

A LOOK AT THE BOOK 2 Corinthians

Ralph Porter
© 2003

AUTHOR AND DATE

External and internal evidence give ample evidence that Paul wrote 2 Corinthians.

The more debated issue concerns the unity of the book.

The change of tone in chapters 10-13 is used as a basis for considering the book to be a combination of two letters.

It's frequently assumed that the latter part represents the hard letter mentioned in 2:4.

However, the issue referred to is not mentioned.

No external nor conclusive evidence forces us to question the unity of the book.

The book was written near the end of the third missionary journey, normally accepted to be around A.D. 56-57.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

After Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, Timothy visited Corinth and came back with a negative report.

Paul made a quick trip to Corinth to try to resolve the problems there.

Following his visit, Paul wrote a hard letter to the church.

While Titus delivered the letter, Paul waited anxiously for his return.

He finally went to Macedonia to look for him.

He was grateful to hear from Titus that the church responded positively to his correction.

From Macedonia Paul wrote 2 Corinthians and later visited the church again.

PURPOSE AND THEME

Paul's letter was an attempt to respond to the present situation in Corinth as Titus had just described it.

He had several purposes:

To express his gratitude for their positive response.

To explain his change of plans.

To encourage the church to receive the brother who had repented back into fellowship.

To prepare for the offering.

To defend himself against the accusations of the false teachers.

Along with these main specific purposes, Paul wanted to build them up generally, and to prepare for his visit.

The book focuses on the ministry, though the treatment is hardly a unified presentation of the theme.

Three main subjects are presented in the book:

The privilege of the ministry (1-7)

The principles of Christian giving (8-9)

The vindication of Paul's ministry (10-13)

The main feature of the book would appear to be the glimpse into the heart of God's servant.

It shows his motivation, his concern for God's people and the proper use of boasting in defense of the authority God has given him.

The emotionally charged expression of his concern for them is what makes the book hard to handle synthetically.

The book is not a logically presented thesis of a theological theme.

It expresses what his heart feels.

What principles for our lives does Paul reveal?

How should we put them into practice today?

2 CORINTHIANS

The Privilege of Ministry

Ralph Porter

EXPLANATION OF PAUL'S CONDUCT AND MINISTRY 1-7	PREPARATION FOR THE COLLECTION 8-9	VINDICATION OF PAUL'S MINISTRY 10-13
GREETING 1:1-2 THANKSGIVING FOR COMFORT IN SUFFERING 1:3-11 Comfort from God 3-7 Deliverance by God 8-10 Their participation in prayer 11 EXPLANATION OF PAUL'S DELAY 1:12-2:13 Concern for them 1:12-14 Intention to visit them 1:15-16 False accusation against them 1:17 Response to the accusation 1:18-22 Delay to avoid judgment 1:23-2:4 Restoration of offender 2:5-11 Concern caused by Titus' delay 2:12-13 EXPLANATION OF PAUL'S MINISTRY 2:14-7:16 Joy of ministry 2:14-16 Requirements for ministry 2:17-3:6a Basis for ministry 3:6b-5:10 Glory of the old covenant 3:6b-7 Greater glory of the new covenant 3:8-11 Ministry without a veil 3:12-4:6 Ministry in fragile vessels 4:7-5:10 Privileged position of ministry 5:11-21 Motive for ministry 11-16 Ministry of reconciliation 17-21 Exhortations based on ministry 6:1-7:2 To be fruitful 6:1-10 To be open with them 6:11-13 To be separated from evil 6:14-7:1 To respond to his love 7:2 Praise from results of ministry 7:3-16 Lack of condemnation 3 Confidence in them 4 Response to his exhortation 5-16	APPEAL FOR THE OFFERING 8:1-15 Example of Macedonia 1-6 Petition 7-8 Example of Christ 9 Previous interest 10-11 Proper motive 12-15 RECOMMENDATION OF MESSENGERS 8:16-22 REASON FOR THEIR JOURNEY 9:1-5 PRINCIPLES FOR THE OFFERING 9:6-15	RESPONSE TO THE CRITICS 10:12-18 Exhortation not to judge by the flesh 10:1-6 Denial of inconsistency 10:7-11 Importance of divine approval 10:12-18 Fear of effect of false teachers 11:1-6 Refusal of financial support 11:7-15 Suffering on account of the gospel 11:16-12:11 Comparison with Judaizers 11:16-33 Experience in the third heaven 12:1-4 Thorn in the flesh 12:5-10 Proof of his authority 12:11-18 Evidence of apostleship 11-13 Refusal to burden them 14-16 Honesty demonstrated by messengers 17-18 PREPARATION FOR VISIT 12:19-13:10 Desire for their edification 12:19-21 Warning to judge themselves 13:1-10 CONCLUDING ARGUMENTS 13:11-14 Final exhortations 13:11-12 Final greeting 13:13 Benediction 13:14