

2 Corinthians Week 1

1-Introduction

a-Corinth. Situated on narrow isthmus between Gulf of Corinth and Saronic gulf and their respective seaports. So, a place of commerce.

-in Paul's day, a Roman colony, replanted in 44BC after having been destroyed by the Romans earlier. Very cosmopolitan in composition, people from many areas and backgrounds. 'we should think of Corinth in Paul's day as similar to any other cosmopolitan center, no worse and no better.

-capital of Roman province of Achaia. Host of Isthmian games. By the second century, the leading city of Greece.

-offered economic and social opportunities for the influx of 'freedmen' from Rome.

-no aristocracy, but an 'aristocracy of money'.

'The drive for upward mobility by advancing economically became the obsession of the middle

class. It could be said that it worshipped wealth.'
NIVAC

b-Paul and the Corinthians. 'a very complex affair'.

A Likely Scenario

-Acts 18:1-18- brings the gospel to Corinth, preaches 18 months. Uproar brought by Jews to Gallio, the Proconsul. Paul stays 'many more days'. Around 50-51AD. 2 historical events help date his ministry in Corinth. First, decree by Claudius, 49 AD. Second, the date of Gallio's time in Corinth.

-During time in Ephesus. Paul writes 'previous letter' mentioned in 1Corinthians 5:9. Visitors come from Corinth. Paul writes 1Corinthians about 55AD. Timothy sent to Corinth. Paul makes 'painful visit' (see 2Cor.2:1, 13:2). Writes 'severe letter (see 2Co2:4. 7:8). Titus visits Corinth.

-from Macedonia. Paul reunites with Titus. Writes 2Corinthians. Makes third visit to Corinth. See Acts 20:2-3. Then on to Jerusalem with collection and delegation from churches.

So, 4 letters. 3 visits.

Another option- basic difference is that I Corinthians is the 'severe letter'/tearful letter. And that the 'offender' is the man living with his father's wife mentioned in 1Corinthians. So, 3 letters, 3 visits.

c- Major issues/themes.

-most personal of all his letters with respect to ministry and heart for believers.

-addressing problems. Two sources of difficulty. First, an individual person (Chapter 2 and 7). Second, group of bad actors, false apostles. Directly mentioned in Ch. 10-13 but probably in mind earlier as he explains his ministry. Probably being criticized by them and as he defends his ministry he is indirectly rebutting their nonsense.

Possible criticisms. Paul had not come with letters of recommendations as others did. Paul changed his travel plans and was not to be trusted. He was not a polished orator, unimpressive in both appearance and speech. Had no revelations about which to boast. He did not charge for his ministry so it could not have been very valuable. All his troubles and afflictions

showed he was not a conqueror. He was tough when writing letters but weak when present.

-suffering/afflictions /human frailty AND the comfort, sufficiency, deliverance, power and grace of God.

2- Chapter 1:1-11.

1:1-2 Greeting

Apostle- seen risen Christ, entrusted with the gospel, sent to share it.

Church of God- belongs to Him, it is His.

Saints- those who are His. Set apart to belong to Him.

1:3-11 Thanksgiving

-Father of mercies/compassion. A Hebrew way of saying 'the all merciful Father'.

-God of all comfort who comforts us. Paraklasis- encourage, exhort, comfort. 10 times.

1:4- Paul can testify that on every occasion when he has been in tribulation he has been so sustained and

strengthened by the hand of God that he has been able not merely to endure it but to derive blessings from it.

-all our affliction, primarily due to demands of gospel ministry. 8 times affliction or suffering.

Reality of both affliction and divine comfort as Paul and we live in the time between the times.

So, see major theme early on. The comfort that comes from God in the midst of suffering and affliction. The climax of this theme is 12:7-10.

v.5- share Christ's sufferings? Refers to suffering endured on behalf of Christ and the ministry to which Paul was called. Also, Christ suffered to bring us life, so Paul suffers to bring life through the gospel to others.

v.8-11. affliction in Asia. Not certain what he refers to. Some think linked to episode in Ephesus. Paul learned a vital lesson through it. To depend not on self but on God who raises the dead.

1:9- but when he looked back on the hours when he had stood at death's door, he knew that he had been

allowed in the providence of God to go through that terrible experience that he might be brought to a full recognition of his own utter helplessness and, abandoning all self-confidence, learn to trust in God who raises the dead. RT

-role of intercessory prayer. See also Romans 15:30-31, 1Thessalonians 5:25, 2Thess.3:1-2, Ephesians 6:18-20, Colossians 4:2-4.

