

## Introduction To 2 Corinthians

Paul's first letter to Corinth was written in and sent from Ephesus in approximately A.D. 56 or 57. The letter was one of Paul's strongest, sternest epistles. He had sent the letter by Titus to whom he had given instructions to bring word back to him of the reaction of brethren to the letter. Although the letter was necessary, the apostle could not help having apprehensions as to how the letter would be received by Corinthian brethren.

Paul had indicated his intentions to remain a while longer at Ephesus for, although he had been there already nearly three years, a great and effectual door was opened to him but the apostle was conscious of many opponents. While he waited and worked in Ephesus, he sent two of his fellow laborers ahead of him into Macedonia: Timothy and Erastus (Acts 19:22). There was also gathering unto him different men from the provinces around: Galatia and Macedonia. These were apparently the messengers of various congregations who were bearing gifts from those respective churches or regions to relieve the wants of Jerusalem saints (2 Cor. 8:23).

The door of opportunity for Paul in Ephesus came to an abrupt end when Demetrius with other silversmiths in Ephesus feigned outrage that Paul would insinuate there were no gods which were made with hands, charging Paul with blaspheming their goddess Diana, actually indignant because people were not buying their silver images of the idol as once they had. But their "outrage" had an explosive result: a riot arose and it was necessary that Paul leave the city.

Uppermost in Paul's mind were his thoughts of Corinth and anxiety to have word from Titus caused him to "bypass" an open door at Troas because Titus did not meet him there (2 Cor. 2:12). Westward he traveled to Macedonia — familiar and dear terrain to him. It was in Philippi some five or six years before that he had first preached on European soil. There he baptized Lydia and the jailor (Acts 16). Were they still there? One would wonder. And it was in Philippi that apparently Luke remained behind to strengthen the church and continue the preaching of the gospel when Paul, Silas, and Timothy had gone on to Thessalonica and parts westward. And it was in these parts that Titus somewhere met Paul, causing such a lifting of his spirits that Paul uses the word "comfort" almost a dozen time at his first reception of word from Titus as to how Corinthians had received his first letter.

Still, while Titus' arrival, with his basically good news of the Corinthians' reaction and reception to Paul's letter was extremely comforting to Paul, there was a discordant note. There was still a party opposed to Paul in Corinth, championed (with little doubt) by the false teachers who had raised so many questions about Paul, his authority, his "crude" public preaching, and other issues they brazenly raised against him. Such issues and persons had to be dealt with and deal with them he did: chapters 11 and 12 are two of the sharpest to issue from Paul's pen. Paul wrote the letter, warning, "This is the third time I am coming to you. At the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. I have said beforehand, and I do say beforehand, as when I was present the second time, so now, being absent, to them that have sinned heretofore, and to all

the rest, that, if I come again, I will not spare ..." (2 Cor. 13:1f). The letter was sent (likely by Titus, but the bearer really is unknown) and Paul and company moved resolutely toward Corinth. His company now numbered eight or nine brethren who were bearing various gifts from Gentile churches for Jerusalem saints for it was Paul's intent to sail for Judaea from Corinth, plans which had to be canceled for a plot laid against his life made it necessary that he backtrack the same way he had traveled from Asia (Acts 20:3).

Evidently the second letter accomplished its desired results: opposition to Paul had apparently been quelled by the time he arrived in the city and Paul remained in Corinth for about three months during which time he composed the letter to Roman saints, a letter which bears no hint of the internal turmoil Paul evidenced when he wrote the two letters to Corinth. Corinth must also have completed the offering they were the first to promise and many of the ills among the brethren had been corrected. The opponents of Paul were silenced, without doubt waiting for another day when they might strike again, but for the moment Paul could be content that Corinthian problems had been resolved and brethren were at peace.

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