

The background of the slide is a photograph of salt pans on a hillside. The pans are arranged in a grid-like pattern, with some filled with a yellowish liquid and others with white salt deposits. The surrounding landscape is dark and rocky.

1 Corinthians 13–16
2 Corinthians 1

B R C

Study the Bible and follow Jesus

NT #33 Bible Reading Class
Pastor: Wentang Wang

A Bible Reader's Conviction

- *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17, NIV)*

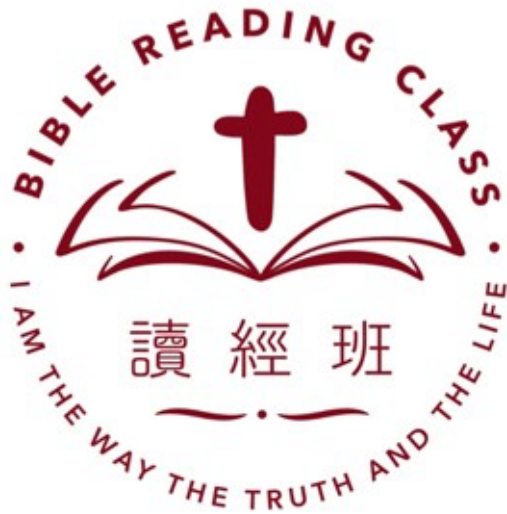
A Blessed Journey

1. May you study God's Word with a reverent heart and walk in His will.
2. May the Lord's Word flourish, and may He add to the church those who are being saved.
3. May the Lord bless your days of reading the Scriptures.

Study the Bible, follow Jesus

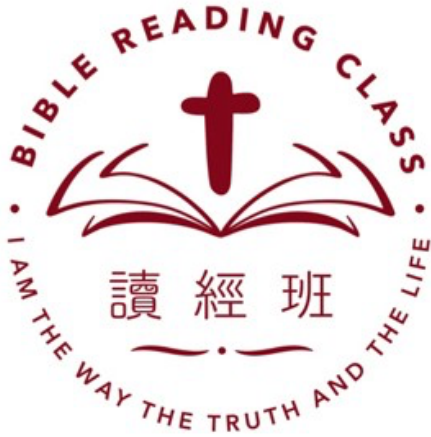


The Guiding Principles of BRC



- Christ-Centered
- Bible-Based
- Mission-Minded

BRC: A Gentleman's Agreement



I'll complete weekly reading assignment

I'll watch weekly teaching video in its entirety

I'll complete weekly quiz (closed book)

The Structure of the 27 Books of the New Testament

- The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) John
- The Fourfold Gospel, Acts, The Thirteen Pauline Epistles, The Other Nine Epistles (General Epistles and Others)
- Five Books of Historical Narrative, Twenty-Two Books of Doctrinal Teaching

Ranking of Gifts

• *God has appointed in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then those who perform miracles, then those who have gifts of healing, those who help others, those who administer, and those who speak in tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. And yet I will show you the most excellent way. (12:28–31, NIV)*

• *One body has many members, and each member has different gifts. Based on the principle of “for the common good” (12:7), that is, “to build up the church” (14:12), Paul ranked the eight gifts as follows:*

1. *Apostles*
2. *Prophets*
3. *Teachers*
4. *Workers of miracles*
5. *Gifts of healing*
6. *Helpers*
7. *Administrators*
8. *Speakers in tongues*

Ranking of Gifts

- At the top of this “gift list” are apostles, followed by prophets. Apostles proclaim “Jesus Christ and Him crucified,” and prophets proclaim the word of God. The church is **“built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20, NIV)**. Without the ministry of apostles and prophets, there would be no establishment of the church. These two gifts occupy the top positions because they truly deserve it.
 - Notice that in the gift list, the much-envied “speaking in tongues” is at the very bottom. Indeed, every time the Bible mentions gifts (Romans 12:6–8; 1 Corinthians 12:8–10, 28–30; 1 Peter 4:10–11), tongues (speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues) is either not mentioned at all or placed last. In God’s eyes, “tongues” contributes the least to the building up of the church. It cannot be compared with apostles and prophets, and it ranks far behind teachers, helpers, and administrators. In other words, if someone preaches or teaches God’s word, helps brothers and sisters, or manages church affairs well, their contribution far surpasses those who speak in tongues.
 - Paul says: **“Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.” (NIV)** Do not crave the small gift of tongues; desire the greater gifts that build up the church. However, whether small gifts or great gifts, there is “the most excellent way” that surpasses all gifts; without it, all gifts become useless.
-

