

2 Corinthians - Introduction

Timeline

53 AD – Paul left Antioch, Syria

53 AD – Paul traveled across Galatia, Phrygia and into Asia

53-Spring of 56 AD – Paul is in Ephesus

56 AD – Paul travels through Macedonia

56 AD Winter-57 AD Spring – Paul is in Corinth, Achaia

57 AD Spring – Paul leaves Corinth to pass through Macedonia to Jerusalem



- 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:11 – Paul promised to send Timothy to Corinth
- Timothy returned to Ephesus with bad news concerning Corinthian Church
- Paul abandoned his original travel plans (given in 1 Cor. 16) and went immediately to Corinth to make an abrupt, painful visit to the church (2 Cor. 13:1-2; 2:1)
 - Paul was personally attacked by members of the Corinthian church at this time (2:5-11; 7:12)
- Paul returns to Ephesus and writes a third letter (in between 1 and 2 Corinthians) and sent it with Titus back to Corinth (2:4, 12-13; 7:6-7)
- Paul leaves Ephesus after the riot going north along the western coast of Asia to Troas. In Troas Paul waited because:
 - A door was open for his preaching
 - Paul expected to meet Titus returning to Ephesus from Corinth.
- When Titus did not show up in Troas, Paul crossed the sea to Macedonia (likely landing in the port of Neapolis.) Paul apparently met Titus soon after arriving in Neapolis or Philippippi. (2:12 and 7:5)
- Titus' report back to Paul included this information:
 - Corinthians responded in a positive way "with many tears" to the "severe letter" (2:4)

- Disciplinary action had been taken (2:5-11) and 7:5-12)
- False Teachers - A new problem had developed: showboating, flamboyant “false” apostles from Judea had come to Corinth to challenge Paul and to make money.
- Paul writes 2 Corinthians from Macedonia and sends Titus back to Corinth with this letter (Paul’s fourth letter in this series of four written to the Corinthians)
- Paul would follow Titus and 2 Corinthians later and make his third visit to Corinth (13:1-2)

The letter of 2 Corinthians will:

1. Explain why Paul’s travel plans had changed several times.
2. Refute the false-teachers attempt to discredit Paul:
 - a. By claiming Paul did not have letters of commendation (3:1)
 - b. By claiming Paul was bold from a distance while he wrote impressive letters, but in person (if he did show up) was not an impressive man and was not a skilled speaker
 - c. By claiming Paul was not legitimate like the Greek rhetoricians and philosophers because he did not charge money for his speaking services (11:7)
 - d. By claiming Paul did not “love” the people because he did not allow them to give him money (11:11; 12:13-15)
 - e. By claiming Paul could travel independent of church support because he was keeping some of the money he said was going to be taken to the Jerusalem church (12:17-20)
3. Refute the false-teachers who were false-apostles teaching:
 - a. Another Jesus
 - b. Another spirit
 - c. Another gospel
 - d. Using skilled rhetoric (11:2)
4. Re-engage the Corinthians with collecting money for the Jewish believers in Jerusalem.
5. Paul writes about himself and reveals the things he has suffered to bring his ministry to the church (11:21-12:12)
6. Paul writes that he is about to make his third trip to Corinth and he is ready to unleash his full apostolic authority if things do not improve (12:14, 20-22; 13:1-5)

Travel Plans or Changes in Itinerary

1. Two brief visits: Original plan was to cross the Aegean Sea from Ephesus to Corinth. Then, travel north to Macedonia. Before Paul left for Jerusalem he would stop by Corinth for a second visit.
2. One long visit for the winter: Travel north from Ephesus to Macedonia and then come down to Corinth (1 Cor. 16:5). Paul would then leave Corinth for Jerusalem.

All these changes in travel plans are the subject of 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:14

Outline

1. Travel, ch. 1-7 – Explaining the Change of Itinerary
 - a. 1:3-11 – Suffering
 - b. 1:12 -2:14 – travel details
 - c. 2:14-7:4 – digression
 - d. 7:5 – Paul resumes to report that he has met Titus
2. Macedonia, ch. 8-9 - Preparation for visit and collection of the money
3. Corinth, 10-13 – Expos the false-apostles and defend Paul’s ministry

A Few Questions and Unknowns

Deadly affliction of Asia 1:8; the vision of 12; the “thorn in the flesh” of 12:2; what “brothers” with Titus