



SECOND CORINTHIANS

The Comfort of God FOR and THROUGH His People



Part I — “The City of Corinth & the Apostle Paul” — 10 September 2023

Introduction: People & Places

Main Point: People and places can both undergo change that is _____, but the true work of the Lord in a person's life involves a transformation that is _____ and ultimately _____.

Corinth - *The Story of a New City*

Ancient Corinth

- There were several factors that contributed to the identity of ancient Corinth as a city.

1. _____

“Corinth, on the isthmus, had an enviable position. It could lock the land door to or upon the Peloponnesus; it could serve and mulct the overland trade between northern or southern Greece; and it had harbors and shipping on both the Saronic and the Corinthian Gulf. Between these seas it built a lucrative *Dioclos* (“a slipping through”)—a wooden tramway along which ships were drawn on rollers over four miles of land. Its fortress was the impregnable Acrocorinth...” —Will Durant, *The Life of Greece*

2. _____

The Temple of Aphrodite

“The temple of Aphrodite was so rich that it owned more than a thousand temple slaves, courtesans [prostitutes] whom both men and women had dedicated to the goddess. An therefore it was on account of these women that the city was crowded with people and grew rich; for instance the ship captains squandered their money here.” —Strabo (1st c. B.C.)

The Temple of Asclepius

“[Asclepius, the son of Apollo and a human mother] was regarded as a renowned healer. Shrines to [him] were found in many places...Cures were said to be effected when, after bathing in the sea, the patients underwent [ceremonial washings] at the shrine...the patients then entered the main hall of the shrine, where they were urged to sleep.” —Colin Kruse

3. The Isthmian _____

“... in ancient Greece, a festival of athletic and musical competitions in honor of the god Poseidon, held in the spring of the second and fourth years of each Olympiad at his sanctuary on the Isthmus of Corinth ...Open to all Greeks, the Isthmian Games were especially popular with Athenians.” —Encyclopedia Britannica

Key Point: The wealth, religion, and reputation of the city were of no benefit when the _____ razed it to the ground, looted its treasures, and sold its population into slavery in 146 B.C.

New Corinth

- Corinth was ordered to be rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. and the new city soon developed its own identity.

1. A unique _____

2. Restored _____ and _____

3. _____ Conflict

Key Point: Although the city had been rebuilt, the new population was beset by the same kinds of _____ that had characterized that of the old city.

“The shortage of reasonable avenues of honor at the top of [society] meant that many well-to-do sought it elsewhere...The options included...private entertainment, games and festivals, patronage of new cults or collegia, demonstration of rhetorical skill or philosophical acumen, sponsorship or receipt of an approved honorary statue with appropriate epigraph, and socially conspicuous displays of a private [entourage] of slaves or freedmen.” —H. Stansbury, *Corinthian Honor, Corinthian Conflict*

Paul - *The Story of a New Man*

Saul of Tarsus

- Roman citizenship was central to Saul's identity.

1. _____ & _____

2. Familiarity with Greco-Roman _____

- **Jewish heritage was central to Saul's identity.**

1. Paul was ethnically Jewish by _____.

Phil. 3:5a—circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews

2. Paul was religiously a _____ by training and a _____ of Christians by choice.

Phil. 3:5b-6—as to the law, a Pharisee ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Acts 22:3b-4a—educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God

⁴I persecuted this Way to the death

Key Point: From both a worldly and religious perspective, Saul had much about his identity that he could take _____ in.

The Apostle Paul

- **Saul's identity was dramatically altered in his conversion and subsequent commission given by Christ.**

1. Paul's understanding of the _____ was transformed.

Rom. 1:1-4—¹Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

2. Saul's zeal for the things of God was transformed and redirected to preaching the _____ among the Gentiles.

Gal. 1:11-16b—¹¹For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. ¹²For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹³For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, ¹⁶was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles...

Key Point: Paul had a new understanding of who he was in the _____ and of what he hoped for in the _____.

Phil. 3:7-8, 10-11a—⁷But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ...¹⁰that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection...

Paul in Corinth—Acts 18:1-17

Observations:

1. Paul's decision to minister in Corinth was strategic.
2. Paul found ministry partners in Aquila and Priscilla as he pursued his usual pattern of first going to the Jews.
3. In the midst of opposition, the Lord blessed the proclamation of the Gospel in Corinth.
4. Paul's initial time in Corinth came to an end after an appearance before the Roman governor, Gallio.

Key Point: Although Paul left Corinth with a _____ or group of _____ established in the city, he would be forced to write to them on numerous occasions about various matters of concern.

"The [Corinthian church] was a thriving and brilliant congregation composed of persons from mixed backgrounds and social settings. It was an explosive mix that led to dissension and rivalry that caused Paul much anguish and concern."

—David Garland

Concluding Thoughts

1. Paul repeatedly exhorted the Corinthians to view themselves and others according to the _____ rather than the _____.

2 Cor. 5:16-17—¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

2. Paul repeatedly exhorted the Corinthians to look with _____ to the future while being _____ in the present.

1 Cor. 15:50,53,58—⁵⁰I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable... ⁵³For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality...⁵⁸Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.