

Week 1 - Handout

Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. ¹² We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. ¹³ If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. ¹⁴ For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. (2 Cor 5:11-14)

2 Cor Background study (ch 1)

- Written by Paul and Timothy to Church in Corinth and the surrounding area. Paul planted the church in Corinth during second missionary journey Acts (15:36-18:22)
- 1 Corinthians addresses several issues within the church involving divisions, lawsuits, sexual immorality, exaggerated eschatology, over embracing freedom, under valuing community, over emphasis of certain gifts, under appreciating certain groups of people, confusion over resurrection hopes. The letter addresses some of these topics in a forceful way
- 1 Cor 16 outlines Paul’s plans...which must have been changed. The divisions present in 1 Cor are now full blown and Paul is being criticized.

Opponents apparently have several criticisms of Paul

- 10:10f; 11:5f – Not a good speaker
- 2:17; 12:11f – He did not accept money for preaching...(except the collection)
- 4:1f – He was being deceptive in his practices

(1:1-11) Introduction

- Comfort from God through Christ → comfort others
- Sufferings of Christ → sufferings in our life
- Our comfort / Our suffering → for your benefit
- Hardships teach us to rely on God instead of self
- Resurrection (a theme from 1 Cor) is central to hope

Discussion

- Why do you suppose Paul raises these issues in the introduction?
- What hints do you see in this section about how the Corinthians are misunderstanding the nature of Paul’s ministry?

(1:12-22) Paul’s Reliability

- “understood in part” → the issue in Corinth stems from immature faith
- Change of plans → Paul is unreliable
- The reliability of Paul’s ministry is anchored in promises of God...not Paul

Discussion

- What is unique about Paul’s “boast” in 1:12
- How do we understand making plans in a “worldly manner” (v. 17)
- How do you act according to God’s grace?
- How does the Spirit serve as a guarantee?

(1:23-2:11) Spare Me

- Paul’s motive for not returning to Corinth was for their benefit, not Paul’s benefit, not Paul’s being fickle
- “another painful visit”? (read 12:19-21)
- Paul expresses confidence in the sincerity of the Corinthians
- Seems that Paul wants the Corinthians to deal with the sin in the congregation themselves as competent Christians instead of simply to please Paul or follow his instructions.
- The example of “searching for Titus” could be an example of “good reasons” to change travel plans

Discussion

- How was Paul’s earlier letter (perhaps 1 Cor or another letter) misinterpreted?
- What schemes of the Devil become stronger when people do not forgive one another?
- In what ways is “not being involved” a sign of honor?