

2nd Corinthians 1:12-2:4

Misunderstood

Additional Notes

Overview of 2nd Corinthians:

Corinth, capital of the province of Achaia, was one of the most strategically located cities in the empire. It controlled shipping and trade routes, resulting in great commerce and wealth. It's population numbered 500,000 slaves and 200,000 non-slaves with a mix of Greeks, Romans and those from the Orient. The Corinthians, influenced by the temple of Aphrodite, were not viewed as having high moral standards.

Like no other letter, Paul's writing addresses matters of the heart in life and ministry for himself and the Corinthians. It is a letter of tender love, strong rebuke and great transparency. It deals with life events not philosophical ideals. "Traditionally, Paul's two letters to Timothy and one to Titus are called 'the Pastorals.' But 2nd Corinthians has a strong claim to be recognized as the Pastoral Epistle *par excellence*, because it contains not 'pure' but 'applied' *pastoralia*." (Harris, Murray J., "2nd Corinthians." In Romans-Galatians. Vol. 10 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. pg. 314).

A broad overview of the book: Chapters 1-7- address Paul's joy over the Corinthians responsiveness to his previous letter; Chapters 8-9 bring encouragement to follow through on financial commitments to the saints; Chapters 10-13- provide a defense of Paul's Apostleship, directed toward those still resisting his authority.

Chronology of Events Leading to the Epistle of 2nd Corinthians:

50-52 A.D.-The Apostle Paul first visits Corinth (Acts 18).

53-55 A.D.- While in Ephesus Paul received news regarding improper conduct among the Corinthians. He writes what is known as the 'Previous Letter' (this letter is mentioned in 1st Corinthians 5:9, but has been lost).

In response to the 'previous letter', Paul receives a letter from Chloe's people and Stephanas. In Spring of 55 A.D., he writes 1st Corinthians to answer their questions (1st Corinthians 7:1) and exhort them to apply Christian principles on an individual, social and congregational level.

When Timothy delivered 1st Corinthians, he discovered the church swayed by false teachers disputing Paul's authority and teaching as an Apostle. In response to this news, Paul made a personal visit to Corinth (referred to in 2nd Corinthians 2:1 as the 'painful visit'). It appears this attempt met a humiliating rebuke (see 2nd Corinthians 13:1-3).

In response to this rebuke, Paul returned to Ephesus and wrote the 'severe letter' mentioned in 2nd Corinthians 2:4. This letter has also been lost. After riots in Ephesus, Paul left and met Titus in Macedonia (Acts 20:1).

Titus brought a generally positive response from Corinth to Paul. Though the false teachers were encouraging a minority to remain hard hearted, the majority responded to the severe letter with humility and repentance. In Autumn of A.D. 56, Paul wrote 2nd Corinthians as an expression of his heart response to the report from Titus. The letter was written from the area of Macedonia- possibly the towns of Philippi, Thessalonica, or Berea.

Paul's makes his third visit to Corinth in Acts 20:1-4, spending months with the believers in the city.