2 Corinthians 5 ¹⁸ Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (NASB)

"BE RECONCILED TO GOD"

An Application of 2 Corinthians

Are we reconciled to God in the way that Paul intended?

A SUMMARY OF JEFF REED'S TEACHING ON 2 CORINTHIANS http://amesdsm.cc/media

Intention Statement of 2 Corinthians:

to defend Paul's apostleship in the Corinthian churches, for which he was uniquely commissioned, that they might remain in his sphere of authority and therefore participate fully in the progress amongst the Gentiles...

- by describing his internal stress in carrying out his stewardship.
- by describing the heart of the ministry of the gospel, "conflicts without and fears within," as a context for victorious progress.
- by defending his apostleship and seeking the Corinthians as partners in that progress.

Biblical Theology of 2 Corinthians:

- A. Paul's philosophy of ministry (2 Cor. 1:1–2:11)
- B. Paul's "theology of perspective on ministry"—his calling, what success really is (2 Cor. 2:12–7:5)
- c. Paul's theology of giving as part of churches being established in the gospel (2 Cor. 8–9)
- D. Role and responsibility of apostolic leaders today (2 Cor. 10–12)
- E. What apostolic leaders should expect of their churches today (2 Cor. 13)

EPISTLE: The structure and imagery of the NT epistles are governed by the conventions of letter writing. They are innovations constructed on Greek and Roman models, which had three main parts: **introduction** (sender, addressee, greeting); text or **body**; and **conclusion** (final wishes or greetings).

With this structure as the core, the NT epistles show important additions. The cursory "Greetings!" (*chairein*) of the Graeco-Roman letter becomes the theologically charged "Grace [*charis*] to you and peace from God" (RSV) in NT epistles. Their conclusions include not only final good wishes but also solemn benedictions.

More important are two totally new units—a *thanksgiving* (a liturgically formulated statement of thanks and/or prayer for the spiritual welfare of the recipients and/or a commendation of their spiritual virtues and blessings) and a *paraenesis* (a list of moral exhortations, including both positive and negative commands, as well as such motifs as proverbial wisdom, lists of virtues and vices, and extended exhortations on a single moral topic). The *paraenesis* typically comes after the doctrinal middle section of an epistle.

Ryken, L., Wilhoit, J., Longman, T., Duriez, C., Penney, D., & Reid, D. G. (2000). In *Dictionary of biblical imagery* (p. 243). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

PAULINE LETTER STRUCTURE

1. **Prescript** (Intro)

- A. ID of Author & Recipients
- B. Well Wishes

2. Mediation

- A. Thanks to God
- B. Prayer for Recipients

3. Exposition (Indicative)

- A. Reminding of the Known
- B. Informing of the Unknown

4. Exhortation (Imperative)

- A. General Orientation
- B. Specific Action Steps

5. Postscript (Outro)

- A. Greetings
- B. Well Wishes

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"Paul & Tim., to Church in..."
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- "Grace to you from God..."
- "I thank God for you..."
- "I pray to God for you..."
- "For you know..."
- "Don't be unaware..."
- "Therefore, walk..."
- "Put off, Put on..."
- "Greets you, You Greet..."
- "Grace of Christ to you..."

PAULINE LETTER STRUCTURE

		1 Thess.	2 Thess.
1.	Prescript (Intro) A. ID of Author & Recipients B. Well Wishes	1:1a 1:1b	1:1 1:2
2.	Mediation A. Thanks to God B. Prayer for Recipients	1:2-10	1:3-10 1:11-12
3.	Exposition (Indicative) A. Reminding of the Known B. Informing of the Unknown	2:1-16 2:17-3:13	2:1-14
4.	Exhortation (Imperative) A. General Orientation B. Specific Action Steps	4:1-2 4:3-5:22	2:15 2:16-3:15
5.	Postscript (Outro) A. Greetings B. Well Wishes	5:26 5:23-28	3:17 3:16-18

THE PIVOT TO EXHORTATION

- **1 Thess. 4** ¹ Finally then, brethren, we <u>request</u> and <u>exhort</u> you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to <u>walk</u> and please God (just as you actually do <u>walk</u>), that you <u>excel still more</u>.
- **2 Thess. 2** ¹⁵ So then, brethren, <u>stand firm</u> and <u>hold</u> to <u>the traditions</u> which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us.

