

Expositional Notes on II Corinthians

NT703

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INTRODUCTION

Early patristics such as Polycarp, Athenagoras, Cyprian, Tertullian, and Irenaeus attested to the Pauline authorship of this Epistle. This of course becomes very obvious because the writer claims to be Paul (II Cor. 1:1; 10:1) and an apostle (II Cor. 1:1; 12:12). Paul had established the Church of God at Corinth on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-11). He presumably wrote Proto-I Corinthians to deal with fornication in the church (I Cor. 5:9-13), and the Corinthians wrote him back asking about the married state (I Cor. 7:1). In I Corinthians, he responded to their letter with answers, and dealing with the issue of pride in the Corinthian church, manifested by factions over the church ordinances of Baptism and Lord's Supper. He attempted to deal with their hubris by focusing on the gospel of Christ, and how everyone must enter a relationship with Christ in humility, and then live the humble life. He urged that the fornicator be disciplined from the church (I Cor. 5:1-5).

After writing I Corinthians, he waited at Ephesus for Timothy to indicate a resolve (I Cor. 4:17; 16:10-11), which did not come. His initial evangelistic trip to Corinth was in heaviness (II Cor. 2:1; Acts 18:5) as he had just left Athens and faced stiff opposition (Acts 18:6). Having written I Corinthians, rebuking the church for her pride, and having required the expulsion of the fornicator, he considered this a "sorrowful" letter (II Cor. 2:2-11). He left Ephesus and went to Troas hoping to find Titus with news about the Corinthians' response, and finally met up with him in Macedonia with the good news of their repentance (II Cor. 2:12-13; 7:5-16). The fornicator had been restored, their pride evinced in factions regarding the ordinances had been stemmed, and their collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem had been fulfilled. However, a new problem developed, namely Jews who attempted to undermine Paul's apostolic ministry (i.e., II Cor. 11:1 ff.), and against whom he defended himself (II Cor. 10:1-12:18).

The chronology of Paul's activities relative to Corinth is the following:

1. Paul started the Corinthian church in early 50's and remained 18 months (visit in "heaviness").
2. Perhaps he wrote Proto-I Corinthians and did receive their letter about marriage.
3. He wrote I Corinthians ("sorrowful letter") about AD 55 from Ephesus.
4. He left Ephesus and went to Troas and Macedonia to find Titus (AD 55).
5. Having received Titus's good report, he wrote II Corinthians (AD 56).

PURPOSE

Paul's purpose was three-fold: 1. He rejoiced in the Corinthians' repentance. 2. He urged them to finalize their gift to the Jerusalem church. 3. He defended himself against the Judaizers.

CHARACTERISTICS

1. Both Epistles are example of practical pastoral theology as Paul's revealed his tenderness as a shepherd and exhortation as a father.
2. II Corinthians gives basic instruction of theological topics such as suffering, the New Covenant, the judgment seat of Christ, and Christian stewardship.
3. Paul focused on rejoicing in the midst of trials, seeking the Lord's strength in weakness.
4. He recognized Satan's efforts to thwart the welfare of the Corinthian assembly.
5. He continued the theme of humility in the believer's life, exalting his office but decreasing his person.

OUTLINE

- I. Salutation (1:1-2)
- II. Paul's Defense of His Manner (1:3-24)
 - A. His Past (1:3-22)
 - B. His Plans (1:23-24)
- III. Paul's Defense of His Ministry (2:1-7:16)
 - A. His Sorrow (2:1-17)
 - B. His Spirit (3:1-18)
 - C. His Sincerity (4:1-18)
 - D. His Security (5:1-21)
 - E. His Suffering (6:1-18)
 - F. His Separation (7:1-16)
- IV. Paul's Defense of His Mission (8:1-9:15)
 - A. The Example of Christ (8:1-24)
 - B. The Exhortation of the Church (9:1-15)
- V. Paul's Defense of His Model (10:1-12:13)
 - A. The Authority of His Apostleship (10:1-11:33)
 - B. The Frailty of His Flesh (12:1-13)
- VI. Paul's Defense of His Motive (12:14-13:10)
- VII. Conclusion (13:11-14)

EXPOSITION OF CHAPTERS

Chapter One

After introducing himself and Timothy and giving their benediction (vv. 1-2), Paul revealed his sufferings as an Apostle,¹ and the comfort that went along with his calling (vv. 3-11). He indicated why he changed his mind in coming to them as he had promised (I Cor. 16:5). He did not want to visit them with heaviness of heart again (cf. 2:1).

