

# The Book of 2 Corinthians

## Chapter 1

1. In verse 3, Paul refers to God as the "the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort". The Greek word translated "mercies" indicates compassion from deep in His heart. The word translated as "comfort" could also be translated as consolation, solace, encouragement, or refreshment. God comforts us because of his compassion. What are some of the ways that God has comforted you? Take time to thank Him for His compassion towards you.
2. Read verses 4-7. In addition to comforting us simply to help us, God comforts us that we can be a comfort to others. As you think about the ways that God has worked in your life, ask God to help you see how He might want to use you to minister to others in the same way.
3. Paul tells in verses 8-10 of a tremendously difficult time that he and his companions went through while in Asia. They were "burdened", "despaired of life", and had the "sentence of death" upon them. But notice the reason for this in the middle of verse 9, "that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead". When we face seemingly impossible situations, God designs these as opportunities to trust Him in a greater way. What difficulties is God bringing you through now? Are you taking advantage of the opportunity to trust Him in it?
4. Paul speaks of his "boast": that he lived in "simplicity and godly sincerity", not according to his own power and resource but by the grace of God. Essentially, this means that Paul lifted a life that was an open book and had no hypocrisy. His only agenda was Jesus. Have you ever lived this way? If not, what is holding you back? If you once did, but are not now, what have you allowed to creep in to get in the way? No matter where you're at, ask Jesus for help to live like Paul!
5. Read verses 15-18. The Corinthians are accusing Paul of not being a man of his word. However, Paul wasn't saying yes and then changing it to a no. He was just noncommittal until he was sure it was the Lord. Read Matt 5:33-37. Do you keep your promises? Do you stick to your yes's and no's? Do you count the cost before you make commitments?
6. The reason it is important for us to be trustworthy when we say we do something is found in verses 19-20. What is God's character when He makes promises?
7. We are told that the Holy Spirit is in our hearts as a guarantee. The word for guarantee means "money which in purchases is given as a pledge or down payment that the full amount will subsequently be paid". In other words, the fact that the Spirit lives in us, is a proof that Jesus will finish the work in us and take us home. Read Phil 1:6. How does this truth minister to you?
8. In verse 24 Paul speaks of not having dominion over (being the boss of) the Corinthians. Rather he says that he is a "fellow worker", a Greek word that we get our word "synergy" from. Synergy means multiple forces working as one. What part do you play in the work of the kingdom of heaven? Do you have your eyes on the prize: seeing people come to know God and to grow in their relationship with Him?

## Chapter 2

1. In verses 1-3 Paul gives some great principles on relationship and conflict. The Corinthian church was plagued by problems. They were a very "fleshy" church; they often didn't act like Jesus. Because Paul loved them, at times he had to correct them, both by letter and face to face. It's almost never a comfortable thing to correct someone.
  - a. In verse 1 Paul says that he has made up his mind not to come to them "in sorrow". In other words, having said his peace to them, he gave them space and time to change. Do you have any broken relationships? Have you said

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what the Lord would have you say to that person? If you have, ask God for patience with those people, and give God room and space to work.

- b. In verse 2, Paul indicates that although he loves them very much and would be very happy to see them; at this time they would not be happy to see him. Sometimes in our relationships we have such affection for a person that we push things too much. We care more about how they make us feel, than about the person. Take some time to assess your most important relationships. Ask God to help you to want what is best for them, and not simply what you get from them or want for them.
  - c. Verse 3 sums up the reason for these things. Relationships are about joy! Read Matthew 22:36-39. When you put the welfare of others first, how does that affect your relationship with them? Ask God to fill you with His Spirit when you spend time with loved ones. As He does you can be a joy and a blessing to be around, and God can use you to heal those broken relationships.
2. Read verse 4. Paul had to speak some very hard words to the Corinthians in his last letter to them. What was his motivation for speaking this way to them? What was not his motivation? When you deliver difficult counsel to someone, do you make sure to communicate that you love them?
  3. As we look at broken relationships, it is valuable for us to take time to thank God for all that He has done and continues to do to heal the brokenness in our relationship with Him. What has God done to keep our relationship with Him joyous?
  4. In verses 5-8 Paul speaks to them of the man who needed to be corrected in his first letter (See 1 Corinthians 5:1-7). Note verses 7 and 8. What should we consider after we have rebuked or corrected someone?
  5. Look at verses 10-11. Forgiveness is central to the Christian life. We are a forgiven people, because of a forgiving God, and so we should be forgiving. Read Matthew 18:21-35. When we are not forgiving, how does that leave an open door for Satan to do damage in our lives?
  6. Paul had no rest in his spirit in the ministry in Troas, despite an open door from the Lord. Something was missing, and he moved on to Macedonia. This looked like a failure, but notice Paul's comments in verse 14. Does Paul sound defeated? What caused him to have the attitude that he had?
  7. We have a fragrance that comes off of our lives. As Christians, we want people to sense Jesus in us. However, although He is beautiful to us, to the unrepentant He is not. Are people clear about who Jesus is when they spend time with you? Do they know more about Him when they are around you?

