As with other assignments, because of the amount of material these notes and study questions will focus on a few verses from the assignment rather than the whole chapter.

Background

1 and 2 Corinthians are two of perhaps four letters that Paul wrote to the Saints in Corinth. The first letter (referred to in 1 Corinthians 5:9–13) has not been preserved. First Corinthians is the second letter, written partly in response to reports of problems in Corinth and partly in response to questions that the Corinthians had written to ask Paul. As we can see in 1 Corinthians 16:3–6, when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, he intended to visit Corinth later, and he promised to send Timothy to Corinth. Timothy may have been the messenger who carried 1 Corinthians to Corinth.

After writing and sending 1 Corinthians, Paul made a second trip to Corinth, but that visit was a difficult one, with bad feelings between Paul and the Corinthians. (First Corinthians 2:1 refers to that visit.) After that tense visit, it seems that Paul wrote a third letter (no longer in existence) from Ephesus rather than from Corinth again. (See 2 Corinthians 1:15 and 23.) This lost letter would have
been quite critical of the Corinthians but written in Paul’s anguish (2 Corinthians 2:4).

After writing the third (hypothetical and missing) letter, Paul left Ephesus for Troas and continued on to Macedonia, where he met Titus. Titus brought news that the Corinthians had repented and were reconciled to Paul (2 Corinthians 7:5–13), and Paul wrote 2 Corinthians in response. Thus, 2 Corinthians seems to be the fourth letter in the series, written after Paul learned of the Corinthians’ repentance.

Paul sent Titus back to Corinth with the letter that we call 2 Corinthians, a letter that included instructions for raising money to aid the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:16–20).

There are three main parts to 2 Corinthians:

1. 2 Corinthians 1:12–7:16
   Paul defends his relation to the Corinthians, explaining his anger, tears, and joy
2. 2 Corinthians 8:1–9:15
   He discusses the welfare collection being made for the Saints in Jerusalem
3. 2 Corinthians 10:1–13:10
   Paul confronts apostates within the Corinthian church, in particular some who think of themselves as what we might call “super apostles” (“chief apostles” in the King James Version—11:5) teaching a new, supposedly superior version of the gospel.
These supposed super apostles seem to have been a new kind of Judaizer: wealthy Palestinian Jewish converts, they insisted on reading the Old Testament only allegorically, they claimed special spiritual knowledge, they seem to have argued that Christ’s death made no difference to him because he was just as heavenly before as afterward, and they believed that wealth is proof of righteousness (and so denied that we must suffer and sacrifice).

Are there those today who are comparable to these super apostles? If so, how do we deal with their teachings? How do we avoid them? More important, how do we avoid becoming one of them?

2 Corinthians 1

Verses 3–4: Given the circumstances in which the letter was written, why is it appropriate that Paul begin by praising Jesus as “the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort” (verse 3)?

What does it mean to say that the Father is “the Father of mercies”?

What does the word comfort mean? According to the Oxford English Dictionary, when the Bible was being translated into English, the word meant “to strengthen (morally or spiritually); to encourage, hearten, inspire, incite.” Does that change the meaning of the verse for you?1

How are mercy and comfort related?
What reason does verse 4 give for Paul’s gratitude? What kind of comfort does Paul offer those who need comfort? How was Paul comforted by God?

The words *comfort* and *consolation* in verses 3–7 all translate variations of the same word, *parakaleō*. Christ has used the noun form of the word to describe both himself and the Holy Spirit, “the paraclete.” (See John 14:16; see also 1 John 2:1.) The word means not just “comforter,” though that translation is meaningful and important, but “one who stands beside another,” “an advocate for another.” Does that understanding of the word change your understanding of these verses? What does the promise of a comforter mean to us when we are suffering?

**Verses 5–7:** What does Paul mean when he says “the sufferings of Christ abound in us” (verse 5)? Might we reasonably understand this to mean “the sufferings for Christ”? We live in a time that is relatively free from persecution. What might it mean to suffer for Christ today? Can we do so in our personal relations, such as those with our family, ward, or community members?

Here is another translation of verse 6: “If we suffer, it is for your help and salvation; if we are helped, then you too are helped and given the strength to endure with patience the same sufferings that we also endure.” What is Paul saying when he says that if he suffers it is to help the Corinthians? What does he mean when he says that if he is helped then they too are helped? Do we see anything like this in our own relations?
In verse 7 Paul tells the Corinthians that he has a steadfast hope for them because he knows something. What does he know? How does that knowledge yield hope? Hope for what?

2 Corinthians 4

Verses 1–2: In verse 1 Paul says that he has received his ministry, his calling, through God’s mercy. What does he mean by that? Are our callings given to us by divine mercy? How does having received his calling by God’s mercy make it possible for him to be strong?

What might the “hidden things of dishonesty [or shame]” (verse 2) be? Craftiness is the same word translated beguiled in 2 Corinthians 11:3. What is Paul talking about?

What does it mean to use the word of God deceitfully, in other words, to falsify it? How might we do so? Do we ever do so without thinking that we are?

