

Paul Writes 2 Corinthians



When: On 3rd journey [A.D. 57]
From Where: Somewhere in Macedonia (Acts 20:1-2a)

Synopsis

- Another of the “major” N.T. epistles of Paul
- We know Paul wrote this letter from somewhere in Macedonia (9:4)
 - He mentions some Macedonians may come with him to Corinth
- We can be fairly certain as to when he penned this letter
 - We remember the “wide, effective door” he mentioned in the first letter (1 Cor. 16:9)
 - The burning of the magic books in Ephesus (Acts 19:13-20)
 - That “door” apparently closed sooner than Paul originally anticipated
 - In this letter, Paul speaks of trouble & affliction in Asia (1:8a)
 - He “despaired even of life”...he had “the sentence of death” in him (1:8b-9)
 - The riot in Ephesus after the book burning certainly fits this description (Acts 19:23-41)
 - Following his departure from Ephesus, he went to Troas to find Titus, desiring a report on how Corinth had received his first letter and if they had repented (2:12-13)
 - Only later did he meet up with Titus in Macedonia (7:5-16)
 - Apparently, after this meeting, Paul wrote his 2nd letter to Corinth
 - As he had been the one to take Paul’s 1st letter to Corinth, we also believe Titus carried the 2nd letter (8:16-24)
- We also remember the part Timothy was to play in conjunction with this second letter
 - Paul sent him into Macedonia before the Ephesian riot broke out (Acts 19:22)
 - It appears Timothy was also to go to Corinth afterwards (1 Cor. 4:17)
 - Paul was not sure if Timothy would arrive in Corinth before he did (1 Cor. 16:10-11)
 - Paul planned to go to Corinth and winter there (1 Cor. 4:19; 16:5-6)
 - However, Timothy joins Paul in the salutation of this letter...obviously, they caught up with one another in Macedonia (1:1)
- There also is an “interesting twist” of Paul’s plans to go to Corinth revealed in both letters
 - He reveals his initial plans in the 2nd letter (1:15-16)
 - He mentions different traveling plans toward the end of the 1st letter (1 Cor. 16:5-6)
 - After writing the 1st letter, he wanted to give it time to work before he arrived
 - In the 2nd letter, Paul states he wanted to “spare” the Corinthians (1:23)
 - Events in Greece necessitated yet another “change in plans again re: his return trip to Syria (Acts 20:3)

The Two Treatises

Lesson 49

Synopsis (cont.)

- This letter mentions the money Paul was collecting for the needy saints (chs. 8 & 9)
 - The Corinthians had already been gathering up their funds for over a year (8:10)
 - Paul urged them to “complete the doing” of these plans (8:11)
- No other N.T. book gives us a glimpse into the heart of Paul more than the 2nd letter to Corinth
 - Sadly, it is a book often overlooked or ignored altogether
 - Paul speaks often of affliction and anxiety (1:4-6, 8-10; 4:8-12; 11:23-28; 12:7-10)
 - More importantly, Paul also speaks of comfort derived from serving God in the greatest of causes...His eternal kingdom and the gospel message to be preached (1:4; 2:14-17; 4:6-7, 16-18; 5:1-11; 7:6, 13)

Outline

Paul emphasizes the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ (1:1 – 7:16)

- God comforts His people (1:3-11)
 - The word “comfort” is used 10 times in vv. 3-7
 - God brings “comfort” through brethren, His word, the work of the gospel
- He is proud of & affectionate towards the Corinthians...knows the feeling is mutual (1:12-14)
- He is again “attacked”...he has to answer a false charge of him being “fickle” (1:15 – 2:4)
 - His decision to not come to Corinth was mischaracterized
 - Paul was not indecisive or “fickle,” but decisive...he cared for & loved the Corinthians
 - He wanted his 1st epistle to have sufficient time to bear fruit
- He shows his focus is on the ministry (2:5-17)
 - He encourages forgiveness for the brother punished earlier (vv. 5-11; 1 Cor. 5:1-11)
 - His desire to find Titus, learn of Corinth's receipt of the 1st letter (vv. 12-13)
 - His willingness to be an “aroma of Christ to God” to all men (vv. 14-17)
- He views the Corinthians as his “letters of commendation” (3:1-6)
- He stresses the superiority of the new covenant over the old covenant (3:7-18)
 - The letter kills...is written on tablets of stone
 - The Spirit gives life...is written on tablets of human hearts
- He speaks boldly in defense of the new covenant (4:1 – 6:10)
 - God's servants have “light” and have a “treasure in earthen vessels” (4:1-15)
 - God's servants may “lose heart” but the “inner man is renewed” (4:16-18)
 - They yearn to put aside their “earthly tabernacle” and be “eternally clothed” (5:1-10)
 - He was an “ambassador for Christ” imploring men to be “reconciled to God” (5:20 – 6:10)
- He exhorts the Corinthians to remain faithful (6:11 – 7:16)
 - “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers...come out & be separate...” (6:11 – 7:1)
 - He commends them on their repentance & good reception of the first letter (7:2-16)

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Outline (cont.)

Paul gives instructions re: the Corinthians' contribution for needy saints (8:1 – 9:15)

- He commends the poor Macedonians, holds them up as an example for the Corinthians (8:1-5)
- He encourages them to fulfill their plans re: the contribution (8:6-15)
- He informs them of all the precautions he has taken to ensure the credibility of gathering the collection properly (8:16-24)
- He admonishes them to have their collection ready to be picked up (9:1-5)
 - If some from Macedonia come to Corinth with him, it would be embarrassing...Paul had openly praised and "bragged" on the Corinthians
- He reminds them of the necessary principles re: the collection (9:6-15)
 - Sow and reap bountifully, not sparingly
 - Contribute cheerfully, not grudgingly or under compulsion

Paul defends himself and his authority as an apostle (10:1 – 13:14)

- The last thing Paul wanted to do was to defend himself...he would rather focus on the gospel and the Corinthians
- Throughout this section, we see doses of sarcasm, strong at times to make a point
- He answers the charges that he is "bold" in writing, but "weak" when present (10:1-11)
- He will not commend himself... *"he who boasts, let him boast in the Lord"* (10:12-18)
- He states his "apostolic credentials" (11:1-33)
 - He begged the Corinthians to "indulge" him this right
 - He was not inferior to the other apostles
 - He had endured so much for the cause of Christ...maybe more than anyone else
- Hesitantly, he must "boast" of his visions & revelations (12:1-10)
 - Yet, he admits God gave him a "thorn in the flesh" to keep him from excessively boasting
 - He learned what he also taught...God's grace is sufficient to keep us strong in weakness
- He chides the Corinthians...they know Paul and should not have believed otherwise (12:11-21)
- He warns about his upcoming visit and gives some final exhortations (13:1-14)
 - When he arrives, he will "not spare anyone who has sinned"
 - He will deal with those who discredited him before the Corinthians he loved dearly
 - He desires most to build them up, not tear them down in severity
 - Closing exhortations...
 - *"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith...prove your own selves."*
 - *"We pray to God that you do no wrong."*
 - *"Rejoice...be made complete...be comforted...be like-minded...live in peace."*

The Two Treatises

Lesson 49

Review Questions

- 1) What are your thoughts about Paul as you read **11:23-28**? Does this also give you any thoughts about yourself and your own contributions to the Lord's kingdom?

- 2) When reading **12:7-10**, what important principle(s) do we learn about prayer?

- 3) Using **7:11** as a guide, what should a person do and feel when genuinely repenting?

- 4) What can we learn from **9:6-7** re: our own financial responsibilities to God and the church?

- 5) How can **5:1-10** help prepare us for eternity?