

The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe
Week #20 – Adult Bible Study

II Corinthians 1:1 – 2:13

February 25 & 26, 2025

Introduction

1. II Corinthians is markedly different from I Corinthians
2. Paul's first visit to Corinth lasted about 18 months, and in the next 6 years or so, he wrote to and received from this church many letters, but we have only a couple, or pieces of several
3. II Corinthians is likely a compilation of at least 2 letters, and perhaps more
4. At the very least, we know that there has been a rift or highly disagreeable confrontation between Paul and the church, and much of II Corinthians arises from this painful situation and attempts to make things right again
5. We do not know exactly what the problem was, but problems can arise from:
 - a. Tensions that result when people in the church still live in the "old" ways, before following Jesus
 - b. Tensions that arise from persecution and hardship
 - c. Tensions that stem from different theologies within church members, or when members of churches become part of another church
6. We do not know the final status of Paul's relationship with the Corinthian church
7. What we do see in this letter is a glimpse into Paul himself, and how he functions as a Christian pastor, and by extension, how Christians are all meant to relate to each other

II Corinthians 1:1-2

8. Paul begins the letter in the same way that all letters of that period were begun
9. He notes that he was chosen to be an apostle; he did not appoint himself to the position
10. He is the same as Peter or any of the other "original" apostles – he was chosen by Christ
11. Paul's focus was on mission to the Gentiles
12. This emphasis on Paul's position, authority, and calling is especially important, given that there is now a crisis on his relationship with the Corinthian church
13. He address the Corinthian Christians as "saints," when meant not that they were especially good, but that they had been called and claimed by God to become members of God's people
14. He uses his traditional greeting:
 - a. *Shalom* – "peace" – not personal peace, but peace in the relationship between God and man
 - b. *Chairein* – "grace" – the love of God upon which all Christian existence depends

II Corinthians 1:3-7

15. This section is about Affliction and Comfort
16. Paul himself has been severely challenged/afflicted, and the comfort he has received from God becomes then a source of comfort to the Corinthians
17. Paul's suffering is not the normal suffering that all people experience: it is the suffering/affliction that comes upon people who follow Jesus
18. What might this suffering have been? We don't know for sure, but possibilities include:
 - a. Riots
 - b. False accusations in court
 - c. Imprisonment
 - d. Homes and business broken up
19. Paul experienced comfort from the Spirit, and he felt this comfort was "worth" the experience of suffering
20. This comfort is at least partly because through his suffering Paul has come to understand Christ more deeply
21. Paul's suffering is not unlike the Corinthians' suffering – and this mutual suffering provides comfort from each to the other

II Corinthians 1:8-11

22. Paul had learned important things in his suffering: all suffering can teach us
23. He learned that God can deliver us – in *this* life – from "certain" death
24. God's deliverance of Paul from a fatal situation helped Paul grow in his overall confidence in God's power to save him from anything

II Corinthians 1:12-14

25. There is an abrupt transition here, maybe due to an abrupt change in Paul's thinking, or due to fragments of letters being put together
26. The upshot of this section is that Paul asks the Corinthians to understand him and trust him
27. The Corinthians may think of Paul as insincere, or that he is hiding something from them
28. But Paul is being authentic with them
29. And, Paul is proud of them, as he hopes they are proud of him

II Corinthians 1:15-22

30. Apparently, Paul has been reproached for changing his plans about visiting Corinth
31. He does not immediately defend his decision based on information about *why* he changed his plans: instead he essentially reminds them that his whole life is guided by the Spirit
32. As a God-led (Spirit-guided) life, Paul's life is never two-faced (saying one thing but intending another)
33. Just as God says "yes" to us by sending Christ, and this "yes" is ironclad, so must Paul's life (and the life of any other Christian) be filled with simple integrity – yes is yes and no is no
34. Another way to say it: God is always reliable, and so is Paul, because Paul's life is given to and inspired by God

II Corinthians 1:23 – 2:4

35. Now, Paul gives an account of the facts that led him to make the Spirit-led decision to "change" his mind
36. His reasoning:
 - a. Paul and the Corinthians are equal – co-workers, friends, siblings – in the family of Christ
 - b. It was better – at this time – for Paul not to show up and thereby cause more painful interaction
 - c. It was better for things to settle a while
 - d. And Paul is staying away because of his love for them

II Corinthians 2:5-11

37. Apparently, at some point in the years of relationship between Paul and the Corinthians, there had been trouble between Paul and one particular person
38. This rift had touched the whole church
39. The church had "punished" this person – how we do not know – perhaps by exclusion, or public rebuke?
40. Paul urges the group to forgive and restore this person, for two reasons:
 - a. The person might fall away from faith
 - b. The whole community, in *not* forgiving, would give in the power of Satan (by not fulfilling Jesus' command to forgive as we have been forgiven)

II Corinthians 2:12-13

41. Paul has had good success in Troas, but he did not continue there for long because he was worried about the work and well-being of Titus, so he left Troas
42. Here is the tension involved in balancing our work and prioritizing one good form of work against another

Questions for Your Life Today

- A. What is your own experience of difficult times in church communities?
- B. How do the concepts or realities of God's grace and peace inform your life?
- C. How has "mutual suffering" impacted your life?
- D. If you have not suffered, how can you still participate in the suffering of others?
- E. How has deliverance from disaster of some sort strengthened your faith?
- F. By what set of principles do you decide what you will and will not do in your life?
- G. Have you been forgiven by another person? Have you forgiven another person? What did you learn?

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Resources:

- Interpretation Commentary on First Corinthians, Richard B. Hays, John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1997
- Interpretation Commentary on Second Corinthians, Ernest Best, John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1987
- The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of I Corinthians – Life in the Local Church, David Prior, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985
- The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of 2 Corinthians – Power in Weakness, Paul Barnett, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1988
- The Communicator's Commentary, 1, 2 Corinthians, Kenneth L. Chafin, Word Books, Waco, Texas, 1985