

# INTRODUCTION

## A. Paul and Corinth

Paul had written 1 Corinthians in the early months of AD 54. But it was only partially successful. Some concerns were probably dealt with: for instance, we hear no more disputation about the resurrection of the body, or the eating of food sacrificed to idols, and references to gnosis and wisdom become much less common. The cause of the new troubles entered Corinth *from without*.

As Paul Barnett notes, the Corinthian church proved to be the most demanding of the churches Paul had oversight of. In 1 Corinthians Paul writes objectively and confidently, while 2 Corinthians reveals a range of emotional extremes. But in both letters he is forced to defend his doctrines.<sup>1</sup>

It is unfortunate that because Romans is more systematic and often easier to follow, historically it has put the Corinthian epistles in the shade, although justification by sovereign grace is not absent, and is thoroughly applied. “What do you have that you did not receive?” Paul asked the church in Corinth; “and if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?” (1 Cor 4:7). And in their way, the Corinthians epistles are no less theologically rich and deserving of attention.

1. Barnett, *The Message of 2 Corinthians*, 13–14.

## B. Roman Corinth

No introduction to 2 Corinthians, however short, would be adequate without a careful explanation of the distinctive features of the city of Corinth.<sup>2</sup>

### 1. A Prosperous, bustling, international community

Corinth was one of the most vibrant, exciting, and challenging cities in the whole of the Greek world in Roman times. It was situated on a narrow neck of land in Greece with a harbor on each side of it. On the east side, the harbor of Cenchreae faces across the sea to the Roman province of Asia and Ephesus. On the west side the port of Lechaem faces Italy and ultimately Rome. Yet at the narrowest point of the isthmus the distance between the two seacoasts is less than six miles, or barely nine km. Corinth was thus a major center for international east-west trade.

This favored location for east-west trade was matched by an almost equally favored position between northern and southern Greece. To the north lay the Province of Achaëa, and yet further north, Macedonia, which included Philippi and Thessalonica. To the south lay the Peloponnese, down to the shores of Cape Malea. Corinth stood at the crossroads or intersection between north and south and between east and west for business and trade. In Paul's time it had become a busy, bustling, cosmopolitan business center. By comparison, Athens might have seemed a slumbering university city, dreaming simply of its greater past.

Those who traded between Asia and the west preferred to use the two port facilities of Corinth rather than travel by ship around Cape Malia, where winds and tides were often hazardous off the southern shores of Greece, especially in winter. If they used light cargo ships, sailors or traders could transport even the ship on rollers over the paved road, called the *diolkos*, that linked the two harbours. Alternatively, they could unload cargo at one port and reload it at the other. In either case, toll fees or carriage charges swelled the income of Corinth and its officials.

Corinth inherited a large income from tourism, business, and manufacturing. Tourists flocked to Corinth, not least for the famous Isthmian

2. I shall repeat many of the features that I noted in my earlier commentaries on 1 Corinthians (2000 and 2006). In this particular section, I am going to draw especially on what I have written in my shorter commentary on 1 Corinthians of 2006, together with a few comments from Donald Engels, *Roman Corinth* (1990). I have not seen clearer or more relevant material elsewhere.

Games, which were held every two years. Second only to the Olympic Games, the Isthmian games were among the three great games-festivals of the whole of Greece. They attracted participants, spectators, and other visitors from all corners of the Empire between Rome and the east. Archaeologists have recovered coins that witness to the range of international visitors who came to the Games.

When he first arrived in Corinth, Paul would probably have seen whatever booths and stands remained from the Games of AD 49, and they would have been in full swing during his ministry there in AD 51. By the middle of the first century, the Games had expanded to include a multiplicity of competitive and sometimes spectacular events. In addition to chariot races, athletic events, competitions in trumpet, flute, and lyre, poetry readings, and other events, Corinth or Isthmia had, unusually, introduced athletic contests for women, and the *apobatikon*, in which a rider would leap from one team of horses to another. During this period Corinth managed the Games and reaped a vast income from them.

In addition to competitors and spectators, business people, traders, and especially individuals with entrepreneurial skills or hopes visited what constituted a hub of opportunity for new commercial contacts and ventures, new possibilities of employment, quick person-to-person agreements or transactions, and a large cosmopolitan pool of potential consumers. These visitors brought money to rent rooms, to buy necessary or exotic products, and to hire dockers, porters, secretaries, accountants, guides, bodyguards, blacksmiths, carpenters, cooks, housekeepers, and both literate and menial slaves. They sought to employ or to hire managers, craftsmen, and people who could repair wagons, tents, ships, or chariots. This list conveys a good idea of the composition of the average Pauline church community.

