

# Bible-Reading Coach Podcast Transcript

## Week 48: 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, *Faith and Grace*

Welcome to Week 48 of the Bible reading coach podcast. My name is Karl Vaters and I'm here to help you read through the entire Bible in 52 weeks.

For the next several weeks until we get to the book of Revelation, at least we'll be reading an increasingly high number of books every week. It's not that our pace is getting faster, it's that the books are getting slower. So this week, we're going to read three mid size, comparatively, books written by the Apostle Paul, we're going to spend two days on each of them. Second Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians. All of these books were written by the Apostle Paul, written to churches that he planted. Two of them, Corinthians and Ephesians, were written to the big cities of Corinth and Ephesus. And the other one Galatia was written not to a town called Galatia, but to the region of Galatia, where a whole bunch of small towns existed where Paul had planted churches in small towns. So we're going to read books that were sent to different types of population centers, two of them to large cities, one of them to small towns.

So let's take a look at the books one at a time. First of all, we're going to start with Second Corinthians. It is, as you might guess, by its name, a follow up to the book of First Corinthians. And, first of all, let's start with some good news. They seem to have learned many of the lessons that Paul had been trying to teach them in First Corinthians. He's not nearly as angry at Corinthians, as it was in First Corinthians. And he even congratulates them for fixing some of their problems, as we'll see when we go through it. And you read through it this week. So let's take a look at it. chapter by chapter, first of all, Second Corinthians starts in chapter one. With Paul talking about a change in travel plans, it starts in a way that might feel strange to you, as you read it. Right after his usual greeting, Paul starts talking about his travel plans, in an apologetic kind of a way, well, not apologetic as much as a defensive kind of a way. Here's why. When Paul had been in Corinth, the last time, he had said he would come back soon, but he hadn't been able to come back. And some people in Corinth who were against Paul, were using this as an excuse to call him unreliable and a liar. So Paul explains, I'm not unreliable, I'm not a liar, sometimes people's travel plans change. Here's what I originally intended, here's why it changed. And here's what happened in that. So we get some of that in Second Corinthians chapter one.

We then move along to the second and third chapters, where the apostle Paul starts with some of his teaching. And he begins teaching by by telling them how the covenant through Jesus is different from the covenant that we covenants, actually, that we read in the Old Testament, basically, when he tells us that Jesus doesn't just forgive us under this new covenant, but he also requires under this new covenant, because we've been forgiven so much, and given so much grace that we need to give forgiveness and grace to others. There was a legalism in the way that most people approached the covenants in the Old Testament. But you can't have that kind of legalism. It's a covenant of grace, not just received by us, but this should be given from us to others. And the way that that happens, according to Paul, in these two chapters is that because the Holy Spirit now lives in us in this New Covenant, because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and because of the spirits arrival on the day of Pentecost, as we saw described in Acts, chapter two, the Holy Spirit in us now helps us to do this and to live

more like Jesus, and to be filled with grace and peace towards others just as God granted the same to us.

We then move along to second Corinthians, chapters four and five, where he talks about one of the reasons we need to go easier on ourselves and others is that even though we now have the all powerful God living inside of us through the Holy Spirit, while the power within us is indestructible, the vessel in which the Holy Spirit lives is he calls like Jars of Clay, a jar of clay was a very breakable thing they, they would make different, use different materials, and treat even the same material clay in different ways to make different types of containers in that day, just like we have today. There are containers that are for quick use, and they are disposable. It's kind of like a bottle of water is not used, designed to be used more than once. So it's very light plastic. And there are other things that we use regularly constantly, even for years and decades. Well, what he's telling us is basically we are in bodies that are going to decay, they're going to die and decay. They're like cheap clay pots. And so what he's doing is not to put us down, what he's telling us is we have this eternal and all powerful God living in us, but he's living inside these disposable clay pots that One day we'll die and decay. And so he's trying to teach us this beautiful balance between God's grace and power that's in us. But we need to have humility, because of the vessel that's holding God's power. So it's this constant balance between grace and power on one side, but humility on the other side.

