

The Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians

Lesson 1

In Defense of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Christianity arose as a movement within the Jewish community in Jerusalem. Its founder was a Jew as were his disciples. Following Jesus' ascension his disciples proclaimed the gospel only to Jews. Yet in little more than a generation Christianity was recognized as a predominantly Gentile religion. This phenomenon is due principally to the energy with which Paul spread the gospel in the Gentile world from Syria to Italy between A.D. 47-60. During this ministry he was constantly attacked from enemies from outside the church as well as enemies within the church. Second Corinthians is primarily a defense of Paul's apostleship and his ministry and therefore a defense of the good news of the Savior who sent him.

1. After Paul was converted to Christ in Acts 9, what was his early experience (Acts 9:20-30)? What major revelation did God make to the apostles after that (Acts 11:18)?
2. Why did some of the early Christian Jews in Jerusalem have to leave the city (Acts 8:1)? Where did a great movement to Christ occur (Acts 11:20-21)? Who was sent there to minister (Acts 11:22-25)? Who did Barnabas enlist to help him?
3. Where did Paul and Barnabas go on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:2-4)? After preaching the gospel repeatedly, who opposed them (Acts 13:42-50)? What prophecy was fulfilled that day (Acts 13:47)?
4. After returning to the church at Antioch, who came there stirring things up (Acts 15:1-5)? What was Paul's reaction (15:2)? Who was at the church council in Jerusalem to decide this matter (15:6-13)? What was the decision (15:19)?
5. These false teachers who taught salvation by works, keeping the law, and tradition were to plague Paul for the rest of his life. What were these opponents (from within the church) up to in Galatia (Gal 1:6-10)? Why did Paul have to go to Jerusalem for a private meeting with the leaders of the church (Gal 2:1-10)? Who was trying to "bring them into bondage" (Gal 2:4)? Who agreed with Paul and gave them the "right hand of fellowship" (Gal 2:9)?

6. Did these false teachers claim to be Christians (2 Cor 11:13)? Did they claim to be “apostles of Christ”? What was Paul’s assessment of their claims (2 Cor 11:14-15)?

7. These deceivers from within the church were also at work in Philippi. What warning did Paul give the Philippians (Phil 3:2)? What was the threat at Colossae (Col 2:16-19)? What did Paul say about legalism in Colossians 2:20-23?

8. Why would any members of the church follow men such as these Paul is warning against (2 Timothy 4:3)? Did Peter ever warn against false teachers within the church (2 Peter 2:1-3)? What about John (2 Jn 1:7-11) or Jude (1:3-4)?

9. On what basis did these false teachers in Corinth criticize Paul (2 Cor 10:10; 11:7)? Why were these false teachers hard to detect (2 Cor 11:13-15)?

10. The most important reason for Paul to defend his apostleship and his ministry is to defend his message – the gospel. What was Paul’s source for his message (Galations 1:11-17, 1 Cor 2:10-13)? What is the difference between Paul’s message and the message of the false teacher (2 Cor 5:14-21, Romans 10:3-4, 2 Cor 2:17; 10:12, 16-18; 11:3, Galations 2:16, 20-21; Acts 15:1,5; Phil 3:17-20, Colossians 2:8-10, 18-23; 2 Timothy 1:8-12; 4:3-4)