

Advent Adult Faith Formation
Week 3 – Handout 3
Paul's Second Epistle to the Church at Corinth

Historical Background

- Paul's theology is expressed throughout, but II Cor is neither doctrinal nor didactic, but rather intensely personal
- It is of great use to the church in the 2nd century CE
- Referenced by Polycarp in his *Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus* (C. 130 CE), one of the earliest of the Christian apologies

The New Issues at Corinth

- 1) The Offender who has been a severe critic of Paul (not the Offender of I Cor.)
- 2) The False Teachers: a Judaizing group, known as the "Christ Party" in I Cor. They accuse Paul of being a self-seeker with no apostolic authority
- 3) The Painful Visit: reference to a 2nd visit by Paul during the interval between writing I Cor and II Cor. This visit has already taken place when Paul speaks of a 3rd visit in II Cor.
- 4) The Severe Letter: written as a result of the 2nd visit to Corinth. The letter could be lost but most scholars believe that it is contained in Chapters 10-13 of II Cor

Historical Reconstruction of Timeline

- Paul makes 1st visit to Corinth when he establishes the church
- After 18 mos. He leaves and goes to Ephesus where he wrote I Cor (spring 54 or 55 CE)
- Stronger issues arise at Corinth and Paul makes a 2nd visit which ends in great pain and distress
- The church at Corinth is not supporting Paul against the "Christ Party"
- Paul writes "the severe letter" (possibly Chapters 10-13 of II Cor)
- Paul writes II Cor (autumn 55 or 56 CE)

Regarding II Cor

- Scholars suggest that Chapter 13: 11 should follow Chapter 9: 15, separating Chapter 10: 1 – Chapter 13: 10 as the "severe letter"
- Some scholars believe that Chapter 9 was not originally a part of II Cor. As the language is quite different
- Most all scholars believe that II Cor is a compilation of writings, all by Paul, but not originally a part of II Cor
- II Cor has 3 main divisions: Chapters 1-7, Chapters 8-9, Chapters 10-13

Overview of Themes in II Cor

- Letter is one of a father who has been reconciled to his children
- Christ centered and strong in faith and fortitude
- Insights into the reasons why we suffer
- Encouragement to face hardships as opportunities to grow closer to God
- Generosity of the church (Chapter 9) and a great discourse on giving to those in need with a cheerful spirit
- Paul gives us a full description of his own weaknesses and suffering

Chapter 1

- Salutation citing Timothy as co-author.
- In afflictions, Christ wants to draw us closer to himself as the great comforter. This enables us to help others going through afflictions.
- Reference to wanting to return to Corinth but does not go in order to spare them more sorrow

Chapter 2

- Deals with the Offender who has verbally attacked Paul as a self-seeker with no apostolic authority. Paul tells them to forgive and move on
- Relates his trip to Troas in serve of Titus after sending First Epistle. Meets Titus in Macedonia and the report from Corinth is positive

Chapter 3

- We, as believers, may be the only exposure the non-believer receives regarding Christ
- Vss. 5-15 is one of the most remarkable and important texts in the NT
- Glory of the New Covenant is greater than that of the Old Covenant
- God spoke to Moses face to face (but within the Old Covenant, Moses; face is veiled). We have something much greater because we have God living within us
- If we behold the glory of God, we will be transformed into the image of Him and his glory will be seen in us

Chapter 4

- Great insight into the basic tenet of the Christian faith...Jesus Christ gave his own life so that we might live.
- Messengers of the Gospel live out a life of sacrifice so that others might find life
- We have these treasures in "clay jars" so that the power of God is clearly seen to belong only to him and does not come from us

Chapter 5

- Man is both a natural and spiritual creation
- As we are being transformed into a spiritual rather than a natural being, we begin to long for the spiritual body. At some point we start feeling more at home in the spiritual body than the natural body
- This is evidence of spiritual maturity. We walk more with spiritual eyes than natural eyes. "We walk by faith and not by sight"
- Vss. 10-17 of great depth and context
- 1) we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ
- 2) the love of Christ controls us
- 3) Christ died for all so that those who live no longer live for themselves
- 4) from now on, we know no one after the flesh.
- 5) if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.
- Walking in the spiritual life, we become ambassadors of Christ. We represent him in his ultimate purpose of reconciling the world to God

Chapter 6

- Apostleship required one to daily die to self and any personal ambition. The drive of an apostle's life had to be love of God, love of people, devotion to making Christ and his Gospel known

- Vs. 14 is a strange (out of place) insertion: if the love of Christ controls us and he is our first love, to be yoked to a non-believer would be unthinkable. First and foremost love requires that we do all things for the sake of the Gospel

Chapter 8

- Paul is tough, resolute, and uncompromising, but this makes his tenderness and affection stronger. His love for the Corinthian church is a source of great joy.



