



Overview for 2 Corinthians

Purpose: To refute criticisms leveled at Paul's apostolic authority, and to expose the false teachers in Corinth

Author: Paul the Apostle

Date Written: Approximately A.D. 55-57, from Macedonia

Key People: Paul, Timothy, Titus, the believers at Corinth, and the false teachers

Setting: Located on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, Corinth was a prosperous commercial city, and the capital of the Roman province of Achaia. Major trade routes passed through it, and it was famed as a licentious, sophisticated city of pleasure. The church at Corinth had been founded on Paul's first visit to that city. However, the believers there were under attack by Satan, and problems with worldliness, moral issues, internal strife, and doctrinal deviations continued to threaten the Corinthian church. Paul had to spend much time warning and correcting them.

Prior to the writing of 2 Corinthians, Paul had written other letters to the infant church at Corinth. Seemingly, another epistle had been written prior to 1 Corinthians (see 1 Corinthians 5:9). The Book of 1 Corinthians addressed moral problems in the church, and answered specific questions on several issues. That letter failed to produce the desired results, so Paul made a "painful visit" to the church at Corinth (see 2 Corinthians 2:1). Apparently, this visit

was followed by another "sorrowful letter" written between 1 Corinthians and this epistle.¹

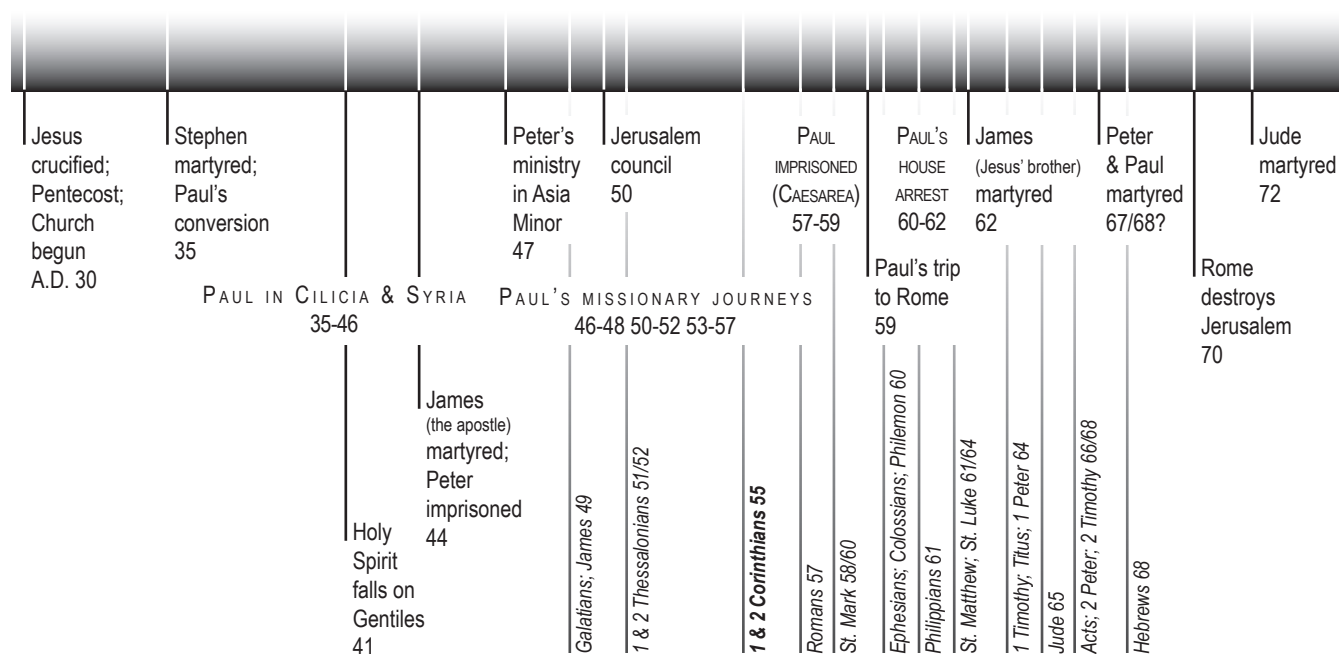
Approximately one year after the Book of 1 Corinthians was written, the challenges against Paul's apostolic authority had increased and a number of accusations had been leveled against him. Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to set forth his credentials as a true apostle of Jesus Christ, and to denounce those who were twisting the truth and discrediting him.

Summary: The Epistle of 2 Corinthians begins with Paul's greeting to the church and an expression of praise to God for His comfort. Chapters 1 through 7 focus on Paul's apostolic ministry, and express his anxiety and relief in connection with the mission of Titus, who had taken Paul's "sorrowful letter" to the Corinthian church (2 Corinthians 7:6). He defended the legitimacy of his apostleship by describing the sufferings he had endured in the course of his ministry, and urged the Corinthians not to turn away from the truth but to be fully reconciled with God. Chapters 8 and 9 center on the grace of Christian giving, revealing Paul's efforts to motivate the Corinthian believers' generosity in the collection for the church at Jerusalem. He told them how others had given, and encouraged them to demonstrate their love in a tangible way as well. Finally, in chapters 10 through 13, Paul presented a further vindication of his authority, and looked ahead to factors that still needed attention within the church. The epistle closes with final greetings and a benediction.

1. Carver, Frank G., *Beacon Bible Commentary*, Vol. VIII, p. 494.

Timeline

Many of these dates are approximate, as reference materials differ slightly.



Outline

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- I. Introduction (1:1-11)
 - A. Salutation (1:1-2)
 - B. Thanksgiving (1:3-11)
- II. The apology of the Apostle (1:12—7:16)
 - A. The conduct of Paul (1:12—2:11)
 - B. The calling of Paul (2:12—6:10)
 - C. The conclusion (6:11—7:16)
- III. The arrangement of a contribution for the saints (8:1—9:15)
 - A. The examples to consider (8:1-15)
 - B. The mission of Titus (8:16-24)
 - C. The principles to heed (9:1-15)
- IV. The authority of the Apostle (10:1—13:10)
 - A. The approval of the Apostle (10:1-18)
 - B. The boast of the Apostle (11:1—12:10)
 - C. The credentials of the Apostle (12:11-18)
 - D. The challenge of the Apostle (12:19—13:10)
- V. Conclusion (13:11-14)
 - A. Exhortations (13:11-12)
 - B. Greetings (13:13)
 - C. Benediction (13:14)