

Paul's Third Missionary Journey—Emergency Visit to Corinth (brief and painful) (c. Summer 54)

2 Corinthians 2:1; 12:14; 13:1–3

2:1 For I have decided this for myself, not to come to you again in sorrow.

12:14 Behold, this third *time* I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden *to you*. For I am not seeking your possessions, but you. For children are not obligated to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.

13:1 This *is* the third *time* I am coming to you. By the testimony of two or three witnesses every word will be established. [Deut 19:15]

2 I have already said when *I* was present the second time, and *although I* am absent now *I* also say in advance to those who sinned previously and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare *anyone*,

3 since you are demanding proof that Christ, who *is* not weak toward you, but is powerful among you, is speaking in me.

Paul's Third Letter to the Corinthians (now lost) / Paul Sends Titus to Corinth (c. Summer 54)

2 Corinthians 2:4; 7:8; 12:17–18

2:4 For out of great distress and anguish of heart I wrote to you through many tears, not so that you may be caused to be sad, but so that you may know the love that I have especially for you.

7:8 For if indeed I grieved you by my letter, I do not regret *it*. Even if I did regret *it* (I see that that letter grieved you, even though for a short time),

12:17 I have not taken advantage of you through anyone whom I sent to you, *have I?*

18 I urged Titus *to go*, and I sent the brother *with him*. Titus did not take advantage of you, *did he?* Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same footsteps?

Paul's Third Missionary Journey—The Great Disturbance in Ephesus (Fall 54)

Acts 19:23–40

Demetrius Incites a Riot

23 Now there happened at that time no little disturbance concerning the Way.

24 For someone named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver replicas of the temple of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen.

25 These he gathered together, and the workers occupied with such things, *and* said, "Men, you know that from this business we get our prosperity,

26 and you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this man Paul has persuaded *and* turned away a large crowd *by* saying that the *gods* made by hands are not gods.

27 So not only is there a danger this line of business of ours *will* come into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Artemis *will* be regarded as nothing—and *she* is about to be brought down even from her grandeur, *she* whom the whole *of* Asia and the *entire* world worship!"

28 And *when they* heard *this* and became full of rage, they began to shout, saying, "Great *is* Artemis of the Ephesians!"

Paul's Friends Prevent Him from Intervening

29 And the city was filled with the tumult, and with one purpose they rushed into the theater, seizing Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians *who were* traveling companions of Paul.

30 But *when* Paul wanted to enter into the popular assembly, the disciples would not let him.

31 And even some of the Asiarchs who were his friends sent *word* to him *and* were urging *him* not to risk himself *by going* into the theater.

"Great is Artemis of the Ephesians"

32 So some were shouting *one thing and* some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and the majority did not know why they had assembled.

33 And *some* of the crowd advised Alexander, *when* the Jews put him forward. But Alexander, motioning *with his* hand, was wanting to defend himself to the popular assembly.

34 But *when they* recognized that he was a Jew, they were shouting with one voice from all *of them* for about two hours, "Great *is* Artemis of the Ephesians!"

The City Clerk Quiets the Crowd

35 And *when* the city secretary had quieted the crowd, he said, “Ephesian men, for who is there among men who does not know the Ephesian city is honorary temple keeper of the great Artemis and of *her* image fallen from heaven?

36 Therefore *because* these *things* are undeniable, it is necessary *that* you be quiet and do nothing rash!

37 For you have brought these men *here who are* neither temple robbers nor blasphemers of our goddess.

38 If then Demetrius and the craftsmen *who are* with him have a complaint against anyone, the court days are observed and there are proconsuls—let them bring charges against one another!

39 But if you desire anything further, it will be settled in the lawful assembly.

40 For indeed we are in danger of being accused of rioting concerning today, *since there* is no cause in relation to which we will be able to give an account concerning this disorderly gathering!” And *when he* had said these *things*, he dismissed the assembly.

Paul’s Third Missionary Journey—Return to Macedonia via Troas (Fall 54)

Acts 20:1

2 Corinthians 2:12–13

20:1 Now after the turmoil had ceased, Paul summoned the disciples, and *after* encouraging *them*, he said farewell *and* departed to travel to Macedonia.

12 Now *when I* arrived in Troas for the gospel of Christ and a door was opened for me by the Lord,
13 I did not experience rest in my spirit, *because* I did not find Titus my brother, but saying farewell to them, I departed for Macedonia.

Paul’s Third Missionary Journey—Timothy and Titus Join Paul in Macedonia (Fall 54)

2 Corinthians 1:1; 7:5–7

1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God that is in Corinth, together with all the saints who are in all Achaia.

7:5 For even *when* we arrived in Macedonia, our body had no rest, but we were afflicted in every *way*—quarrels outside, fears within.

6 But God, who comforts the humble, comforted us by the coming of Titus,

7 and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort *with* which he was comforted among you, *because he* reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.