PAULINE LETTER STRUCTURE

	Romans	Ephesians
1. Prescript (Intro)A. ID of Author & RecipientsB. Well Wishes	1:1-7a 1:7b	1:1 1:2
2. MediationA. Thanks to GodB. Prayer for Recipients	1:8-9 1:10-12	1:3-14 1:15-23
3. Exposition (Indicative)A. Reminding of the KnownB. Informing of the Unknown	 1:13-11:36	2:1-22 3:1-21
4. Exhortation (Imperative)A. General OrientationB. Specific Action Steps	12:1-2 12:3-16:2	4:1-3 4:4-6:20
5. Postscript (Outro)A. GreetingsB. Well Wishes	16:3-23 16:24-27	6:21-22 6:23-24

THE PIVOT TO EXHORTATION

- **1 Thess. 4** ¹ Finally then, brethren, we <u>request</u> and <u>exhort</u> you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to <u>walk</u> and please God (just as you actually do <u>walk</u>), that you <u>excel</u> still more.
- **2 Thess. 2** ¹⁵ So then, brethren, <u>stand firm</u> and <u>hold</u> to <u>the traditions</u> which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us.
- **Rom. 12** ¹ Therefore I <u>urge</u> you, brethren, <u>by the mercies of God</u>, to <u>present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice</u>, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. ² And <u>do not be conformed</u> to this world, but <u>be transformed</u> by the renewing of your mind, so that you may <u>prove what the will of God is</u>, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.
- **Eph. 4** ¹ Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, <u>implore</u> you to <u>walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, ³ being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.</u>

PAULINE LETTER STRUCTURE

		1 Cor.	2 Cor.
1.	Prescript (Intro) A. ID of Author & Recipients	1:1-2	1:1
	B. Well Wishes	1:3	1:2
2.	Mediation A. Thanks to God B. Prayer for Recipients	1:4-9	1:3-7
3.	Exposition (Indicative) A. Reminding of the Known B. Informing of the Unknown	1:10-2:5 2:6-4:13	2:14-5:17 1:8-2:13
4.	Exhortation (Imperative) A. General Orientation B. Specific Action Steps	4:14-21 5:1-16:18	5:18-21 6:1-13:10
5.	Postscript (Outro) A. Greetings B. Well Wishes	16:19-21 16:22-24	13:12-13 13:11,14

THE PIVOT TO EXHORTATION

1 Cor. 4 ¹⁴ I do not write these things to shame you, but to <u>admonish</u> you as my beloved children. ¹⁵ For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet *you would* not *have* many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. ¹⁶ Therefore I <u>exhort</u> you, <u>be imitators of me</u>.

2 Cor. 5 ¹⁸ Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an <u>appeal</u> through us; we <u>beg</u> you on behalf of Christ, <u>be reconciled to God</u>. ²¹ He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

"RECONCILE" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

40.1 καταλλάσσω (v,6); καταλλαγή, ῆς (n,4); ἀποκαταλλάσσω (v,3); συναλλάσσω (v,1):

to reestablish proper friendly interpersonal relations after these have been disrupted or broken (the componential features of this series of meanings involve (1) disruption of friendly relations because of (2) presumed or real provocation, (3) overt behavior designed to remove hostility, and (4) restoration of original friendly relations)—'to **reconcile**, to make things right with one another, **reconciliation**.' (Louw, Nida, <u>Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains</u>)

- 1 Corinthians 7:11
- 2 Corinthians 5:18-20
- Romans 5:10-11
- Romans 11:15
- Ephesians 2:16
- Colossians 1:20,22
- Acts 7:26

Discussion Questions:

- 1. What did Paul intend with the phrase "be reconciled to God" in 1 Cor. 5:20?
- 2. How can we assess if a church or a person is truly "reconciled to God"?
- 3. Is it possible to "be reconciled with God" while sideways with his ambassadors?

TYPICAL DEFINITIONS

Reconciliation is the *objective* work of God through Christ (2 Cor. 5:19). But it is also a *subjective* relationship: "Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). Thus, it is Christ through the cross who has made reconciliation possible, for "God made him ... to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21).

