

# **2 Corinthians 1**

## **Introduction**

- The city of Corinth was located on a narrow strip of land (called an isthmus) with sea ports on each side
- There was much land traffic across the isthmus, so that sailors would not have to sail around the southern tip of Greece (very dangerous waters, many storms, etc.)
- Goods were unloaded on one side of the isthmus and carried across the land to the other side and reloaded on ships bound for Rome
- This constant traffic of sailors, travelers, businessmen, government officials through Corinth made the city a very evil place
- But Paul and Priscilla and Aquila began a congregation there

Date for 2 Corinthians: about 57 AD (6-18 months after *1 Corinthians*)

Place of the writing: Macedonia (modern-day Greece) (*2 Cor. 2.13*) – Paul had received a report back from Titus

- So the book was probably written from Philippi in Macedonia

## **Main divisions of 2 Corinthians**

**Ch. 1-7** – Discussion of some continuing problems at Corinth; some old ones had been settled, but others were still there

**Ch. 8-9** – The subject of poor giving (contributions) at Corinth

**Ch. 10-13** – A defense of Paul's apostleship – The false teachers at Corinth were attacking Paul, and he answered all of the charges against him

## **General characteristics of 2 Corinthians**

1. A very emotional letter (like Galatians) – Not as neatly organized as *1 Corinthians*; a "chain" type letter – one thought would lead to another thought (also called: stream of consciousness)
2. Very autobiographical – We learn more about Paul from *2 Corinthians* than from any other of his letters
3. Some very famous passages in 2 Corinthians
  - 4.7 – treasure hidden in earthen vessels
  - 4.16-18 – outer man decaying....
  - 5.1-10 – present in the body...
  - 6.14-17 – unequally yoked...

## **2 Corinthians 1.1-11**

**V1** – Why "by the will of God"? To establish his apostleship (in light of *Chs. 10-13*)

-He was assisted by Timothy (he must have returned from his work at Corinth – *1 Cor. 16.10*)

-*"Saints"* – we are all *"saints"* (sanctified, set apart for service to God)

-*"Saints"* therefore are not people canonized by the Catholic Church, but are special people in the eyes of God

-**Other congregations in Greece?** Athens (some believers – *Acts 17.34*), possibly Cenchrea

(Phoebe from there – maybe there was a congregation there, or maybe she was a member at Corinth)

**V 2 – Typical greeting from Paul?**

1. From whom
2. To whom
3. Greetings and a blessing)

**V 3-7 – The word "comfort" is used 10 times**

- Purpose?** To make us appreciate the comfort we receive from God the Father
- Maybe some at Corinth had grown lazy and were no longer appreciating the comfort that God gives his people
- Remember *John 14-15* – The Holy Spirit is referred to as our comforter (He comforts us through the words of the Bible today)

**V 4 – How are we best able to comfort others?** When we have experienced something that they are experiencing

- It is like having wisdom teeth extracted – then we truly know what it is like, instead of just referring to it as "*dental work*"

**V 5 – Read John 15.18-23 – Why will we be persecuted?** Because our Lord was persecuted

- Greek word for "*comfort*": Like standing beside a person to encourage him when he is undergoing severe testing

**V 6 – If Paul suffered persecution, on whose behalf did he suffer?** The Corinthians

**V 7 – Suffering and comfort go together for the Christian**

- Paul had high expectations for the church at Corinth

**V 8 – Asia = Asia Minor (name for that area today) – that included Ephesus**

- Acts 19.23-41* – Demetrius and the silversmiths of Artemis (Diana)
- Remember *1 Cor. 15.32* – He fought "wild beasts" at Ephesus
- How bad did the situation at Ephesus get?** They thought they were going to die; they gave up hope of living
- The false teachers at Corinth should have felt humbled as this letter was being read there (after attacking Paul's sincerity)

**V 9 – The sentence of death?** They believed they were going to die

- Purpose of this suffering?** To learn to trust in God and not in human flesh
- Old Testament parallel: Abraham and Isaac
- Remember: *Genesis 22.1-19* and *Heb. 11.17-19*

**Optional material:** A great Russian writer [Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881)] was a radical anarchist and was sentenced to be shot by a firing squad; he was standing outside in freezing weather and waiting to be executed, when a reprieve arrived from the Czar. It changed his life, and he became a much more religious man

**V 10 – How was Paul's thinking changed?** He had a deeper appreciation of God's care; he placed all his hope on God after that

**V 11 – Why did God intervene?** Because of the prayers of many  
-**V 1-11** – This is typical of the autobiographical nature of *2 Corinthians*

**2 Corinthians 1.12-14** – Paul's sincerity was being attacked

**V 12 – Did Paul rely on "fleshly wisdom"?** No  
-**How had Paul conducted himself toward the Corinthians, according to v 12?** With holiness and godly sincerity

**V 13 – Another charge against Paul?** It was hard to understand his letters  
-Very interesting: *2 Peter 3.14-17* – Peter said that the untaught and unlearned were distorting the writings of Paul  
-But Paul didn't use tricks of language

**V 14 – Had they understood Paul's message at Corinth?** Partially, but Paul was still proud of them

**2 Corinthians 1.15-24**

**V 15-16 – Paul's plans?** To visit Corinth twice (on his Third Missionary Journey) – in other words, going and coming through Macedonia (Greece)

**V 17 –** But there was a change of travel plans  
-**How had some at Corinth interpreted this?** "Paul can't be depended on – he didn't follow through with what he said he was going to do"  
-**Read 1 Cor. 16.7** – in other words, his plans were always dependent on the will of God  
-**Did Paul make promises like politicians today?** No

**V 18-19** – No changing in Jesus and no fickleness in Paul's preaching about Jesus

**V 20 –** What a beautiful verse: Faith in the promises of God  
-"Amen" – meaning: That which is reliable, firm, "So be it" (a name given to Christ in *Rev. 3.14*)  
-**Remember 2 Peter 3.9** – God is not slack concerning his promises

**V 21 – What was Paul anointed to do?** *Acts 9.15* – Preach the gospel to the Gentiles

**V 22 –** A reference to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit  
-God sees us as his own people when he sees the Holy Spirit dwelling in us

**V 23-24 – Why hadn't Paul made his second visit to Corinth?** To give them time to get their house in order

**-Fellow-workers?** He was not lording himself over the Corinthians

Revised 2013-01-22