their hearts. His love is not transactional.

Paul defends his ministry not with credentials, but with character. He's not manipulating the church—he's serving them. He fears that when he visits, he'll find quarreling, jealousy, impurity—signs of a church unready for Christ's presence.

Illustration: Like a parent who works two jobs to provide for their children, Paul is willing to be poured out for their spiritual good.

Note These Things: Ministry is costly.

Are we willing to be spent, give of ourselves for others, even when it's not reciprocated? True love gives without demanding return.

Are we living in a way that strengthens others or stumbles them? Readiness means aligning our private lives with our public witness.

How do we measure spiritual leadership today? Are we drawn to flash or faithfulness? Faithfulness is not always flashy. Are we measuring ministry by endurance and fruit, or by popularity and applause?

3. **Get Ready by Examining Yourself (13:1–10)**

1 This is the third time I am coming to you. Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. ² I gave a warning when I was present the second time, and now I give a warning while I am absent to those who sinned before and to all the rest: If I come again, I will not be lenient, ³ since you seek proof of Christ speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but powerful among you. ⁴ For he was crucified in weakness, but he lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by God's power. ⁵ Examine and test yourselves to see if you are (READY) in the faith. Examine yourselves. Or do you yourselves not recognize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless you fail the test. ⁶ And I hope you will recognize that we ourselves do not fail the test. ⁷ But we pray to God that you do nothing wrong—not that we may appear to pass the test, but that you may do what is right, even though we may appear to fail. ⁸ For we can't do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. ⁹ We rejoice when we are weak and you are strong. We also pray that you become fully mature. ¹⁰ This is why I am writing these things while absent, so that when I am there I may not have to deal harshly with you, in keeping with the authority the Lord gave me for building up and not for tearing down.

Key Verse: . ⁵ *Examine and test yourselves to see if you are (READY) in the faith. Examine yourselves. Or do you yourselves not recognize that Jesus Christ is in you?—*

Paul is giving them a ‘Heads Up’ that he is coming, not to justify HIS CREDENTIALS and INTEGRITY, but to cause them to question and examine their own hearts.

This Self-examination isn't about condemnation—it's about confirmation. Self-examination is essential for spiritual health. Christ is in you... unless He's not.

Paul, as a Spiritual Father and Model of Integrity must confront their failures and sin. Paul's desire is not to tear down—it's to build up. He urges them to test themselves, not others. He calls on them to show their integrity and genuineness through presence (of Christ's Heart) not performance. Like a Good Doctor, Paul's rebuke is surgical, not punitive.

CONSIDER THIS: Before we critique others, we must examine our own hearts. Are we walking in the faith?

Is Christ truly in us. How do we practice healthy self-examination without falling into self-condemnation?

When was the last time you asked, “Lord, search me”? Readiness means repentance, not just reassurance.

4. **Get Ready by Living in Grace (13:11–14)**

¹¹ Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice. Become mature, be encouraged, be of the same mind, be at peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints send you greetings. ¹³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Paul closes this with a Challenge and a Blessing. The intent seems to be that Paul is linking together rejoicing, maturity, unity (same mind) with the love and peace of God. Paul ends not with a scolding, but with a blessing. *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”* (v.14)

This Trinitarian benediction is a beautiful summary of the Christian life: grace, love, and fellowship. It is like a family hug after a hard conversation—truth has been spoken, but love holds them together. In all our relationships—church, family, friendships—let grace, love, and fellowship be the final word. Readiness means walking in the rhythm of grace with others.

Paul’s final words to the Corinthians are not just for them—they’re for us. We are called to be people Ready to Serve, Ready to Love: Readiness isn’t just about avoiding sin—it’s about embracing **community, unity, and joy**.

“People get ready... “Paul’s final words aren’t a threat—they’re a **plea**. A plea to be found faithful. A plea to be made whole. A plea to live in the power of Christ, not the performance of self. **A Plea to Get Ready & Stay Ready**
To:

- Serve with patience and integrity.
- Love sacrificially, even when misunderstood.
- Examine yourselves honestly and humbly.
- Live in the grace of Christ, the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Spirit.

Invitation

(Note: Some material adapted from Co-Pilot)

The entire scripture section follows on the next pages:

2 Corinthians 12:1-21... ¹ *Boasting is necessary. It is not profitable, but I will move on to visions and revelations of the Lord.* ² *I know a man in Christ who was caught up to the third heaven fourteen years ago. Whether he was in the body or out of the body, I don't know; God knows.* ³ *I know that this man—whether in the body or out of the body I don't know; God knows—* ⁴ *was caught up into paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a human being is not allowed to speak.* ⁵ *I will boast about this person, but not about myself, except of my weaknesses.* ⁶ *For if I want to boast, I wouldn't be a fool, because I would be telling the truth. But I will spare you, so that no one can credit me with something beyond what he sees in me or hears from me,* ⁷ *especially because of the extraordinary revelations. Therefore, so that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to torment me so that I would not exalt myself.* ⁸ *Concerning this, I pleaded with the Lord three times that it would leave me.* ⁹ *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness." Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may reside in me.* ¹⁰ *So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and in difficulties, for the sake of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.* ¹¹ *I have been a fool; you forced it on me. You ought to have commended me, since I am not in any way inferior to those "super-apostles," even though I am nothing.* ¹² *The signs of an apostle were performed with unfailing endurance among you, including signs and wonders and miracles.* ¹³ *So in what way are you worse off than the other churches, except that I personally did not burden you? Forgive me for this wrong!* ¹⁴ *Here for this third time I am READY to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you;*

for children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. ¹⁵ *I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less?* ¹⁶ *But be that as it may, I did not burden you myself; nevertheless, crafty fellow that I am, I took you in by deceit.* ¹⁷ *Certainly I have not taken advantage of you through any of those whom I have sent to you, have I?* ¹⁸ *I urged Titus to go, and I sent the brother with him. Titus did not take any advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same steps?* ¹⁹ *All this time you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you. Actually, it is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ; and all for your upbuilding, beloved.* ²⁰ *For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you not READY to be what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there will be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances* ²¹ *I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced.*

2 Corinthians 13:1-14... *This is the third time I am coming to you. EVERY FACT IS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES.* ² *I have previously said when present the second time, and though now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest as well, that if I come again I will not spare anyone,* ³ *since you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me, and who is not weak toward you, but mighty in*

you. ⁴ For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we will live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you. ⁵ Test yourselves to see if you are READY in the faith; EXAMINE YOURSELVES! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? ⁶ But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test. ⁷ Now we pray to God that you do no wrong; not that we ourselves may appear approved, but that you may do what is right, even though we may appear unapproved. ⁸ For we can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth. ⁹ For we rejoice when we ourselves are weak but you are strong; this we also pray for, that you be made complete. ¹⁰ For this reason I am writing these things while absent, so that when present I need not use severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for tearing down. ¹¹ Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹³ All the saints greet you. ¹⁴ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.