Paul would have spent many long, hot hours in a workshop, probably close to the Lechaem Road or on the north, sun-drenched side of the Forum or *Agora*. Archaeologists have excavated shops or workshops of some 13' x 8', some with sleeping accommodation above, which Aquila and Priscilla may well have used as their quarters (Acts 18:3).

## 2. Corinth as a Roman colony

Corinth was a Roman colony that welcomed waves of new settlers. Corinth's geographical position as an international centre of trade, together with its attraction for business and economic prosperity, already

sets the stage for regarding it as a deeply competitive, self-sufficient, and entrepreneurial culture, marked by ambitions to succeed at what we nowadays term a corporate mind shaped by consumerism, and perhaps even with its own celebrities.

Two further factors add decisively to this developing picture. The history of Corinth goes far back into earlier centuries as a Greek city-state, but in the second century BC it became embroiled in political struggles that related to Sparta and also to Rome. In 146 BC, a Roman army sacked the city and left it virtually in ruins for some two hundred years. Yet such a prime location for defence, trade, and economic power could not remain neglected forever. In 44 BC, the year of his assassination, Julius Caesar re-founded Corinth as a Roman *colonia* for veterans from his legions.

The new Corinth was initially resettled chiefly by Roman soldiers, Roman freedpersons, and Roman slaves, and was very soon swelled by tradespersons and business entrepreneurs from various parts of the Roman Republic. The government and laws of the new city were established on a fully Roman pattern. Loyalty to Rome was fundamental to the settlement of the veterans, and loyal Roman citizens made Corinth a secure strategic base for possible future campaigns against Parthia, Dacia, or further east. The new name of the city honored Julius Caesar: *Colonia Laus Julia Corinthiensis* in full, or Corinth for short. The towering mountainous hill AcroCorinth, some 570 meters from the city center, had served as a citadel for defense during the early Greek period, and it still provided a structure for defense if ever this was needed.

The well-ordered colony attracted an increasing number of immigrants, who came in the hope of making their fortune. Every condition was right: a cosmopolitan international center under secure Roman government order, with shipping routes to Rome and Ephesus and to the east; a plentiful supply of natural resources for manufacturing; and a vibrant business mentality where quick success (or sometimes failure) was part of the cultural ethos. Competition, patronage, consumerism, and multiform layers and levels of success were part of the air breathed by citizens of Corinth.

### 3. Corinth as a hub of manufacturing, patronage, and business

As if all this were not enough, Corinth enjoyed spectacular natural resources for the production of goods. First and foremost, the almost limitless supply of water from the Pyrenean Fountains not only provided the domestic needs

of a large, vibrant, expanding city, but was also a necessary component for the manufacture of bricks, pottery, roof tiles, terracotta ornaments, and utensils. Other needed components were available: a very large deposit of marl and clay; light sandstone to be quarried or used for building on a large scale; and a harder limestone for durable paving on streets and roads.

Even in the earlier Greek period, Corinth had been called “wealthy Corinth.” In its first-century Roman period, the city hummed with economic wealth, business, and expansion. Businesswomen like Chloe, we may surmise, sent their middle managers to Corinth to deal on their behalf (1:10). Aquila and Priscilla saw Corinth as a prime location for leather goods or tentmaking when Claudius expelled Jews from Rome in AD 49. They probably arrived, already as Christians, shortly before Paul, and set up their workroom-come-shop either on the north side of the Forum or among the shops and markets of the Lechaem Road.

