

The Year of St. Paul

The Second Letter to the Corin-



Three Major Points of 2nd Corinthians

Paul's apostolic ministry (chapters 1-7)

To put it mildly, St. Paul was not a popular man among many of the Christians in Corinth. Coupled with those who were stirring up rebellion against St. Paul and what he had taught them, the Corinthians were also troubled by the fact that St. Paul changed his plans after promising a visit to them. This added even more fuel to the fire of those who opposed Paul's teaching and authority.

The collection for Jerusalem (chapters 8-9)

As he did in his first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul encourages the more well to do Christians in Corinth to help their Christian brethren in Jerusalem who were experiencing difficult times due to persecution and poverty.

Addressing the accusations against him posed by those who oppose him (chapters 10-13)

St. Paul addresses the lies being told about him point by point. In doing so, he seeks to give answers to his defenders in Corinth in combating those who are teaching falsely and opposing his authority. While St. Paul cannot be present to defend himself personally, this "apologia" will serve to set the stage for his intended visit to Corinth within the next few months.

Paul's Ministry to the Corinthians

Chapter 1: St. Paul begins his letter as he almost always does with a greeting and thanksgiving to God. He establishes his authority as an "apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." This declaration will serve to lay the foundation of a major portion of this letter. In his greeting St. Paul also mentions Timothy, who is well known to the Corinthians as he worked with St. Paul during his stay there, and had visited them separately on other occasions.

The thankfulness St. Paul offers to God for His blessings is not for favors enjoyed but for mercy, encouragement and consolation in the difficult times being experienced in the Church at Corinth. St. Paul

speaks of the sufferings both he and the Corinthians are experiencing as sharing in the very sufferings of Christ. And yet, while sharing in Christ's suffering, we also share in the Lord's comfort.

Points to Ponder

When we suffer, do we consider that Jesus suffered too?

We know that through His suffering Christ brought redemption to the world. As part of the Body of Christ and united to Him in all things, is our suffering useless, or can our suffering be of benefit to ourselves and others? What comfort and encouragement does the example of Jesus give to us in times of difficulty?

GOD FIRST

Year Three, Part 24

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Why Didn't St. Paul Visit As Promised?

Rather than visiting he sent a since lost letter known as the "Letter of Tears." It is apparent that he sent the letter rather than visit as he was concerned that a visit under the current circumstances would have caused further friction. An example of discretion being the better part of valor, the intent of his letter was not to cause pain, but that they may know the love he has for them.

Paul's "Letter" of Recommendation

Chapter 3: Because St. Paul was not one of the original apostles his authority was frequently challenged. He often used as a letter of recommendation references to his apostolic journeys. Proving that you couldn't please everyone, there were some in Corinth who saw these references as a matter of pride on his part and used them against him. His opponents brought letters of their own with the intention of usurping Paul's authority. In response, St. Paul says

his true letter is not one of paper and ink but the witness of the Spirit of God working in the hearts of those in the Church at Corinth to which he was called to minister.

Points to Ponder: *What evidence through our words and deeds serve as a letter of recommendation for each of us individually and as a parish that the Spirit of God is working in our hearts?*

A Slave For The Sake Of Christ

Chapter 4: In contrast to his detractors, St. Paul makes clear his preaching is not to build himself up but to preach Christ, and thus to sacrifice himself to become as a slave for the sake of the Corinthians so that they may know clearly, and without compromise, the Good News of Jesus Christ. Contrasting the great treasure of the Gospel entrusted to him, he admits that the treasure has been placed in the hands of an “earthen vessel”, stressing his human limitations and imperfections. The instruments God uses to spread the Gospel may be fragile but the Gospel itself is the power of God.

While an “earthen vessel” and being worn away day by day, St. Paul takes comfort that though he is a fragile instrument, the Gospel of Christ renews our internal spirit day by day, refocusing our sight from the temporary things which can be seen, to the promise and glory of that which is unseen.

Points to Ponder: *In what circumstances would it be helpful to remember that God entrusted the great treasure of the Gospel to the fragile earthen vessels of human ministers and that the power of the Gospel is of God and not of the persona of any individual?*

Tents

Chapter 5: St. Paul reminds the Corinthians that life on this earth is short and temporary. In keeping with his exhortation to keep focused on the glory not yet seen, he reminds us that our life in it’s current state, in earthly tents, is temporary, for God has prepared

Wheel taken from “Reading the Acts, Epistles and Revelation by Kingsley E. Dalpadado, OMI, St. Paul Editions

an eternal dwelling for all those perceived in faith.

Chapter 2: As stated earlier, the fact that St. Paul didn’t visit Corinth as promised caused hurt feelings and doubts about him. The Church reminds us of St. Paul’s statement in the words of the Mass for the dead. “Lord, for your faithful people life is changed, not ended. When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven.”

Points to Ponder: *Because our time on earth is a temporary state, there are some who believe Christians should withdraw from the concerns in the world. How does this agree or conflict with what Christ commands of us and what St. Paul says in his letters?*

CORRECTION: *For those keeping these teachings on file, please note that last week’s insert of 1-4-09 was subtitled to the Philippians and should have been subtitled as the Second Letter to the Corinthians.*