What does it mean to commend oneself to the conscience or awareness of men in the sight of God?

Verses 3–6: Who are “them that are lost” (verse 3)? Why is the gospel hidden from them? Does it mean that they should not be proselytized?

How does Paul explain their loss (verse 4)?

Why does Paul think that he must remind the Corinthians that he is not preaching himself (verse 5)? What does he mean when he says that he preaches himself a servant for Jesus’s sake?
Paul begins verse 6 with a reference to the creation. Why does he use that reference to speak of his conversion? What does the creation have to do with his conversion?

In whose face did the Jews see the glory of God (Exodus 39:29–33)? In whose face did Paul, like other Christians, see that glory?

**Verses 7–12:** Who is the earthen vessel, the clay pot, in which a revelation of Jesus Christ has occurred? How does that revelation show “the excellency of the power of God, and not of us” (verse 7)?

The word translated troubled (verse 8) means “confined, narrowed.” Is that a good description of what it means to be troubled? The word translated distressed means “cramped” and so, also, “afflicted.” Paul is hemmed in on every side, but he is not cramped. What does he mean by that? One translation of the first clause is “being afflicted in every-thing, but not being anguished.” Do you think that captures well what Paul is saying? Why or why not?

The word translated perplexed means “to be uncertain.” What does despair mean to you? Why might perplexity lead to despair? Why doesn’t Paul despair? Does that say anything about our despair? Other translations of the word translated despair are “at a loss psychologically,” “in great difficulty,” “in great doubt,” and “embarrassed.” Do you think one of those would make a better translation? If so, why?

Why is it important for Paul to remind the Corinthians that he has been persecuted (verse 9)? Are any of those he is writ-
ing to, perhaps, among the people he thinks of as his persecutors? What does it mean to be cast down (struck down)?

In verse 10 Paul says that he always carries the death of Jesus in his own body. What does that mean? How is Jesus’s death revealed in Paul’s body?

The word *for* at the beginning of verse 11 tells us that this verse explains what Paul has just said. What is the explanation?

“Delivered unto” might be translated as “are in danger of.” Does that help you understand the verse?

How was the life of Jesus revealed in Paul’s body? How is it revealed in ours?

Given what Paul has just said in verses 10–11, can you explain what he means in verse 12? In what sense or senses is death something at work in Paul’s life? How is life at work in the lives at those in Corinth?

**Verses 13–15:** In verse 13 Paul quotes from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the version that he and most of those to whom he wrote would have used). He quotes Psalm 116:10: “I believed, and therefore have I spoken.” What point is Paul making by quoting that scripture?

In verse 14 Paul tells what he believes, in other words, what he was referring to in verse 13. What does he believe, and how is that relevant to the discussion?

How would you describe the topic that Paul has been discussing? Is it announced in verses 1–2? In verses 8–11?
Somewhere else? Are the topics of those two passages different or the same?

What is Paul saying in this verse? To what does “these things” refer? There is no verb in the Greek text. In Greek one could omit the to be verb, leaving it understood. Do you think that the King James translators have assumed the correct verb, are? Or should it be in either the past or the future tense: “were” or “will be”?

Paul does what he does so that many will thank God and, through those thanks, glorify him. Is that what motivates us when we fulfill our callings? What other motives are there? How do we know whether our motives are good or bad?

**Verses 16–18:** Paul says this is why he doesn’t lose strength. Explain what he says in these verses. What keeps him going?

In verse 16, what does “outward man” refer to? How about “inward man”? The word perished might literally be translated “is being corrupted,” and the word renewed might literally be translated “is being renewed or reinvigorated.” What causes the outward person to perish? What reinvigorates the inward person?

In verse 17 Paul says that though he is afflicted now, he will receive “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” He just said that he is motivated by the desire that people will praise God. Now he says that he is buoyed up by the promise of a great reward. Is there a contradiction between those things? If not, explain why not. If so, explain the contradiction and see whether you can explain how Paul could have made the mistake.
In 2 Corinthians 11: 23–27 Paul describes some of the afflictions that he suffered: beatings and stonings, imprisonment, shipwreck and being lost at sea, the many great dangers of travel in those days, weariness, pain, sleeplessness, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness. How can he describe his affliction as light (verse 17)?

Elder Neal Maxwell said: “When we take Jesus’s yoke upon us, this admits us eventually to what Paul called ‘the fellowship of [Christ’s] sufferings’ (Philippians 3:10). Whether illness or aloneness, injustice or rejection, . . . our comparatively small-scale sufferings, if we are meek, will sink into the very marrow of the soul. We then better appreciate not only Jesus’s sufferings for us, but also His matchless character, moving us to greater adoration and even emulation.”

What does it mean to take Jesus’s yoke on ourselves? How is suffering related to doing so? According to Elder Maxwell, what is the effect of suffering meekly? Why is adoration important? What would suffering bring us to emulate?

Why does Paul describe eternal glory as a weight?

In verse 18, what are “the things which are seen” and “the things which are not seen”? What does this verse have to do with the previous discussion?