

April 19: 2nd Corinthians 1-2

Introduction

Second Corinthians is one “book” comprised of several letters. For this reason, it does not necessarily have the same cohesive flow that First Corinthians had. Paul wrote 1st Corinthians from Ephesus, after which his situation in Ephesus changed and so too did his plans to visit Corinth. During this time, some rival missionaries visited Corinth and Paul had the sense that they were undoing a lot of his work and their insistence on receiving support from the church interfered with Paul’s planned collection for the church in Jerusalem –the participatory partnership collection- which was Paul’s means of getting the Jerusalem church to accept the Gentile Christians as full members and full partners in the gospel. Paul eventually was able to visit and made what he called a “painful visit,” during which he confronted unnamed missionaries and chastised the church. When he returned from this visit, he wrote chapters 10-13 FIRST, then after he had cooled down and received word that his “severe letter” (chapters 10-13) had been well received and attained Paul’s desired outcome, he wrote chapters 1-7. Chapter 8-9 are likely a few chunks of multiple letters Paul sent to the Corinthians about the Jerusalem Collection over the course of time.

Chapter 1

Paul opens this letter with a blessing reminding the church that God comforts us in our affliction. This speaks directly to Paul’s recent experience of affliction during his “painful visit” to Corinth. God doesn’t promise that Christians will never face affliction, but we are assured through this passage that affliction will be met with God’s consolation. How have you received consolation?

Paul’s plans to visit have changed, and he now plans two visits, to visit Corinth on both his way to Thessalonica and his way back to Judea to submit the Gentile collection to the church of Jerusalem. His original promise to them has changed. Paul suggests that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all of God’s promises, and that we Christians have received the down payment (first installment) of God’s promises through the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 2

Paul states that they are not lords over the Corinthians, but co-workers with them for the sake of the gospel. He recalls his previous painful visit to Corinth, and states that he did not want to make another upsetting visit to them, which is partly why the plans are changing. Paul uplifts and encourages the church, urging them to forgive the one among them who caused Paul so much pain, not to shun him. Satan's designs or plans are to divide the church and to build contentions, our righteous spiritual combat then is to unite the church and to forgive and reconcile with one another.

What does it mean to you to be the "aroma of Christ"? Paul urges us to speak our faith from a place of authenticity and sincerity.... Not as a "peddler of the gospel." Those outside of the church can spot a phony a mile away, but an experience with a genuinely transformed Christian life is enticing and intriguing, like a sweet aroma. We speak our faith as persons sent "on a mission from God" and even as those who are currently standing in God's presence. We take worship with us out on the road! How would we speak differently if we kept in mind that we are speaking in God's own presence?