It is not surprising that the culture of the day in Corinth expressed a degree of *self-satisfaction*, if not *complacency*, alongside the *drive to compete and to succeed*. The culture was one of *self-promotion*. When Paul carried the gospel to Corinth, it is not surprising that he “came . . . with much fear and trembling” (2:3). The gospel of a humiliated, crucified Christ was an *affront* to the people who cherished *success* and loved *winning*. Paul refused to carry himself like a professional lecturer or rhetorician, which in 2 Corinthians meant his insistence on preaching the gospel free of charge. And, as he says in 1 Cor 2:2, the gospel he preached among them declared nothing “except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

#### 4. The ethos of the city permeated the church and resonates with today

Study of both 1 and 2 Corinthians makes it clear that Christians in Corinth still carried over into their Christian existence many of the cultural traits that characterized their pre-Christian culture. Christians are always *in process* of renewal and sanctification, betraying signs of the old life as well as signs of the new. One writer has compared this to coming out of the cold into a warm room: pockets of ice from the cold may remain, even when we have decisively come under the influence of heat and warmth. The heat is decisive, but traces of the cold remain in the present. In the case of the Corinthians, some competitiveness, self-achievement, self-promotion, self-congratulation, and self-sufficiency remained, even if these were no longer decisive for their Christian lives.

Competition and success were everywhere apparent: in the Isthmian games, in business and trade, in social status, and in economic power. Entrepreneurs regularly used social networks of influence, and this occurred not least in Corinth through the Roman system of patronage, where choosing the right patron could secure rapid promotion through the influences of the patron rather than through personal merit. Paul's opponents in 2 Corinthians readily showed how they could "put down" others and boast or brag about their own achievements. The so-called false apostles looked for a triumphalist gospel rather than a crucified Christ. We must beware of similar attendances in the culture of our own day, whereby consumerism, celebrity cults, and self-promotion, often threaten to crowd out the relevance of the crucified and risen Christ.

### C. The Content and Argument of the Epistle

#### 1. Broad outline

2 Corinthians has three clearly-marked divisions. Chapters 1–7 consist mainly of an exposition of Paul's apostolic ministry. Chapters 8–9 plead the cause of a collection organized among the gentile churches for the church of Jerusalem. Chapters 10–13 strongly defend Paul's apostolic authority in the face of its denial by people in Corinth. Nevertheless, it is crucial to regard these sections not as independent themes, but as part of an integrated whole, as David R. Hall and, earlier, George Beasley-Murray, among many others, rightly stress.<sup>3</sup>

2 Corinthians is also perhaps the most neglected of Paul's major letters (often studied less than his popular shorter letters), but this is surprising because "this letter is the most moving document that Paul has left to us."<sup>4</sup> In the light of this neglect, there is a need for a relatively short introduction to this epistle. Other introductions often seem to some to be unduly complex because, as C. K. Barrett notes, there is a serious danger of arguing in a circle, i.e., from historical reconstruction to literary hypothesis, and from literary hypothesis back to historical reconstruction.<sup>5</sup>

3. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*; Beasley-Murray, "Introduction," 1–3.

4. Beasley-Murray, "Introduction," 6.

5. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*.

## 2. The unity of 2 Corinthians

It is understandable that for several centuries scholars have proposed that 2 Corinthians 1–9 is not the same letter as 2 Corinthians 10–13. Whereas in chapters 1–7 (or 1–9), Paul expresses his joy because he and the congregation have made up their quarrel and he can even warn about too strict a punishment of the unrighteous (2:7–8), 10:1 begins anew with “I, Paul, myself”; he attacks “some” (10:2), “such people” (10:11), “those who would like to claim” (11:12), “false apostles” (11:13), servants of Satan, “who disguise themselves as servants of righteousness” (11:15), etc.<sup>6</sup> This basic partition theory—that our letter of 2 Corinthians is composed of two originally separate letters that have been joined—has been held since at least 1776, when it was proposed by J. S. Semler. More recently it has been held by Windisch, Héring, T. W. Manson, and many others. Yet it has generated fierce debate. And whatever our views on partition theses, most writers regard the whole of 2 Corinthians as written by Paul, even if on separate occasions. Thrall writes, “It is certain that it is genuinely Pauline.”<sup>7</sup>

There are other less simple partition theories. Thrall and others regard chapters 8 and 9, on the collection for Jerusalem, to be too repetitive plausibly to have been written on the very same occasion.<sup>8</sup> Some also question whether 2:14–7:1 was written at the same time as the rest of 2 Corinthians. But against partition theories, a growing number of moderate scholars support the unity of 2 Corinthians. These include C. K. Barrett, Frances Young and David Ford, Paul Barnett, George H. Guthrie, and most decisively David R. Hall in his book *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*.<sup>9</sup> One important factor is that Hall pays attention to 1 Corinthians, which is one of my main reasons for passionately supporting arguments for the unity of the epistle.

