

“INTRODUCTION TO 2 CORINTHIANS”

INTRODUCTION: The conflicts that plagued the Apostle Paul were constant. False teachers were constantly making accusations about Paul – declaring that he was a self-appointed, inferior man who merely claimed to be an apostle; that he was misleading the people he taught; that his teachings were contrary to the Law; that he violated Roman Law; that he was financially motivated, seeking personal gain; that he was preaching a Gospel contrary to the other Apostles in Jerusalem; and that he was personally unimpressive and inferior. Many of these accusations, Paul sets straight throughout the book of 2 Corinthians. However, ultimately, Paul’s passion in writing was to promote Jesus Christ – as He always preached the Cross of Christ to the glory of Christ. Throughout 2 Corinthians, Paul glorifies Christ:

- Chapter 1 – the example of Christ – v. 19
- Chapter 2 – the victory in Christ – v. 14
- Chapter 3 – the transformation in Christ – v. 18
- Chapter 4 – the glory of Christ – v. 4
- Chapter 5 – the righteousness of Christ – v. 21
- Chapter 6 – the fellowship in Christ – v. 15
- Chapter 7 – the repentance in Christ – v. 10
- Chapter 8 – the generosity of Christ – v. 9
- Chapter 9 – the gift of Christ – v. 15
- Chapter 10 – the obedience of Christ – v. 5
- Chapter 11 – the purity in Christ – v. 2
- Chapter 12 – the power of Christ – 9
- Chapter 13 – the presence of Christ – v. 5

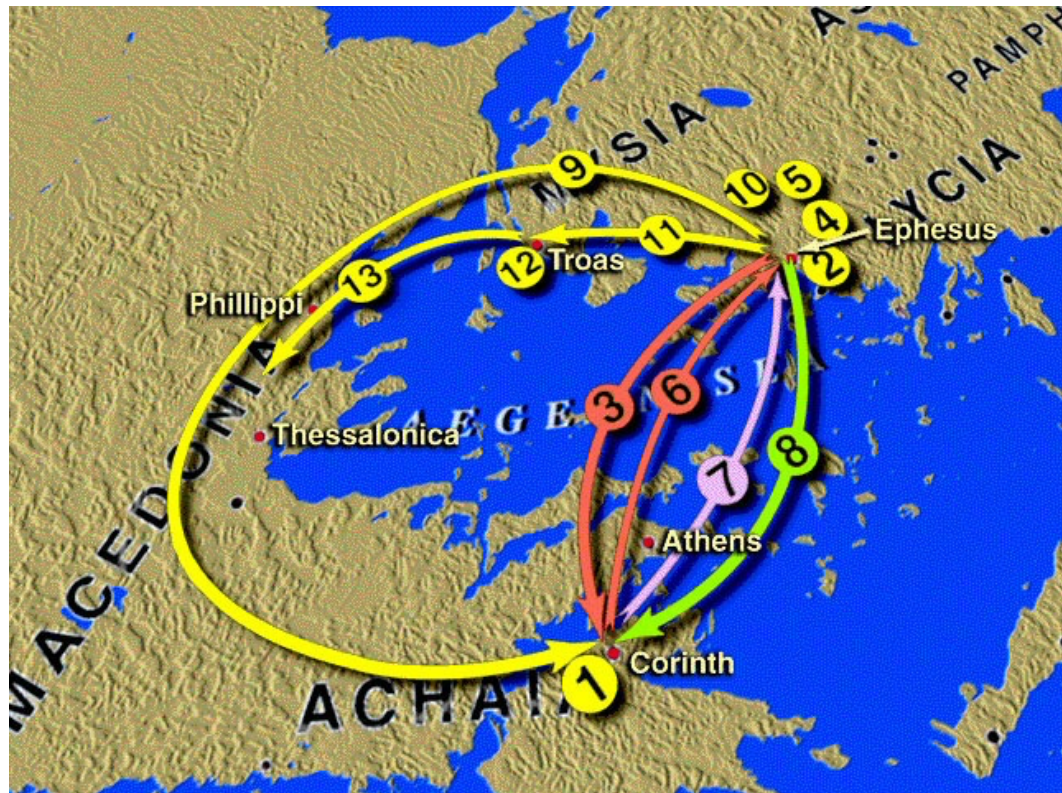
I. The Interaction by the Apostle – 1:1-11

