

**Sermon, February 26, 2012**  
**“The Holiness of the Church” 2 Corinthians 6:11-7:1**  
**Pastor Thomas P. Bellhy**

**Overview of 1 and 2 Corinthians:**<sup>1</sup>

- The letter was addressed to the church in the city of Corinth.
- Written sometime late in 55AD, early 56AD after Paul left Ephesus during his third missionary journey.
- Corinth was located in southern Greece about 45 miles west of Athens.
- Paul’s association with the important commercial city of Corinth began on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1–18), when he spent 18 months (Acts 18:11) ministering there.
- After leaving Corinth, Paul heard of immorality in the Corinthian church and wrote a letter (since lost) to confront that sin, referred to in 1 Cor. 5:9. During his ministry in Ephesus, he received further reports of trouble in the Corinthian church in the form of divisions among them (1 Cor. 1:11). In addition, the Corinthians wrote Paul a letter (1 Cor. 7:1) asking for clarification of some issues. Paul responded by writing the letter known as 1 Corinthians. Planning to remain at Ephesus a little longer (1Cor.16:8, 9), Paul sent Timothy to Corinth (1Cor. 4:17) Disturbing news reached the apostle (possibly from Timothy) of further difficulties at Corinth, including the arrival of self-styled false apostles (11:13).
- To create the platform to teach their false gospel, they began by assaulting the character of Paul. They had to convince the people to turn from Paul to them if they were to succeed in preaching demon doctrine. Temporarily abandoning the work at Ephesus, Paul went immediately to Corinth. The visit (known as the “painful visit,” 2:1) was not a successful one from Paul’s perspective; someone in the Corinthian church (possibly one of the false apostles) even openly insulted him (2:5–8, 10; 7:12). Saddened by the Corinthians’ lack of loyalty to defend him, seeking to spare them further reproof (cf. 1:23), and perhaps hoping time would bring them to their senses, Paul returned to Ephesus.
- From Ephesus, Paul wrote the “severe letter” (2:4) and sent it with Titus to Corinth (7:5–16). Leaving Ephesus after the riot sparked by Demetrius (Acts 19:23–20:1), Paul went to Troas to meet Titus (2:12, 13). But Paul was so anxious for news of how the Corinthians had responded to the “severe letter” that he could not minister there though the Lord had opened the door (2:12; cf. 7:5). So he left for Macedonia to look for Titus (2:13). To Paul’s immense relief and joy, Titus met him with the news that the majority of the Corinthians had repented of their rebellion against Paul (7:7). Wise enough to know that some rebellious attitudes still smoldered under the surface, and could erupt again, Paul wrote (possibly from Philippi, cf. 11:9 with Phil. 4:15; also, some early manuscripts list Philippi as the place of writing) the Corinthians the letter called 2 Corinthians. In this letter, though the apostle expressed his relief and joy at their repentance (7:8–16), his main concern was to defend his apostleship (chaps. 1–7), exhort the Corinthians to resume preparations for the collection for the poor at Jerusalem (chaps. 8, 9), and confront the false apostles head on (chaps. 10–13). He then went to Corinth, as he had written (12:14; 13:1, 2). The Corinthians’ participation in the Jerusalem offering (Rom. 15:26) implies that Paul’s third visit to that church was successful.

**General Outline of 2 Corinthians:**<sup>2</sup>

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| I.    | Greetings and Introduction (1:1–11)                                  |
| II.   | Paul’s Explanation of His Conduct and Apostolic Ministry (1:12–7:16) |
| III.  | The Collection for the Christians at Jerusalem (8:1–9:15)            |
| IV.   | Paul’s Vindication of His Apostolic Authority (10:1–13:10)           |
| VIII. | Conclusion (13:11–14)  |

