



A Course

In

**II CORINTHIANS,
STUDIES IN**

Prepared by the
Committee on Religious Education
of the
American Bible College

A COURSE

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Pineland, Florida 33945

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The compiler of this course is seeking to introduce a broad range of fundamental/evangelical commentators on the book of Second Corinthians. It is our intention to present to our readers a variety of early biblical scholars from such as John Gill (1697-1771), Thomas Scott (1747-1821), and Adam Clark (1760-1832) up to present day biblical scholars such as Homer A. Kent, Jr., Robert Gromacki and David Sorenson. In each case, we have chosen only those authors from a fundamental perspective who believe in the verbal, plenary and infallible inspiration of the Word of God. Instead of analyzing the comments of these authors and summarizing their thoughts, we choose to directly quote them. However, in so doing, these authors will quote various translations, Greek renderings and often use their own translations. Although the American Bible College believes the King James Version is the preserved Word of God, this method of study allows the writer to occasionally condense a passage in his own paraphrase. This should not be construed to imply that the A. B. C. is correcting God's Word.

During this course the student is required to read through the entire Book of Second Corinthians ten times.

It is our desire that this study will be enlightening and spiritually rewarding as you understand II Corinthians' history and doctrines of the Church. All references will be footnoted and bracketed.

Respectfully your servant in Christ Jesus,

Dr. Marvin W. Royse

FOREWORD

APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THIS BOOK

Second Corinthians is one of the most profound of all the epistles of Paul. A lifetime of study would be too short to master it. The thoughts are deep, and the student who is not willing to do prolonged and patient thinking ought not to undertake the book. Each phrase and each verse is of value, and to get at the meat of this epistle it must be carefully broken down and analyzed into its component parts. Each part must be studied for itself and then in its relation to the other parts. Analysis is not enough. We must synthesize each phrase to see Second Corinthians as a whole.

Suggestions for Study

As we undertake these studies in Second Corinthians, our primary effort should be to familiarize ourselves with the text itself. This we may do through careful reading and rereading. Following Dr. James M. Gray in his book, *How to Master the English Bible*, we suggest the following five rules for this reading:

- (1) Read the whole book at one time, ignoring chapter and verse divisions.
- (2) Read it continuously, right through at a single sitting, without break or interruption.
- (3) Read it repeatedly, over and over again; not twice, but ten or fifteen times.
- (4) Read it independently, without consulting other people's interpretations until you have direct contact and immediate acquaintance with the book itself.
- (5) Read it prayerfully, seeking your interpretation from the Holy Spirit who is present in the subject matter and also in the heart of the devout reader.

Reading is our First step, but mere reading is not study. Having read the epistle, we study it carefully and purposefully, closing the book from time to time to summarize our study. We will use as our guide in this study the comments of various recognized Bible scholars. Additional books should be consulted where available, and a comparative study made of the different interpretations.

Some Values to Be Sought

Closely connected with our purpose in reading and with the problems that we face are the values that we seek. First, we want a working knowledge of the *content* of the book of Second Corinthians. Then, we want to know its *aim* and *purport*. Finally, we want to lay hold of the message of the book both for its first century and its present century readers. The final test of value will be not how much of the text we have mastered, but how much Christ has mastered our lives through these *Studies in Second Corinthians*.

ANALYSIS OF THE EPISTLE TO SECOND CORINTHIANS

1. When writing his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul expected shortly to visit them, and had indeed formed a detailed plan of the journey. But we may safely infer from <470115>¹ 2 Corinthians 1:15, 16, 23, that Paul had not been at Corinth between the writing of the first and second epistles, so that we must place his second epistle very soon after the writing of the first epistle, probably on his arrival at Philippi. The place whence it was written was clearly not Ephesus (see <470108>2 Corinthians 1:8), but Macedonia (<470705>2 Corinthians 7:5; 8:1; 9:2), whither the apostle went by way of Troas (<470212>2 Corinthians 2:12), after waiting a short time in the latter place for the return of Titus (<470213>2 Corinthians 2:13). The Vatican MS., the bulk of later MSS., and the old Syr. version, positively assume Philippi as the exact place whence it was written; that the bearers were Titus and his associates (Luke?) is apparently substantiated by <470823> 2 Corinthians 8:23; 9:3, 5.

