

# 2 Corinthians

God's Word to a  
????  
Church

## 2 Corinthians

Rebuke  
Appeal &  
Praise  
to a

**Maturing** Church

“Your **restoration** is what we pray for” (13:9b -- ESV)

“We pray for this: **your maturity**” (LEB)

“This we also pray for, that you become **mature**”

(NASB)



- 1. Some are still not saved.** Paul works up to a strong challenge for those not yet saved to be reconciled to God (5:10-21). All must stand before the judgment seat of Christ (5:10).
- 2. Some of those saved still needed strong warning and discipline.** Paul put off another “painful” (sorrowful) visit to “spare them” (1:23-24).
- 3. They failed to appreciate those who had labored for their spiritual good.** A main theme of 2 Cor. is Paul’s defense of his and his co-laborers’ ministry to them.

## Evidences of Immaturity



4. Some have a critical attitude toward those who labored most for their spiritual good. E.g., some said about Paul, *“his letters are strong but his bodily presence is weak [unimpressive—NASB] and his speech contemptible.”* (10:10).
5. They have an uncritical and undiscerning attitude toward false teachers: *“If someone proclaims another Jesus ... or another gospel you put up with it readily enough [tolerate very well!--NASB]”* (11:4).
6. A final exhortation (13:11) points to their need to reach a higher level of maturity (“be perfect” -- KJV; “aim for restoration” – ESV; “mend your ways” – NASB) the point is their “entire reformation so that there is no need for discipline” -- Barnes)

## Evidences of Immaturity

# Chronology

## (3) Visits

&

## (4) Letters

- **1<sup>st</sup> Visit to Corinth** – there for 1 ½ -2 years
- Paul writes a **lost letter** rebuking the incest and other sins allowed (1 Cor. 5:9-11). Also received news from Chloe’s household about divisions (1 Cor. 1:11) and information from the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (16:17).
- Paul writes **1st Corinthians**.
- Paul learns they have not improved and he makes a 2nd **[the “painful”] visit** (2:1, ... “I would not come to you in sorrow again”).
- To avoid another such painful/sorrowful visit Paul writes a strong **letter of rebuke** and correction. (2:1-4; 7:8-9; 10:9-10). Delivered by Titus?
- Paul writes **2 Corinthians** after meeting up with Titus who brings news of a good response.
- **3<sup>rd</sup> visit.** (see Acts 19:21-22 about visit to Achaia regarding the gift for Jerusalem saints)

# Paul's Methods of Dealing with an Immature Church

## Introductory Thoughts

1. This requires courage, for it can be an emotional and spiritual battle.
2. This requires deathly effort; it can be physically exhausting and dangerous. Also see next point. [4:12](#), *“So death is at work in us, but life in you.”*
3. This sometimes requires physical energy without sufficient rest. [7:5](#), *“For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within.”*

# Paul's Methods of Dealing with an Immature Church:

## Introductory Thoughts

4. This may put the missionary in the midst of “fightings” from opposers of the Gospel.  
*7:5, “we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.”*
5. Most of all it requires a genuine heart for the people, a “wide-open heart,” a heart that speaks the truth boldly and in love.  
*(2 Co 6:11, “We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open.”)*
6. This will produce fear in the best of spiritual leaders – 7:5, “we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, **within were fears.**”  
**Fear of what?**

## What might a missionary church-planter fear?

- Fear of people turning back to their old ways. *\*Few things deflate a missionary more than professing believers turning back.*
- Fear of people being led astray by false teachers.
- Fear of people rejecting one's biblical ministry for a watered down one.
- Fear of violent, "beastly" opposers of the Gospel. *1 Cor. 15:32, "I fought with beasts in Ephesus."*

Paul's Methods of  
Dealing with an  
Immature Church

**Introductory  
Thoughts**

1. As much as possible we should unite with the fellow believers (1:2-7; note especially vv. 6-7).

- Paul talks about his own suffering and hardship endured for the faith.
- Paul teaches that these trials and God's **comfort** are for all.
- The LORD is the “God of **all comfort**” for **all believers**.

**Lessons from Paul's Dealings  
with an Immature Church**



## 2. Paul stresses the value of mutual prayer to help believers through their own suffering (1:6-7; 1:11).

- In Asia Paul and his co-workers experienced a near-death persecution but God delivered through prayer and continues to do so.
- Paul desires the Corinthians to pray also for them.
- He does not belittle their prayers despite the sin and difficulties they have caused.

1:11, “*You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.*”

**Lessons from Paul’s Dealings  
with an Immature Church**



### 3. We should **boast** about the church and our mutual faith and future.

- 1:14, “just as you have also understood us in part, that we are your reason for **boasting**, just as you are also ours in the day of our Lord Jesus.”
- The expression implies that there was mutual confidence, mutual love, and mutual cause of rejoicing. It is well when ministers and people have such confidence in each other, and have occasion to regard their connection as a mutual cause of rejoicing and of boasting. (Barnes)
- Paul also refers to other churches as a reason for boasting in eternity. 1Th. 2:19, “For what is our hope or joy or crown of **boasting** before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?”

**Lessons from Paul's Dealings  
with an Immature Church**



4. We should have transparent honesty and boldness about both **concern for them** and **gratitude for their good responses**. Paul did not shrink from sharing his heart (7:1-7; *note especially v. 7*).
5. We should use the good example of others to encourage and challenge the church to further growth in maturity (8:1; see also 7:4, 8:24, 9:2-4).

Note: Paul also praised the Corinthians for a good start on their offering and urged completion (8:6-7 – see next slide).

## Lessons from Paul's Dealings with an Immature Church



# Praise of and exhortation to the Corinthian church.

8:6 Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. 8:7 But **as you excel in everything**—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—**see that you excel in this act of grace also.**

**Lessons from Paul's Dealings  
with an Immature Church**



## 6. Paul made strong statements about his growing confidence in them.

2 Cor. 1:13b, ... *“that we are your boast as you also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.”*

2 Co 2:3, *“And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all.”*

7:4, *I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.”*

**Lessons from Paul's Dealings  
with an Immature Church**



6. Paul used examples and made strong statements about his growing confidence in them.

7:9, “Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that **your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing.** 10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. 11 For observe this very thing, that **you sorrowed in a godly manner:** What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! **In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.”**

**Lessons from Paul’s Dealings  
with an Immature Church**



6. (cont.) Paul made strong statements about his growing confidence in them.

7:14 For whatever **boasts I made to him about you**, I was not put to shame. But just as everything we said to you was true, so also **our boasting before Titus has proved true**. 15 And his affection for you is even greater, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling. 16 **I rejoice, because I have complete confidence in you.** (ESV) (“have confidence in you in all things” – KJV)

**Lessons from Paul's Dealings  
with an Immature Church**



**Paul's  
Benediction  
Shows How  
to Meld  
Rebuke and  
Grace**

*“The grace of the  
Lord Jesus Christ  
and the love of  
God and the  
fellowship of the  
Holy Spirit be with  
you all.”*

*-- 13:14*

- He uses “fullest benediction at the close of the severest letter.”
- “With you all.” The word “all” is here introduced with special tenderness and graciousness. Some have sinned before; some have not repented; yet he has for them all one prayer and one blessing.”  
(Pulpit)

As we work with the people in  
our church plants let us follow  
Paul's example of  
**great exertion,**  
**bold exhortation,**  
**expressed endearment.**