

Pastor Will's Sermon Study Notes for 2 Corinthians

Series: 2 Corinthians – Preview, part 1

Date: Starts May 2016

Introduction

Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Corinth from Macedonia. He had suffered great persecution in Asia Minor—perhaps in the city of Ephesus—and he was on the way to visit the Corinthians. He was traveling through all of Greece—through both Macedonia in the north and Achaia in the south—to collect a donation for the poor Christians in Jerusalem. Paul sent this letter on ahead of him to tell the Corinthians how they should handle some of the problems that were plaguing them; he especially focused on the problem of the false teachers who had infiltrated the church. A significant group of believers had been influenced by these false teachers. Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to reassert his apostolic authority among the Corinthians.

This letter was probably one of the more difficult letters for Paul to write. Although Paul wanted to rejoice with the Corinthians in their spiritual growth, he didn't shrink from asserting his authority and disciplining those who needed it.

Positively, Paul found the Corinthians had well received his "severe" letter. Paul was overjoyed to learn from Titus that the majority of Corinthians repented of their rebellion against Paul (2 Corinthians 2:12-13; 7:5-9). The apostle encourages them for this in an expression of his genuine love (2 Corinthians 7:3-16). Paul also sought to vindicate his apostleship, as some in the church had likely questioned his authority (2 Corinthians 13:3).

Key Verses

2 Corinthians 3:5: "Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God."

2 Corinthians 3:18: "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

2 Corinthians 5:21: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

2 Corinthians 10:5: "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

2 Corinthians 13:4: "For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you."

Overview

In responding to the attacks on his character and authority, Paul explains the nature of Christian ministry and openly shares about his ministry. This is an important letter for all who wish to be involved in any kind of Christian ministry, because it has much to teach us about how we should handle our ministries today. Like Paul, those involved in ministry should be blameless, sincere, confident, caring, open, and willing to suffer for the sake of Christ.

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

Outline

- I. Apostolic Ministry (2 Cor. 1:1-7:16)
 - A. The Minister's Greeting (2 Cor. 1:1-11)
 - B. The Minister's Plans (2 Cor. 1:12-2:13)
 - 1. Concerning travel (2 Cor. 1:12-2:4)
 - 2. Concerning the offender (2 Cor. 2:5-11)
 - 3. Concerning Titus (2 Cor. 2:12-13)
 - C. The Ministry's Nature (2 Cor. 2:14-7:16)
 - 1. Its triumph (2 Cor. 2:14-17)
 - 2. Its commendation (2 Cor. 3:1-5)
 - 3. Its basis (2 Cor. 3:6-18)
 - 4. Its theme (2 Cor. 4:1-7)
 - 5. Its trials (2 Cor. 4:8-18)
 - 6. Its motivation (2 Cor. 5:1-10)
 - 7. Its message (2 Cor. 5:11-21)
 - 8. Its conduct (2 Cor. 6:1-10)
 - 9. Its exhortation (2 Cor. 6:11-7:16)
- II. Apostolic Collection (2 Cor. 8:1-9:15)
 - A. The Pattern of Giving (2 Cor. 8:1-9)
 - 1. The Macedonians (2 Cor. 8:1-7)
 - 2. The Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 8:8-9)
 - B. The Purpose of Giving (2 Cor. 8:10-15)
 - C. The Procedure of Giving (2 Cor. 8:16-9:5)
 - D. The Promise of Giving (2 Cor. 9:6-15)
- III. Apostolic Vindication (2 Cor. 10:1-13:14)
 - A. Paul's Authority (2 Cor. 10:1-18)
 - B. Paul's Conduct (2 Cor. 11:1-15)
 - C. Paul's Suffering (2 Cor. 11:16-33)
 - D. Paul's Credentials (2 Cor. 12:1-13)
 - E. Paul's Unselfishness (2 Cor. 12:14-19)
 - F. Paul's Exhortations (2 Cor. 12:20-13:14)

Key Info

Purpose: To affirm Paul's ministry, defend his authority as an apostle, and refute the false teachers in Corinth

Author: Paul

To whom written: The church in Corinth, and Christians everywhere

Date written: About a.d. 55-57, from Macedonia

Setting: Paul had already written three letters to the Corinthians (two are now lost). In 1 Corinthians (the second of these letters), he used strong words to correct and teach. Most of the church had responded in the right spirit; there were, however, those who were denying Paul's authority and questioning his motives.

Key verse: "We are Christ's ambassadors, and God is using us to speak to you. We urge you, as though Christ himself were here pleading with you, 'Be reconciled to God!'" (5:20 NLT).

Key people: Paul, Timothy, Titus, false teachers

Key places: Corinth, Jerusalem

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