2 Corinthians Week 2

Chapter 1:12-2:17

1:12-14 Paul's integrity in word and ministry.

Conscience- the human faculty whereby a person either approves or disapproves of his or her actions and those of others. (not an absolutely reliable guide due to the effects of sin).

Holiness, godly sincerity, grace of God- how Paul ministers. Grace of God- relies upon the power of God at work in his ministry. See 1Cor.15:8-10.

1:15-2:4. Explanation of and Defense of change in travel plans.

v.17- according to the flesh= readiness to renege on commitments if no longer advantageous.

v.18- 'as God is faithful'. So too His servant, messenger. God's faithfulness is a given. Paul's reflects His master's character.

v.19- Son of God who was preached among you- content of message centers on the person and work of Jesus, Son of God. See 1Cor.1:23, 2:1-2, 15:3-4.

v.20- as many as may be promises of God=many in the OT regarding redemption through a special One. In Jesus, they are kept by God. They are Yes! Even the promises we still look forward to. Are Yes and we will experience at right time. See e.g. Acts 13:23,32.

Amen! By us. We agree! It is firm, reliable, we are in agreement. We add our Amen to God's Yes in Christ.

To the glory of God who gave and kept the promises.

v.20-22 4 Words.

-establishes- when used of people, indicates their strengthening or establishing so that they exhibit certain characteristics. God has strengthened Paul and his co-workers and the Corinthians to be trustworthy.

God enables them to be firm and sure in their loyalty to Christ.' R T

-anointed- chrio, to anoint, which was often a rite of commissioning. Used 4 other places in NT, 3 of which link with the Holy Spirit. Luke 4:18, Acts 4:17, 10:38. So, probably to understand, anointed by the Spirit to carry out ministry.

-sealed. Used of commercial documents to refer to sealing of letters and sacks so none can tamper with contents. Also to indicate ownership.

‘marking them out from the rest of mankind as those who really belong to Him and are eternally the objects of His loving care.’ R T

Identification and protection.

So, Spirit is the identifying mark of every true believer. See Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30. Also Romans 8:9.

Arrabon-deposit made by buyer to seller as a guarantee that full amount will be paid at the proper time.

-pledge/guarantee. Spirit is the down payment of all Christ has accomplished, which guarantees the full experience for those who are His. See also 2Cor.5:5,

Ephesians 1:14. Similar idea in Romans 8:23, first fruits.

‘in the New Testament the Christian experience of anointing, sealing and receiving the earnest are all associated with the operation of the Holy Spirit.’ P H

3 Persons- notice the mention of God, Christ, Holy Spirit. Salvation is Trinitarian.

2:1- another ‘painful visit’.

2:3- severe letter following ‘painful visit’.

2:5-11 Discipline by the church; now forgiveness for the offender. Restoration.

v.11-no advantage taken by Satan; schemes.

2:12-13- door opened. See also 1Cor.16:9, Acts 14:27, Colossians 4:3. Opportunity for effective gospel ministry. Yet, no rest, did not find Titus. Left for Macedonia. Very concerned to learn how the Corinthians had responded to severe letter.

2:14-7:4. Extended explanation of ministry. One could go from 2:13 directly to 7:5 and keep reading and it would make perfect sense. Instead, Paul gives a wonderful description of the motives, methods and content of his message in this 'digression'.

He probably does so to strengthen the repentant believers and to help the whole church have even more confidence in him and, therefore, the gospel. And he is defending his apostleship against opponent who are even now casting a shadow over the church, even though he does not directly confront their nonsense until Chapter 10-13.

2:14-17. Leads in triumph. Roman general/emperor-leads triumphal procession. 2 primary understandings. First, as a conquered person. Led in Christ's triumphal procession. A way to say that God in Christ had conquered him and in his suffering the fragrance of the gospel was being spread abroad. Second, led as one of the victorious soldiers in Roman triumphal procession which was accompanied by incense which all could smell. Fragrance is still the gospel, which has 2 possible responses. To those who accept it, life. To those who do not, death.

-not peddlers. Negative connotation. Merchants often adulterated their goods to make more profit. Paul does not do that with the gospel. Perhaps over against the false apostles we meet in Chapter 10.