Love, Chapter 13

- *What was the problem?*
 - *The Corinthians pursued spiritual gifts and tried hard to display themselves, yet they had no love for others.*
 - *“If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.” (13:1–3, NIV)*
-

Explanation of the Passage: “But Do Not Have Love”

- *“If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, **but do not have love**, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, **but do not have love**, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, **but do not have love**, I gain nothing.” (13:1–3, NIV)*
 - *The phenomenon of “tongues” has existed since ancient times, especially in pagan religions. Some mediums, when “possessed by spirits,” uttered unintelligible sounds, which were considered spiritually powerful and were highly regarded by their followers. Corinth was a city full of idols, and its citizens frequently encountered mediums and speaking in tongues. After they believed in the Lord, they brought their former concepts into the church. When they saw people speaking in tongues in the church, they were extremely excited and especially admired those who had the “gift of tongues,” causing confusion in the church.*
 - *Paul says: You value speaking in tongues so much, don’t you? Fine—suppose I can speak in the tongues of men, and even the tongues of angels, bringing the gift of tongues to its highest level; but without love, I am only a “dang, dang, dang” gong and a “clang, clang, clang” cymbal, producing nothing but noise.*
-

Explanation of the Passage: “But Do Not Have Love”

- *Some say, “What I value is not tongues, but prophecy.” Paul says: Even if I have the gift of prophecy, not only with unmatched eloquence, but also understanding all mysteries, knowing the meaning of the seven trumpets, the truth about the great red dragon, and calculating the day of Christ’s return. Not only that, I have even prayed with faith and cast a great mountain into the sea. Even if I can do all these things, but do not have love, I am nothing.*
 - *The Corinthians were spiritually immature and judged people by outward appearance. Paul says: You are wrong! Without love, even if a person brings all kinds of religious expressions to their highest level—even if he is a star, an influencer, or an important figure in your eyes—in God’s eyes he is nothing.*
 - *Some say, “To have love? Fine, I am very loving—I donate a lot of money to help the poor, and I am even willing to offer my own body to be burned.” Paul says: Even if you go to such an extent, but your motive is not love—if it is to gain praise from people, if it is for show—then what you do is in vain and brings no benefit to yourself.*
-

Explanation of the Passage: “But Do Not Have Love”

- *At some point, Christianity saw the rise of many tongues, many prophets, many mysteries, much knowledge, much charity, and much performance. The Corinthians say to the twenty-first-century church, “You’re just getting here? We’ve been here all along!” But do you know? Paul says that without love, none of this counts for anything.*
 - *To express the indispensability of love, Paul uses exaggerated language and extreme examples to highlight the importance of love. Whether tongues, prophecy, charity to the poor, or faith that moves mountains—without love, all become meaningless.*
-

Love, Chapter 13

- *Reasons for the problem*

1. **Selfishness:** *The Corinthians were very selfish. They boasted about their gifts and displayed themselves in order to gain people's praise. They thought only of themselves and not of the whole church, and they had no love for others. Paul says that love is the most beautiful way of life. All gifts, if not accompanied by love, are of no benefit. Without love, you are nothing. Without love, no matter how great your gifts are or how great the sacrifices you make, they still bring no benefit to you.*

- **“But do not have love, I am nothing.”**
 - **“But do not have love, I gain nothing.” (13:2–3, NIV)**
-

Love, Chapter 13

- *Reasons for the problem*

2. **Immaturity:** *The Corinthians were very immature; they were spiritual infants, and their thoughts and behavior were not mature. Paul says, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? (3:1, 3, NIV)*

Paul hoped they would grow up and put childish ways behind them:

- *“When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.” (13:11, NIV)*

Love, Chapter 13

- *Reasons for the problem*

3. **Ignorance**: *The Corinthians were very ignorant. They thought gifts were the most important, but they did not know that love is the most excellent way (the most beautiful way of life). They thought gifts were the most valuable, but they did not know that gifts are temporary, and only love endures.*

- *“But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away... And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” (13:8, 13, NIV)*

