

The Book of 2 Corinthians

The Author, Title, and Date of 2 Corinthians

1. Title: 2 Corinthians: Named for the Church in Corinth to whom it was written.
2. Author: The Apostle Paul: Paul himself claims authorship within (1:1; 10:1). Polycarp, a disciple of the Apostle John, quotes from this book in the second century A.D. The “vocabulary, similarities to 1 Corinthians, and correlation with evidence from Acts also prove Paul’s authorship. (MacArthur p.5)
3. Date: After Paul left Ephesus in the spring of 56 A.D. (1 Cor 16:8) and went to Macedonia during his third missionary journey.
4. Location: Written in Macedonia (16:8-9); perhaps the city of Philippi (MacArthur p.5).

The Background and Setting of 2 Corinthians

1. Paul was aware of troubles in Corinth and wrote a letter lost to time but referred to. (1 Cor 5:9)
2. After that letter, Paul heard of more trouble. (1 Cor 1:11; 16:17)
3. “While 1 Corinthians apparently resolved some of the problems in Corinth, a new and potentially more dangerous threat soon arose.” False teachers, claiming to be apostles sent from the Jerusalem Church arrived in Corinth and began leading the people away from Paul and the truth. (MacArthur p.4)
4. Paul left Ephesus and went to Corinth.
 - a. His visit was “sorrowful” or painful. (2:1)
 - b. He was defied and openly insulted (2:5-8, 10; 7:12) yet church members took no action against that unruly person (possibly one of the false teachers).
5. Paul returned to Ephesus and wrote another letter, the “severe” letter (also not preserved) (2:4) and sent it to Corinth with Titus. (7:5-16)
 - a. Paul made his way to Macedonia where he met Titus who was returning from Corinth.
 - b. Titus explained that most of the church had repented and reaffirmed their loyalty to Paul. (7:7)
 - c. “Their ready response filled Paul with joy and confirmed his confidence in them.” (Hughes)
6. Although greatly relieved, Paul knew all of Corinth’s troubles were not resolved. False teachers remained and many who believed were confused. Many others were following these false teachers.
 - a. Paul prepared to return to Corinth again. (12:14; 13:1).
 - b. Paul penned 2 Corinthians.

**A church in danger:
Disobedience to
God, His truth and
those He has called
to lead.**

The Purpose of 2 Corinthians

1. To describe his sufferings in Asia. (1:3-11)
2. To explain his change of plans regarding his return to Corinth. (1:12-2:4)
3. To direct actions regarding discipline and reconciliation. (2:5-11)
4. To express his joy over the obedience of some. (2:2-13; 7:15-16)
5. To state the superiority of grace over the law. (2:14-6:10)
6. To appeal for a separation from the crafty and smooth-talking false teachers. (6:11-7:16)
7. To give instruction regarding the collection. (8:1-9:15)
8. To rightfully defend his apostleship against the attacks of those who would deceive the church. (10:1-13:14)
 - a. Paul was an apostle. (Acts 14:14; 1 Corinthians 1:1; 4:9; 9:1; 15:9; Gal 1:1)
 - b. He personally saw the resurrected Lord Jesus. (Acts 9:1-16; 1 Corinthians 15:8; Gal 1:12)

Format

This is “an emotional and highly personal letter” (MacArthur p.5). Paul cared deeply for this church and he was pained by their struggles. As a good shepherd, he sacrificed for his flock and was hurt by their rebellion against him and the truth. To uphold the truth, he was compelled to defend the position God had entrusted to him.

Some Key Verses

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” (1:3-4)

The Book of 2 Corinthians

“For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.” (2:17)

“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God... We do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake.” (4:1-2, 5)

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” (5:17)

“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (5:20-21)

“Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide.” (6:11)

“Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?” (6:14)

“Make room for us in your hearts; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one.” (7:2)

“But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore, it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.” (11:12-15)

The Outline of 2 Corinthians (MacArthur)

1. Apostolic Ministry (1:1-7:16)
 - a. The Minister’s Greeting (1:1-11)
 - b. The Minister’s Plans (1:12-2:13)
 - 1) Concerning travel (1:12-2:4)
 - 2) Concerning the offender (2:5-11)
 - 3) Concerning Titus (2:12-13)
 - c. The Minister’s Nature (2:14-7:16)
 - 1) Its triumph (2:14-17)
 - 2) Its commendation (3:1-5)
 - 3) Its basis (3:6-18)
 - 4) Its theme (4:1-7)
 - 5) Its trials (4:8-18)
 - 6) Its motivation (5:1-10)
 - 7) Its message (5:11-21)
 - 8) Its conduct (6:1-10)
 - 9) Its exhortation (6:11-7:16)
2. Apostolic Collection (8:1-9:15)
 - a. The Pattern of Giving (8:1-9)
 - 1) The Macedonians (8:1-7)
 - 2) The Lord Jesus Christ (8:8-9)
 - b. The Purpose of Giving (8:10-15)
 - c. The Procedure of Giving (8:16-9:5)
 - d. The Promise of Giving (9:6-15)
3. Apostolic Vindication (10:1-13:14)
 - a. Paul’s Authority (10:1-18)
 - b. Paul’s Conduct (11:1-15)
 - c. Paul’s Suffering (11:16-33)
 - d. Paul’s Credentials (12:1-13)
 - e. Paul’s Unselfishness (12:14-19)
 - f. Paul’s Exhortations (12:20-13:14)

The world in danger:

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.” (2 Tim 4:3-4)

References:

John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 2 Corinthians*
MacArthur NASB Study Bible
Robert G. Gromacki, *New Testament Survey*
D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the Pauline Epistles*
Colin Kruse, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 2 Corinthians*
Philip E. Hughes, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*