

The
New
Testament
in a Year

Week 22

2 Corinthians 10 – Galatians 1

*This week's reflector is
Kate Gregory.*

*She is the minister at the Belwood-
Metz Pastoral Charge.*

General Questions for Reflection

You might pick one part of each chapter and think about these questions.

- What does this tell me about God (including Jesus and the Holy Spirit)?
- What does this tell me about our world?
- What does it tell me about me?
- What does it say about following Jesus?
- Is there something here I'd like to learn more about?

Why not use these thoughts to shape your prayer today.

Thanks to Wellington Square UC for making this available.

Monday

2 Corinthians 10

In the 10th chapter of 2 Corinthians we find the apostle Paul defending himself against his critics in Corinth.

The letter tests the modern reader's powers of deduction. It is like overhearing one side of a telephone conversation, and trying to fill in what the absent person is saying.

What we can surmise is that these critics have attacked Paul's ability to speak, have called him a coward who does not have the courage to speak to them in person in the same strong way he writes. They attack even his looks, which is really "below the belt" and certainly has nothing to do with his message.

Paul does not respond with anger but instead with reason and gentleness. He is not afraid to challenge them, and he does so with tongue in cheek, telling them that anyone would look great if all they compare themselves to is themselves. Who we all have to compare ourselves to is Jesus, and that contest will always come out in His favour.

Tuesday

2 Corinthians 11

Others are teaching. Paul calls them super-apostles. They are skilled orators. Paul reluctantly tries to build himself up to convince the Corinthians to believe the stories of Jesus, not what the Jewish Rabbis are teaching.

Paul speaks of his disappointment with the Corinthian church, using the analogy of Christ as the groom and the church as the bride. Paul fears these superior preachers have seduced the people of Corinth so that they are no longer pure in their beliefs.

Paul defends his practice of not taking money for his teaching. At that time teachers were paid well. Paul's detractors say he takes no pay because his teaching is worthless. Paul did not charge them (though he did receive money from Christians in Philippi) because he wanted to be free to be blunt in pointing out the errant ways of his students. If he took money from them that would be more difficult to do.

Even today, ministers find it difficult to give a good stewardship sermon in the church that is paying them. There are congregations that don't take up the offering until after the sermon so that people can judge the amount of their gift by the value of the preaching!

Wednesday

2 Corinthians 12

Paul continues to make the case that he is a credible witness for Christ, and is to be believed over those other imposter-apostles. To do this, he says, he must boast, even though he does not want to.

In this chapter Paul tells, cryptically, of his own visions, in which he has been allowed to meet God and walk with God.

He also says that because he was given this gift, and because God did not want to give him any reason to be proud, God also afflicted him with a thorn—or a stake—in the flesh.

There has been much speculation about what that thorn or stake might have been. We know from his writings that whatever it was it was physical, intermittent, and terribly painful. He never says exactly what it was, for everyone to whom he wrote already knew.

This weakness, he contended, made him strong. His strength did not come from himself, but by the grace of God.

Thursday

2 Corinthians 13

Paul finishes his letter to the church in Corinth, looking forward to his third visit to them. He is done with his defense; now he just wants them to prosper in faith.

He writes to them to warn them that he is going to be stern with them, but he writes forcefully now so that they will be forewarned. He can never be so stern when he actually sees them face-to-face. He loves them. All of his defense has been made with one purpose: that they will be able to believe in Christ Jesus. That is all that Paul wants. You can see that he only wants the best for all of them.

In this final, short, chapter we find that blessing which we have so often heard even in our modern churches: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Friday

Galatians 1

Paul now writes to the churches of Galatia. Here, too, he has discovered that his new-found sheep have been straying, lured by false apostles and teachers. Paul launches straight in to prove his own authority as an apostle chosen not by men but by God directly.

The first 12 disciples were chosen by Jesus. When Judas left their band they then decided to choose one to replace him. To narrow the field they decided that the new disciples, now called apostles, had to have been with Jesus throughout the ministry, from Jesus' baptism to his ascension. So they chose Matthias.

Now, Paul did not fit into that category as long after the ascension he was working for the Roman government in persecuting the Christians. His last act in that capacity was to oversee the public stoning of Steven.

In this chapter Paul makes his case that he is an apostle not by the definition set by the first 12 apostles, but by God's own appointment. While he does this, he gives us some interesting facts about his own journeys, even before he began his teaching ministry.