Love, Chapter 13

- *The solution*

- **Live out love**: *God is the source of love, and Christ is the model of love. We are God's children and disciples of Christ; love is in our hearts. Paul explains the true meaning of love and encourages the Corinthians to live out love:*

- ***“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” (13:4–7, NIV)***

Love, Chapter 13

- *Facing such perfect love, we all bow our heads in shame and say, “Lord, forgive me!” I am not patient enough, not kind enough. I cannot completely avoid envy, nor can I completely avoid boasting. I cannot fully achieve “**does not dishonor others**” (NIV) (the original meaning is “not making others lose face,” such as shaming others, belittling others, not treating others as human, hurting their dignity)...*
 - *Paul sets Christ’s love as the standard and places this lofty definition before the disciples, saying: Brothers, this is the love of the Lord Jesus; let us follow it!*
 - *I think that if all the teachings of the Lord Jesus were condensed into one word, it would be “love.” Fixing our eyes on Jesus, understanding the meaning of love, and constantly reminding ourselves to live it out—then as a Christian, I should not make major mistakes.*
 - *If I study doctrine and master the law but reject others and spread hatred, even if I raise my hands in worship and shout “Christ my Lord and King,” I am merely a Pharisee. If I speak in tongues and pursue charismatic gifts but do not have love, then it is simple—I am nothing more than a Corinthian!*
-

Prophecy Is Greater Than Speaking in Tongues, Chapter 14

- *What was the problem?*
 - *The Corinthians exalted the gift of speaking in tongues, knowing only how to edify themselves but not how to edify the church, resulting in confusion and disharmony in the church.*
 - *The one who speaks in tongues edifies himself; the one who prophesies edifies the church.*
 - *Likewise, since you are eager for spiritual gifts, seek to excel in those that build up the church.*
 - *In the church, I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue. (14:4, 12, 19, NIV)*
-

Prophecy Is Greater Than Speaking in Tongues

- *“Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit. But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort. Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but **the one who prophesies edifies the church**. I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified.” (14:1–5, NIV)*
 - *Prophecy means “forthtelling God’s truth,” not “foretelling what’s going to happen.” With this basic understanding, one can read this passage correctly.*
 - *The key issue is “building up the church.” What builds up the church? The understandable “prophesying,” or the unintelligible “speaking in tongues”? Paul makes this very clear!*
-

Prophecy Is Greater Than Speaking in Tongues

- Paul says, *“Eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.”* Why is prophecy more important than tongues? Because *“the one who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but the one who prophesies edifies the church.”* Isn’t that clear enough?
 - Paul was concerned that some might accuse him of jealousy—belittling tongues because he himself could not speak in tongues. So Paul continues:
 - *“Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction? Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the pipe or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker is a foreigner to me.”* (14:6–11, NIV)
-

Prophecy Is Greater Than Speaking in Tongues

- It turns out Paul could also speak in tongues! At this time Paul was in Ephesus and planned to go to Corinth later. He said, **“If I come to you and speak in tongues,” what would that accomplish?** What benefit would it be to you? Then he gives two vivid examples:

First, musical instruments: whether flute or harp, if the sounds are indistinct, how can anyone recognize the tune?

Second, the trumpet: if the trumpet does not sound a clear call—whether advance, retreat, or charge—what will the soldiers do?

Likewise, if your tongue does not speak “intelligible words,” how will anyone know what is being said? At this point, Paul’s meaning should be unmistakably clear. How can charismatic believers use 1 Corinthians 14 to promote speaking in tongues?

- Paul then states the most important sentence: **“So it is with you. Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church.”** (14:12, NIV)

- *Brothers and sisters, spiritual gifts are for building up the church, not for showing off. This is the central point of 1 Corinthians 14!*

Prophecy Is Greater Than Speaking in Tongues, Chapter 14

- *Reasons for the problem*

1. **Selfishness**: The Corinthians were selfish, knowing only how to edify themselves and not the church.

- *“Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies edifies the church.” (14:4, NIV)*

2. **Immaturity**: The Corinthians were immature, thinking they were adults when they were actually infants.

- *“Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.” (14:20, NIV)*

3. **Ignorance**: The Corinthians were ignorant, thinking they knew everything when they actually knew nothing.

