

Two Year Bible Trek
Week 92
2 Corinthians

Key Concepts: The key concept 2 Corinthians is that even though Paul and the church were previously at odds, reconciliation is always possible.

Background: Evidently there was a period of time following Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth when his relationship with the church deteriorated. He then wrote what he calls the "painful letter" which we do not have. He was so concerned about the relationship however that he sent Titus to check in with them. When he had not heard from Titus he begins to journey to Corinth. Before he could reach the city, Titus finds him and relates that the church had changed its perception of Paul. Paul then writes this letter as a response to the improved relationship.

Brief Summary: Opening (1:1-1:11) Paul opens this letter with the usual from whom/to whom and then moves to a thanksgiving for the deliverance and comfort which God has given to Paul and his companions as well as to the church in Corinth.

A defense of Paul's changing plans (1:12-2:13) Paul moves quickly into a short recap of why he did not make it back to Corinth, as he had earlier promised. His reason for not coming at that time was that he didn't want to cause the Corinthians more pain than he had already caused with his "painful letter." He also urged forgiveness for the one who had spoken against him.

Paul discusses his ministry (2:14-6:13) Paul declares that he and his friends are not "peddlers of God's word" (in other words doing it for the money) but are instead "commissioned by God" for the task of presenting Christ. The proof of this commissioning is the existence of the Corinthian church. Even so Paul takes no credit for the work, giving all credit to the Spirit. He states that he is no more than an earthen vessel in which the treasure of God's story of Christ dwells. In fact Paul and his friends carry around within them "the body of the death of Jesus" (meaning they are weak) in order that the power of Jesus may shine through them. Finally he reminds the Corinthians that "if anyone is in Christ he/she is a new creation", that "in Christ, God was reconciling the world to God's self" and that Paul and his friends are ambassadors of that message.

Relationships with pagans (6:14-7:1) - Paul quotes some Old Testament passages about being separate from outsiders. This section is thought to be an insertion from another letter.

Paul's call to share (7:2-9:15) Paul, filled with joy that the Corinthians changed their attitude toward him encourages them to complete the offering they had begun collecting for the saints in Jerusalem. He reminds them that the Macedonians had given beyond their means and so the Corinthians should give liberally and not sparingly for "God loves a cheerful giver."

Paul defends himself and his ministry (10:1-12:13) Paul agrees that his physical appearance and oratorical abilities are not as good as those he calls "super Apostle's" who had preached a different gospel from his, and demeaned him in front of the Corinthians. Nonetheless Paul writes, he is content with weakness, hardships and persecutions even though his religious/spiritual pedigree is greater than those who criticize him. His only boast is in Christ and not in himself.

Paul's coming visit (12:14-13:14) Paul reminds the Corinthians that he is coming for a visit and so they need to have their spiritual house in order or he will be forced to deal with them in a harsh manner. Even so, he hopes that they will prove to be doing well and doing what is right.

1. What do you make of Paul's willingness to be weak so the church can be strong?
2. How do you see yourself as a new creation in Christ?
3. What do you make of Paul's call for separation in 6:14-7:1?