A. The Background

1. Paul had a turbulent relationship with the church at Corinth.
2. **1** He originally came to Corinth during his 2nd Missionary Journey around AD 50-51 and stayed approximately 18 months (Acts 18:1-18).
3. He arrived there having been roughed up at Philippi and chased out of Thessalonica and Berea.
4. During his stay there, he formed the church and nurtured it until he left sometime in AD 52.
5. The church he left behind quickly fell prey to false teaching, rivalries, lawsuits, abuse of spiritual gifts, and legal action against one another.
6. **2 - 4** After several years, after Paul had been sick, made a vow, headed to Jerusalem, and returned to spend three years at Ephesus.
7. **5** While at Ephesus, Paul receives news about the troubles at Corinth – most notably that immorality had been accepted as an “alternative lifestyle,” causing Paul to immediately write to the Corinthians a letter called “**The Lost Letter**” – cp. ***1 Corinthians 5:9-11***.
8. **7** Some members of Chloe’s household (possibly one of the Community Groups in Corinth) responded by asking a series of questions – cp. ***1 Corinthians 1:11***.
9. Paul seems to have immediately responded by writing another letter to the Corinthians – what we call 1 Corinthians – “**The Long Letter**” – to respond to the questions.
10. As he is writing, yet another correspondence came from Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus adding to the questions and assuring Paul that the church generally is doing well – cp. ***1 Corinthians 16:17***.
11. **10** He sent this “**Long Letter**” around AD 54-55 while in Ephesus, where Paul planned to stay until Pentecost, then head to Macedonia and on to Corinth to spend the winter of 55-56 AD – cp. ***1 Corinthians 16:5-9***.
12. However, the controversies in Corinth weren’t settled by the “**Long Letter**,” and an emergency trip to Corinth, which was very controversial, resisted, and Paul seems to have been repudiated to some degree by a faction of the church led by one man in particular, causing Paul to leave without resolution – cp. ***2***

Corinthians 13:2.

13. He apparently returned to Ephesus and from there penned a scathing letter, bathed with the tears of grief, one that Paul seemed to have regretted sending so it can be called “**The Lamented Letter**” – cp. *2 Corinthians 7:8.*
14. **11-12** Paul seems to have fallen into a state of depression – distracted by fears within and traveled from Ephesus to Troas to wait for word from Titus as to whether the Corinthians had responded well to “**The Lamented Letter.**” – *2 Corinthians 7:5-6.*
15. **13** Finally, Paul left Troas for Macedonia, where he met Titus, coming to inform Paul of great news! – the offending brother had been dealt with and to such a degree that he was in danger of being overwhelmed.



16. Hearing this news, Paul picked up the pen and wrote 2 Corinthians – “**The Last Letter**” – this is the epistle that we are studying.
17. He writes it prior to coming to Corinth for the third time, which he does, and remains there for another three months as a guest of Gaius from where he writes Romans – *Romans 16:23.*
18. Paul left Corinth in a bit of a crisis as some there planned to

ambush and murder him, causing him to change his plans and leave overland instead of onboard ship as originally planned – cp. [Acts 20:3](#).