- *“If anyone thinks they are a prophet or otherwise gifted by the Spirit, let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s command. But if anyone ignores this, they will themselves be ignored.” (14:37–38, NIV)*

Prophecy Is Greater Than Speaking in Tongues, Chapter 14

- *The solution*

- **Be adults in your thinking:**

- *“Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.” (14:20, NIV)*

The Logic of Adulthood

- *What adults understand: everything is for building up the church*

1. *The gift to be especially desired is prophecy. (14:1)*
 2. *The one who prophesies speaks to people for strengthening, encouraging, and comfort. (14:3)*
 3. *The one who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; the one who prophesies edifies the church. (14:4)*
 4. *Since you are eager for spiritual gifts, seek those that build up the church. (14:12)*
 5. *Stop thinking like children; be infants in evil, but adults in thinking. (14:20)*
 6. *If the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? (14:23, NIV)*
-

The Logic of Adulthood

- *The choice adults make: better to teach than to speak in tongues*
 - *“I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.” (14:18–19, NIV)*
-

The Quality of Community Life

• *Paul's words are understandable even to unbelievers. In simple terms, you must have the quality required for community life. In a community, you cannot think only of yourself and ignore others. Speaking loudly in a library—what kind of quality is that? Cutting in line—what kind of quality is that? Speaking in tongues in church (without interpretation)—what kind of quality is that?*

The Quality of Community Life

- *From the perspective of community life, there are three levels of mindset:*
 1. **High level: Doing good**—willing to restrain or even sacrifice oneself for the benefit of others.
 2. **Middle level: Neither good nor evil**—managing oneself, not sacrificing oneself but also not harming others.
 3. **Low level: Doing evil**—thinking only of oneself, not caring about others, even if it harms the whole.
-

What Does “Women Should Remain Silent in the Churches” Mean?

- *“Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.” (14:34–35, NIV)*
 - *This passage, difficult for modern women to accept, was spoken in an era of gender inequality two thousand years ago. Whether among Jews, Greeks, or Romans, women had low social status and few received education. Except for certain women of the streets, few women appeared in men’s gatherings. The church changed this phenomenon—Christian gatherings included both men and women. The gatherings in Corinth were chaotic; not only were some speaking in tongues, but some talkative women were chattering endlessly, disrupting the meeting. Paul forbade such women from speaking in the church.*
 - *Did Paul forbid women from preaching? In 11:5, Paul says, **“But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head.”** This shows Paul did not forbid women from preaching; he only required them to submit to authority.*
-

What Does “Women Should Remain Silent in the Churches” Mean?

- *Some believe these two verses were added later and were not part of Paul’s original writing. Consider:*

- *“For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people. Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? If anyone thinks they are a prophet or otherwise gifted by the Spirit, let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s command.” (14:31–37, NIV)*

- *If these two verses are removed, does the passage read more smoothly? Regardless of interpretation, one thing is certain: doctrine must not be built on disputed passages. These two verses are controversial; therefore, we must not build a doctrine of “women cannot preach” upon them.*

The Resurrection of the Dead, Chapter 15

- *What was the problem?*
 - *Some in the Corinthian church claimed there was no resurrection of the dead, and shockingly, some believers accepted this!*
 - *“But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.” (15:12–14, NIV)*
-

The Resurrection of the Dead, Chapter 15

- *Reasons for the problem*

- ***Some were destroying foundational truth:*** *the resurrection of Christ is the central message of the gospel, the most basic truth, and the foundation of the church.*

- *The church is built on “Jesus Christ who was crucified and raised from the dead.” To claim there is no resurrection is to destroy the foundation of the church—this is the most malicious attack.*

- *Some say, “It’s not a problem that people claim Christ did not rise,” because the church has always been attacked. The real problem is that some in the Corinthian church believed it!*

- ***“For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.”***
(15:16–17, NIV)

The Resurrection of the Dead, Chapter 15

- *The solution*

1. **Preach the pure gospel**: *The best way to combat lies is to preach the truth. The best way to combat heresy is to preach the pure gospel.*

- *The content of the gospel is Jesus Christ and Him crucified, raised on the third day, declared with power to be the Son of God:*

- *“Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand... For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” (15:1–4, NIV)*

The Resurrection of the Dead, Chapter 15

- *The solution*

2. **Teach the truth of the resurrection:** 1 Corinthians 15 is the most important chapter on the doctrine of resurrection and should be studied carefully and taught frequently.