Woodruff, W. J. (1996). *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (p. 663)

TYPICAL DEFINITIONS

Reconcilation—a change from enmity to friendship. It is mutual, i.e., it is a change wrought in both parties who have been at enmity.

- (1.) In Col. 1:21, 22, the word there used refers to a change wrought in the personal character of the sinner who ceases to be an enemy to God by wicked works, and yields up to him his full confidence and love. In 2 Cor. 5:20 the apostle beseeches the Corinthians to be "reconciled to God", i.e., to lay aside their enmity.
- (2.) Rom. 5:10 refers not to any change in our disposition toward God, but to God himself, as the party reconciled. Romans 5:11 teaches the same truth. From God we have received "the reconciliation" (R.V.), i.e., he has conferred on us the token of his friendship. So also 2 Cor. 5:18, 19 speaks of a reconciliation originating with God, and consisting in the removal of his merited wrath.

Easton, M. G. (1893). In *Easton's Bible Dictionary*

THE AUTHOR'S INTENT AND LITERARY DESIGN OF 2 CORINTHIANS (ACCORDING TO BILL BURNS)

The purpose of 2 Corinthians is to establish the church in their love for Christ and for the legitimately commended ministers that he authorized to build them up.

- By Paul *introducing* himself in his role as an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy as a brother, to the church at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia (1:1-2).
- By thanking God for encouraging Paul's team amidst all their afflictions so that they will be able to likewise encourage those who are in any affliction (1:3-7).
- By *teaching* that Christ's life-giving triumph which was ironically achieved through death is manifest in Paul's meek and yet bold style of ministry so that the church can be proud of Paul and help in his work (1:8-5:17).
- By exhorting the church to be reconciled to God by opening their hearts and hands to Paul's team and by rejecting their misconceptions about ministers along with the false apostles that were undermining Paul's ministry (5:18-13:10).
- By making a *concluding* appeal for the church to be joyful, mature, comforted, like-minded, and live in peace with the promise that the God of love and peace will be with them (13:11-14).

Paul's appeal to the Corinthian Church to "be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20) implies the restoration of a proper friendly relationship with God and the ambassadors that God sent to build them up.

CONSULT THE SCHOLARS

But what do the words "Be reconciled to God" mean? Taken broadly, Paul is admonishing the Corinthians to be restored in their relationships with God.

At this time they are all too easily tolerating heterodox teaching about Jesus (11:4) under the influence of the newly arrived "peddlers of God's word" (2:17). Moreover, Paul's defensive tone throughout the excursus indicates significant disapproval of his role and ministry in Corinth (3:5–6; 4:2, 7, 12; 5:11–13; 6:3–10; 7:2–4). In consequence, this church has drifted some distance from God and his spokesman, Paul.

Paul is encouraging them to return to their God and to the word spoken by Paul, the apostle of Christ.

Barnett, P. (1997). <u>The Second Epistle to the Corinthians (p. 311)</u>. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

CONSULT THE SCHOLARS

Paul's appeal to the Corinthians that they be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20) arises from his concern for their alienation from himself and their misunderstanding of his ministry (1:23–6:13); he expects that a renewal of their relationship with God on the basis of divine reconciliation in Christ will resolve the problems existing between humans.

Myers, A. C. (1987). In <u>The Eerdmans Bible dictionary</u> (p. 875). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Paul's appeal to the Corinthian Church to "be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20) implies the restoration of a proper friendly relationship with God and the ambassadors that God sent to build them up. The practical steps to restore this relationship are specifically defined in the whole subsequent exhortation section of the letter.

PAULINE LETTER STRUCTURE

		2 Cor.
1.	Prescript (Intro) A. ID of Author & Recipients B. Well Wishes	1:1 1:2
2.	Mediation A. Thanks to God B. Prayer for Recipients	1:3-7
3.	Exposition (Indicative) A. Reminding of the Known B. Informing of the Unknown	2:14-5:17 1:8-2:13
4.	Exhortation (Imperative) A. General Orientation B. Specific Action Steps	5:18-21 6:1-13:10
5.	Postscript (Outro) A. Greetings B. Well Wishes	13:12-13 13:11,14

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1. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to open their hearts to Him and his team as commended ministers of the Lord, as Titus reported that the Corinthians had actually done (5:21-7:16);