Paul’s Third Missionary Journey—Paul’s Ministry in Macedonia (Fall 54)

Acts 20:2a

2 Corinthians 8:1–5

2a And *after he* had gone through those regions and encouraged them at length,

1 Now we make known to you, brothers, the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia,
2 that with a great ordeal of affliction, the abundance of their joy and the extreme depth of their poverty have overflowed to the wealth of their generosity.
3 I testify that *they gave* according to *their* ability, and beyond *their* ability, by their own choice,
4 requesting of us with much exhortation the favor and the fellowship of the ministry to the saints,
5 and not just as we had hoped, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and *then* to us, by the will of God.

Paul’s Fourth Letter to the Corinthians – Part 1 (Fall 54)

2 Corinthians 1:1–2:13

Greeting

1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God that is in Corinth, together with all the saints who are in all Achaia.

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Praise to God for His Provision of Comfort

3 Blessed *is* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

4 who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those *who are* in all affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

5 For just as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, thus through Christ our comfort overflows also.

6 But if we are afflicted, *it is* for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, *it is* for your comfort that is at work in the patient endurance of the same sufferings that we also suffer.

7 And our hope for you *is* firm, *because we* know that as you are sharers in the sufferings, so also *you will be sharers* in the comfort.

Paul's Afflictions in the Province of Asia (Ephesus; see Acts 19:23–41)

8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning our affliction that happened in the *province of* Asia, that we were burdened to an extraordinary degree, beyond *our* strength, so that we were in despair even of living.

9 But *we* ourselves had the sentence of death in ourselves, so that we would not be putting confidence in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead,

10 who delivered us from so great *a risk* of death, and will deliver *us*, in whom we have put our hope that he will also deliver *us* again,

11 *while* you also join in helping on our behalf by prayer, so that thanks may be given on our behalf by many persons for this gracious gift *given* to us through *the help* of many.

Theme Statement: A Proper Understanding of Paul's Ministry

12 For our reason for boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you, in holiness and purity of motive from God, not in merely human wisdom, but by the grace of God.

13 For we are not writing *anything* else to you except what you can read or also understand. But I hope that you will understand completely,

14 just as you have also understood us in part, that we are your reason for boasting, just as you *are* also ours in the day of our Lord Jesus.

An Explanation of the Changes in Paul's Travel Plans

15 And with this confidence, I was wanting to come to you previously, in order that you may have a second proof of my goodwill, 16 and through you to go to Macedonia, and to come to you again from Macedonia, and to be sent on my way by you to Judea.

17 Therefore, *when I* was wanting *to do* this, perhaps then was I making use of vacillation? Or was I deciding what I was deciding according to the flesh, in order that with me my "yes" may be "yes" and my "no" *may be* "no" *at the same time*?

18 But God *is* faithful, so that our word to you is not "yes" and "no."

19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the one who was proclaimed among you by us, by me and Silvanus and Timothy, did not become "yes" and "no," but has become "yes" in him.

20 For as many as *are the* promises of God, in him *they are* "yes"; therefore also through him *is* the "amen" to the glory of God through us.

21 Now the one who establishes us together with you in Christ and who anoints us *is* God,

22 *who* also sealed us and gave the down payment of the Spirit in our hearts.

The Painful (Second) Visit and the Explanation for His Decision Not to Return

23 But I call upon God *as* witness against my life, that *in order to* spare you, I did not come again to Corinth.

24 Not that we lord it over your faith, but we are fellow workers for your joy, because by faith you stand firm.

2:1 For I have decided this for myself, not to come to you again in sorrow.

2 For if I *cause* you sorrow, then who will make me glad except the one who is caused to be sad by me?

3 And I wrote this very *thing* in order that *when I* came, I would not experience sorrow from those who ought to have made me glad, *because I* have confidence about you all, that my joy belongs to all of you.

4 For out of great distress and anguish of heart I wrote to you through many tears, not so that you may be caused to be sad, but so that you may know the love that I have especially for you.

Forgiveness of the Offender

5 But if anyone has caused sorrow, he has not caused me sorrow, but to some degree—in order not to say too much—to all of you.

6 This punishment by the majority *is* sufficient for such a person.

7 So then, you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest somehow this person should be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

8 Therefore I urge you to confirm *your* love for him.

9 Because for this *reason* also I wrote, in order that I could know your proven character, whether you are obedient in everything.

10 Now to whomever you forgive anything, I also *do*; for indeed, whatever I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, *it is* for your sake in the presence of Christ,

11 in order that we may not be exploited by Satan (for we are not ignorant of his schemes).
 12 Now *when I* arrived in Troas for the gospel of Christ and a door was opened for me by the Lord,
 13 I did not experience rest in my spirit, *because* I did not find Titus my brother, but saying farewell to them, I departed for Macedonia.

