

GOD'S AMAZING BOOK

THROUGH THE BIBLE, BOOK BY BOOK

led by: Pastor Josh Franklin, Good Hope Baptist Church (www.goodhopechurch.org and www.joshfranklin.org)

DEFENDING THE MAN OF GOD

A Quick Look at the Second Letter to the Corinthians

Fast Facts on 2 Corinthians

Written by? Apostle Paul

Written when? 56-57 AD

Written why? To discredit 1

Corinthians, 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)

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 hadn't liked 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."*

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.
3. 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."**
4. 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. A big portion of 2 Corinthians is Paul's Autobiography.

7. In 2 Corinthians, different forms of the word “ministry” are used some eighteen times, underscoring the epistle’s theme.
8. In 2 Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9, we find the longest New Testament passage on the subject of giving.
9. In 2 Corinthians, Paul’s companion and helper, Titus, is referred to by name no less than nine times, far more than anyone else.

OCCASION:

To understand 2 Corinthians, it is useful to understand the long and complicated relationship between Paul and Corinth, a relationship that has taken some time for scholars to unravel.

1. Evangelizing Corinth. On Paul's second missionary journey, Paul traveled into what is known today as Greece. After a cold reception by the philosophers and thinkers who gathered in Athens, Paul went on to Corinth (Acts 18). Initially, Paul worked with Aquila and Priscilla as a tentmaker. But eventually he received enough financial support from Macedonian Christians to preach the gospel full time. After being rejected by many of the Jews, Paul focused his missionary work on the Gentiles and stayed with the Gentile God-fearer Titius Justus. In a vision one night, God encouraged Paul to keep on preaching in Corinth (Acts 18:9-11), so he stayed for a year and a half (a.d. 50–52).

2. Paul's stay at Ephesus. Around a.d. 52, Paul left Corinth to report back to his home church in Antioch and the elders in Jerusalem (Acts 18:18-22). On his next missionary journey, Paul made his headquarters at Ephesus, at the lecture hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:8-10). There, he preached for a little over two years. Evidently, he sent many of his students to the surrounding region, for Luke reported in Acts "that people throughout the province of Asia—both Jews and Greeks—heard the Lord's message" (see Acts 19:10 nlt). It was at Ephesus that Paul wrote several letters to the Corinthians.

3. The first letter to the Corinthians. Around this time, Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians. This is the letter to which Paul alluded in 1 Corinthians 5:9. Evidently the letter warned the Corinthians not to associate with those who called themselves Christians and yet persistently participated in sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 5:9-13). Although some scholars consider 6:14–7:1 to be a fragment of that letter, most believe that this letter was not preserved.

Paul’s Corinthian Correspondence and Visits

Event	Scripture Reference
Founds 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.

4. The second letter to the Corinthians. Toward the end of his stay at Ephesus (around a.d. 54–55), Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians, known today as 1 Corinthians. Earlier Paul had received a letter from the Corinthian church delivered by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (1 Corinthians 16:17). This letter had been filled with questions about church order. In 1 Corinthians, Paul answered these questions. See handout on 1 Corinthians for details about that letter.

5. Paul's painful visit. Shortly after sending 1 Corinthians, Paul most likely visited Corinth himself. The situation with the church concerned him so much that he traveled there to rectify the problems that had emerged. According to what can be gathered from 2 Corinthians, Paul's authority was challenged by a particular church member (perhaps leading others) during this visit. In response, Paul warned the church to discipline its immoral members before he had to do it himself (see 2:1; 12:14, 21; 13:1-4).

6. The severe letter to the Corinthians. After this painful visit, Paul wrote a "severe letter" to the Corinthians, evidently encouraging the Corinthians to discipline their errant member and/or members (see 2:1-4; 7:8). Most Bible commentators consider this letter to be Paul's third letter to the Corinthians, which is now lost. It has become generally accepted that 1 Corinthians was not the "severe letter," primarily because 1 Corinthians as a whole does not reflect the extreme sorrow that Paul described as being behind his severe letter.

7. The fourth letter to Corinthians. In a.d. 55, Paul left Ephesus for an evangelism trip to Troas (Acts 20:1-6). Evidently, he was supposed to meet Titus there in order to receive a report on the Corinthian church. Although there were some promising opportunities to share the gospel in Troas, Paul went on to Macedonia to find Titus because of his concern about the spiritual condition of the Corinthians (2:12-13). He met Titus somewhere in Macedonia and heard the good news that the Corinthians had disciplined the offender just as Paul had instructed (2:5-11; 7:2-16). Titus gave Paul a report that was, on the whole, encouraging (2:14; 7:5-7). However, other problems were surfacing in Corinth. Many were grumbling about Paul—the fickleness of his travel plans (1:12–2:4) and whether he truly possessed the authority of an apostle (3:1-18). - Life Application Commentary

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).**

Needs for a Fund-Raising Project

Information	2 Cor 8:4	Enthusiasm	2 Cor 8:7, 8, 11
Definite purpose	2 Cor 8:4	Persistence	2 Cor 8:2ff
Readiness and willingness	2 Cor 9:7	Honesty and integrity	2 Cor 8:21
Dedication	2 Cor 8:5	Accountability	2 Cor 9:3
Leadership	2 Cor 8:7	Someone to keep it moving	2 Cor 8:18-22

The topic of fund-raising is not to be avoided or one that should embarrass us, but all efforts should be planned & conducted responsibly.