## Chapter 3

1. Because his apostleship has been called into question by some within the church, Paul has found the need to respond to those criticisms. He will do this several times in this letter, but he does not want to do so with just talk. Read verses 1-3. What is this first part of his "resume" as he re-establishes his ministry to the Corinthians? Read Matt 11:16-19, and Matt 7:16-20. As you seek to be a witness for Christ, make sure that you are more than just talk.
2. Consider verse 3. God changes us from the inside out, changing our hearts by His Spirit. How has God changed who you are on the inside? In verse 4, Paul states that they have a great trust toward God because of Jesus. How does knowing Jesus help us to trust God? What in His life and character has proved that God is trustworthy?
3. In verses 5-6, Paul puts the things he is talking about in perspective: his confidence is not in his self. How has Paul been made sufficient for the ministry to which God has called him? How are we made sufficient?
4. Read verses 6-11. The Old covenant, the law, was a relationship based on our performance. Although there were certain glorious things about this covenant (one of

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which was that God's holy character was revealed), it is doomed because of our inability to perform to God's standard. However, the new covenant, Grace through faith, has a greater glory, because this relationship is based on trusting in Jesus' ability to work through His Spirit. What are some ways that this new relationship with God is better than the old? Note verse 17.

5. Paul found a great boldness and confidence in knowing the power of God's Spirit at work in Him. Do you know this power? Ask God to fill you with His Spirit afresh, that you may walk in His power. What does God want to do with you? Although you are not sufficient for His calling on your life, is He?
6. In the same way that the Moses veiled his face, Israel has a veil over their face, and cannot see how the OT scriptures prophesy of Jesus. Read 1Cor 2:12-16. When you read your bible do you ask for understanding from God? Make a habit of it!
7. Look at verse 18. As we spend time looking upon, studying, and getting to know Jesus, what happens to us?

## Chapter 4

1. Serving others in the name of Jesus is something that is not always easy. The enemy, the world, and our own flesh often oppose us. We can easily be discouraged. According to verse 1 and verses 16-18, what things kept Paul from becoming discouraged? In verse 2 Paul speaks about living a wide open life for Christ: renouncing sin, turning away from scheming, plainly speaking the word of God, and shining with truth. He was not a "secret" Christian. Why does hiding your Christianity never work?
2. In verses 3-4 Paul speaks about Satan as the "god of this world" (see also 1 John 5:19). Even though Paul was living such a vibrant life for Jesus, and even though the gospel was clearly presented, Satan was still in opposition (read John 8:44). In this verse what does he do to stop people from seeing Jesus? Read verse 6 to see how God overcomes this.
3. Read verses 5-6. As we seek to communicate the gospel to those who are lost, who the enemy is coming against, we must keep Jesus central. What do we preach and what do we not preach? As we do this, who breaks through the darkness and blindness of those we are trying to reach?
4. We are clay pots, easily broken and made of dust. Yet we contain a valuable treasure: the gospel and the Spirit of God. How does knowing this affect how we minister to others? How does it affect how they see God?
5. Verses 8-12 speak of a principle in the Christian life: God uses a person who dies to himself and lets God live through him (see Luke 9:23-25). Do you daily lay down your wants and desires at Jesus' feet and say "not my will but your will, Lord"? According to these verses, how does living this way affect others?
6. Read verses 13-15. Paul preached, trusting that God would work. It was risky for him to preach the gospel, and it often cost him. But others were important to him; to him Christianity wasn't just about getting himself saved, but seeing others saved as well. How much of a priority is it to you to see "grace spread to the many"? If it is not ask God to change your heart today.