**Major Themes of 1 Corinthians:**<sup>3</sup>

- It portrays God the Father as a merciful comforter (1:3; 7:6), the Creator (4:6), the One who raised Jesus from the dead (4:14; cf. 13:4), and who will raise believers as well (1:9).
- Jesus Christ is the One who suffered (1:5), who fulfilled God’s promises (1:20), who was the proclaimed Lord (4:5), who manifested God’s glory (4:6), and the One who in His incarnation became poor for believers (8:9; cf. Phil. 2:5–8).
- The letter portrays the Holy Spirit as God (3:17, 18) and the guarantee of believers’ salvation (1:22; 5:5).
- Satan is identified as the “god of this age” (4:4; cf. 1 John 5:19), a deceiver (11:14), and the leader of human and angelic deceivers (11:15).
- The end times include both the believer’s glorification (4:16–5:8) and his judgment (5:10).
- The glorious truth of God’s sovereignty in salvation is the theme of 5:14–21, while 7:9, 10 sets forth man’s response to God’s offer of salvation-genuine repentance.
- Second Corinthians also presents the clearest, most concise summary of the substitutionary atonement of Christ to be found anywhere in Scripture (5:21; cf. Is. 53) and defines the mission of the church to proclaim reconciliation (5:18–20).
- Finally, the nature of the New Covenant receives its fullest exposition; also see book of Hebrews (3:6–16).

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<sup>1</sup>MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Co 1:1

<sup>2</sup>New American Standard Bible, Compact Reference Edition, 2000.

<sup>3</sup>MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 2 Co 1:1

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The letters to the Corinthians overall message is the purpose and uniqueness of the church; it is a call for the church to be true disciples of Christ, continue the mission of Christ, and separate itself from worldly to Godly behavior (holiness).

**1. Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians**

- In Acts the birth of the ministry of the “church” is ordained by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, without which it could not exist...a supernatural indwelling.
- The supreme theme of Romans is that righteousness comes from God: the glorious truth that God justifies guilty, condemned sinners by grace alone through faith in Christ alone.
- 1 Corinthians defines the church as true disciples of Christ and continue the mission of Christ.
- 2 Corinthians stresses the importance of the holiness of the church.

**2. What does the word “Church” mean...first used by Jesus in Matthew 16:18**

- Peter’s confession is the rock, Christ, the rock...Upon Christ, the rock, Peter’s confession, is His church to be built; **ἐκκλησία**, (ek la si a) lit. “those who are called out”; as a gathering of citizens *assembly, meeting*

**3. However, “church” is an ancient concept.**

- The exodus assembly in the Old Testament culminates at Sinai “in the day of the assembly” ***in God’s presence***... קהל (qahal); **Deuteronomy 4:10(similar in Dt. 31:12; Nehemiah 8:1-2); Leviticus 23:3**
- The Church in the Old Testament was always this “called out” assembly of people responding to the presence of God, hearing the Word of God...

**4. Who is the “Church”? Romans 1:1-7**

- The Church is all who are called out and set apart by God for divine purpose; saints or believers in Jesus Christ united with Him as one.

**5. The “Church” is more than just an assembly it is one “body”? Romans 12:4-5**

- The body of Christ; the body is holy...
- **ἅγιος**, (1) of things set apart for God’s purpose *dedicated, sacred, holy* (2) of persons *holy, pure, consecrated to God*
- The “saints” make up the Body of Christ...the body of Christ is holy, set apart for Divine purpose!

**6. The “church” is to be set apart and not intertwined or mixed up in, or yoked with the “worldly”**

- **2 Corinthians 6:14-16**
- The church is to be seen as a separate, holy entity. Careful to a correct understanding and teaching of God’s Word...just like Jesus was!
- The “church” must not let worldly, cultural, worldviews to be intermingled, intertwined, mixed up in, yoked with it. This does not say that the church is to be monastic, without mission.

**7. The church is “IN” the world to shine the light of Christ but not “OF” the world so that the light may be diminished (2 Corinthians 6:16-18)**

- The church is a holy temple of God, individuals indwelt by the Holy Spirit, collectively bound together
- We must be separate from the politically correct, culturally acceptable views of the day and be a light to that darkness...NOT participate with it, NOT touch what is unclean so we might be blessed with the promise of God...*“Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,” says the Lord. “AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you.”<sup>18</sup> “And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” Says the Lord Almighty.*

**Conclusion:**

- The church is the beautiful bride of Christ, the body of Christ, to be treasured, nourished, taught and encouraged to continue the mission of our Lord.
- The church is made up of disciples of Christ, those who are willing to hear and be taught the Word of God.
- The church has a distinct purpose; to spread the gospel and make disciples; disciples, as part of the body of Christ, going out into the world to tell others about Jesus, be an example of Christ, and make disciples...a Holy circle of faith.
- The church is to guard its borders, careful to separate itself from unholy doctrine carved out by the mind of man.
- The church is to be holy.

The letters to the Corinthians overall message is the purpose and uniqueness of the church; it is a call for the church to be true disciples of Christ, continue the mission of Christ, and separate itself from worldly to Godly behavior (holiness).