A. The necessity of resurrection:

- *“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep... For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” (15:20–22, NIV)*

B. The resurrection body:

- *“So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable... it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.” (15:42–44, NIV)*
-

The Resurrection of the Dead, Chapter 15

- *The solution*

2. **Teach the truth of the resurrection** : 1 Corinthians 15 is the most important chapter on the doctrine of resurrection and should be studied carefully and taught frequently.

C. The timing of resurrection:

- *“In a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.” (15:52, NIV)*

D. The victory of resurrection:

- *“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?... But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (15:55–57, NIV)*
-

What Is “Baptism for the Dead”?

- *“Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour?” (15:29–30, NIV)*
 - *This verse confuses many Christians: Can we be baptized for the dead? If a relative dies without believing, can I be baptized for them so they may enter heaven? The Mormon Church in Salt Lake City has a baptismal font specifically for “baptism for the dead.” Are they correct?*
 - *Some say the Greek word translated “for” (hyper) also means “over.” Some were baptized over the graves of martyrs to honor them. But when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, the church had not yet faced large-scale persecution, so this explanation seems unlikely.*
 - *Some say baptism for the dead was to fill vacancies in the church. When a believer died, the church lost one member; a new believer was baptized “for the dead” to fill the vacancy.*
-

What Is “Baptism for the Dead”?

- *Some say it was not to fill vacancies but to commemorate the dead. A believer died, and someone said, “Today I am being baptized in memory of this beloved brother or sister.” All these explanations sound strange. Baptism expresses our relationship with Christ—how could such an important matter involve the dead, as if the dead were greater than Christ?*
 - *The most natural explanation is the literal one: In Corinth, some people were indeed being baptized for the dead, hoping the dead might be resurrected: **“If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?”** Paul was not endorsing this practice; he was using the Corinthians’ foolish behavior to refute their claim that “there is no resurrection,” exposing how absurd they were.*
 - *A possible scenario: Someone believed but died before being baptized. The Corinthians performed baptism on their behalf. Or, like the Mormons, a respected elder claimed to receive revelation that a deceased person had repented after death, so the living could be baptized for them to be saved. These were foolish practices of the Corinthians, not Paul’s teaching.*
-

What Is “Baptism for the Dead”?

- *Paul is saying: Some among you claim there is no resurrection, yet some of you are being baptized for the dead. If the dead do not rise—if death is the end—why be baptized for them? Isn't this contradictory? And as for us, **if there is no resurrection, why do we risk our lives? We might as well eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. (15:33)***

- *Regardless of interpretation, “baptism for the dead” contradicts basic doctrines such as justification by faith. Doctrine must not be built on obscure verses or verses that conflict with the overall teaching of Scripture—this is a fundamental principle.*

2 Corinthians:

Introduction to 2 Corinthians

• **Background of the writing:** *The time was around AD 55, in the autumn or winter. A series of events happened that year, roughly in the following order:*

- 1. At that time Paul was in Ephesus, and his ministry was very difficult. When he heard that the Corinthian church had problems, he still took the time to write 1 Corinthians to instruct them.*
 - 2. After finishing 1 Corinthians, Paul was still uneasy and personally made a trip to Corinth. Unfortunately, the problems were not resolved, and Paul returned to Ephesus in sorrow.*
 - 3. After returning, Paul wrote another very severe letter (now lost) and sent it with Titus to Corinth. Thank the Lord, this time there was a good result, and Paul was comforted.*
 - 4. Paul then wrote 2 Corinthians, affirming his apostleship and urging the Corinthians not to listen to false apostles, lest they stray from the Lord's way.*
-

Introduction to 2 Corinthians

- ***The most personal letter:*** *In 2 Corinthians, Paul speaks much about himself; it is the most personal of all his letters. Paul repeatedly defends himself in the letter, raising questions such as:*
 - *Why did Paul strive so hard to defend himself?*
 - *Why would a servant of God care so much about himself? Could he not be more at ease?*
 - *How others view him is their business—why did Paul care so much about others' opinions?*
-

Why Did Paul Strive to Defend Himself?