The following coincidences will serve to establish this date: <470101>2 Corinthians 1:1, Timothy (who had now rejoined Paul by way of Corinth, <461610>1 Corinthians 16:10, 11) was in Paul's company (<442004>Acts 20:4); <470108>2 Corinthians 1:8, Paul had lately escaped death at Ephesus (<441930>Acts 19:30); <470115>2 Corinthians 1:15, 16, he had originally intended to go through Corinth to Macedonia, and return through Corinth to Judaea, but, upon receipt of the information which called forth his first epistle, he had so far altered his plan (<470117>2 Corinthians 1:17; <460418>1 Corinthians 4:18,19) as to determine to forego the first of these visits to Corinth, and to make the second a longer one (<461607>1 Corinthians 16:7), and he was ultimately compelled to pass through Macedonia to Corinth, and return through Macedonia to Jerusalem (<442001>Acts 20:1-3); chap. 2:12,13, on his way to Macedonia, since writing the first epistle, he had touched at Troas (as usual, <441611>Acts 16:11; 20:6), but did not stay, on account of Titus's absence, who afterwards met him in Macedonia, with intelligence of the good effects of his former letter (<470605>2 Corinthians 6:5-15); <470801>2 Corinthians 8:1; 9:2, 4, he was now in Macedonia (<442002>Acts 20:2); <470806>2 Corinthians 8:6, 16-18, 22, 23, this letter was sent by

Titus (compare subscription) (<442004>Acts 20:4); <470810>2 Corinthians 8:10; 9:2, Paul was collecting funds for the church at Jerusalem (<442016>Acts 20:16), and had heard of the Corinthians' readiness to contribute a year since, probably by Apollos, who had now returned to Ephesus (<441901>Acts 19:1, compared with <461612>1 Corinthians 16:12). Finally, the *subscription* exactly tallies with these particulars; comp. <470818>2 Corinthians 8:18, 22. (See Conybeare and Howson's *Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, 2:97.)

2. From <470201>2 Corinthians 2:1; 12:14; 13:1, 2, many have inferred that before writing this epistle Paul had twice visited Corinth, and that one of these visits had been after the church there had fallen into an evil state; and the second of these visits has been most plausibly assigned to the apostle's three years' stay at Ephesus. So Chrysostom and his followers, Oecumenius and Theophylact, and in recent times, Muller (*De tribus Pauli itin.* Basil, 1831), Anger (*Rat. Temp.* p. 70, sq.), Wieseler (*Chronol.* p. 239), and the majority of modern critics. Olshausen adopts a still more complicated theory (*Comment.* 4:124 sq., Am. ed.). We have seen above that this visit did not take place between the two epistles, and as it cannot be assigned to the subsequent residence in Greece (<442002>Acts 20:2, 3), those who think it occurred are obliged to suppose one not mentioned in the Acts. (See this position maintained by Alford, *Comment.* in N.T., 2, proleg. 49 sq.) This expedient of interpolating an event in a continuous history is always a doubtful one, and in this case seems excluded by the positive terms in which Paul's residence and labors are confined, during the whole time in question, to Ephesus (see <441910>Acts 19:10, 22, compared with 20:31). Nor is this hypothesis necessary; the passages that seem to imply an intended third visit, when carefully examined, merely speak of a third intention (◊□✠⊕◊□■ ℳ⊕◊□✠⊕○♦”❖ ℳ⊗⊗♦ ℳ⊗⊗♦□ℳ✠■, <471214>2 Corinthians 12:14, and ◊□✠⊕◊□■ ℳ⊗⊗□⊗□○⊗✠, <471301>2 Corinthians 13:1, do not state two actual prior visits, as contended by Alford, *Comment.* in loc.; see Horne's *Introd.*, new ed., 4:529) to visit them, only one of which had heretofore been successful (<441801>Acts 18:1; comp. <470115>2 Corinthians 1:15); and, in like manner, the “second, coming to them in heaviness” and “humbling,” instead of deprecating a second such scene, simply intimates the possibility of such a scene

