

AP 41

2 Corinthians / Προς Κορινθίους Β / Pros Korinthious B

To The Corinthians, Second

This letter might be more accurately entitled 4th Corinthians. There is quite the battle going on in the church's relationship with Paul, and it can be pieced together with a careful study. But that is not our purpose so I will just share a probable timeline.

The Church is planted by Paul over an 18-month period - Acts 18

- 1) A first warning letter (lost) – 1 Corinthians 5:9-13
 - Paul receives a letter from Chloe's people informing him of continuing problems at the church – 1 Cor 1:11
- 2) Paul writes 1 Corinthians in response to this letter
 - Apparently, many or most in the church rejected 1 Corinthians
 - Paul sends Timothy to Corinth to get a first-hand report – 1 Corinthians 16:10-11
 - Face to Face follow up visit – The "painful visit" of 2 Corinthians 2:1
- 3) Paul writes The Severe Letter/Letter of Tears (Lost) – 2 Cor 7:8-12
 - Many in the Church Repent – 2 Corinthians 7:8-12
- 4) Paul writes 2 Corinthians which is conciliatory, but still includes a robust defense

All four letters to the Corinthian Church are motivated by love. However, the conflict being experienced by the church and Paul is another obvious motivation for all the letters. New leaders at Corinth are recasting the gospel and proclaiming a different Jesus (11:4). The situation almost has the feel of a coup. These new voices show up after Paul left and were parasitically taking advantage of the Church (11:20) and Paul's work. Numerous times you can see Paul indirectly quoting them in the letters (10:10). Paul sarcastically calls them super-apostles (11:5). They attack the gospel proclaimed – calling it foolishness, so anytime you read Paul using the term fool/foolishness there is always an undercurrent of meaning. Best guess they are Hellenistic Jews (incipient Gnostics). They are elites who come with letters of recommendations (3:1-3), they are educated, and they are gifted speakers (10:10-12, 11:6). Paul sees them as wolves amidst the flock, not brothers or sisters of the faith with whom he disagrees.

This letter, more than any other letters of Paul, allows us to see the soul of Paul. We see Paul's joy, frustration, anger, sufferings, comfort, strength, weakness, and on and on. So, if you want to see the soul of Paul, or if you value authenticity, this is a great book to read in depth. My take-away for these two letters - Ministry is not easy or for the faint hearted.

Sunday, Sept 25 2 Corinthians 1:1-11

For Reflection: The section on comfort is given color by the conflict the church and Paul have experienced. Reconciliation and the comfort that comes with it is just now tentatively being

experienced. *When have you been most desperate for the intervention of God in your life?*

Lagniappe: Isaiah 40:1-2

Monday, Sept 26

2 Corinthians 3:7-18

For Reflection: Paul contrasts the Old Covenant of the Law/Letter with the New Covenant of Grace. The Old condemns, the New transforms. *In what area of your life are you currently being transformed into the Jesus' likeness?*

Lagniappe: Jeremiah 31:31-34

Tuesday, Sept 27

2 Corinthians 4:1-15

For Reflection: This is one of my favorite chapters in the NT. It declares the humility necessary for those who minister. "We do not proclaim ourselves, but Christ" "We have treasure in jars of clay". *What is the treasure about which Paul is writing? What do you treasure most? What is the clay jar? What is your greatest weakness, plain-ness, embarrassment?*

Lagniappe: Deuteronomy 7:6-8

Wednesday, Sept 28

2 Corinthians 4:16-5:21

For Reflection: *How will your hope in Jesus Christ, the promise of heaven – that eternal weight of glory beyond all measure 4:17, affect your lifestyle today?* Reconciled is a relational term – where people are forgiving/repenting and moving past a state of enmity. *How would you describe the health of your relationship with God at this core level, are you reconciled, or are you experiencing irreconcilable differences? Where are you exercising your ambassadorship?*

Lagniappe: Philippians 3:20

Thursday, Sept 29

2 Corinthians 10

For Reflection: As we begin reading Paul's defense, it is easy to see a decided mood change in the letter. Defending yourself before friends and loved ones is among the harder things we must do in life (11). The next 4 chapters paint a fascinating and painful picture. Two passages from this chapter have become essential wisdom for many Christians (3-5 & 17-18). In the very first paragraph Paul casts his argument in spiritual terms – upping the ante. *What are the weapons of our war? (4). What does it mean for you to take every thought captive? (5).* Paul believes the battle for the soul occurs in the mind, in our thoughts and beliefs.

Lagniappe: Psalm 20:6-7

Friday, Sept 30

2 Corinthians 11

For Reflection: Paul's words drip with sarcasm in these chapters, just one example of this is seen in vs 5 when he calls his opponents "super-apostles". Ironically, the label is equal parts truth and sarcasm, as this is how they are presenting themselves. They are far more elite than Paul, but ironically, the identities of these elites remain unknown to history. A pleasant irony from Paul's perspective. *When have you been wrongly accused? How did it affect your relationship with God and others? When have you witnessed someone wrongly accused? What did you do?*

Lagniappe: Genesis 39:6-23

Saturday, Oct 1

2 Corinthians 12

For Reflection: In this chapter we find another essential truth (9). Surprisingly, we find so much theological truth and wisdom amid a defense. *Where have you most clearly experienced the sufficiency of God's grace? When have you seen God work through your weakness?*

Lagniappe: Isaiah 40:29-31