- *Paul vigorously defends himself in the letter. Let us first look at what he said:*
 - *“Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.” (2:17, NIV)*
 - *“Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you?” (3:1, NIV)*
 - *“We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart.” (5:12, NIV)*
-

Why Did Paul Strive to Defend Himself?

- *“If anyone is confident that they belong to Christ, they should consider again that we belong to Christ just as much as they do.” (10:7, NIV)*
 - *“I do not think I am in the least inferior to those ‘super-apostles.’” (11:5, NIV)*
 - *“Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham’s descendants? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again.” (11:22–23, NIV)*
-

Why Did Paul Strive to Defend Himself?

- *“I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained...” (12:1, NIV)*
 - *“I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you. I am not in the least inferior to the ‘super-apostles,’ even though I am nothing.” (12:11, NIV)*
 - *“Be that as it may, I have not been a burden to you. Yet, crafty fellow that I am, I caught you by trickery!” (12:16, NIV)*
 - *“Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ; and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening.” (12:19, NIV)*
-

Why Did Paul Strive to Defend Himself?

- *Paul did not receive salary from the Corinthian church, nor did he gain any benefit from them. At that time he was in Ephesus (Asia)—why would he trouble himself with matters in Corinth (Europe)?*
 - *Because false apostles had entered the Corinthian church, attacking Paul and the gospel he preached, spreading false teachings. The Corinthians were spiritually immature and easily influenced; some were gradually drifting from the truth.*
 - *Paul explained himself to the Corinthians, striving to clarify his motives and emphasize his apostolic authority for two reasons:*
 1. ***Toward the Lord:*** *He was faithful to the Lord's calling, honored his office, and could not tolerate false apostles and false teachings.*
 2. ***Toward people:*** *He loved the Corinthians and did not want them to stray from the truth; everything was for their edification.*
-

Outline of 2 Corinthians

- *I. Defense, Chapters 1–7*
 - *II. Encouragement, Chapters 8–9*
 - *III. Warning, Chapters 10–13*
-

Outline of 2 Corinthians

- *I. Defense: Chapters 1–7*
 - *Paul vigorously defends himself. Using “we” and “you”—that is, Paul and the Corinthians—he explains the content of his defense:*
 1. *We comfort you with the comfort we received in affliction, 1:3–11*
 2. *Our boast is our conscience, 1:12–2:4*
 3. *I urge you to forgive the brother who sinned, 2:5–11*
 4. *We do not peddle the word of God for profit; we preach Christ sincerely, 2:12–17*
 5. *You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, 3:1–11*
-

Outline of 2 Corinthians

- I. Defense: Chapters 1–7

6. We behold the Lord's glory with unveiled faces, 3:12–4:6

7. We have this treasure in jars of clay, 4:7–15

8. We are confident and prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord, 4:16–5:10

9. We are Christ's ambassadors, urging people to be reconciled to God, 5:11–6:10

10. We speak to you with wide-open hearts, as to our children, 6:11–7:4

11. We were comforted by the good news about you, 7:5–16

Outline of 2 Corinthians

- *II. Encouragement: Chapters 8–9*

1. *Encouraging the Corinthians to give generously, 8:1–15*
 2. *Thanking God that Titus and his companions were willing to handle the offering, 8:16–9:5*
 3. *Thanking God for His indescribable gift, 9:6–15*
-

Outline of 2 Corinthians

- *III. Warning: Chapters 10–13*

1. *I am ready to punish every act of disobedience, Chapter 10*

2. *I boast like this because you forced me, Chapters 11–12*

3. *The final warning, Chapter 13*

“The God Who Gives Comfort” and “The One Who Brings Comfort”

- *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and **the God of all comfort**, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.” (1:3–4, NIV)*
-

Past Deliverance, Present Deliverance, Future Deliverance

- *“Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us, ”*
(1:9-10, NKIV)
-

Boasting Only in One's Conscience

- *“Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God’s grace.” (1:12, NIV)*
-

In Him It Is Always “Yes”

• *“But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not ‘Yes’ and ‘No.’ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silas and Timothy—was not ‘Yes’ and ‘No,’ but in him it has always been ‘Yes.’ For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ. And so through him the ‘Amen’ is spoken by us to the glory of God.” (1:18–20, NIV)*

Not Lording Over Your Faith

- *“Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm.” (1:24, NIV)*
-