¹ These reference numbers have been left in and are in accordance with Strong's Bible verse referencing: “47” is the forth-seventh Bible book—II Corinthians, and “115” is the verse reference—chapter 1, verse 15.

on his second coming. (See Davidson's *Introd.* to N.T. 2:213 sq.) This question, however, does not affect the dates assigned each epistle above, except so far as the supposed middle visit may be taken as the occasion of one or both of them — a position which we have shown to be wholly gratuitous and untenable. *SEE PAUL.*

3. "On arriving at Troas, Paul expected to meet Titus with intelligence from Corinth of the state of things in that church. According to the common opinion Titus had been sent by Paul to Corinth, partly to collect money in aid of the distressed Christians in Palestine, partly to observe the effect of the apostle's first epistle on the Corinthians. In this expectation of meeting Titus at Troas Paul was disappointed. He accordingly proceeded into Macedonia, where at length his desire was gratified, and he wished-for information obtained (<470213>2 Corinthians 2:13; 7:15 sq.)."

"The epistle was occasioned by the information which the apostle had received also, as it would certainly seem probable, from Timothy, of the reception of the first epistle. It has indeed recently been doubted by Neander, De Wette, and others, whether Timothy, who had been definitely sent to Corinth (<460417>1 Corinthians 4:17) by way of Macedonia (<441922>Acts 19:22), really reached his destination (comp. <461610>1 Corinthians 16:10); and it has been urged that the mission of Timothy would hardly have been left unnoticed in <471217>2 Corinthians 12:17,18 (see Ruckert, *Comm.* p. 409). To this, however, it has been replied, apparently convincingly, that as Timothy is an associate with Paul's writing the epistle, any notice of his own mission in the third person would have seemed inappropriate. His visit was assumed as a fact, and as one that naturally made him an associate with the apostle in writing to the church he had so lately visited.

"It is more difficult to assign the precise reason for the mission of Titus. That he brought back tidings of the reception which Paul's first epistle had met with seems perfectly clear (chap. 7:6 sq.), but whether he was specially sent to ascertain this, or whether to convey fresh directions, cannot be ascertained. There is a show of plausibility in the supposition of Bleek (*Stud. u. Krit.* 1830, p. 625), followed more recently by Neander (*Pflanz. u. Leit.* p. 437), that the apostle had made Titus the bearer of a letter couched in terms of decided severity, now lost, to which he is to be supposed to refer in <470203>2 Corinthians 2:3 (compared with ver. 4, 9); <470708>2 Corinthians 7:8, 11 sq.; but, as has been justly urged (see Meyer, *Einkit.* p. 3), there is quite enough of severity in the first epistle (consider <470418>2 Corinthians 4:18-21; 5:2 sq.; 6:5-8; 11:17) to call forth the apostle's affectionate anxiety. Moreover, the supposition of a lost letter is in

itself improbable. If it be desirable to hazard a conjecture on this mission of Titus, it would seem most natural to suppose that the return of Timothy and the intelligence he conveyed might have been such as to make the apostle feel the necessity of at once dispatching to the contentious church one of his immediate followers, with instructions to support and strengthen the effect of the epistle, and to bring back the most recent tidings of the spirit that was prevailing at Corinth."

"The intelligence brought by Titus concerning the church at Corinth was on the whole favorable. The censures of the former epistle had produced in their minds a godly sorrow, had awakened in them a regard to the proper discipline of the church, and had led to the exclusion from their fellowship of the incestuous person [1 Cor. 5:1]. This had so wrought on the mind of the latter that he had repented of his evil courses, and showed such contrition that the apostle now pities him, and exhorts the church to restore him to their communion (<470206>2 Corinthians 2:6-11; 7:8 sq.). A cordial response had also been given to the appeal that had been made on behalf of the saints in Palestine (<470902>2 Corinthians 9:2). But with all these pleasing symptoms there were some of a painful kind. The anti-Pauline influence in the church had increased, or at least had become more active; and those who were actuated by it had been seeking by all means to overturn the authority of the apostle, and discredit his claims as an ambassador of Christ.