Hall rightly argues that what he calls “puffed-upness” at Corinth dominates 1 and 2 Corinthians equally. He writes, “Being blown up with self-importance like the frog in Aesop’s Fables . . . occurs three times in (1 Corinthians) chapter 4, and three times in chapters 5–16.”<sup>10</sup> Further ex-

6. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 211–12.

7. Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 3.

8. Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 4.

9. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 6–36; Young and Ford, *Meaning and Truth in 2 Corinthians*, 36–44; Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*; Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, 23–38; Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*.

10. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 32.

amination, he says, reveals the continuity between the competitive pursuit of “wisdom” rebuked in chapters 1–4, and the behavioral problems discussed in chapters 5–16. “There is a continuity between the puffed-upness of [some] Greek *tines*, who were defying Paul’s authority in 4:18–19 and the puffed-upness of the church as a whole in 5:5.”<sup>11</sup> 6:13 implies a separation between the physical and the spiritual, as in 1 Cor 5:1–5.<sup>12</sup> Hall further comments on chapters 8–10, on the eating of meals. He adds a chapter on the social background of 1 Corinthians, rightly referring to Gerd Theissen, Jerome Murphy O’Connor, Dale Martin, and others.<sup>13</sup>

On 2 Corinthians, Hall does not deny the huge psychological difference between 2 Corinthians 1–9 and chapters 10–13.<sup>14</sup> He quotes Plummer as saying, Paul “suddenly bursts out into a torrent of reproaches, sarcastic self-vindication, and stern warnings, which must almost have undermined the pacific effect of the first seven chapters.”<sup>15</sup> He also quotes Jerome Murphy-O’Connor to the same effect.<sup>16</sup> His reply to the partitionists, however, makes several points. First, “Paul’s criticisms are mainly directed at the incoming teachers, not at the church.”<sup>17</sup> In addition to the text itself, he also quotes Barrett and Hughes in support. Hughes points out that 10:1 begins not with an outburst but with entreaty “by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.”<sup>18</sup> He writes as their father, not as judge. Second, rhetoric in the ancient Greco-Roman world often allowed or encouraged confrontational approaches. Danker illustrates this from the speeches of Demosthenes.<sup>19</sup> Young and Ford support this argument, and Hughes also cites parallels from Cicero. Third, Hall argues that the historical situation demands different responses in chapters 10–13 from 1–9. The final three chapters, he observes, concern a personal confrontation with rivals.<sup>20</sup>

11. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 34.

12. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 37.

13. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 51–85.

14. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 87–89.

15. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, xxix–xxx; Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 88.

16. Murphy O’Connor, *The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 10–11.

17. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 88.

18. Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, xxiii.

19. Danker, “Paul’s Debt to the *De Corona* of Demosthenes.”

20. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 88 and 92–100.



Hall also considers arguments about chapters 8 and 9. He writes, “A further objection to the unity of two Corinthians is the central place of the appeal for the collection. In opposing the view of Young and Ford, 2 Corinthians has a style of a forensic defence. Murphy-O’Connor protests that ‘a plea for money, even for others, has no place in an apologia.’” He continues, “But this does not invalidate the view that Paul regarded the letter in broad terms as an apology, but with various other items thrown in.”<sup>21</sup> Hall points out issues relating to Titus as an example. He also quotes R. F. Collins as suggesting that it is not legitimate to expect perfect unity in any letter.<sup>22</sup> He concludes, “The general tone of chapters 8 and 9 is in keeping with 2 Corinthians as a whole.”<sup>23</sup> He returns to consider these arguments further in a later chapter, engaging the work of Hans Dieter Betz.<sup>24</sup> Hall approves of Ben Witherington’s argument that the Corinthian correspondence represents a “mixed” list of topics.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, Hall addresses the question of vocabulary. The change from plural to singular (e.g., “I myself, Paul” in 10:1) is no argument for the partition of the epistle, especially since this change of number is precisely what we should expect when Paul addresses his personal rivals.<sup>26</sup> As far as examples of non-Pauline vocabulary are concerned, Paul could well be borrowing the language of his opponents.<sup>27</sup> He concludes, “None of the arguments commonly used for separating chapters 10–13 from the rest of 2 Corinthians stands up to examination. We should therefore accept the testimony of the manuscripts of the early church that the letter is a unity.”<sup>28</sup> Hall’s arguments are strong, but in the light of other arguments by C. K. Barrett, Young and Ford, George Guthrie, Paul Barnett, and others, they become entirely convincing. They are especially so in the light of his careful exposition of 1 Corinthians. Thus, in the following commentary, I shall be reading 2 Corinthians as a single, coherent letter.

21. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 100; cf. Murphy-O’Connor, *Theology*, 11.

22. R. F. Collins, “Reflections on one Corinthians as a Hellenistic letter,” 60.

23. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 101.

24. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 114–19.

25. Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*.

26. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 102–6.

27. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 199–222.

28. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 106.

## D. Fundamental Framing Questions

### 1. The identity of Paul's opponents

It is generally agreed that “No clear consensus has emerged about the opponents with whom Paul had to reckon during the period represented by 2 Corinthians.”<sup>29</sup>

Hall writes, “It is clear from 2 Cor 11:22 (‘Are they Hebrews? So am I’) that Paul’s opponents boasted of their Jewish birth. This has sometimes been taken to mean that they were Judaizers from Palestine. There are, however, strong grounds for questioning this view, and for locating their background in Hellenistic Judaism.”<sup>30</sup> For, first, there is little trace of the ideas and vocabulary Paul uses to combat Judaizers elsewhere. Circumcision, for example, and the role of the law are not disputed. Second, in spite of Ernst Käsemann’s discussion about authorization by the Jerusalem apostles, letters of commendation are not vehicles of authorization. Third, the language about “super-apostles” (Greek, *hoi hyperlian* [superlative] *apostoloi*, 11:15) does not allude to the Jerusalem apostles.

It is probably clearer that the opponents were travelling preachers, perhaps repeating Hellenistic propaganda from Diaspora synagogues.<sup>31</sup> The third chapter (Paul’s discussion of Scripture and Moses) is crucial. The gospel ministry, as preached by Paul, is permanent and glorious, in contrast to the “Mosaic” ministry of the newcomers. The written text kills (Greek, *to gramma apokteinei*, 3:6). The enemy is probably not “legalism” here, but blindness.<sup>32</sup> The “veil” is a symbol of blindness. However, apart from Hall’s emphatic link of Paul’s opponents with Hellenistic Judaism, it is difficult to be much more precise regarding the identity of the newcomers. We know that Paul considered them to be “peddlers of God’s word”; preachers of another Jesus, Spirit, and gospel; accusers of Paul as having a weak presence; being manipulators and enslaving people; and being Hebrews and descendants of Abraham.

29. Furnish, “Corinthians, Second Letter to the,” 225.

30. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 129.

31. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 132.

32. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 139.

## 2. The tearful letter

In 2 Cor 2:4, Paul says, “I wrote to you out of much distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain, but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.” The majority view today is that this “tearful” letter was written after 1 Corinthians and is now either wholly lost or perhaps partly preserved in parts of 2 Corinthians 10–13. Hall, however, points out, “Traditionally (and I believe correctly) this letter has been identified as 1 Corinthians.”<sup>33</sup> Paul, he argues, was an emotional man, not an academic professor. He adds, “There were many issues discussed in 1 Corinthians that could have triggered such an emotional response” (i.e., as found in the tearful letter), e.g., the party spirit (1:10–13); unspiritual thinking (3:1–3); behaving like kings in Paul’s absence (4:8); puffed up with a pride that might require Paul’s coming with a rod (4:18–21); the case of incest of which they were boasting; members of the church taking other members to court (6:1–11); consorting with prostitutes (6:12–20); divisions at the Lord’s Supper (11:20–22, 27–30); competitive chaos in the “use” of gifts of the Spirit (14:27–33); and a denial of the resurrection (15:2, 12).<sup>34</sup> Hall concludes, Paul’s “approach would inevitably have hurt the Corinthians. Many of them were Paul’s converts, bound to him by close ties of affection.”<sup>35</sup> “The references in 2 Corinthians to a tearful letter are all appropriate to 1 Corinthians.”<sup>36</sup>

## 3. Doctrinal themes

Paul Barnett has helpfully drawn attention to various doctrinal themes in his shorter work on 2 Corinthians.<sup>37</sup> He lists the following, which we paraphrase, with additions:

1. *The promises of God.* God has proved faithful in keeping his ancient promises by his recently inaugurated new covenant of Christ and the Holy Spirit (1:8–20; 3:3–6, 14–18). Moreover, God faithfully delivers and holds onto those who belong to Christ (1:3–11, 22; 4:7–9; 7:6).

33. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 223.

34. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 224–45.

35. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 226.

36. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 235.

37. Barnett, *The Message of 2 Corinthians*, 16–17.

A promise is not simply a statement but an act. Provided that the speaker is sincere and faithful, in making a promise the speaker commits himself to perform the act which actualizes the promise. For God to make promises to humankind is a supreme act of grace, for God limits his options by committing himself to perform the act which he has promised.

2. *The new covenant.* God has now surpassed and replaced the old covenant (3:7–11). It powerfully meets humanity’s needs at their point of greatest weakness, including ageing and death (4:16—5:10), and in their alienation from God because of sin (5:14–21). It is often forgotten that one of the earliest heresies in the Christian era was Marcion’s attempt to claim that the Old and New Testaments were not both from the gracious God and Father of Jesus Christ. This devaluation of the Old Testament must always be resisted, and this is affirmed in 2 Corinthians.
3. *Christ is the pre-existent Son of God* (1:19; 8:9). He is the image of God (4:4), the Lord (4:5), the judge of all (5:10), the sinless one who died as a substitute and representative for all people, the one through whom God was reconciling the world to himself (5:14–21). Second Corinthians contains Paul’s most comprehensive account of the death of Christ (5:14–21). Here Christology (reflection on the person of Christ) and Paul’s doctrine of the atonement (reflection on the work of Christ) are rightly closely integrated together.
4. *The genuineness of New Testament ministry.* This is one of the central themes of this epistle. Authentic ministry is not achieved or validated by letters of recommendation, or by a would-be minister’s mystical or miraculous powers, but by his faithfulness in persuading and his effectiveness in bringing people to the Christian faith (5:11–12; 3:2–3). The very existence of the Corinthian congregation was Christ’s living letter of recommendation of Paul’s ministry. The pattern and measure of the minister’s lifestyle is the sacrifice of Christ (4:10–15; 6:1–10; 11:21–23). Establishing true criteria for genuine ministry is one of the major contributions of this letter.
5. *Paul was, both in person and through his writings, the apostle of Christ to the gentiles.* The Risen Lord gave Paul his authority in his historic commissioning of him on the road to Damascus (10:8; 13:10), and Paul’s consequent ministry is still exercised to subsequent generations

through his letters, which now form part of the canon of Scripture. This letter is important because it is Paul's major defense of his apostleship to his detractors, whether in the ancient or modern period.

6. *Christian giving and serving.* These arise out of our response to the graciousness of God displayed towards us and in us. Cheerful and generous giving, in all its forms, brings a harvest of great enrichment to the givers. This is seen especially in chapters 8 and 9, which remain an integral part of this epistle.
7. *The Word of God, or the gospel.* This has defined, limited, content, which neither ordained ministers nor anybody else may add to or subtract from (4:2; 11:4). This gospel is exceedingly powerful in bringing rebellious humans under the rule of God (4:6; 10:4-5).

#### 4. Paul: apostle, missionary pastor, and man of intense emotions

In 2 Corinthians, more than in any other epistle, we see Paul bare his soul. He allows us to see his inner self in turmoil. Corinth is the church that he has planted, and he is proud and protective of his converts. When the "false apostles" try to unsettle the church, he becomes understandably upset and even jealous. He has given so much, and suffered so much, but these newcomers make him feel rejected. Their values seek to reverse those of Christ and the cross. Paul feels cut to the heart. What can and should he do?

At times we feel Paul's frustration. The newcomers or interlopers have traumatized him by their arrogance and reversal of the message of the crucified Christ. Nevertheless, Paul's passion is Jesus Christ and his three related callings to be Christ's apostle, a deeply caring Christian pastor, and a missionary prepared to travel and to suffer for the gospel of Christ. In these respects, as Chrysostom has shown, he is worthy of our highest veneration and respect. But this epistle, above all others, shows him as a man, a human being torn by conflicting emotions and inner conflict. The epistle shows us not an idealized Paul, but Paul as he was: a faithful servant of the crucified and risen Christ, but also a human figure. Perhaps we sometimes expect too much of Christian leaders. They are not cardboard saints, but flesh-and-blood servants of Christ, whose thoughts, feelings, and actions we can relate to.