

2 Corinthians: *Strength in Weakness*

Introduction

I. The Author— The Apostle Paul

II. The Audience— The background for Second Corinthians picks up where First Corinthians ends. Paul wrote First Corinthians from Ephesus during his second missionary journey in the Spring of A.D. 55 and sent it to Corinth in the hands of Fortunatas, Stephanas, and Achaicus (1 Cor 16:23). Sometime later Timothy returned to Ephesus from Corinth and informed Paul that his letter did not resolve the problems in the church. Paul decided to revisit Corinth for a second time in what he called the “painful visit” (2 Cor. 2:1; cf. 13:1). After this second visit, Paul wrote a third letter to the Corinthians that grieved him deeply to write because of its disciplinary nature (2 Cor 2:4; 7:8-9). This non-extant, non-canonical letter was probably delivered by Titus (2 Cor 2:13). After the silversmith’s riot in Acts 19, Paul left Ephesus for Troas to meet Titus to find out what was going on in Corinth. Titus was not at Troas when Paul arrived, so Paul anxiously pushed on to Macedonia (2 Cor 2:12-13; 7:8-9). There he met Titus who brought a positive report about the Corinthian church overall, but a negative report about a specific group that was opposed to Paul. From Macedonia Paul writes 2 Corinthians in preparation for his third visit to Corinth in the winter of AD 56-57 (Acts 20:1-4). During his three month stay in Corinth on this third visit, Paul writes his letter to the Romans (Rom 16:1, 23).

III. The Aim—To defend Paul’s ministry, message, and apostleship against the accusations of those who opposed him and Christ.

IV. The Arrangement—

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| I. Introduction (1:1-11) | |
| II. The Explanation of the Ministry: Apology (1:12–7:16) | <i>PAST</i> |
| III. The Encouragement of Generosity: Arrangements (8–9) | <i>PRESENT</i> |
| IV. The Enforcement of Apostleship: Authority (10–13) | <i>PROSPECTIVE</i> |
| V. Conclusion (13:11-14) | |

V. The Analysis

Second Corinthians has *three important features*: 1) it is the least systematically arranged of Paul's letters, 2) it is the most autobiographical of his epistles (he is defending himself), and 3) it is filled with emotions (joy, suffering, sorrow).

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III. The Encouragement of Generosity: Arrangements (8–9) *PRESENT*

IV. The Enforcement of Apostleship: Authority (10–13) *PROSPECTIVE*

V. Conclusion (13:11-14)

VI. The Application