Scripture quotations are from the [Lexham English Bible \(LEB\)](#). Copyright 2012 [Logos Bible Software](#). Lexham is a registered trademark of [Logos Bible Software](#).

Chronological Notes

- 1) Second Corinthians contains significant biographical information about Paul's varied hardships and revelatory visions that we otherwise would not know. The following outline of what happened after Paul left Corinth assumes that 2 Corinthians is a unity.¹
 - A) Paul's physical absence from Corinth apparently created a theological and administrative vacuum that others moved to fill. Paul may not have appointed specific leaders in the church since the Christians met in the houses of individuals who naturally tended to exert influence over others because of their wealth and social prominence. Paul argued that though they had a myriad of guardians in Christ, they had only one father in the gospel (1 Cor 4:15). This statement suggests that the church was inundated with would-be guides even before any interlopers arrived.
 - B) In two letters, a previous letter now lost (1 Cor 5:9–13) and 1 Corinthians, Paul challenged important persons in the community for their ethical misbehavior and their association with idolatry. Paul sent Timothy to Corinth from Ephesus with 1 Corinthians (1 Cor 4:17; 16:10–11). The guilty parties did not accept his discipline passively. His bold rebukes caused them to lose face and sparked deep resentment. They counterattacked by impugning his motives, methods, and person to undermine his authority in the church. The result: some members continued as avid supporters of Paul, some wavered, and some comprised a determined element of resistance to his leadership. Anyone who has held a leadership position in a church can probably identify with this scenario.
 - C) Paul ended up changing his plans from what he sketched out in 1 Corinthians 16:5–9. He intended to come to them after passing through Macedonia and perhaps spend the winter with them. Later, he says he wanted to go to Macedonia via Corinth and then return before setting sail for Jerusalem (2 Cor 1:15–16). Instead, Timothy may have returned from Corinth with bad news that caused Paul to make an emergency visit.
 - D) The visit turned out to be bitter and distressing for Paul (1:23; 2:1; 12:14; 13:1). He was the object of an attack by someone in the community (2:5–8; 7:11–12), and no one from the Corinthian congregation took up his defense.
 - E) Paul returned to Ephesus from Corinth and did not go on to Macedonia as previously planned.
 - F) He then wrote the sorrowful letter from Ephesus in lieu of another visit (1:23; 2:3–4; 7:8, 12) in which he sought to test their obedience (2:6). The letter apparently called on them to take action against the offender and to demonstrate their innocence in the matter and their zeal for him before God (7:12).
 - G) After this letter was written, Paul's life became so endangered in Asia that he attributed his survival to God's miraculous deliverance (most likely the great disturbance of Acts 19).
 - H) Titus probably delivered this severe letter to the Corinthians. He stayed to insure their repentance, to cement their renewed commitment to Paul, and to rejuvenate their dedication to the collection for the poor in Jerusalem. Paul had assured Titus of his confidence in the Corinthians' positive response to the letter (7:14) and expected to hear some word from Titus about the Corinthians' response to his letter.
 - I) Apparently, Paul planned to meet Titus in Troas (2:12–13). He had an evangelistic opportunity there, but his nagging worries about the situation in Corinth (see 11:28) caused him to leave this work. Presumably, when Paul realized that Titus was not on the last boat of the season (now autumn), he assumed that Titus would now have to travel by land through Macedonia. He left for Macedonia in hopes of meeting Titus there (2:12–13).

¹ Sourced from David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, The New American Commentary (Broadman & Holman, 1999): 27–30.

- J) Titus's arrival with good news about the repentance of the majority (2:6) and their zeal for Paul greatly comforted him (7:6–7, 9, 11, 13, 15). His expression of joy in chapter seven indicates that the severe letter and Titus's visit had repaired the breach.
- K) Healing a broken relationship takes time, as does complete ethical reformation. Paul responded by writing 2 Corinthians and sending Titus back with two brothers to complete the collection (8:6, 17–18, 22). He defends his activity as an apostle and makes a fervent appeal for the Corinthians to be receptive to him again. Their affection for him, however, had been alienated by the presence of boastful rivals, and he was still concerned that their former openness to him had diminished.
- L) At some point during this time, these interlopers arrived in Corinth. They apparently came off as “superapostles” who were more spiritual, eloquent, and compelling than Paul (11:5, 23; 12:11). It is likely that when they came to Corinth they made inroads with the group in Corinth already at odds with Paul and most receptive to alternative views. The presence of rivals forced Paul to address the issue of how they can discern a true apostle from a huckster, a true witness from an imposter, and true speech from foolishness.
- M) The letter appears to have resolved some issues. Paul spent three months in Greece (Acts 20:2–3) before leaving for Jerusalem with the collection, and, presumably, most of that time was spent in Corinth. The letter to the Romans was therefore probably written from Corinth on the eve of his departure.