## Chapter 5

1. The idea at the beginning of chapter 5 was begun back in the middle of chapter 4: that although in this life we suffer for the sake of the gospel, we should not let that deter us, for in the next life, the rewards of earthly faithfulness are well worth it. Paul then uses the analogy of a tent and a house, comparing them to our earthly and heavenly bodies, respectively. How are tents and houses different? Looking at verse

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- 1, what are the differences between the earthly tent body and the heavenly house body? Read what Jesus said in Matthew 10:28, and John 14:1-3.
2. Verses 2 and 4 repeat the idea of groaning in our earthly bodies. What are some ways that these "tents" are difficult to be in? How will it be better when we are given new, eternal bodies?
3. In the midst of the teaching on our future heavenly home and body, verse 7 captures a critical idea: in this life, we walk by trusting in God and His Word, not by trusting in what we see. Clearly, we cannot see what we will become (see 1John 3:2), but we have the promise of God that it will be wonderful. How often do you make a deliberate choice to trust what the bible says, in spite of the culture standing in opposition to it?
4. Read verses 6-10. In verse 8 Paul says that he would love to get his new body and go to be home with the Lord (also read Phil 1:21-24). Does Paul's desire to go to heaven cause him to have an "escapist" mentality, where he checks out of this life and does nothing (look at verse 9)? Are you actively engaged in living this life for the hope of the next life?
5. In verse 11-14 Paul states that because he sees the judgment to come, he makes it his goal both with his words and his life in any way possible to persuade people to give their hearts to Jesus. Have you taken time recently to consider the eternal estate of people you love who are lost? Take time to truly pray for these people, and ask God to give you a compassion for the lost and a drive to reach them.
6. Consider verse 15. If you are a born again Christian, given the life of Jesus, how should you now live?
7. Look at verse 17-21. What are the benefits in these verses of being "in Christ"? List each one of them.
8. As a result of the work that God has done in us, He desires to do a work through us. Having been reconciled (made right with) God, He has given us the ministry of reconciling others to Him. Who in your life might God want to use you to reach? Paul said that he "implored", or begged the Corinthians to get right with God. Do you have enough love for others to beg them to consider Christ?

## Chapter 6

1. Paul tells the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain. The Greek word translated "vain" could also be translated as "empty-handed", or "purposeless". In other words: do something with the grace that God has shown you. Is your life substantially changed from when you were not a Christian? Do you labor for the kingdom with a sense of purpose?
2. Read verse 2. When should we begin to give God our best? Although life has seasons, and we must wait on the Lord for His timing on many things, we can pursue knowing Him and actively showing love to people at all times.
3. Paul essentially says in verse 3 that his whole life was lived in such a way that it reflected well on Jesus and that he would be able to serve others without them questioning his sincerity. Examine your own life. Are there areas of your life that do not reflect well on your Savior? What is God calling you to do to have a more effective witness with others?
4. Read verses 4-10. Make a list of all the ways that Paul's life was demonstrating the authenticity of his ministry and his relationship with God.
5. In verse 10 you can really hear Paul's love for the Corinthians. As you seek to minister to others, do you seek to speak openly, freely, generously? Are you clear with them that your motive is love?
6. Paul tells the Corinthians that they are not restricted by him, but by their own affections. In other words, the only limitation on us is how much we let God work in us. Are there ways that God might want to work in your life that you are restricting?

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Are you giving too much affection to anything, and if so how does that affect what God would do with you?

