

Survey of 2 Corinthians

David Rountree

1. It is universally accepted that the apostle Paul was the writer to the church at Corinth (1:1).
2. 2 Corinthians is the least systematic of all of Paul's epistles making it the more difficult to analyze.
3. This letter was written after Paul had gotten a report on how the church at Corinth had received his first letter to them. Apparently many had received his letter in the proper spirit but there were others who doubted both his motives and his apostleship. Thus, Paul writes 2 Corinthians to express his joy over those who received his word well and then to defend his apostleship for those who doubted his authority to instruct them.
4. More than any other of Paul's epistles, 2 Corinthians gives us a glimpse into Paul's inner feelings about himself, his ministry, and his relationship to the churches God allowed him to establish. This is the letter that tells us about Paul's comfort (1:3-7); his vision of the third heaven (12:1-4) and his thorn in the flesh (12:7-10). He also hints at the charges others made against him (2:17; 4:3; 5:3; 10:8; 10:10; 11:6).
5. It is believed that 2 Corinthians was probably written about a year after 1 Corinthians around 56 AD from the region of Macedonia, the Roman province in northern Greece whose capital was Philippi. 1 Corinthians was written from Ephesus. Between these two letters Paul may have made a visit to Corinth (12:14; 13:1-2, notice "third"). He now writes a letter instead of another "painful visit" (2:1).
6. It is thought that 2 Cor.2:4 and 7:8 hardly fit a description of 1 Corinthians, so Paul must have written another letter to the Corinthians between what we have that has been lost and not placed in the canon.

Outline

Paul's Trials of Ministry (1-7)

1. His interest in the Corinthians in particular (1:8-2:11)
2. His service to all (2:11-17)
3. His calling & power by the Holy Spirit (3-4)
4. His hope for the future (5:1-19)
5. His exhortation and appeal to the church (5:20-7:4)
6. His joy at their reception of the word (7:5-16)

Paul's Teaching on Mercy Relief Giving (8-9)

1. The appeal for liberality (8:1-15)
2. The sending of Titus and two others (8:16-9:5)
3. The blessedness of liberality (9:6-15)

Paul's Apostleship (10-13)

1. He vindicates his apostolic authority (10:1-12:13)
2. He ministers with authority (12:14-13:10)

Conclusion (13:11-14)

Main Points and Application

1. What does 2 Corinthians 3:1-3 say about Paul's ministry?
2. How is every Christian a letter of recommendation today? How are most of us read? Even Jesus says our lives are an open book recommending Christ (see John 13:34-35).
3. From 2 Corinthians 3:18-4:6 what is the ministry of the Spirit? What examples can be seen in our lives of the ministry of the Spirit?
4. From 2 Corinthians 4:7-11 how are we always carrying about in our bodies the dying of Jesus?
5. How would you describe the comfort in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18? How should we respond to suffering from this perspective?
6. According to 2 Corinthians 5:20 what was the aim of Paul's ministry? Explain the need for reconciliation.
7. What kind of giving is being referred to in 2 Corinthians 8-9, the giving of our tithes or the giving of a mercy relief offering? (See 8:4,7,14,20; 9:1,5) Why does this matter? What giving principles do you see emerge from these chapters?
8. In 2 Corinthians 10:12-18 Paul defends his apostleship. What does he say others did that was unwise? With this in mind, what kind of Christians ought we to be?
9. According to 2 Corinthians 13:5 what should we do? What kind of examination questions might we ask ourselves?