

God's Amazing Book

Journey Through the New Testament

DEFENDING THE MAN OF GOD

A Quick Look at the Second Letter to the Corinthians

This book reveals the warm, human character of Paul. Many have pictured Paul as the methodical logician of Romans or Galatians... This epistle, however, is emotional, full of tears and grief. It was written more with the heart than with the head.

– Robert G. Gromacki

A Dentist once said, "When a patient has a toothache, I'm his best friend. But when he has no pain and I tell him we have to drill, I'm his worst enemy." Dentists inflict pain to help us avoid pain. That makes them people to avoid, but it also makes them people to whom we run for help. Paul must have felt like a dentist as he wrote these words. He had inflicted pain on the Corinthians by correcting their misdeeds, but they didn't like it. Then he had avoided visiting them to keep from grieving them too much, but they hadn't liked that either. Yet, with great compassion, he paused at the beginning of this epistle to reveal his heart before them. Everything he did for them—the sharp rebukes as well as sparing them more correction—was for their good. They may not have liked him. But he did everything because he loved them deeply.

2 Corinthians 12:15 says, "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved."

Fast Facts on 2 Corinthians

Written by? Apostle Paul

Written when? 56-57 AD

Written why? The people tried to discredit Paul as the one sent by God to speak to them. This letter is the response from Paul, telling the Church that He is God's man.

Where Written? Macedonia

Special features: This is an intensely personal and autobiographical letter.

Key Phrase: *God's Man & God's Ministry*

The Outline to the Book

Paul explains his actions (1:1–2:11)
Paul defends his ministry (2:12–7:16)
Paul defends the collection (8:1–9:15)
Paul defends his authority (10:1–13:13)

FASCINATING FACTS:

1. This is the most autobiographical of Paul's letters and it has been called his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* ("Defense of his life")
2. This is one of Paul's most intense and personal letters. It is not very systematic, reading more like a journal. These are the words of a man who expresses his deepest feelings about himself and the ministry God has given him.

- The Corinthian congregation apparently got over their bickering, eventually. **In the final decades of the first Christian century, Roman church leader Clement complimented them in a letter. He wrote that they “bore no malice to one another. All sedition and all schism was abominable to you.”**
- Paul wrote at least four letters to the Corinthians: (1) a letter mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:9, warning believers to stay away from sexually immoral people; (2) 1 Corinthians; (3) the stern letter of reprimand mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:4; and (4) 2 Corinthians.

5. Apostle means “one sent”

6. In 2 Corinthians, different forms of the word “ministry” are used some eighteen times, underscoring the epistle’s theme.

7. In 2 Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9, we find the longest New Testament passage on the subject of giving.

8. In 2 Corinthians, Paul’s companion and helper, Titus, is referred to by name no less than nine times, far more than anyone else.

Here are what seem to be several main points of attack, along with excerpts of Paul’s defense.

1. Paul is a self-appointed apostle, not one personally commissioned by Jesus, as were the original disciples. **“When I was with you, I was patient and worked all the powerful miracles and signs and wonders of a true apostle” (12:12).**

2. Paul is self-promoting. **“We are not preaching about ourselves. Our message is that Jesus Christ is Lord” (4:5).**

3. Paul can’t be trusted, since he didn’t come to Corinth when he said he would. Paul replies by saying that his last visit was so painful that he decided a cooling off period was in order. **“I have decided not to make my next visit with you so painful. . . . I didn’t want to make you feel bad. I only wanted to let you know how much I cared for you” (2:1, 4).**

4. Paul is pocketing money collected for the poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem. **“Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit” (2:17, New International Version).** Paul implies that the intruders are seeking donations for themselves from the Corinthians. Paul had refused to do this (12:13). Instead, he earned his keep by working as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3).

5. Paul barks boldly in his letters, but in person he’s a coward who has nothing worth saying (10:10). **“When I am with you, I will do exactly what I say in my letters” (10:11).**

Paul’s Corinthian Correspondence and Visits	
Event	Scripture Reference
Finds the church on second missionary journey	Acts 18:1-17
Leaves Corinth, arriving at Ephesus	Acts 18:18-19
(1) <u>Writes a letter now lost*</u> “the previous letter”	1 Cor. 5:9-13
Receives a bad report from “some from Chloe’s household” and a letter from Corinth	1 Cor. 1:11; 7:1
(2) <u>Writes 1 Corinthians</u>	1 Corinthians
Sends Timothy and Erastus to Corinth	Acts 19:22; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10
Hears of a serious crisis in Corinth caused by Jewish troublemakers in which Paul’s authority is questioned	2 Cor. 10:10; 11:23; 12:6-7
Makes a hasty trip to Corinth (“painful visit”)	2 Cor. 2:1; 12:14; 13:1
(3) <u>Writes “severe letter” to Corinth</u> (now lost to us)	2 Cor. 2:3-9; 7:8-12
Searches for Titus in Troas and Macedonia	2 Cor. 2:12-13
Finds Titus, who reports the worst at Corinth is over	2 Cor. 7:6-16
(4) <u>Writes 2 Corinthians</u>	2 Corinthians
Makes third visit to Corinth	Acts 19:21; 20:3; 2 Cor. 13:1
* Some believe 2 Cor. 6:14 – 7:1 is a fragment of this letter.	

Source: Dr. Danny Akin, church lecture.