4. "This intelligence led the apostle to compose his second epistle, in which the language of commendation and love is mingled with that of censure, and even of threatening. This epistle may be divided into three sections. In the first (1-3) the apostle chiefly dwells on the effects produced by his first epistle and the matters therewith connected. In the second (4-9) he discourses on the substance and effects of the religion which he proclaimed, and turns from this to an appeal on behalf of the claims of the poor saints on their liberality. And in the third (10-12) he vindicates his own dignity and authority as an apostle against the parties by whom these were opposed. The divided state of feeling in the apostle's mind will account sufficiently for the difference of tone perceptible between the earlier and later parts of this epistle, without our having recourse to the arbitrary and capricious hypothesis of Semler (*Dissert. de duplice appendice Ep. ad Rom.s Hal.* 1767) and Weber (*Prog. de numero epp. Ad Correctius constituendo*, Vitemb. 1798), whom Paulus follows, that this epistle has been extensively interpolated."

"A close analysis is scarcely practicable, as in no one of the apostle's epistles are the changes more rapid and frequent. Now he thanks God for their general state (<470103>2 Corinthians 1:3 sq.); now he glances at his

purposed visit (<470115>2 Corinthians 1:15 sq.); now he alludes to the special directions in the first letter (<470203>2 Corinthians 2:3 sq.); again he returns to his own plans (<470212>2 Corinthians 2:12 sq.), pleads his own apostolic dignity (<470301>2 Corinthians 3:1 sq.), dwells long upon the spirit and nature of his own labors (<470401>2 Corinthians 4:1 sq.), his own hopes (<470501>2 Corinthians 5:1 sq.), and his own sufferings (2 Corinthians 6, 1 sq.), returning again to more specific declarations of his love towards his children in the faith (<470611>2 Corinthians 6:11 sq.), and a yet further declaration of his views and feelings with regard to them (2 Corinthians 7). Then again, in the matter of the alms, he stirs up their liberality by alluding to the conduct of the churches of Macedonia (<470801>2 Corinthians 8:1 sq.), their spiritual progress (ver. 7), the example of Christ (ver. 9), and passes on to speak more fully of the present mission of Titus and his associates (ver. 18, sq.), and to reiterate his exhortations to liberality (<470901>2 Corinthians 9:1 sq.). In the third portion he passes into language of severity and reproof: he gravely warns those who presume to hold lightly his apostolical authority (<471001>2 Corinthians 10:1 sq.); he puts strongly forward his apostolical dignity (<471105>2 Corinthians 11:5 sq.); he illustrates his forbearance (ver. 8 sq.); he makes honest boast of his labors (ver. 23 sq.); he declares the revelations vouchsafed to him (<471201>2 Corinthians 12:1 sq.); he again returns to the nature of his dealings with his converts (ver. 12 sq.), and concludes with grave and reiterated warning (<471301>2 Corinthians 13:1 sq.), brief greetings, and a doxology (ver. 11-14).

5. “The *genuineness* and *authenticity* is supported by the most decided external testimony (Irenaus, *Haer.* 3:7, 1; 4:28, 3; Athenagoras, *de Resurr.* p. 61, ed. Col.; Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 3:94; 4:101; Tertull. *de Pudicit.* chap. 13), and by internal evidence of such a kind that what has been said on this point with respect to the first epistle is here even still more applicable. The only doubts that modern pseudo-criticism has been able to bring forward relate to the unity of the epistle, but these are not such⁷ as seem to deserve serious consideration (see Meyer, *Einleit.* p. 7).²

² John McClintock and James Strong, CYCLOPEDIA OF BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL LITERATURE, Vol. IV, Corinthians, Second Epistle to the, pp. 128-133. Hereafter referred to as [MCCLINTOCK].

