

LESSON 23: 2 CORINTHIANS 1-7
MARCH 15, 2017

OVERVIEW

- . Introduction and background
- . The glory of the Christian ministry – 2 Corinthians 1-7

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- . Reasons for Paul's change of plans
 - . Paul's visit to Macedonia – 2 Corinthians 1:17-24
 - . In I Corinthians Paul said he wished to join them shortly
 - . His original plan was to make two additional trips there
 - . His plan was to stay in Ephesus until after the Feast of Pentecost, then cross the sea to Corinth
 - . From there his plan was to move north in to Macedonia, then travel back to Corinth before heading for home
 - . Paul changed his plans to give the Corinthians time to respond to his first letter
 - . He wanted to give them time to make things right amongst themselves
 - . At the same time the opposition forces in Ephesus had heated up and Paul was forced to escape quickly in order to spare his life
 - . He and his traveling party decided to head north to Macedonia
 - . This change of plans gives the enemies of Paul in Corinth ammunition
 - . The Judaizers within the church unjustly charged Paul with insincerity and "lightness" (implied in 2 Corinthians 1:17-18)
 - . Paul talks later in his second letter about this faction who attacks Paul's person, teaching and character – 2 Corinthians 10-13
 - . Paul appeals to the Corinthians personal knowledge of his consistent character that his promises are reliable
- . Paul's wait
 - . Paul heads for Troas and eagerly awaits the arrival of Titus
 - . When Titus did not arrive with news from Corinth Paul was acutely disappointed
 - . Paul was not just physically tired but his heart was burdened with anxiety concerning the Judaizing party from Jerusalem who hated him and tried to undermine his apostolic authority
 - . No word from Corinth was making Paul think his opposition was making inroads

- . It was also a burden to Paul that he could not stay longer with the people of the various churches he was planting
- . Paul turns difficulties and emotional trials to triumph through his faith
 - . A new church is formed in Troas
 - . Paul visits this growing church later during his return voyage
 - . Throughout Paul's suffering he thanks God who always provides strength
 - . Paul's sufficiency was of God – 2 Corinthians 3:5
 - . "Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds" – John 12:24
 - . Only in proportion as Paul had part in Christ's cross could he share in the power of Christ's resurrection
- . Paul's wait in Macedonia for news – 2 Corinthians 1:3-5; 2:13; 7:5
 - . When Titus did not arrive, Paul decides to cross over to Macedonia and Philippi
 - . It's possible one of the shipwrecks he survived happened at this time 2 Corinthians 11:25
 - . While in Philippi Paul stayed again, at the home of Lydia
 - . Paul had a deep, deep love for the people at the church of Philippi and it was thought to be his favorite
 - . It was the one church where he accepted financial support
 - . At long last Titus arrives with good news from Corinth
 - . The majority of the church was willing to submit to Paul
 - . They were mourning over their sins, disaffection and fervently loved Paul himself
- . The characteristics of 2 Corinthians
 - . Out of the abundance of relief, joy, comfort and tender affection, Paul sits down to write the first seven chapters of 2 Corinthians
 - . Paul reveals, as in no other epistle, something of the depths of anguish and the physical suffering he is experiencing
 - . Yet this suffering is always intermingled with his profound inner trust in Christ that leads to his triumph in Christ over every situation
 - . If it is God's Will that we seek and we surrender ourselves to that Will, through Christ, then His Will be done
 - . Of value in 2 Corinthians is Paul's unconscious revelation of himself in it
 - . Paul reveals his very Christian spirit – suffering, rejoicing, enduring, yet always overcoming in Christ
 - . Paul reveals his sensitivity in his relationship to his converts
 - . We see an intensely human personality, anxious, perturbed, restless
 - . We see the intensity to which Paul gives himself over to his converts
 - . Yet despite these human complexities nothing deterred Paul from his mission

- . Nowhere more than in 2 Corinthians do we see Paul's conception of the Christian ministry
 - . He sees himself as God's chosen ambassador – 2 Corinthians 5:20
 - . By God's grace revealed through Paul, God's comfort is seen to balance completely all suffering for Christ's sake
 - . There is suffering – persecution, distresses, tribulations, trials, weaknesses – 2 Corinthians 4:8-11, 6:4-5, 8-10; 7:5; 11:23-28; 12:7-16
 - . There is the counterbalance of God's strength made perfect in weakness – 2 Corinthians 12:9
 - . God's consolation so perfectly comforting him that it overflows to others – 2 Corinthians 1:4
 - . Eternal glory that outweighs all suffering – 2 Corinthians 4:17
 - . Joy that overcomes trial – 2 Corinthians 7:4
 - . Abundance of grace – 2 Corinthians 8:9
 - . Awareness of God's sufficiency – 2 Corinthians 3:5-9
 - . God's deliverance – 2 Corinthians 4:7-16; 12:9-10

THE GLORY OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY – 2 CORINTHIANS 1-7

(TO BE CONTINUED ON APRIL 5)

NEXT LESSON: APRIL 5, 2017 – 2 CORINTHIANS 1-7