

NAME

The book gets its name from the church it is addressed to. For a discussion of Corinth see Class Notes on 1 Corinthians: Recipients.

Second Corinthians is probably the fourth letter that Paul sent to the church he founded in Corinth (Acts 18:1-17), together with the house churches "*in the whole (province) of Achaia*," of which Corinth was the capital (2 Corinthians 1:1; 11:10; cf. Romans 16:5,23; 1 Corinthians 16:15,19). The four letters are: 1) The previous letter mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:9; 2) our 1 Corinthians; 3) the tearful, severe letter mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:3,4; and 4) our 2 Corinthians.

AUTHOR

For a discussion of the Apostle Paul see the Class Notes on Romans: Author.

TNLT - Introduction to 2 Corinthians:

No one has seriously challenged Paul's authorship of 2 Corinthians. The sole exception is that 6:14-7:1. Due to its unique vocabulary and subject matter it is sometimes regarded as a non-Pauline insertion, perhaps from a sect, since it is similar in terminology to the Dead Sea Scrolls. More likely it is simply a digression, or perhaps it has been taken from another of Paul's letters to Corinth and inserted here. Most likely the differences are in part due to Paul's quoting a collage of Scripture. Either way, the material in it was most likely written by Paul himself to deal with the moral and spiritual situation in the church in Corinth.

DATE

Written in Macedonia circa 56 A.D. Written a year or so after Paul wrote 1 Corinthians and a year before he wrote his letter to the Romans from Corinth (Cats 20:2,3).

(Halley page 713):

Leaving Ephesus, Paul went into Macedonia on his way to Corinth. While in Macedonia, in the summer and fall of 55 A.D., Paul visited churches in the region of Philippi and Thessalonica, in the midst of many anxieties and sufferings. After waiting long to hear from the church in Corinth, Paul met Titus, who came from Corinth with word that Paul's letter had accomplished much good (2 Corinthians 7:6) but that some of the leaders in the Corinthian church still denied that Paul was a genuine apostle of Christ. That is when Paul wrote this letter and sent it ahead with Titus (8:6,17), expecting to reach Corinth soon himself.

THEME

Halley (page 44): "*Paul's Vindication of His Apostleship*"

Mitchell: Consolation in Christ

For those who attempt to live meaningfully for Christ, perils and persecutions can be expected (cf. 2 Timothy 3:12). Hence, such people will need consolation and it can always be found in Christ.

Key Word (Mitchell): Ministry - In his defense against his enemies, Paul lays before us his views of the Christian ministry. For those contemplating professional Christian work, this book should be studied long and hard.

Key Word (Nelson's): Paul's Defense of His Ministry - The major theme of 2 Corinthians is Paul's defense of his apostolic credentials and authority.

Key Verses (Nelson's):

"For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, Who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:5,6)

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, Who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:17-19)

Key Chapters (Nelson's): 8,9 - These chapters are one unit and comprise the most complete revelation of God's plan for giving found anywhere in the Scriptures.

Purpose (Mitchell): 1) To encourage the majority (They had submitted to the first letter); and 2) To answer the minority (and thus defend his character and apostleship).

Mitchell:

As with Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, the thrust of this letter is ethical rather than doctrinal. Therefore, its message is especially needed today. Evangelical Christians are far more prone to be lax ethically than doctrinally. We have a tendency to reduce ethics to a few externals and miss the *"weightier matters of the law."* As Christ warned the Pharisees we tend to *"strain at gnats and swallow camels."*

Outline:

I. Introduction 1:1-4

II. Paul's Consideration of Response to the First Epistle 1:5-2:17

A. The delayed visit to them 1:5-2:4

Paul had intended to visit the Corinthian church but he had become seriously ill (1:8-10) and he was not let by the Spirit to do so because his personal appearance in the church might cause certain of them embarrassment (1:17,23). Note also the reason why God allowed Paul to go through a serious physical affliction. It was not because there was some particular sin in Paul's life, but rather in order "that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead" (1:9). Often the only way God can get us to trust in Him rather than our own cleverness, is to back us into a corner by adverse circumstances.