7. Being unequally yoked means connecting together two different animals that are not compatible because of the differences inherent to their nature (size, strength, temperament). In verses 14-18, Paul deals with the subject of our deepest relationships and commitments, and how these need to be with other believers. Jesus himself was a "friend of sinners", so this does not mean that we cannot have relationships with unbelievers. However, our best friends, husbands/wives, business partners, really anyone we join ourselves to, should love Jesus. What are the types of problems that can come up if this is not the case? This passage says to be careful about the commitments we make. However, if you have already made such commitments, God's instruction from 1 Corinthians 7 is that we should honor these commitments, seeking to be a witness to the other party.
8. Paul refers to us as the temple of the Holy Spirit; this is an awesome thought! God almighty lives in us! Everywhere you go, you bring God with you. Spend some time thinking/praying about that. What does that mean for what God wants to do with you wherever you go?

## Chapter 7

1. In verse 1 Paul appeals to the Christians to live clean, holy lives, because of the promises of God in the last three verses of chapter 6. Go back and list those out.
2. Look at verse 2-3. Does Paul himself live the way that he is telling the Corinthians to live? An example is a powerful tool to help others live for Jesus.
3. Notice that Titus was a comfort to the Paul. Notice also that the message of the Corinthians doing well in the Lord was a comfort to Paul. Even those who know Jesus well are encouraged as He works in and through others. Do you regularly consider the impact you have on others? Are you aware how meaningful your life can be in God's hands?
4. In verses 8-12 Paul references the corrective letter that he had written to them earlier (we know it as 1 Corinthians). Notice:
  - a. Paul at first regretted sending the letter, because its harsh tone might hurt them. But once he saw them respond positively to the correction, he was glad that he sent it. Have you ever had to correct someone and been sorry about it? Have you ever known the joy of someone welcoming the correction?
  - b. Paul was happy not just that they were sad, but that they were sad enough about their own sin to turn from it. Compare and contrast godly sorrow with a worldly sorrow. What does godly sorrow produce?
  - c. Ultimately, Paul wrote not just to fix a wrong, but because he truly cared for the Corinthian believers. Do your efforts to correct others come from a desire to make things right, or from a desire to demonstrate God's love and care?

## Chapter 8

1. The church back in Jerusalem was experiencing persecution and hard, lean times. Paul made it his habit to take up a monetary collection for them from the churches he visited, and later to present this gift to the church at Jerusalem. In verse 1 Paul brings up the churches in Macedonia, who although they were not well off financially, were generous in their giving. Read Luke 21:1-4. What is important to God about our giving? In God's eyes, does having a lot mean that you can give more?
2. Look at verse 3 and 4. Write down some of the things that characterized the Macedonian church's giving.

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3. Notice verse 5. What is the most important part of giving to God?
4. Look at verse 6 and verses 10-11. It seems that the Corinthians had made some kind of commitment to give to the church in Jerusalem. Paul had sent Titus to make sure that they followed through on that commitment. How important is it to you to keep your word? What things get in the way of us keeping our promises? Read Matt 5:33-37 and James 5:12. Is God reminding you of a commitment that He wants you to follow through on?
5. Read verses 7-9. Paul is not giving a legalistic outward command to give. Rather, he is calling them to follow the example of Jesus in giving all of ourselves for the cause of the kingdom. Is loving generosity an important value to you? Do your actions bear this out?
6. In verses 12-15, Paul builds on the idea that the church is the body of Christ. Read 1Cor 12:12-27. Do you consider other as often as you consider yourself? Especially do you care for others in the body of Christ that way?
7. Titus had a tremendous reputation. As you read through this chapter, note some qualities about Titus that are listed here. This is the same Titus that Paul writes to later in the book of Titus, so keep him in mind when we come to Titus in the regular bible reading in a few weeks.

## Chapter 9

1. Paul continues the idea of Christians giving to others, and the Corinthians had a great willingness to do so. What affect did their passion have on the Macedonian believers?
2. In verses 3-5, an interesting principle is brought up. Although the Corinthians had a heart for giving, there was also a discipline involved in doing so. Budgeting for giving is important to help us give with the right heart. Note the end of verse 5. What is the right way to give? What is the wrong way?
3. Read verse 6, and read Matt 6:19-21 for commentary. Now rewrite verse 6 in your own words.
4. Verse 7 is the definitive New Testament rule when it comes to giving. What two ways does this verse tell us to give to God? What two ways does it tell us to not give to God?
5. Look at verse 8. What is God able to do?
6. Consider that in verse 8 we are told God can give us an abundance (or over and above what we need) for "every good work". God equips us by his grace. Read 2Tim 3:16-17. Notice the same phrase "every good work". How does God equip us with His grace?
7. Read verses 9-11. Ultimately, all provision comes from God. Take time to thank Him for all He has provided for you.
8. Sometimes when we give, we think of the sacrifice that we are making, and we forget all of the ways that God will use that sacrifice. In verses 12-14 we read of the effects of the Corinthian generosity. What did their giving accomplish?
9. Paul gets excited at the end of the chapter and thanks God for a gift that words can't explain. Look up John 3:16. What is this gift?

