

Through The Bible

Session #46 – 2nd Corinthians

December 15, 2004

Discussion from last time: What's going on in 1st Corinthians 5:5?

- "...to hand this man over to Satan..." is an unusual expression.
 - Seems to include excommunication from the church.
 - See 5:2; 5:7; and 5:13 which all speak of removing destructive, cancerous, and vicious people / forces from within your midst.
 - Outside of the sphere of the Church is where Satan rules and has strongest influence. So, to hand someone over to Satan is to kick them out of the Church.
- The phrase, "...for the destruction of the flesh..." is more problematic.
 - How can kicking someone out of the Church destroy someone's flesh?
 - It could be that Paul envisions expulsion from the Church as having physical consequences.
 - Paul speaks of the consequences of spiritual failings (see 11:30). See also Acts 5:1-10 about Ananias and Sapphira; the blinding of Elymas (Acts 13:8-11) and Paul own thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7).
- The last phrase, "...his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord" implies that Paul believes this person is still saved. Even though this person has been kicked out of the Church, on the final day of God's judgment, Paul expects to see this person among the Lord's people.
- So, what do you think of this?

Study of 2nd Corinthians

Remember the geographical location of Corinth

- Between port city of Lechaenum (Gulf of Corinth side, north-west) and port city of Cenchreae (Saronic Gulf, south-east).
- The overland distance between the two cities was about 10 miles. We wondered about that last time. The journey around the southern tip of Cape Maleae was about 200 miles. Cape Maleae was known for violent storms.
- A stone-paved road was built (called the *Diolkos* ... means, "to haul across") to transport ships overland.

- As early as 586 BC, a plan was developed to cut a channel through the isthmus...and Nero started work on this channel...but work ceased when he died around AD 67. In 1887, the channel work resumed and was completed in 1893.

Paul and the Corinthians

- His relationship with these people stretched over several years (around AD 50-57).
- We believe Paul made 3 visits to Corinth.
- Paul's preaching in Corinth did not begin well (see Acts 18). We believe his first visit was the last phase of his 2nd missionary journey.
 - The Jews kicked him out of the synagogue.
 - So Paul, not very tactfully so, set up shop right next door at the house of Justus.
- Paul persisted and many gentile Corinthians (not many Jews) were converted.
- Paul stays in Corinth preaching for about 18 months (Acts 18:9-11).
- Paul's relationship with the Corinthians was a tense one.
 - See 1st Corinthians 4:18-19; 1st Corinthians 9:3-4; 1st Corinthians 14:37-38

Summary of Paul's reason for writing 1st Corinthians:

- First and foremost, Paul is trying to reform people's conduct. He wrote 1st Corinthians because of information he received from Chloe's people (1st Corinthians 1:11).
- He received a letter (the lost letter; 1st Corinthians 7:1) and Paul is replying.
- Paul also received some independent news...serious concerns...and he felt a need to write.
- Paul was troubled with the divisions within the church.
- There's a quarrelsome spirit in the church.
- Concerning the culture of Corinth, there seems to be some sexual impurity in the people's conduct and Paul writes to address this.

By the time Paul began writing 2nd Corinthians Timothy had returned from Corinth (remember Paul sent him there to try and iron out some of the difficulties) and the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians had passed through a very difficult time.

- When Timothy got back and reported what was going on in Corinth, Paul changed his original itinerary (see 1st Corinthians 16:5-9) and sailed directly to Corinth.
- He planned on returning again to Corinth after he had been in Macedonia and when he was on his way to Jerusalem (see 2nd Corinthians 1:15-16) but the visit was so painful, Paul went straight to Ephesus from Macedonia (2nd Corinthians 1:23; 2:1). He was accused of indecision because he didn't make this 2nd visit (2nd Corinthians 1:17).

- When Paul got to Corinth, he found himself the target of an attack (2nd Corinthians 2:5; 7:12) by an individual. No attempt was made by the congregation to support Paul in this attack (2nd Corinthians 2:3).
- The whole visit was painful to Paul.

So, why was 2nd Corinthians written?

- The concern is definitely about matters inside the church instead of outside.
 - Tensions can blow up when people become Christians and bring too much of their pre-Christian ways into the Church.
 - Tensions can be brought into the Church by outside pressures – persecutions. How are the faithful to treat those who don't stand as firmly as others?
 - Tensions can be created when people from other churches come into a new Christian community.

When was 2nd Corinthians written?

- 2nd Corinthians could be portions of several letters combined. For example, there seems to be a break in thought at 2:13. Also, at 6:14, there seems to be a break in thought in the general section (2:14-7:4). Also, chapters 8-9, while dealing with the same issue (collection for the poor), the matter seems to be treated differently.
- While problematic to determine, we can narrow down possibilities based on the following:
 - Gallio held office in Corinth from AD 51-52 and we know that Paul was brought before Gallio (Acts 18:12-17).
 - Paul arrived in Corinth for his first visit around AD 50.
 - Toward the end of his time in Ephesus, Paul wrote 1st Corinthians (AD 52-55). The Harper-Collins Study Bible dates 1st Corinthians AD 54.
 - We think Paul wrote 2nd Corinthians around AD 56.

Outline of 2nd Corinthians – Crisis and addressing crisis is the theme of 2nd Corinthians.

- I. Paul's response to a crisis resolved (1:1-9:15)
 - a. Greetings and change of plans (1:1-2:4)
 - b. Forgiving offenders and who we are as ministers (2:5-3:18)
 - c. Paul's ministry and our faith (4:1-5:10)
 - d. Ministry of reconciliation (5:11-7:4)
 - e. Paul's joy after crisis resolved (7:5-16)
 - f. The collection (8:1-9:15)
- II. Paul responds to a new crisis (10:1-13:14)
 - a. Paul's response to criticisms (10:1-18)

- b. Corinthian gullibility and Paul's sacrifice (11:1-33)
- c. Paul's visions (12:1-10)
- d. Paul's concern for the Corinthians (12:11-21)
- e. Paul's threat to act when he returns (13:1-13)