

### 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 But I determined this for my own sake, that I would not come to you in sorrow again.

12:14 Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not responsible to save up for *their* parents, but parents for *their* children.

13:1 This is the third time I am coming to you. EVERY FACT IS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES. [\[Deut 19:15\]](#)  
 2 I have previously said when present the second time, and though now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest *as well*, that if I come again I will not spare *anyone*,  
 3 since you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me, and who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you.

### 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 much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.

7:8 For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—*for* I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while—

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

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

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

Acts 19:23–41

#### Demetrius Incites a Riot

23 About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way.

24 For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen; 25 these he gathered together with the workmen of similar *trades*, and said, "Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business.

26 You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods *at all*.

27 Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence."

28 When they heard *this* and were filled with rage, they *began* crying out, saying, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

#### Paul's Friends Prevent Him from Intervening

29 The city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia.

30 And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly, the disciples would not let him.

31 Also some of the Asiarchs who were friends of his sent to him and repeatedly urged him not to venture into the theater.

#### "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians"

32 So then, some were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly was in confusion and the majority did not know for what reason they had come together.

33 Some of the crowd concluded *it was* Alexander, since the Jews had put him forward; and having motioned with his hand, Alexander was intending to make a defense to the assembly.

34 But when they recognized that he was a Jew, a *single* outcry arose from them all as they shouted for about two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

#### The City Clerk Quiets the Crowd

35 After quieting the crowd, the town clerk said, "Men of Ephesus, what man is there after all who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of the *image* which fell down from heaven?

36 So, since these are undeniable facts, you ought to keep calm and to do nothing rash.

37 For you have brought these men *here* who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess.  
 38 So then, if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a complaint against any man, the courts are in session and proconsuls are *available*; let them bring charges against one another.  
 39 But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in the lawful assembly.  
 40 For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today's events, since there is no *real cause for it*, and in this connection we will be unable to account for this disorderly gathering."  
 41 After saying this he dismissed the assembly.

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

Acts 20:1

2 Corinthians 2:12–13

1 After the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and when he had exhorted them and taken his leave of them, he left to go to Macedonia.

12 Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord,  
 13 I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to 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 by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia:

7:5 For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within.

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

7 and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as 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 When he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation,

1 Now, brethren, we *wish to* make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,  
 2 that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.  
 3 For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, *they gave* of their own accord,  
 4 begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,  
 5 and *this*, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and 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 by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout 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 *be* 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 will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

6 But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer;  
7 and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are *sharers* of our comfort.

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

8 For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came *to us* in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;  
9 indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;  
10 who delivered us from so great a *peril of death*, and will deliver *us*, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us,  
11 you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through *the prayers of many*.

#### **Theme Statement: A Proper Understanding of Paul's Ministry**

12 For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.  
13 For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end;  
14 just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.

#### **An Explanation of the Changes in Paul's Travel Plans**

15 In this confidence I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing;  
16 that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea.  
17 Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no *at the same time*?  
18 But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no.  
19 For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him.  
20 For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.  
21 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God,  
22 who also sealed us and gave *us* the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

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

23 But I call God as witness to my soul, that to spare you I did not come again to Corinth.  
24 Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm.  
2:1 But I determined this for my own sake, that I would not come to you in sorrow again.  
2 For if I cause you sorrow, who then makes me glad but the one whom I made sorrowful?  
3 This is the very thing I wrote you, so that when I came, I would not have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice; having confidence in you all that my joy would be *the joy* of you all.  
4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.

#### **Forgiveness of the Offender**

5 But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree—in order not to say too much—to all of you.  
6 Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which *was inflicted* by the majority,  
7 so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort *him*, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.  
8 Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm *your* love for him.  
9 For to this end also I wrote, so that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.  
10 But one whom you forgive anything, I *forgive* also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, *I did it* for your sakes in the presence of Christ,  
11 so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.  
12 Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord,  
13 I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia.

### 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.<sup>1</sup>
  - 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).
  - 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.

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

- 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.