

## Mercies and Comfort

### The Corinthian Order of Events – and the Four Letters to Them

- **51 AD** - Paul's first visit to Corinth (**Acts 18:1-21**)
  - He proclaims the gospel and the Corinthian church is planted.
    - Here, he also meets Aquilla and Priscilla. He works and stays with them.
    - Paul remained with this young church for 18 months before proceeding to Ephesus to preach the gospel there.
- **52 – 53 AD** - Apollos visited the church in Corinth, and it seems likely that Peter also did.
  - Unfortunately, the Corinthians became divisive over which church leaders they felt that they were individually "of."
  - Sexual sins were also rampant among them, and so Paul wrote them a non-canonical letter about it.
    - We don't have this first letter, but he reminds them about what he wrote in this first letter in **1 Cor 5:9** and elaborates even further on it.
  - The Corinthians write a letter back to Paul with specific doctrinal questions for him.
- **54 AD** – From Ephesus, Paul writes **1st Corinthians**, his second letter to them (**1 Cor 16:8**)
  - He sends Timothy to visit them. (**1 Co 16:10 – 11**)
    - Timothy returns but doesn't have a good report back to Paul about how they received him and **1st Corinthians**.
- **54 AD** – Paul makes an immediate second visit to discipline Corinth and is heartbroken by what he finds (**2 Cor 2:1; 10:10; 11:4-8, 13-15; 13:2**).
  - Jewish "super-apostles" had embedded themselves into the church leadership and had rejected Paul's apostleship.
  - The divisions and personal attacks on Paul's credibility had only increased.
- **54 AD** - Paul writes another non-canonical letter to them. This one was "severe" and written out of "much affliction and anguish" for them with "many tears." (**2 Cor 2:4; 7:8**)
  - This is his third letter to them, and he sends it with Titus to Corinth.
- **55 AD** - After hearing back from Titus about their sorrow and repentance (**2 Cor 2:13; 7:5; Acts 20:1**), Paul writes **2 Corinthians** to them.
  - This is his fourth letter to them.
- **56 AD** - Paul's third visit to Corinth, spending the three winter months with them. (**Acts 20:2**)
  - During this time, he wrote Romans and then left for Jerusalem.

### Paul Was Willing, But Didn't Want to Have to Make a Painful Visit to Them

**1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 4:14 - 21**

**14** I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children.

**15** For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

**16** I urge you, then, be imitators of me.

**17** That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.

**18** Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you.

**19** But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power.

**20** For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.

**21** What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?



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### **A Large Theme of Comfort in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians**

- In the letter as a whole, the *paraklēsis* word group (“comfort,” “consolation,” “appeal”) is a dominant theme in the letter.
  - 29 of 59 instances of these words in the New Testament are found in this epistle.
- The idea behind this word group in the New Testament is always more than calming care or soothing sympathy.
  - It has the idea of strengthening, coming alongside helping, and making another stronger to endure.
  - The Greek idea behind this is communicated by the equivalent Latin word for comfort (*fortis*), which also means “brave.”

### **Paul’s Concern Is Not for His Reputation Remaining Intact in Corinth, But For the Gospel**

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11:2 – 5**

**2** For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

**3** But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

**4** For if someone comes and proclaims *another Jesus* than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive *a different spirit* from the one you received, or if you accept *a different gospel* from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

**5** Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles.

### **Salvation Is Free, But Discipleship Is Going to Cost You Everything**

**Matthew 16:24** Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:12 - 13**

**12** Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

**13** But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:12** Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted

**Romans 8:18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

### **Suffering as Proof of Christian Authenticity**

**Luke 6:26** “Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

**Galatians 6:17** From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