Introduction

The second letter to the Corinthians grows out of the first and its development. Paul wrote it. We know that the first letter was written at Ephesus just before Pentecost, in the spring. This letter was written soon afterwards, probably in the summer, A.D. 57. <441921>Acts 19:21-22 tells us how he left Ephesus, where he wrote the first letter; also, <442001>Acts 20:1. In this letter, <470705>2 Corinthians 7:5-13, after leaving Ephesus he came to Troas, the site of ancient Troy, whence he set out to establish the gospel in Europe on a previous expedition. At Troas he had appointed a rendezvous with Titus, who took the first letter to Corinth. He told Titus to meet him at Troas and report about the reception of that letter. When he got to Troas our letter tells us that he was distressed in mind about not meeting Titus and hearing the effect of his first letter – so distressed that he could not work, though a great door was opened to him. So he left Troas [modern-day Western Turkey] and crossed over into Macedonia [modern-day Greece]. This letter tells us that in Macedonia, not specifying where, Titus came to him with the report of the reception of the first letter. On the reception of that report he wrote this second letter and sent it back by Titus. So his letter grows out of the report of Titus. In studying its parts we can easily find out what the report was, and thereby get the key to the occasion of the letter.

Titus reports first, that when he got to Corinth, the other letter was well received, but that they received him in fear and trembling. We find that statement in <470715>2 Corinthians 7:15. He states, in the second place, that the majority of the church were deeply penitent over the wrongs that had provoked the first letter, particularly with reference to this case of fornication in the church. When we study the character of that repentance we find one of the best lessons on repentance to be found in the Word of God. He then states that under this repentance the church excluded the erring man, and that the erring man himself was made penitent by the action of the church and Paul's letter. He then tells Paul that he had commenced to take the collection for which he had been sent, and that it was progressing very well, though not completed yet. All that was very satisfactory and lifted a great burden off Paul's heart.

But Titus brought a mixed report. Some of it was bad. He reported that some members of the church were unequally yoked with unbelievers, who by their association with heathen in the festivals and games disqualified themselves for the true Christian life. ...

His report further showed that while the minority of the church accepted and acted upon Paul's letter, yet

the spirit of debate, strife, envy, and jealousy was rife. Thirty-five years after Paul is dead, when Clement writes his first letter to this same church, we find that while they have followed Paul's commandments in nearly everything, still there remained that spirit of debate. While not inspired, Clement's letter is one of the very best in church history. That was not pleasing news, but Titus had some much more unpleasant news, to wit: There was an incorrigible minority in the church who denounced Paul for writing instead of coming to them, saying that he kept promising, but did not keep his word; instead of coming he sends a letter, which was very weighty indeed, but he knew that in bodily presence he was weak and his speech was contemptible, and so he got out of his promise by writing a letter. They still questioned his apostolic authority, saying that he had never seen the Lord in the flesh, and was not one of the original twelve; that the fact that he worked for his living instead of demanding apostolic support showed that he was conscious of the weakness of his apostolic claim that he did not demand a support for himself and wife as Peter and others did; that he did not have the true gospel which was taught by James and Peter. On account of this mixed news we have a mixed letter, just about as mixed a letter as was ever written.

In general terms this letter is divided into three parts. Chapters 1-7, roughly speaking, are devoted to a discussion of Paul's ministry and its methods. Chapters 8-9 are devoted to the great collection which he is still urging to be completed. Chapters 10-13 are devoted to meeting the criticisms of the incorrigible minority. There is a vast number of subdivisions. In these last chapters he is fighting a battle, not for his own life, but for the very life of the gospel itself. Those last chapters are very stern. They disclose a mortal combat.

By whom did Paul send this letter? By Titus, instructing him to finish that collection, and sends with Titus the messenger of the churches who had been chosen to take charge of the collections elsewhere. There is a reference to two of these messengers that has put the world to guessing who they were. These three men go back to Corinth with this letter.

In the character of the letter it is utterly unlike any other in the New Testament. If a window had been opened so that we could look right into Paul's heart, it would illustrate this letter. It brings out his personality more than any other or all the rest of his writings and speeches. It brings to light the secrets of his history that never would have been known but for this opposition. The picture of the man contained in this letter cannot be filled out in its outlines by any other man that ever

lived on the face of the earth. One man, being asked the key word of this letter, said, "affliction." Paul tells of his sufferings and their purpose. Another man said that the key word was "boasting"; he used the word "boasting" about twenty-two times in all the rest of his letters and twenty-nine times in this letter. In other words, he is forced to refer to himself and discuss himself in order to furnish those who befriend him the means to reply to his adversaries. He has to put the weapons into their hands, since they don't know these things as he knew them.³

