

## Introduction to *2 Corinthians* 2 Corinthians 1:1-2

### 1:1-2 – Greeting

**1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother**

**To the church of God that is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia:**

**1:2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

### Author, Date, and Original Audience of Epistle

- Author: The Apostle Paul (1:1; 10:1)
- Date: 56 A.D., during Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey, written from Macedonia
- Audience: The Church in Corinth and the region of Achaia

### Overview of Paul's Corinthian Ministry and Correspondence<sup>1</sup>

*2 Corinthians* appears to be Paul's 4<sup>th</sup> letter (at least) to the Corinthians (of which the Spirit has kept preserved 2 of his letters for us as Holy Scripture)

- Pauls' 1<sup>st</sup> visit to Corinth (*Acts 18:1-17*)  
Paul arrives in Corinth while on his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey and has a fruitful ministry in the midst of great difficulty and fearful moments (*Acts 18:9-11*).
- Paul leaves Corinth for Palestine via Ephesus (*Acts 18:18-22*).
- Paul returns to Ephesus on his 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey (*Acts 19*).
- **Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> letter to the Corinthians (*Not preserved by the Holy Spirit*)**  
While in Ephesus, Paul hears disturbing news about the Corinthian church from the household of Chloe (*1 Cor. 1:11*). Paul writes them a letter to exhort them to repent of their sin and to correct their manner of living ("*I wrote to you in my letter...*" – *1 Cor. 5:9*).
- The Corinthians respond with a letter of their own to Paul asking various questions (*1 Cor. 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12*).

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<sup>1</sup> I found John MacArthur's chapter on the *Introduction to 2 Corinthians* in his commentary on *2 Corinthians* very helpful along with the introductory material to *2 Corinthians* in the ESV Study Bible notes.

- **Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> letter (*Preserved by the Holy Spirit and canonized as "1 Corinthians"*)**  
Since Paul could not leave the ministry in Ephesus (*1 Cor. 16:3-10*) to come to Corinth at the time, he wrote this 2<sup>nd</sup> letter (delivered probably by Timothy around 55 A.D.) that answered the Corinthian's questions and exhorted them further to repent of their sinful living and lack of love for one another. If they did not repent, Paul said that he was ready to come and visit them personally and confront them (*1 Cor. 4:14-21*)!
- **Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> visit to Corinth – "the painful" or "sorrowful visit" (2 Cor. 2:1)**  
While it appears that some of the Corinthians may have repented of some of their sinful living, false teachers came to Corinth (claiming to come from the Jerusalem Church) and turned many of the Corinthians against Paul and away from true Christian living and godliness. These false teachers slandered Paul and used various arguments to refute Paul's claim that he was a true apostle of Jesus Christ (*2 Cor. 10-11*). It was a dastardly attack and one that was cowardly and demonic because Paul was not present to defend himself or the true Gospel that he preached.  
Paul left Ephesus (*Acts 20:1-2*) and came to Corinth to defend himself and to confront these false teachers in Corinth. However, Paul was defied openly by the Corinthians and was especially insulted by one of them (*2 Cor. 2:8-11; 7:12*). To Paul's great sorrow, the Corinthians did not stand up for Paul against the slander and insults and he returned to Ephesus in great sorrow.
- **Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> letter (*severe and strongly-worded – 2 Cor. 2:1-4*) – (**Not preserved by the Holy Spirit**)**  
Paul sadly and sorrowfully returned to Ephesus (but refused to give up on or abandon the Corinthian believers!) Paul wrote what has been called the "severe letter" and with very strong words (*2 Cor. 1-4*) called them out for their ungodly actions. Paul sent this letter to the Corinthians by the hand of Titus (*2 Cor. 7:5-16*). The anguish of the situation in Corinth was so severe for Paul that it prevented him from ministering as fully as he would have liked to Troas until he heard from Titus how his "severe letter" had been received by the Corinthians (*2 Cor. 2:12-13*).
- **Paul's 4<sup>th</sup> letter (*Preserved by the Holy Spirit and canonized as "2 Corinthians"*)**  
But good news came from Titus! Titus reported that most of the Corinthians had repented and renewed their love for Paul (*2 Cor. 7:7*). However, Paul knew the Corinthian church was not "out of the woods yet" in regard to their spiritual needs. It appears that the false teachers were still there and still a threat to the Corinthian's spiritual walk. Paul wrote to warn them, encourage them, comfort them, and to defend his apostleship against the false teacher's claims. Paul hoped to visit them again (*2 Cor. 13:1-2*). He sent his letter with Titus to deliver to the Corinthians.

- Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> visit to Corinth (2 Cor. 13:1-2)  
Paul stayed in Corinth for around 3 months it seems, perhaps in the winter season, (1 Cor. 16:6), around 57 A.D.

Of all the churches Paul ministered in, the Corinthian church appears to have caused him some of the most personal challenges and heartache. However, that did not keep Paul from faithfully loving them, even from afar!

### Why Study this Epistle?

1. Because it is God's Word and is therefore profitable for our spiritual growth.  
(2 Tim 3:16-17)
2. Because it focuses greatly on the comfort that God gives to His servants as they serve Him in and through great sorrow. *2 Corinthians* gives us a theology of God's comfort through Christ.
3. Because it shows us the love that Christians must have for one another, even when Christians hurt one another and need to seek reconciliation.
4. Because of its teaching that supports the ministry of giving and its instructions against false teaching and how to refute it with true Christian doctrine and living.