19. In 2 Corinthians, Paul addresses the remaining issues that are essential to the preservation of the Gospel in the church – and enables us to see the heart of the Apostle Paul for Christ Jesus, the Church belonging to Him, and the Gospel that promotes Him.
 - a) *The major theme of the book is Paul's defense of his integrity against those who were attacking him, given the authority of the Scriptures he wrote depended upon his apostolic role.*
 - b) *Additionally, he covers other subjects that are wonderfully edifying to the believer of any age:*
 - (1) A rich theological treatment of the New Covenant – 2 Corinthians 3:1-18.
 - (2) The explanation of what happens to the believer when he dies – 2 Corinthians 5:1-11.
 - (3) He explains reconciliation and justification also in 2 Corinthians 5.
 - (4) He teaches the need to separate from `unbelievers in 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1.
 - (5) He details the principles of giving to the Lord through the church in 2 Corinthians 8-9.
 - (6) He provides standards for distinguishing between servants of Christ and false teachers in 2 Corinthians 11:7-20.
 - (7) He explains how the Lord uses suffering in the lives of His children in 2 Corinthians 12.
 - (8) He also advocates for having one's eyes open during the sanctification process in 2 Corinthians 13.

B. The Blessing – vv. 1-2

1. Paul begins his “Last Letter” through self-designation as an apostle – ***“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God ...”***
2. This is a crucial designation as his apostleship had been called into question by the false teachers in Corinth – claiming that he was self-appointed and didn't carry the authority of those in Jerusalem – cp.
3. The emphasis that he was ***“an apostle ... by the will of God”*** is to demonstrate that his apostleship was not inferior to any of the other Apostles – cp. [2 Corinthians 11:5, 12:11](#).

4. This is critical as the content of the letter was inspired, and the discrediting of the Apostle Paul would necessarily discredit the text provided through him.
5. He also identifies “... **and Timothy our brother**” – as another source of ministry leadership to this church; a man who had been sent to Corinth by the Apostle to – **1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10**.
6. He then identifies them as the recipients of this divinely inspired message – “**To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia ...**”
 - a) *Caesar Augustus had divided Greece into two provinces – Macedonia and Achaia – Macedonia being the northern province and Achaia the southern and included Corinth, Cenchrea, and Athens.*
 - b) *Thus, the letter was intended to help recover the Apostle’s reputation throughout the entire region – illustrating that the focus was broader than the one congregation alone*
7. Paul’s aspiration and prayer for these saints is for their blessing – “**Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**”
 - a) “**grace**” [χάρις] – *is the means by which sinners are brought into fellowship with God, resulting in peace -*
 - b) “**peace**” [εἰρήνη] – *is the result of God’s grace found in Christ Jesus who Himself is our peace, not merely the absence of conflict but the presence of harmony.*
8. There is no other place whereby these things are available except “**from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**” working together to produce them in us – this is how Galatians, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon all begin.

C. The Battles – vv. 3-7

D. The Benefits – vv. 8-11

II. The Integrity of the Apostle – 1:12-2:11

A. The Privilege of Flexibility – vv. 1:12-22

B. The Priority of Forgiveness – vv. 1:23-2:11

III. The Instructions from the Apostle – 2:12-7:16

- A. A¹ Word of Exclamation – 2:12-17
- B. A Word of Examination – 3:1-5
- C. A Word of Exposition – 3:6-4:7
- D. A Word of Expectation – 4:8-5:11
- E. A Word of Exhortation – 5:12-21
- F. A Word of Exhibition – 6:1-7:16

IV. The Involvement with the Apostle – 8:1-9:15

- A. The Precedent for Giving – 8:1-6
- B. The Participation in Giving – 8:7-15
- C. The Precaution with the Gifts – 8:16-24
- D. The Priority in Giving – 9:1-9
- E. The Privilege in Giving – 9:10-15

V. The Influence of the Apostle – 10:1-13:13

- A. The Resources of the Apostle – 10:1-11
- B. The Regard for the Apostle – 10:11-18
- C. The Rejection by the Apostle – 11:1-11:21
- D. The Rejection of the Apostle – 11:21-33
- E. The Reinforcement of the Apostle – 12:1-10
- F. The Rapport by the Apostle – 12:11-21
- G. The Reproof by the Apostle – 13:1-10
- H. The Requests by the Apostle – 13:11-13

¹ These points are found in John Phillips, Exploring 2 Corinthians: An Expository Commentary, 2002, p. 6.