

## Introduction

The book of 2 Corinthians was shrouded in somewhat of a mystery to me for a long time. But a careful study of it in context with Acts and the historical situation that unfolded at Corinth yields great spiritual benefit. Following is an outline of the contact that Paul had with the church at Corinth, starting from its founding.

## Paul's Visits and Letters to Corinth

Date	Acts	Event
49 A.D.	18:2	0. Emperor Claudias commanded all Jews to leave Rome. Aquila and Priscilla move from Rome to Corinth.
Fall 50	18:1-17	1. Paul established the church at Corinth on his second missionary journey. He stayed there 18 months. We can pinpoint the time because we know the starting time of Gallio's proconsulate, July 1, 51 A.D. (Acts 18:12).
Spring 52	18:18-21	2. Paul left Corinth via Cencrea, stopped at Ephesus, sailed to Caesarea, went to Jerusalem, then to Antioch.
52/53 to 55/56	18:23, 19:1-22	3. On his third missionary journey, after going through Galatia and Phrygia, Paul stayed in Ephesus for three years (cf. Acts 20:31). During this time he had much contact with the church at Corinth.
~53		4. <b>Paul wrote</b> to Corinth the letter referred to in 1 Cor. 5:9-13. That letter spoke of the need to separate from sexually immoral people but was misunderstood.
~54	19:1	5. Word came to Paul through various sources about the situation in Corinth. Chloe's family brought him word (1 Cor. 1:11); Apollos may have given him information (1 Cor. 16:12) since he was in Corinth while Paul was in Ephesus; and the Corinthians wrote to Paul (1 Cor. 7:1; see "now concerning" passages in 8:1, 12:1, 16:1) probably sending their letter with Stephanas and company (1 Cor. 16:17).
~54	19:22	6. <b>Paul wrote 1 Corinthians</b> in response to the problems he heard about. Timothy was sent with Erastus from Ephesus to Macedonia and on to Corinth (1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10-11) but it was unclear whether he would arrive before or after Paul's letter.
~55		7. Paul also made the "sorrowful visit" to Corinth sometime during his three-year stay in Ephesus. It is not mentioned in Acts; but since 2 Corinthians mentions his upcoming <i>third</i> visit (12:14, 21, 13:1-2), this second visit had to take place somewhere between Acts 18:18 and 20:1. Some person in Corinth did Paul wrong during this visit (2 Cor. 7:12).
~55		8. After returning, <b>Paul wrote</b> the "severe letter" to

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20:1

20:2-3

20:2-3;  
Rom.  
16:23

straighten things out. This is not the same as 1 Corinthians, though some take it that way.\* It was carried by Titus (2 Cor. 12:18).

9. Paul couldn't wait to hear back from Titus about the results of his trip, so he went to Troas and then Macedonia to find Titus (2 Cor. 2:12-13; 7:5-16). Titus has good news: the church has responded positively to Paul's letter and the offender has been punished. Still, there are other problems that the Corinthians needed to be helped with: Paul's change in travel plans, the "false super-apostles" who were wrecking Paul's work in Corinth, and the plans for gathering a collection in support of the poor saints in Jerusalem.
10. **Paul wrote 2 Corinthians** from Macedonia after he met Titus (2 Cor. 7:5; 8:1; 9:2-4).
11. Paul came to Corinth the third time and stayed for 3 months.
12. Paul wrote the letter to the Romans from Corinth during this three-month visit. We know he was there since he mentioned Gaius (1 Cor. 1:14, though Gaius was a very common name) and Erastus, the city treasurer (16:23). An inscription with Erastus' name in it has been found in Corinth. Rom. 15:26 indicates that his trip was a success as far as the collection goes (a happy ending!).

\* How do we know that the "severe letter" is not the same as 1 Corinthians? There are several lines of evidence:

1. 2 Cor. 7:12 talks about the one who did the wrong, yet no mention is made there of sexual immorality.
2. It seems also from the same verse that Paul is the victim, and not the church at large which was the case in the case of 1 Cor. 5.
3. The severe letter was written in place of another painful visit (2 Cor. 1:23, 2:1, 3), but 1 Corinthians gives no indication that it was written in place of a visit.
4. Paul initially regretted sending the severe letter (2 Cor. 7:8); he probably would not have regretted sending 1 Corinthians, a letter which he knew was inspired (1 Cor. 14:37).
5. The tone of 1 Corinthians does not seem to be too "severe."
6. The passage of several years from the writing of 1 Corinthians in 53 to the writing of 2 Corinthians in 56 gives a lot of time for events to transpire which are not recorded in Acts 19.

Credit for much of this outline goes to Dr. William Combs, who taught a very helpful course at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary on 2 Corinthians.