We then move to chapters six and seven of Second Corinthians. Again, he addresses the challenge of balancing both grace and forgiveness on one side, with the need to stay pure on the other side, pure from the corrupting influences around us, which is specially applied to the Corinthian believers who if you'll remember from last week, we're living in a very sinful city that had begun to creep its culture back into the church. And what's interesting is, as he's talking about God's purity, and how we need to live pure lives, he doesn't approach it in a sad or negative way at all, because it's not a sad or negative thing. The last segment of this passage of chapter six and seven is about the amazing joy that we experience when we actually live pure lives before God. A big part of the reason we want to live purely before God is because it's the way we were designed to live. And as the way to get the greatest amount of joy out of our lives. We then will move to chapters eight and nine, a second Corinthians, where he talks about the importance of two things of joy, and of generosity, he starts by talking again, about the offering that he was taking for the Jerusalem church that was undergoing a lot of persecution.

We talked about it a bit in First Corinthians, he goes into it in real detail. And second, second Corinthians. So if you ever want to learn more, or tell somebody else about this amazing thing you may not have heard before this offering that was being taken for the persecuted saints in Jerusalem, the main place we get that is Second Corinthians. And in fact, it's one of the great teachings about generosity, and about how a church and how Christians can be generous. It's a step by step process that is often talked about when pastors are trying to teach about generosity and about giving a great passage about that.

And it's important for us to understand because there's this ongoing idea that only corrupt churches and only corrupt pastors ever ask for money. That's not biblical. The apostle Paul asked for money everywhere he went, he took up this amazing collection so that he could give it to those in need. Now, sharing with those in need through our finances, is a biblical sign of God's people receiving money so that we can gather more of it to ourselves. The Bible speaks against that constantly let don't store up treasures on earth, store up treasures in

heaven, be the pipeline through which God's blessings flow. But if you're going to give to others, something has to come into you to flow through you to go to others. And take a look at that and how he lays that out so beautifully, in chapters eight and nine, the end of chapter nine, especially as a great illustration of this wonderful, upward spiral of generosity that ultimately ends up in expressions of thanksgiving to God, for His goodness to us.

We then continue on in Second Corinthians chapters 10 and 11, where Paul goes through this defense of his apostleship. Because again, as we talked about before, there were people especially in Corinth, who kept bad mouthing him who kept trying to convince the Corinthian believers that Paul was not an authority in their lives. So he has to defend himself again. And then we'll finish off Second Corinthians chapters 12 and 13, where Paul talks about his weaknesses to begin with. One of the things I love about Scripture is that it never sugarcoats anything, including when its heroes have weaknesses, the only heroes well, the only real hero of the Bible is God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It's a book about God's relationships with us, and Jesus, of course, being the primary character and the primary hero of it.

But it's other primary characters, the human characters throughout the rest of Scripture, none of them are sinless. And their problems are mentioned. Sometimes in graphic and vivid detail here, Paul, writing about himself, talks about how he has these problems. He's asked God to remove these problems, and he asks them to pray for these problems that he has. But he also warns them that if you don't fix the problems you've got, it could be a tough visit for me. Next time I come. So he has weaknesses. He asked him to pray for that. But he also warns them against the sins that they have been committing that they need to get that right and that's how we end Second Corinthians.

We will then move to the books of Galatians and Ephesians. Together the books of Galatians and Galatians and Ephesians are about the same length as Second Corinthians. Second Corinthians length is the same length as Galatians and Ephesians combined, but we are not splitting the week in half. We're gonna give you as much time in Galatians as we gave you a second Corinthians even though Second Corinthians is twice as long. Same with Ephesians. And here's why. Because we've already had First Corinthians we've already heard about the situation in Corinth. And so we're gonna get through that fairly quickly this week, and give you a little more time. And the book of Galatians and Ephesians. As I said earlier, Galatia was not a city, it was a region, it was a region and was actually modern day Turkey. And there were several towns in that region that Paul was writing to. And then Ephesus was and is still today, a very big city, on the west coast of modern Turkey as well.

