

2 Corinthians

Original Historical Setting

Author: Paul

Written: ~55-57 A.D. from Ephesus

Audience: Christians in Corinth

Occasion: After receiving 1 Corinthians, the church apparently responded quite negatively and with further rebellion against Paul's apostolic authority. Paul possibly revisited Corinth which he describes as a sorrowful or painful visit. He wrote another stinging letter to them (of which we do not have a copy). Paul got word that the church was responding positively this time, and thus he wrote 2 Corinthians in response to the whole situation.

Timeline:

~35 AD – Paul's conversion

~47-49 AD – Paul's first missionary journey

~50-53 AD – Paul's second missionary journey

~53-57 AD – Paul's third missionary journey

~60 AD – Paul imprisoned in Rome

World Events that occur simultaneously

~46 AD – Famine in Judea

49 AD – Some Jews expelled from Rome moved to Corinth

51 AD – Aulos, a precursor to bagpipes, invented in Greece

52 AD – Apostle Thomas possibly ministers in India

54 AD – Claudius poisoned by wife and Jews return to Rome

Features and Structure:

I. Paul's Account and Defense of His Ministry **1 - 6:10**

II. Paul's Appeal to Corinthians (especially in regards to a financial collection) **6:11 - 9**

III. Paul's Answer to His Critics **10 - 14**

Genre/Literary style

A long epistle (letter) written in (Koine) Greek

Key text(s)

5:7 – If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation

6:16 – You are the temple of the living God

9:7 – God loves a cheerful giver

12:7 – A thorn in the flesh

What to look for

- Notice a distinct change in tone between chapters 1-9 (warm and friendly) and 10-13 (noticeably harsh).
- Notice the multifaceted theme of "Life in the Body" that emerges—both in Paul's use of the term "body" to speak of the Body of believers that make up the local church, as well as a Christian's individual "body" in which the Holy Spirit resides.
- Compare 1 & 2 Corinthians and the style Paul uses. First Corinthians is deliberate, objective and practical. Second Corinthians is sensitively subjective and has been described as "the impassioned self-defense of a wounded spirit to erring and ungrateful children."

Interesting facts

- Apparently the Church at Corinth heeded Paul's admonitions and ended their bickering. In the final decades of the First Century, Clement of Rome complimented them in a letter. He wrote that they "bore no malice to one another. All sedition and all schism was abominable to you."
- Corinth was filled with shrines and temples, the most prominent being to Aphrodite, the goddess of love. The priestesses of this temple were really prostitutes, of which there were some 10,000.
- At the time of Paul's writing, Corinth had a population of 200,000 free citizens and over 500,000 slaves—many of whom served in their navy as crew.

Memory Verse: 2 Corinthians 12:9