Chapter Two

His strong letter (I Corinthians) demanding church discipline of the fornicator was sorrowful to all (vv. 1-4), and now they needed to follow up on the man's repentance with Christian graces. He encouraged them to forgive, comfort, and love the repentant sinner in church restoration, so Satan would not get advantage with his τὰ νοήματα or "devices" (vv. 4-11). He began to defend his ministry, since he heard ultimately from Titus about criticism (vv. 12-17). Beginning with v. 14, he started a major digression about his ministry.²

Chapter Three

First, he asserted that the Corinthians were proof of his ministry (vv. 1-6), as Paul's calling was as a spiritual minister of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31 ff.). The New Covenant is superior to the Old (cf. Ex. 34:29 ff.), he acknowledged, and refuted the Judaizers with their insistence on the Old Covenant which focused on the letter, ministering death and condemnation, and is done away with. The New Covenant he explained, gives life and righteousness through the Spirit, and is exceedingly glorious forevermore (vv. 7-18).

Chapter Four

He was accused of being dishonest but retorted that his ministry of sincere (vv. 1-2). He recognized diabolical resistance but attested that he preached Christ, not himself (vv. 3-4). He detailed the difficulties of being a NT apostle with at least three paradoxes, and was encouraged about his reward (vv. 5-18).

Chapter Five

Although Paul did not enjoy suffering, his comfort and security was in the glorious resurrection and was motivated by fear of failure at the judgment seat (vv. 1-10). He rejoiced that he had the privilege to be a minister of reconciliation (vv. 11-21).³

¹Cf. 1) Acts 19:22-23; 2) I Cor. 15:32; or 3) II Cor. 11:23-28.

²Paul resumed discussion about his meeting with Titus and his good news about the Corinthians' reception of his *I Corinthian Epistle* in II Cor. 7:5-16.

³Christ died for all and expects all to live for Him (v. 15).

Chapter Six

He testified that he was an example of a minister of God in difficult situations (vv. 1-13). He attempted to encourage them to recognize they were the temple of God and so live in separation (vv. 14-18).⁴

Chapter Seven

Reconciled believers must be separate from the world and unto Paul and Christ (vv. 1-4). He finished his digression and recounted how Titus revealed to him that I Corinthians had been received and affected change in the church (vv. 5-16).

Chapter Eight

He began to defend his mission of collecting a love offering for the Jerusalem church by using the Macedonian church as an example (vv. 1-7). He also used the Lord's life as an example (vv. 8-15). He sent Titus and an unnamed brother to Corinth to take up the offering (vv. 16-24).⁵

Chapter Nine

Paul was encouraged about the Corinthians' desire to give (vv. 1-5), and laid out the principle of sowing and reaping with regard to finances (vv. 6-15).⁶

Chapter Ten

Now he moved to defending the model of his ministry against the Judaizers by claiming his Christ-like meekness and gentleness (vv. 1-2). He did not feel the compulsion to measure himself with others but to have the Lord's commendation (vv. 3-18).

Chapter Eleven

Paul was fearful that the false teachers would beguile the Corinthians with a false Jesus, a false spirit, and a false gospel (vv. 1-4).⁷ His enemies were promoting Satan's ministers (vv. 5-15), but none could deny Paul's struggles and "boasting" in the Lord (vv. 16-33).

⁴Using a series of OT citations, Paul confirmed his argument that separation from the world enhances the presence of the Lord (e.g., Isa. 52:11).

⁵A certain brother was sent with Titus with the monetary gift by the stretching upward of a hand vote (χειροτονηθεὶς) of the congregation (v. 19).

⁶Christian giving was based on the principle of tithing, which practice was established before the Law (Gen. 14:20), required during the Law (Lev. 27:30), and commended after the Law (Mt. 23:23).

⁷For example, the Jehovah Witnesses have a false "Jesus," the Charismatics a false "Spirit," and Roman Catholics and Protestant denominations a false "Gospel."

Chapter Twelve

He expressed that he could have gloried in visions and revelations and out-of-body experiences, but the Lord would not allow him (vv. 1-10).⁸ He manifested the true signs of an apostle (11-18), and challenged them with repentance (vv. 19-21).

Chapter Thirteen

He indicated that this was the third time he came to them (initial visit, I Corinthians, II Corinthians), trusting that they would examine themselves spiritually (vv. 1-10). He concluded with the Triune formula (vv. 11-14).

⁸He wisely did not reveal the nature of his thorn in the flesh.

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