



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

New Testament Survey

Lesson 27 – Second Corinthians – The Ministry of Paul

The Background of Second Corinthians

The following events led to Paul's writing his second letter to the Corinthians:

1. Paul wrote First Corinthians in Ephesus around Easter in 55 AD. (See Lesson 25.)
2. Paul sent Titus to Corinth either with this letter or shortly afterwards.
3. Paul left Ephesus for Troas and expected Titus to meet him there and report to him how things were progressing in Corinth. 2 Corinthians 2:12-13.
4. Paul was so concerned about Corinth that he hurried on from Troas to Philippi. 2 Corinthians 2:13; 7:5.
5. At Philippi Titus returned to Paul and gave his report. 2 Corinthians 7:6-7, 13-16.
6. In general Titus' report was very favorable:

Most of the congregation accepted Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians. 2 Corinthians 7:8-11.

The man who had been guilty of fornication had repented of his sin. 2 Corinthians 2:6-11; 7:12.

The congregation wanted to see Paul again and renew their fellowship. 2 Corinthians 7:7.

7. Titus reported that some problems remained:

A minority group had not listened to Paul's instructions. 2 Corinthians 10:7.

This group viciously opposed Paul and misinterpreted his words and actions. 2 Corinthians 1:15-18; 10:10.

This group claimed that Paul was not a true apostle. He did not accept pay as did the other apostles. 2 Corinthians 11:5-12; 12:11-13.

Because of the disorder in Corinth the projected collection for the poor Christians in Jerusalem had come to a standstill. 2 Corinthians 8-9.

8. Therefore, Paul wrote Second Corinthians from Philippi in 55 AD.

Chapters 1-7: He rejoiced at the good news brought by Titus.

Chapters 8-9: He encouraged them to carry out the collection.

Chapters 10-13: He defended his apostolic authority over against his enemies.

The Ministry of Paul

Paul's second letter to the Corinthians tells us a lot about Paul. Large sections of the letter are autobiographical.

Chapter 1: The troubles in Ephesus made him despair of his life at times. But God delivered him.

Chapter 2: He was so concerned about the Corinthians that he wrote his first letter to them with tears and anguish. He could find no rest in Troas because he had not yet heard anything from Corinth in response to his first letter. Even though he had opportunity for mission work in Troas, he hurried on to Philippi in the hope of finding Titus.

Chapters 4-6: As an apostle, Paul could not pervert the Gospel of Christ. Christ was his Master, and he was willing to suffer for Christ's sake. As an ambassador for Christ, Paul spoke the words Christ gave him. As their spiritual father, Paul pleaded with them as a father with his children.

Chapters 10-13: Paul explained what it was like to be Christ's apostle. On the one hand, he was severely persecuted. But on the other hand, he was given special revelations and even a special vision of heaven itself. But so that he would not become proud of these revelations, God gave him a thorn in the flesh (a bodily ailment?) to keep him humble.

The Purpose of Excommunication

In his first letter Paul had instructed the congregation in Corinth to excommunicate (put out of the congregation) the man who was guilty of open adultery and was not sorry for it. The purpose of this action was to make the man realize the seriousness of his sin and lead him to repentance. In this case the excommunication had its desired effect. The man was sorry for his sin, and Paul instructed the congregation not to delay receiving him back again into fellowship. It is important for Christian congregations today to learn when and how to practice excommunication and also when and how to receive a repentant sinner back into fellowship. Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18:15-18 gives us direction.

Read the listed passages as you study each of the sections below. If you have questions, do not hesitate to ask them.

Rejoicing at the Good News Brought by Titus (Chapters 1-7)

Paul and Timothy – to the Christians in Corinth – grace and peace (1:1-2).

Thanks to God who saved us from death in Ephesus (1:3-11).

“We should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead” (v. __
God **“comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort”** others (v.
__

Paul's change in travel plans (1:12 – 2:4).

Original plan: from Ephesus to Corinth to Macedonia to Corinth again.

The change: from Ephesus to Macedonia to Corinth.

"Our word to you was not Yes and No. ... All the promises of God in Him are Yes"

(vv. _____)

"To spare you I came no more to Corinth" (v. _____)

Instructions concerning the excommunicated member who had repented (2:5-11).

"You ought rather to forgive and comfort him. ... Whom you forgive, I also forgive"

(vv. _____)

Paul's trip from Troas to Philippi (2:12-17).

"I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother" (v. _____)

"Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ" (v. _____)

Paul's letters of recommendation (3:1-3).

"You are an epistle of Christ, ... written not with ink but by the Spirit" (v. _____)

A comparison of the ministry of the Law and the ministry of the Gospel (3:4-18).

We are **"ministers of the new covenant. ... The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life"**

(v. _____)

The sufferings and the glory of an apostle of Christ (4:1 – 5:10).

"We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord" (v. _____)

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels" (v. _____)

"Perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken" (vv. _____)

"We walk by faith, not by sight" (v. _____)

The motive, message, and method of an apostle (5:11 – 6:10).

"The love of Christ compels us" (v. _____)

"If One died for all, then all died; and He died for all" (v. _____)

Jesus' death for all is as good as if we had died for our sins. We are set free.

"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (v. _____)

The whole world has been declared forgiven by God because of Christ's work.

"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (v. _____)

"We are ambassadors for Chris. ... We implore you ..., be reconciled to God" (v. _____)

The call for separation from evil (6:11 – 7:4).

"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. ... Be separate" (vv. _____)

"Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh" (v. _____)

Paul's reaction to Titus' report (7:5-16).

"I rejoice ... that your sorrow led to repentance" (v. _____)

Encouragement for the Collection for the Jerusalem Christians (Chapters 8-9)

The good example of the Christians in Macedonia (8:1-7).

The motivation to give: the grace of Christ (8:8-15).

“Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor” (v. ____)

The sending of Titus and two others to assist in the collection (8:16 – 9:4)

God’s blessing on their giving (9:6-15).

Paul’s Defense of His Apostolic Authority (Chapters 10-13)

Paul discusses the charges of his opponents (10:1-18).

“Not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends” (v. ____)

Paul’s “foolish” boasting of the revelations given to him, along with severe trials (11:1 – 12:21).

“He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you’ (v. ____)

Paul’s coming visit to Corinth (13:1-14).

Questions

1. Why was Paul so upset when he did not find Titus at Troas?
2. What good news did Titus give Paul when they finally met?
3. Why had it been difficult for Paul to write 1 Corinthians?
4. Why had Paul changed his travel plans with respect to Corinth?
5. What had happened to the man that had been excommunicated?
6. What did Paul urge the congregation to do now for this man?
7. How are Christians like letters from Christ?
8. What is the main distinction between God’s law and God’s Gospel?
9. Who has been reconciled to whom? How was this accomplished?
10. What does Paul say about separation from unbelievers?
11. How had the Macedonians given a good example in their giving?
12. What should motivate us to give ourselves and what we have to God?
13. What special blessings had God given to Paul?
14. What was the purpose of the thorn in the flesh?
15. Make a list of the sufferings endured by Paul for the Gospel.