B. The Successful Discipline 2:5-11

C. The Change of Plan 2:12-17

1. Resulting trial 2:12,13

2. Resulting triumph 2:14-17

III. The Explanation of Christian Ministry 3:1-7:16

A. The Description of Ministry 3:1-5:21

1. Its credentials 3:1-5
2. Its nature 3:6-18
3. Its effects 4:1-6
4. Its difficulties 4:7-12
5. Its hopes 4:13-18
6. Its rewards 5:1-10
7. Its impulse 5:11-16
8. Its object and ground 5:17-21

B. The Application of Ministry 6:1-7:16

C. The plea for consistency in life 6:1-10

1. A plea for separation 6:11-7:1
2. A plea of confidence 7:2-16

IV. The Contribution to the Judean Christians 8:1-9:15

A. Paul Cites the Example of Others 8:1-15

B. Paul Commends a Deputation to Them to Receive Their Gifts 8:16-9:5

C. Paul Cites Principles to Govern Living 9:6-15

V. The Vindication of Paul's Apostolic Ministry 10:1-13:10

A. Paul Asserts His Apostolic Authority 10:1-18

B. Paul Extensively Defends His Apostleship 11:1-13:10

1. His concern 11:1-6
2. His method 11:7-11
3. His motive 11:12-15
4. His sufferings 11:16-33
5. His glorious experience 12:1-10
6. His admonition 12:11-13:10

VI. Conclusion 13:11-14

RECIPIENTS

For a description of Corinth see the class notes on 1 Corinthians: Recipient

Mitchell:

This letter was written six months to 1 year after the first letter to the Corinthians. It forms sort of a sequel to it. Titus had delivered Paul's first letter and reported the church's response to Paul at Macedonia. The report contained both good and bad news:

Good News: A majority in the church received the first letter well. They were anxious for Paul to come and personally visit them. The incestuous person had repented. All of this made Paul very happy.

Bad News: A minority still opposed Paul. They questioned his office and his character. They accused him of being proud, arrogant, cowardly, dishonest, insane, and ugly! Needless to say, this greatly disturbed and grieved the great Apostle.

This second letter is a response to Titus' report. Paul answers with great emotion.

CONTRIBUTION TO CANON

Mitchell:

1. A very personal letter with very little doctrine, almost autobiographical.
2. Contains much of Paul's personal history that is given nowhere else:
 - a. Many previously unrecorded hardships 11:23-27
 - b. Escape from Damascus 11:32,33
 - c. Third heaven vision 12:1-4
 - d. Thorn in the flesh 12:7
3. Preponderance of the word "boast" - 31 times. The word is used more in this letter than in all the other letters combined. It was necessary in order for Paul to vindicate himself. He was forced to boast!
4. A very emotional letter displaying a wide variety of emotions... anxiety, resentment, hope, indignation, love.
5. A very irregular epistle. Paul was normally a very systematic thinker (cf. First Corinthians), but this letter is not laid out in logical sequence at all. This is because of the heavy emotional involvement.
6. Practical lessons concerning Christian ministry. Early in Paul's ministry the implied question was asked, "What can I do?" The glorified Christ's answer was, "Go tell Paul how much he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:16). From this epistle we learn very vividly the meaning of Jesus' statement. Yet through it all, God's comforting grace was sufficient. God's grace transformed: *"Pain into Pleasure, Sob into Song, Trouble into Triumph, Gloom into Glory."* (Mitchell)
7. Practical discussion of Christian giving

RESOURCES

Gromacki, Robert C. *New Testament Survey*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978

Robert H. Gundry, Ph.D., *A Survey Of The New Testament*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1970

Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing House

Horton, David, General Editor. *The Portable Seminary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Bethany House Publishers, 2006

Nelson's Quick Reference - Bible Maps And Charts, Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1994

The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Frank E. Gaebelin, General Editor, Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1984

As general resources I've relied on my class notes from various professors at Biola University (especially those of Dr. Curtis Mitchell & Dr. Ed Murphy), Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (WCBS), and Talbot Seminary as well as notes shared with me by Annie Kartoizian.

Additional reference material has come from the study Bibles of the English Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and The New Living Translation.

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