So let's take a look at the book of Galatians. First of all, okay, the book of Galatians, after establishing churches in the small towns in the region of Galatia, as I said, in modern day Turkey, other people had come in after Paul had left. And one group of people that had kind of gotten a foothold in Galatia was a group of people that Paul calls the Judaizers. And they were Jewish people, just like Paul was, and just like most of the Galatian believers were, but these were particular Jews who had had an idea that you had to become a Jew, in order to become a Christian. Anytime you see the argument over circumcision in the New Testament, the argument isn't over a surgical procedure. The argument is over the first big debate of the early church which is this, do you have to become a Jew in order to become a Christian? And Paul's answer to that at times with anchor was no, as a Gentile, you do not have to become Jewish first and

then become a Christian. Christianity is not a sect of Judaism. Christianity is open to everyone, just as you are.

So this book is primarily written to address that controversy. And here's how it addresses the controversy. Let me break it down for you, chapter by chapter. First of all, this Judaizer issue of Do you have to become a Jew to become a Christian is addressed in chapter one by Paul calling this legalism, another gospel. In other words, it's a fake gospel, as someone tells you, you have to do this work in order to become a Christian, they are not preaching the gospel that Jesus gave to us or that Paul gave to them. He then reminds them as we conclude chapter one, that the true gospel came not from Paul, but through Paul from God Himself.

Then in chapter two, he reminds them of this unusual God guided way that Paul was called, by seeing the resurrected Christ directly. He reminds them of his reputation, for standing even against Peter on this issue, like Peter was waffling, according to Paul on whether or not Jews, Gentiles needed to become Jewish in order to become Christians. And he reminds them I even confronted Peter on this, that's how strongly I supported this, that Gentiles are saved by grace through faith, just like Jews are to those who don't have to become a Jew in order to become a Christian. Chapter Three, he reminds them that belief in Jesus isn't just what saves them. It's how we should live our lives.

Basically, when he says, the law wasn't powerful, powerful enough to save you, how do you think the law is going to be powerful enough to keep you we're saved by grace through faith, we live by grace through faith, which leads into chapter four, where he says, You now are the new children of Abraham, whether you were born a Jew or born a Gentile, we are children of Abraham, through our faith, and not through our ethnicity, which is really wonderful news for all of us. Because you don't have to be born into the right family in order to be accepted into the family of God. And then he reminds us in chapter five, that salvation is not given up to bind us into more laws, which is what the Judaizers were telling them, but do free us in Jesus. He then also reminds us that this freedom isn't freedom to sin, but it's freedom to follow Jesus even more closely. And then he wraps it up in chapter six of Galatians, by telling us, reminding us to take care of our hearts to watch out for each other.

And then the final greetings, then we'll finish the week by reading the book of Ephesians. That was written to the town of Ephesus, to the church in the town of Ephesus, unlike the books to Corinth and Galatia. Ephesians is not primarily to address errors, the books of Galatia and, and the book and the books to Corinth, the book of Galatians, and the books of course, correct it that way. They were written, mostly because Paul was hearing about problems going on in those places, and he had to fix them. He did not write the book of Ephesians to Ephesus, because he was hearing about problems in Ephesus, he was doing it to teach them some core theology, so that they could build a foundation. So the book of Ephesus is kind of like the book of Romans. It's not written to correct errors as much as it is to establish Christian theology. So as we walk through this establishment of Christian theology, much like the book of Romans, that we read already did, let's see what he does.

In chapter one, he tells us that we are so blessed by Jesus, that we ought to be in a state of giving him constant praise for what he's done for us, because in Chapter too, he reminds us that Jesus rescued us, not from being bad people to being good people, but from being dead people to being living people, he rescued us from death to life. And because of this, we need to treat others who have come to Christ as well, the fellow brothers and sisters in

Christ, we need to treat each other as members and citizens of the New Kingdom of God, that we have all been brought through this amazing process. None of us deserves any more grace than anybody else deserves. And as he says in chapter three, this amazing grace is why Paul is so passionate about telling everyone, including the Gentiles, all about Jesus and about His grace and about his power and about His salvation.

