

**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 So I made up my own mind not to pay you another painful visit.

12:14 Look, for the third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you, because I do not want your possessions, but you. For children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.

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

2 I said before when I was present the second time and now, though absent, I say again 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 is speaking through me. He is not weak toward you but is powerful among 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 great distress and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears, not to make you sad, but to let you know the love that I have especially for you.

7:8 For even if I made you sad by my letter, I do not regret having written it (even though I did regret it, for I see that my letter made you sad, though only for a short time).

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

18 I urged Titus to visit you and I sent our brother along with him. Titus did not take advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit? Did we not behave in the same way?

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

Acts 19:23–41

**Demetrius Incites a Riot**

23 At that time a great disturbance took place concerning the Way.

24 For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought a great deal of business to the craftsmen.

25 He gathered these together, along with the workmen in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that our prosperity comes from this business.

26 And you see and hear that this Paul has persuaded and turned away a large crowd, not only in Ephesus but in practically all of the province of Asia, by saying that gods made by hands are not gods at all.

27 There is danger not only that this business of ours will come into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be regarded as nothing, and she whom all the province of Asia and the world worship will suffer the loss of her greatness."

28 When they heard this they became enraged and began to shout, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

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

29 The city was filled with the uproar, and the crowd rushed to the theater together, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, the Macedonians who were Paul's traveling companions.

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

31 Even some of the provincial authorities who were his friends sent a message to him, urging him not to venture into the theater.

**"Great is Artemis of the Ephesians"**

32 So then some were shouting one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had met together.

33 Some of the crowd concluded it was about Alexander because the Jews had pushed him to the front. Alexander, gesturing with his hand, was wanting to make a defense before the public assembly.

34 But when they recognized that he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" for about two hours.

**The City Clerk Quiets the Crowd**

35 After the city secretary quieted the crowd, he said, "Men of Ephesus, what person is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is the keeper of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image that fell from heaven?"

36 So because these facts are indisputable, you must keep quiet and not do anything reckless.

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 someone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls; let them bring charges against one another there.  
 39 But if you want anything in addition, it will have to be settled in a legal assembly.  
 40 For we are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause we can give to explain this disorderly gathering.”  
 41 After he had said 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 disturbance had ended, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them and saying farewell, he left to go to Macedonia.

12 Now when I arrived in Troas to proclaim the gospel of Christ, even though the Lord had opened a door of opportunity for me,  
 13 I had no relief in my spirit, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-bye to them and set out 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 From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God that is in Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia.

7:5 For even when we came into Macedonia, our body had no rest at all, but we were troubled in every way—struggles from the outside, fears from within.

6 But God, who encourages the downhearted, encouraged us by the arrival of Titus.

7 We were encouraged not only by his arrival, but also by the encouragement you gave him, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your deep concern for me, so that I rejoiced more than ever.

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

Acts 20:2a

2 Corinthians 8:1–5

2a After he had gone through those regions and spoken many words of encouragement to the believers there,

1 Now we make known to you, brothers and sisters, the grace of God given to the churches of Macedonia,  
 2 that during a severe ordeal of suffering, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in the wealth of their generosity.  
 3 For I testify, they gave according to their means and beyond their means. They did so voluntarily,  
 4 begging us with great earnestness for the blessing and fellowship of helping the saints.  
 5 And they did this not just as we had hoped, but they gave themselves first 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 From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God that is in Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia.

2 Grace and peace to you 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 troubles so that we may be able to comfort those experiencing any trouble with the comfort with which

we ourselves are comforted by God.

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

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

7 And our hope for you is steadfast because we know that as you share in our sufferings, so also you will share in 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, brothers and sisters, regarding the affliction that happened to us in the province of Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of living.

9 Indeed we felt as if the sentence of death had been passed against us, so that we would not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.

10 He delivered us from so great a risk of death, and he will deliver us. We have set our hope on him that he will deliver us yet again, 11 as you also join in helping us by prayer, so that many people may give thanks to God on our behalf for the gracious gift given to us through the help of many.

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

12 For our reason for confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that with pure motives and sincerity which are from God—not by human wisdom but by the grace of God—we conducted ourselves in the world, and all the more toward you.

13 For we do not write you anything other than what you can read and also understand. But I hope that you will understand completely

14 just as also you have partly understood us, that we are your source of pride just as you also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.

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

15 And with this confidence I intended to come to you first so that you would get a second opportunity to see us,

16 and through your help to go on into Macedonia and then from Macedonia to come back to you and be helped on our way into Judea by you.

17 Therefore when I was planning to do this, I did not do so without thinking about what I was doing, did I? Or do I make my plans according to mere human standards so that I would be saying both "Yes, yes" and "No, no" at the same time?

18 But as God is faithful, our message 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—was not "Yes" and "No," but it has always been "Yes" in him.

20 For every one of God's promises are "Yes" in him; therefore also through him the "Amen" is spoken, to the glory we give to God.

21 But it is God who establishes us together with you in Christ and who anointed us,

22 who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a down payment.

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

23 Now I appeal to God as my witness, that to spare you I did not come again to Corinth.

24 I do not mean that we rule over your faith, but we are workers with you for your joy, because by faith you stand firm.

2:1 So I made up my own mind not to pay you another painful visit.

2 For if I make you sad, who would be left to make me glad but the one I caused to be sad?

3 And I wrote this very thing to you, so that when I came I would not have sadness from those who ought to make me rejoice, since I am confident in you all that my joy would be yours.

4 For out of great distress and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears, not to make you sad, but to let you know the love that I have especially for you.

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

5 But if anyone has caused sadness, he has not saddened me alone, but to some extent (not to exaggerate) he has saddened all of you as well.

6 This punishment on such an individual by the majority is enough for him,

7 so that now instead you should rather forgive and comfort him. This will keep him from being overwhelmed by excessive grief to the point of despair.

8 Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him.

9 For this reason also I wrote you: to test you to see if you are obedient in everything.

10 If you forgive anyone for anything, I also forgive him—for indeed what I have forgiven (if I have forgiven anything) I did so for you in the presence of Christ,

11 so that we may not be exploited by Satan (for we are not ignorant of his schemes).

12 Now when I arrived in Troas to proclaim the gospel of Christ, even though the Lord had opened a door of opportunity for me,

13 I had no relief in my spirit, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-bye to them and set out for Macedonia.

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### 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.

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

- 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.