- **2 Cor. 5** ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an <u>appeal</u> through us; we <u>beg</u> you on behalf of Christ, <u>be</u> <u>reconciled to God</u>. ²¹ He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
- 6 ¹ And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain— ² for He says, "At the acceptable time I listened to YOU, AND ON the DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU." Behold, now is "THE ACCEPTABLE TIME," behold, now is "THE DAY OF SALVATION"— ³ giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited, ⁴ but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God,

in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, ⁵ in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, ⁶ in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in **genuine love**, ⁷ in the word of truth, in the power of God;

by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, 8 by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report;

regarded as deceivers and yet true; 9 as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death, 10 as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

- Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide. ¹² You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections. ¹³ Now in a like exchange—I speak as to children—open wide to us also.
- ¹⁴ Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵ Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My People. ¹⁷ "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. ¹⁸ "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.
- 7 ¹ Therefore, having these promises, **beloved**, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. ² **Make room for us** *in your hearts;* we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one. ³ I do not speak to condemn you, for I have said before that **you are in our hearts** to die together and to live together.

Paul's appeal to the Corinthian Church to "be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20) implies the restoration of a proper friendly relationship with God and the ambassadors that God sent to build them up. The practical steps to restore this relationship are specifically defined in the whole subsequent exhortation section of the letter.

- 1. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to open their hearts to Him and his team as commended ministers of the Lord, as Titus reported that the Corinthians had actually done (5:21-7:16); and
- 2. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to open their hands to graciously finance his work among the churches, as the Corinthians had formerly promised (8:1-9:15);

- 8 ¹ Now, brethren, we *wish* to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, ² that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. ³ For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, *they gave* of their own accord, ⁴ begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, ⁵ and *this*, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.
- ⁶ So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well. ⁷ But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, *see* that you abound in this gracious work also.
- ⁸ I am not speaking *this* as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. ⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich. ¹⁰ I give *my* opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do *this*, but also to desire *to do it*. ¹¹ But now finish doing it also, so that just as *there was* the readiness to desire it, so *there may be* also the completion of it by your ability.

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- 3. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to close their minds to fleshly speculations about how ministers should exercise their God-given authority to build up the church using meekness and boldness (10:1-11:10);

10 ¹ Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent! ² I ask that when I am present I *need* not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh. ³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴ for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ⁵ We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, ⁶ and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

⁷ You are looking at things as they are outwardly. If anyone is confident in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again within himself, that just as he is Christ's, so also are we. ⁸ For even if I boast somewhat further about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be put to shame, ⁹ for I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters. ¹⁰ For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible." ¹¹ Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when absent, such persons *we are* also in deed when present.

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- 4. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to close their doors to false apostles who lacked the essential qualities that legitimized Paul and his team, and were undermining his ministry (11:12-13:10).

- 11 ¹² But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. ¹³ For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.
- ¹⁶ Again I say, let no one think me foolish; but if *you do*, receive me even as foolish, so that I also may boast a little. ¹⁷ What I am saying, I am not saying as the Lord would, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting. ¹⁸ Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also. ¹⁹ For you, being *so* wise, tolerate the foolish gladly. ²⁰ For you tolerate it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face. ²¹ To *my* shame I *must* say that we have been weak *by comparison*.

OUR APPLICATION

If... being "reconciled to God" in 2 Cor. 5:20 means:

- 1. Opening their hearts to Paul and his team as commended ministers of the Lord, as Titus reported that the Corinthians had actually done (5:21-7:16); and
- 2. Opening their hands to graciously finance Paul's work among the churches, as the Corinthians had formerly promised (8:1-9:15); and
- 3. Closing their minds to fleshly speculations about how ministers should exercise their God-given authority to build up the church using meekness and boldness (10:1-11:10); and
- 4. Closing their doors to false apostles who lacked the essential qualities that legitimized Paul and his team, and were undermining his ministry (11:12-13:10).

Then...

- 1. What, if anything, might need to change in our church in order for us to be fully reconciled to God?
- 2. What, if anything, might need to change in our individual households in order for us to be fully reconciled to God?

2 Corinthians 5 ¹⁸ Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (NASB)

"BE RECONCILED TO GOD"

An Application of 2 Corinthians

Are we reconciled to God in the way that Paul intended?