We think it's chapters four and five of Ephesus, where he talks about the importance of living united. In Christ's light, the crisis brought us not just from death, to life, but from darkness to light. It's another metaphor that uses death to life as an actual thing that happens spiritually. darkness to light is a metaphor for what's happening there. Death and darkness are always related to life and light are always related in Scripture. And he reminds us in some beautifully, poetic words in chapters four and five, about the difference between living as children of light and not as children of darkness. Then at the end of chapter five, and into chapter six, we get to one of the New Testaments most controversial passages, where he talks about, basically he introduces it at the end of chapter five, by saying, As Christians we are to live lives of humility, and submission, first of all, to God and then submission to one another, we are to look out for others best interest that's supposed to be our a primary characteristic of being followers of Jesus.

The question then becomes, in a highly structured society, where you had slaves and slave owners, where you had very clear distinctions between men who were considered the only ones whose testimony, for instance, was considered in a court of law, and women who were treated as less valuable than cattle in their society. How do you come out of that kind of culture into a place where God values everyone the same? What does that actually look like, in this highly structured society? And then he so he walks through some of these primary relationships, husbands and wives, parents and children's slaves and, and free. And how does this look now that we're Christians?

In this passage is where we get some of the primary teaching that makes a distinction between two different types of belief among Christians. Most Christians fall under one of two camps that are called complementarians, or egalitarianism. Complementarians believe that while men and women are equal before God for salvation, that particularly in the home husbands are the head and wives are to submit to their husbands. That is a very quick and very broad brush explanation of what it means to be a complementarian. It's far more subtle and far more nuanced than that. But that gives you the basic idea. Egalitarianism, on the other hand, believe that we since we are equal before God and salvation, were equal before God and everything, and that men by their maleness are not necessary are not the ones who are necessarily going to be in charge in the home or in the church, that women have just as much a right to speak from God and for God, both in the home and in the church.

I fall on the egalitarian side, if you fall on the complementarian side, God bless you, we'll figure we'll find out in heaven, who's right we'll probably both a whole bunch wrong and a little bit, right. But wherever you are on that just have grace towards those who come from a different place. There are real strong reasons in Scripture, why people might come down on one side of the other, if you only read the Ephesians passage, you're likely to become a complementarian. But the reason I'm an egalitarian is because when I read the other parts of the New Testament, where it talks about there's no difference between male and female anymore, where there were female deaconesses, where there were churches that were held in women's homes, there

appears to be just as much leadership happening from the women of the New Testament, as there were from the men of the New Testament. So we have to balance out these teachings. And for me, the balance in Ephesians comes from that the beginning passage of this is the end of Chapter 51 Chapter Five, not the beginning of chapter six, where this is about teaching us how to live in mutual submission as Christians to each other. Again, if you've got a difference on that, God bless you. We all love the Lord. And we'll all make it through to the other side.

All right, and then he ends in chapter six with final readings. So yeah, there's a lot going on in these short books that we'll be reading this week. We'll read a lot about grace, faith, legalism, about the importance of not compromising morally. Paul addresses different churches at various stages of faith with different types of population centers that have different strengths and weaknesses. So as you read this week, take note of this one. We tend to read the Bible individualistically, at least we do in the American church and in most Western and European type churches. But we have to recognize and I encourage you this week as you read this, it's not written to a person named Ephesus, a person named Galatia, a person named Korath.

These letters are written to churches, groups of people in these three towns. So we need to pause for a moment and ask, okay, I need to read this as a member of the church, that this is being written to us as the church and not just to me as an individual member. It won't change what it says. But it will help you understand I believe, on a deeper level, what Paul is saying here, he's not just speaking to individual Christians about how to behave in an individual way, but to churches and how we are to treat each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. I believe that you read it. With that understanding in mind, you'll get a lot more out of it. So have a great time reading this week, there's so much happening, and then we'll see you next week. Thanks.

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