## Chapter 10

1. Look at verses 1-2, 8-11. Paul was an apostle, and had great authority and power from the Lord. We see the Lord giving power to another apostle (Peter) to bring judgment down upon sin in the early church (Acts 5). The Corinthians had always known Paul as meek in person, yet in his letters he has been bold to them. He warns them that when he sees them in person, they will see another side of him if necessary, and he begs them to respond to his written correction. It seems that Paul is taking every opportunity to be gracious with others, and give them opportunity to repent. If you see someone you care about doing something wrong, are you quick to jump into

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conflict? Do you control your emotions and deal deliberately, thoughtfully, and prayerfully with others before you act or speak?

2. Paul's opponents said that he was just like them (he walked in the flesh). However how was he different from them? (verse 3)
3. Read verse 4-6. Paul fought spiritual battles with spiritual weapons. As Christians we are in a warfare (Read Ephesians 6:10-20). Yet we cannot fight this war with earthly weapons, or by earthly resources. What are the weapons and armor that we are outfitted with when we engage in spiritual warfare? Fleshly human resources are not only useless for this battle, but they are the opponent's tools! Read Galatians 5:19-21 to see what the flesh produces.
4. In verse 7, Paul cautions the Corinthians on making judgment based on outward appearance. Read 1 Samuel 16:7. What does the Lord look at? Although we cannot see a man's heart, what are some good ways to gauge a man's heart? Read Matthew 7:15-27.
5. In verse 12 we see that the people who were criticizing Paul compared and measured themselves by one another. Read John 21:15-22. How did Jesus handle Peter comparing himself to John? Read Ephesians 4:13. According to this verse who should we compare ourselves to? What effect does making this comparison have on you?
6. Look at verses 13-16. Paul's hope is to "not boast in other men's labors", but to "preach the gospel in the regions beyond you". Read Romans 15:20-21. Do you have a heart to see the gospel of God's grace run?
7. In verse 17, Paul quotes Jeremiah 9:23-24. What should we not glory in? What should we glory in?
8. Look at verse 18. Ultimately, our opinion of ourselves does not matter; only what God thinks counts. Read Matt 25:14-30. What do you want to hear the Lord say to you when you stand before Him?

## Chapter 11

1. In verse 2, Paul says that he has a godly "jealousy" for the Corinthians. This word means zeal, passion, or fervency. What is Paul's ultimate desire for the Corinthians? Do you have anyone that you feel this way about?
2. The Corinthians had some false, puffed-up teachers among them. Paul wanted to protect them and so reminds them that the gospel is simple: God loves us; Jesus died for the forgiveness of our sins, and sent his Spirit so that we could walk in newness of life. Are you clear on the simple truths of Christ? Make sure that these as you walk with God that these simple foundations are never replaced by seemingly "deeper" truths.
3. Read verses 5-12. Paul sought to preach the gospel free of charge to the Corinthians, being supported by other churches. He did this for three reasons, found in verses 9, 11, and 12. What were they?
4. Every one of the New Testament authors warned of false teachers. What do verses 13-15 teach us about false teachers? If this is the case, how can we keep from being deceived?
5. Paul loves to talk about and honor Jesus; he does not like to talk about himself. However, in order to point out the differences between himself and the false teachers that were preying upon the Corinthian church, he takes some time to "boast" about his resume' of service to God through the rest of the chapter. James 3:13 states a principle concerning being a teacher in the church of God. Write this principle in your own words as you consider the following:
  - a. In verse 22 and 23, how is Paul equal to the false teachers? In what ways is he greater than them?
  - b. Read verses 24-27. Make a list of all the things that Paul went through for the sake of the gospel.

