

Introduction to 2 Corinthians

Author

Paul is the author of this letter (see [1:1](#); [10:1](#)). It is stamped with his style and it contains more autobiographical material than any of his other writings.

Date

The available evidence indicates that the year A.D. 55 is a reasonable estimate for the writing of this letter. From [1Co 16:5-8](#) we conclude that 1 Corinthians was written from Ephesus before Pentecost (in the spring) and that 2 Corinthians was written later that same year before the onset of winter. [2Co 2:13](#); [7:5](#) indicate that it was written from Macedonia.

Recipients

The opening salutation of the letter states that it was addressed to the church in Corinth and to the Christians throughout Achaia (the Roman province comprising all the territory of Greece south of Macedonia).

Purpose

The Corinthian church had been infiltrated by false teachers who were challenging both Paul's personal integrity and his authority as an apostle. Because he had announced a change in his itinerary, with the result that he would now pay the Corinthians one (long) visit instead of two (short) visits, these adversaries were asserting that his word was not to be trusted. They were also saying that he was not a genuine apostle and that he was putting into his own pocket the money they had collected for the poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem. Paul asks the Corinthians to consider that his personal life in their midst was always honorable and that his life-transforming message of salvation was true. He urges them to prepare for his impending visit by completing the collection they had started a year previously and by dealing with the troublemakers in their midst. He warns them that he means what he writes.

Structure

The structure of the letter relates primarily to Paul's impending third visit to Corinth. The letter falls naturally into three sections:

1. Paul explains the reason for the change of itinerary (chs. [1-7](#)).
2. Paul encourages the Corinthians to complete the collection in preparation for his arrival (chs. [8-9](#)).
3. Paul stresses the certainty of his coming, his authenticity as an apostle and his readiness as an apostle to exercise discipline if necessary (chs. [10-13](#)).

Unity

Some have questioned the unity of this letter (see note on 2:3-4), but it forms a coherent whole, as the structure (above) shows. Tradition has been unanimous in affirming its unity (the early church fathers, e.g., knew the letter only in its present form). Furthermore, none of the early Greek manuscripts breaks up the book.

Outline

- I. Primarily Apologetic: Paul's Explanation of His Conduct and Apostolic Ministry (chs. 1-7)
 - A. Salutation (1:1-2)
 - B. Thanksgiving for Divine Comfort in Affliction (1:3-11)
 - C. The Integrity of Paul's Motives and Conduct (1:12-2:4)
 - D. Forgiving the Offender at Corinth (2:5-11)
 - E. God's Direction in the Ministry (2:12-17)
 - F. The Corinthian Believers--a Letter from Christ (3:1-11)
 - G. Seeing the Glory of God with Unveiled Faces (3:12-4:6)
 - H. Treasure in Clay Jars (4:7-16 a)
 - I. The Prospect of Death and What It Means for the Christian (4:16 b-5:10)
 - J. The Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11-6:10)
 - K. A Spiritual Father's Appeal to His Children (6:11-7:4)
 - L. The Meeting with Titus (7:5-16)
- II. Hortatory: The Collection for the Christians at Jerusalem (chs. 8-9)
 - A. Generosity Encouraged (8:1-15)
 - B. Titus and His Companions Sent to Corinth (8:16-9:5)
 - C. Results of Generous Giving (9:6-15)
- III. Polemical: Paul's Vindication of His Apostolic Authority (chs. 10-13)
 - A. Paul's Defense of His Apostolic Authority and the Area of His Mission (ch. 10)
 - B. Paul Forced into Foolish Boasting (chs. 11-12)
 - C. Final Warnings (13:1-10)
 - D. Conclusion (13:11-14)