

Worksheet #6: 2 Corinthians 6:3–7:16

Summary:

Throughout Paul's extended self-defense in 2 Cor. 2:12–7:16, he frequently mentions his experience of physical suffering. This theme recurs in 6:3–13, where he lists his experiences and describes the character traits that they reveal. Once again, he points out the highly paradoxical nature of faithful ministry in 6:8–10. Then, in 6:11–13, Paul appeals directly and urgently to the Corinthians to deal frankly with him.

Then, in 6:14–7:1, we find a section of 2 Corinthians that, at first, seems difficult to fit within the flow of Paul's argument. Probably another of Paul's frequent digressions, this section addresses a severe problem that would have inhibited the open, frank relationship that Paul describes in 6:11–13 and 7:2–4. In this section, Paul abruptly challenges the Corinthians to avoid entanglement with pagan practices.

Second Corinthians 7:2–16 brings Paul's initial self-defense to a close. In 7:2–4, he ends the "great digression" that began in 2:14 with another direct appeal to the Corinthians' consciences. Then, in 7:5–7, he refers back to the travelogue in 2:12–13 to explain how God had encouraged him through the arrival and report of Titus. Apparently Paul had sent Titus on ahead to Corinth with what is known as the "severe letter," and Titus had returned with the good news that genuine repentance had taken place (7:8–13).

Abbreviated Outline¹ (current passage in bold):

- I. Introduction (1:1–11)
- II. Paul's Relationship with the Corinthians (1:12–2:11)
- III. **Paul's Defense of his Ministry (2:12–7:16)**
 - A. Paul's Ministry in Troas and Macedonia (2:12–17)
 - B. Paul's Letters of Recommendation (3:1–3)
 - C. Paul's Competence (3:4–6)
 - D. Ministry of the New Covenant (3:7–18)
 - E. The Unveiled Truth (4:1–6)
 - F. Treasure in Clay Jars (4:7–18)
 - G. The Coming Resurrection (5:1–10)
 - H. The Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11–6:2)
 - I. **Catalog of Paul's Sufferings (6:3–13)**
 - J. **Call to Separate from Paul's Opponents (6:14–7:1)**
 - K. **Paul's Final Defense (7:2–16)**
- IV. The Collection for the Believers in Jerusalem (8:1–9:15)
- V. Paul's Renewed Defense of his Apostleship (10:1–13:4)
- VI. Final Exhortations (13:5–12)
- VII. Closing (13:13)

¹ Adapted from Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 484.

Interpretation: *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. Why was it important for Paul to avoid giving offense (6:3)?

2. How do the outward circumstances of 6:4–5 reveal the inward qualities of 6:6–7?

3. Paul rarely addresses his audience by name as he does in 6:11. Other examples of this include Gal. 3:1 and Phil. 4:15. Based on these cross-references, what is always true when Paul does address his audience by name?

4. What is the basis for Paul's command that believers not be "unequally yoked" with unbelievers (6:14–16)?

5. In 7:1, Paul refers back to the Old Testament quotations in 6:16–17 with the phrase "these promises." How do the OT quotations of 6:16–17 support the command in 7:1 to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit"?

6. What is it that Paul seems to desire from the Corinthians in 7:2–4?

7. Compare and contrast godly sorrow and worldly sorrow (7:10).

8. What was Paul's purpose for the severe letter (7:12–13)?

Application: *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

9. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?

10. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?