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- c. Read verse 28. Besides all of the outward things that he went through, Paul crowns the list with the inward weight that he carries of concern for the churches. He loves the churches he has planted like they are his children. Is there anyone that you feel a responsibility for spiritually speaking?

## Chapter 12

1. In verse 1-4, Paul tells of a man who was caught up to heaven and who heard things there that were so wonderful that he could not explain them, and it wouldn't even be right to try. Do you ever spend time imagining heaven? Do you have a dry, cliché, "clouds and harps" view of heaven, or is your concept of it more like Paul says it is here?
2. Although Paul was aware of a person who had gone through this spectacular experience, look at what he says at the end of verse 6. Where does he keep the focus?
3. God worked in Paul's life tremendously, and in verse 7 he indicates that there could be a temptation to think that he was special and better than others. God allowed Satan to beat Paul up a bit to keep him humble. Read Job 1. Read Romans 8:28. God can even use our enemies for good purposes in our lives. Thank God that He is in control!
4. Even though God uses difficulties and trials in our lives, it is not always pleasant. Read verses 8-10. Paul seeks to get himself out from under the difficulty, but God tells him no. What things is God doing and trying to teach Paul according to these verses? Do these principles apply in our lives? Are you going through anything difficult that God is not letting you out from under? Are you learning the same things that God was teaching Paul?
5. In verses 11-18 Paul is looking forward to a future time when he will see the Corinthians, and reminding them of how he has not been a financial burden to them. The principles seem to be illustrated most clearly in verse 14-15. Paul essentially says that he wants the best for them, as a parent does for his child and that as a parent he is happy to spend his life to care for them. It is God's desire that we grow up and mature as Christians, and that we eventually become spiritual "parents", helping others to grow in their relationship with Jesus. Read 2 Timothy 2:2. Are you doing this now? If not who might God want you to start with? If you feel totally incapable of disciplining another, what do you have to do to grow today so that you later are capable?
6. Look at verse 19. What is Paul's end goal in all that he says and does for the Corinthians?
7. Consider verse 20-21. When Paul saw sin in the lives of the Corinthians, how did he feel? Do you feel this way about sin in your own life? Are you grieved over sin in the life of others? Take time to pray for people you know who are walking in sin and are in need of repentance and trusting God.

## Chapter 13

1. As Paul wraps up this second letter of the Corinthians, we have gotten to know them pretty well. The Corinthian church had a lot of problems, but they were greatly loved by Paul, and by God. We see that God's heart is to warn those who are sin, and to give them opportunity for repentance, before consequences become more severe. How has God warned you in your life about the consequences of sin? Is there anything in your life now that God is warning you need to change?
2. Paul brought up the idea of God's strength being made perfect in our weakness. In verses 3-4 we see that this principle was at work both in Jesus and in Paul. Read Rom 6:1-13. This principle should be in work in us as well: death to self, new life by the Spirit of God.



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3. In verses 5-6, the word translated as "disqualified" is a word used to test money to see if it is real or counterfeit. Paul is here telling us to examine and test our lives to see if we are really following God. The test is that actions speak louder than words. What evidence is there in your life that you are walking with God? Privately when no one is around? Personally in your relationships with others? Publicly when people look at your life and the way you live?
4. Verses 7-9. Paul ultimately is writing these things so that the Corinthians would "do no evil" and "be made complete". In other words, he wants them to be more like Jesus. Consider those in your own life that God has used to help you grow in Jesus. Have you responded to God's work in your life? Are you still willing to let God do work in you? Pray for a soft and moldable heart to let God have His way in your life.
5. In verse 10, Paul mentions that writing this letter was a way that he could say a lot of hard things to the Corinthians so that he didn't have to do that when they were together. Sometimes writing a letter is a good way to articulate our thoughts and help us say the right things. Maybe God would have you do the same with some people you love? Even if you don't send them a letter, writing will help you to know what is most important for you to speak to them about.
6. Read verse 11. What four things does Paul tell the Corinthians to do? What is result of obedience to these things?
7. Read verse 14. Paul speaks of each person in the Trinity in this verse. What does this verse teach you about God's heart for us?