³ B. H. Carroll, *AN INTERPRETATION OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE*, Vol. 13, JAMES, THESSALONIANS, CORINTHIANS, (PHOTO-LITHO PRINTED BY GUSHING , 1974 MALLOY, INC. ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN) pp. 174-176. Hereafter referred to as [CARROLL]

COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLE TO SECOND CORINTHIANS

I. PAUL'S EXPLANATION OF HIS CONDUCT, 1:1-7:16

A. Introduction, 1:1-11

1. Salutation, 1:1, 2

*The Author (1:1a)*⁴

His position

VERSE 1. Paul followed the usual pattern of early letters as he first named himself, then the addressees, and afterward gave a word of greeting. Paul identified himself to his readers by the designation "apostle of Christ Jesus" and amplified it further with the words "by the will of God." This is very similar to the wording in I Corinthians, and is exactly the same as his introductions in Ephesians, Colossians, and II Timothy. It was appropriate for Paul to use this title, not only because it accurately designated him as one commissioned by Christ with an authority which only our Lord could bestow, but also because his apostolic authority had been questioned in Corinth, and would be defended later in the epistle.

Paul's position as an apostle of Christ Jesus was not self-chosen but was bestowed "by the will of God." His Corinthian readers would have been well aware of the circumstances of his conversion and call to apostleship, for he had spent a year and a half with them on his first visit (Acts 18:11), allowing abundant opportunity for his testimony to be heard and his spiritual credentials examined. It was by divine intervention that he had been transformed from the arch persecutor of the church into its greatest apologist and missionary; only the will of God was a sufficient motivator to explain Paul's willingness to undergo the sufferings he experienced and to sustain him through his trials.

His associate

Timothy is joined with Paul in the introduction under the simple designation "our brother:" The fact that Paul was careful not to grant apostleship to Timothy, even though there was no ready alternative title except for the rather general "brother," argues for an extremely restricted view of the title "apostle of Christ Jesus" in Paul's understanding. Apparently he understood that title to designate only those who had been directly chosen by Christ Himself (see Paul's description of his

authority in Gal. 1:1, 11-24). It is a matter of record that the New Testament refers to no one other than the Twelve and Paul as an "apostle of Jesus Christ." [In the New Testament, the word "apostle" is sometimes used of others than the twelve in a general sense of "messenger" such as Jesus in Heb. 3:1, Jesus' brother James in Gal. 1:19, Barnabas in Acts 14:14, Andronicus and Junias in Rom. 16:7, and Silas in Silas in I Thess.]

To call Timothy "our brother," however, was to use a term that was rich in its implications. Although Timothy's mother was Jewish and his father was Greek (Acts 16:1), he had been born again with God as his spiritual Father; and hence was a brother in the highest sense to Paul and every other believer.

It was often Paul's custom to include various associates in the opening lines of his letters, not because they were coauthors (for they were not, as the frequent use of "I" in this letter makes clear), but as a courtesy to these helpful workers. As for Timothy, he was well known to the Corinthians, having been there, along with Silas, during Paul's founding visit (Acts 18:5; II Cor. 1:19), and probably on at least one subsequent occasion (I Cor. 4:17; 16:10). He had not been mentioned in the salutation of I Corinthians because he was already on his way to Corinth. Whether that visit had been a pleasant one for Timothy can only be conjectured. It does seem probable that his return to Paul did not relieve Paul's anxieties regarding the Corinthians, for this had to await the meeting with Titus (II Cor. 2:13; 7:5-7), and this could mean that Timothy himself had not fared well at their hands. Now that the situation was much improved, the mention of Timothy may have been a thoughtful gesture by the author to reestablish Timothy's importance as a valued colaborer in apostolic ministries. This faithful brother is mentioned in ten of Paul's epistles (plus Hebrews), and appears in the opening greeting of six of them. Two of Paul's letters were addressed to him.

END OF SAMPLE

⁴ Homer A. Kent, A HEART OPENED WIDE, Studies in II Corinthians (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI., 1960), pp. 26-34. Hereafter referred to as [KENT].