- Self=pity is the ultimate form of selfishness. It creates a spiritual Black Hole from which few climb out
- Object is not to avoid sorrow, but to deeply feel the right kind of sorrow that will turn us to God and not to self=pity

Chapter 8

- When we experience the gifts of God we become more generous...his nature manifests in us
- The generosity of the church at Corinth has made them well-known
- The churches had the authority to send out apostles. These are not the same as apostles called by God.
- In modern times, there is a great difference between an apostle sent out from a church and an apostle called by God and ordained for ministry
- (Reference to the Church at Ephesus in Rev. 2: 2) Ephesus tested those who said they were called to be apostles, found them false, and rejected them. We should do the same!

Chapter 9

- Central chapter in the Bible about the grace of generosity
- The foundation of Christianity is generosity: God so loved the world that he gave his only son
- "God loves a cheerful giver" (vs. 7)

Chapter 10

- Here the mood changes drastically
- Spiritual weapons are much more powerful than tangible weapons
- Nothing is more powerful than the truth, spoken in love. It can change minds and mindsets
- Paul had authority from God to build up and tear down. Some presume to tear down who have not built up
- Spheres of authority are dictated by God and there are boundaries. If we go beyond the boundary, there is trouble.
- We need to stay in the will of God and be in the place where he has given us authority

Chapter 11

- Jealousy and being possessive of the work of God out of personal selfishness or personal gain.

- Jealousy leads to false workers because true workers are never motivated by personal gain
- Some preach “another Jesus” or “another Gospel”
- Vs. 3: a basic deception results when we depart from the simplicity of devotion to Jesus Christ
- All work for Jesus Christ must be simple
- False leaders are exposed by:
 - 1) overbearing leadership
 - 2) arrogance in self-exalting
 - 3) taking advantage of people
- When these surface, one must be rejected as a false leader (apostle)
- One can be a false leader and still be a true Christian
- Ephesus got rid of them and so must we
- The real evidence of those who are true leaders (apostles) are those who continuously take up the cross for the one who took up the cross for them

Chapter 12

- Paul describes a man who has a vision (possibly himself) and was caught up into the 3rd realm of heaven.
- If there is a 3rd realm, is there also a 1st and 2nd realm??
- Theories on the realms of heaven:
 - 1) realms of heaven as places
 - 2) realms of heaven as times (ages)
- “Heaven and earth” do not refer to actual terra firma, but to the authorities over them in their assigned times
- 1st realm was destroyed by the Flood
- 2nd realm is the current age (our current world). Satan is the “prince of the air” and reigns over the earth, but will be replaced by Jesus Christ in the next realm
- 3rd realm is the time when Jesus Christ will reign over the earth
- The 3rd realm is the highest
- 1st realm is a physical realm
- 2nd realm is a spiritual realm ruled by Satan and his powers
- 3rd realm is the highest revealed in Scripture where God exists
- Paul reveals that he sometimes doesn’t know whether he is in his body or not. (Some believe that, through prayer, one can be transported to another realm). Words that cannot be expressed....a communication between all living things that is higher than words.
- Paul’s “thorn in the flesh”, caused by Satan, is a mystery but intended to keep him humble. Humility is required in order to receive grace from God. It is often accompanied by a “thorn”

Chapter 13

- Paul reminds them of his own authority to bring correction but he prefers that they do this themselves
- Vs. 7 is the hallmark of all ministry: even if Paul was to become reprobate (to fall), the Corinthians would carry on in Christ
- Paul warns them that if he comes to Corinth again, he will not be lenient
- He concludes by telling them to “get their act together” and gives the Trinitarian Blessing

