

Text: 2 Corinthians 2.1-17

1 Corinthians: *“the epistle of the cross in its social application.”*¹

2 Corinthians: *the epistle revealing the heart of pastoral application.*

In both epistles, Paul addresses the bad attitudes and actions of an immature church, still much affected by the world from which it is drawn.

A Preliminary Outline of 2 Corinthians:

Opening (1.1-11)

Addressing Corinthian Perceptions and Paul’s Ministry Philosophy (1.12-7.16)

Defending Paul’s Conduct (1.12-2.17)

Exposition of Paul’s Philosophy (3.1-6.10)

Appeal for Corinthian confidence (6.11-7.16)

Instructions concerning the offering (8.1-9.15)

Assertion of apostolic authority (10.1-13.10)

Conclusion (13.11-14)²

I. The reasoning behind Paul’s change of plans (1-4)

The opening verses of chapter 2 continue the subject of the last two verses of chapter 1. In 1.23-24, Paul said that he changed his plans to spare the Corinthians from confrontation.

What is the significance of “again” in v. 1?

Paul had visited them in sorrow once already

What would have made the earlier visit sorrowful and when did it occur?

Paul was dealing with Corinthian troubles, probably a quick visit between 1Cor and 2Cor

¹ G. G. Findlay, “St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians,” in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, ed. William Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, n.d.), 739.

² Adapted from Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003).

What does Paul mean in verse 2? What kind of visit was he trying to avoid?

Paul expected a sorrowful visit where he would have to cause them sorrow by what he did on the visit

What letter does Paul refer to in v. 3?

The "severe letter" – a letter written after 1 Cor and before 2 Cor

What motivation lay behind Paul's severe letter? (4)

His sincere love for the Corinthians

II. The resolution of the severe letter (5-11)

What does v. 5 refer to?

To some individual who had insulted Paul, probably not the man of 1 Cor 5, though some think so

What had happened to this person? (6)

He had been punished by the church for his bad behavior

What did Paul urge the Corinthians to do with this individual? (7-8)

To forgive him and not exclude him

What test did Paul put on the church in his previous letter? (9)

To show their obedience by agreeing with Paul about this offender

What does Paul encourage in v. 10? What is the reason? (11)

Paul urged forgiveness, lest ongoing bitterness trap them in Satan's schemes

III. The record of Paul's movements (12-13)

Now Paul refers to his movements. He left Ephesus for Troas. What did he find in Troas?

A great opportunity for ministry

However, Paul moved on from Troas to Macedonia. What was his reason?

Titus didn't show up, and Paul was anxious to find him

IV. The rejoicing in Christian ministry (14-17)

Paul expresses his rejoicing in the ministry as if he is taking part in a Roman triumph, led by Christ (14). What does he say Christ's triumph does through him?

Christ causes him to manifest the "sweet aroma" of Christ everywhere he goes

The "sweet aroma" of Christ has two effects. What is the effect on those who are saved, and on those who are perishing? (15-16)

To the saved, life to life; to the perishing, death to death

What does "who is adequate for these things" mean? (16)

No one is sufficient in himself for the manifestation of the gospel to those around him

What claim does Paul make about his ministry in v. 17?

He is not merely a religious huckster, peddling the gospel for profit, but sincerely preaching the gospel