

THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

At this time, representatives of the churches in the southern part of the province of Galatia come by sea to Corinth. These churches were organized on Paul's first missionary journey prior to the Jerusalem Council. These representatives tell Paul of the joy they had felt when they learned of the entrance of the gospel into Thessalonica. Most likely Timothy had related the success of their work to his mother in Lystra, who in turn informed the churches in Galatia. However, their main purpose in coming was to tell Paul of the incursion of Judaizers into their midst. These false teachers were Jews by birth who came to Galatia criticizing in an unkindly manner Paul's missionary work and life history since his conversion. By this they hoped to undermine the confidence of the Galatian churches in their founder and to gain a foothold for their own teaching. They taught a gospel distorted by requirements of a legalistic kind, which they represented as a more perfect form of the gospel. These opponents of Paul had called the attention of the Galatians to the fact that even Paul, when occasion demanded, could preach circumcision (that of Timothy) and therefore the Galatians should permit themselves to be circumcised.¹⁹ Basing their argument on Paul's conduct, they made it appear that Paul might easily be convinced and in the end allow the Galatians to be Judaized.

Paul is surprised by this report of false teachers and by the rapid success of their work. They had come among the Galatians during the interval between Paul's second visit, when he was accompanied by Silas, and the writing of this letter. These false teachers were still at work at the time Paul writes his letter to the Galatians.²⁰ They were not settled teachers but

19 Paul had circumcised Timothy in Lystra (Acts 16:1-3). According to Zahn (I:182), Gal. 5:2-4 implies that there must have been some recent event that enabled the Judaizers to argue with some degree of plausibility that Paul could, on occasion "still preach circumcision" (cf. Gal. 5:11). This, Zahn argues, must have been the circumcision of Timothy. The question then arises: Why did Paul circumcise Timothy? According to Acts 16:3, Luke states it was because all the Jews in the region "knew that his father was a Greek." This *prima facie* seems strange. One would have thought that Paul circumcised him because his mother was a Jew. The explanation might lie along these lines: Paul had never prohibited Jews from being circumcised, and he wanted Timothy to accompany him in his missionary endeavors. Because the Jews in Lystra knew that Timothy's father was a Greek, Paul circumcises him in order that Timothy would be able to minister with Paul to Jews as himself an observant Jew. "In the eyes of Jews Timothy ranked as a Gentile, because he had a Greek father and was uncircumcised. In the eyes of Gentiles, however, he was practically a Jew, having been brought up in his mother's religion (cf. 2 Tim. iii.15)...Paul therefore regularized his status (and in Jewish eyes, legitimized him) by circumcising him" (F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951], p. 308. See also Charles John Vaughan, *Studies in the Book of Acts* [Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1985; reprinted from MacMillan & Co., (New York, 1890)], p. 344.

20 The exact area meant by "Galatia" in 1:2 is a standard problem in New Testament studies. In the 3rd century B.C. some Gauls migrated to the northern, mountainous regions about Ancyra, Pessinus, and Tavium and established a kingdom there called "Galatia." Under Amyntus, the last king of the Galatians, this territory was extended to Lycaonia, Pisidia, and other places to the south. When Amyntus died in 25 B.C., the Romans took over the region and made it into *the province of Galatia*. However, the organization and marking out of Roman provinces, though furnishing new names or redefining old names, did not displace the old territorial designations. The issue is simply this: Who were "the churches of Galatia" to which this letter was addressed? According to the *North Galatian theory*, it was addressed to the ethnic Galatians in the north of the province, using the term "Galatia" in the older, narrower sense. According to the *South Galatian theory*, it was addressed to those of various races living in the southern part of the Roman province, thus using the term "Galatia" in the newer, broader Roman sense. Zahn, as well as most evangelical scholars today, accepts the South Galatian theory (I:173-178). Therefore, the troubled churches to which Paul writes this letter are the churches he established while traveling through the southern region on his first missionary journey. It is not

missionary preachers who dogged Paul's steps and invaded the churches he established. These are the same men who had recently suffered defeat at the Apostolic Council. Having learned that Paul had gone over to Europe on his second missionary journey and was kept there by the success of his work, they thought it an opportune time to attack the churches in Galatia.

Paul quickly sends the representatives back home in April of 53 with a letter. This letter to the Galatians was written in Paul's own hand, and the self-sacrificing labor it had cost him to write it was proof of his love for them. Since a visit to them at this time was not possible, Paul endeavors to address them as personally as possible by writing the letter himself. In the letter he relates how untrue the contentions of the Judaizers were and that it was just because of his unyielding position on circumcision in particular that he was hated and persecuted by them.²¹ These foreign Judaizers were wise enough to assume a certain appearance of liberality by not demanding at once from the Gentile Christians a complete observance of the law. However, Paul calls attention to this inevitable consequence by writing that every man who is circumcised is under obligation to obey the whole law.

THE LETTER OF I THESSALONIANS

Silas and Timothy arrive in Corinth from Macedonia to join Paul, and Paul now devotes himself exclusively to preaching. Timothy relates the good news that the church at Thessalonica was enduring the persecution brought upon them by the Jews, and this prompts Paul to write I Thessalonians in May-June of the year 53. He praises the Thessalonians for their brave endurance of persecution. They have become an example to converts in Macedonia and Achaia. He reminds them that although there is no reasonable hope of improvement in their situation, he and his companions, like the Lord himself, have also suffered, thus furnishing the Thessalonians an example of patient endurance. In addition, Paul points out that this same hostility on the part of the Jews to the preaching of the Gospel among the Gentiles was also being encountered by the missionaries in Corinth.

Timothy has also informed Paul of slanders being made against him by the non-Christian neighbors of the Thessalonian Christians. These unbelievers may have represented the missionaries as self-seeking and covetous adventurers. In his letter Paul defends the preaching and general conduct of himself, Silas, and Timothy. He assures the Thessalonians that they had not been motivated by ambition or any other unworthy motive while in their midst. Nor had they been covetous. With the utmost effort they had supported themselves by working with their own hands. Their entire conduct had shown their complete devotion to the work with which God had entrusted them and had proven their unselfish, even tender, love for those who heard their preaching.

In regards to the Thessalonian believers themselves, Paul praises them for their conduct, which on the whole is commendable, but urges progress in a number of areas. He refers to the instructions he had previously given them against unchastity, against covetousness and

known definitely whether he ever visited the northern part of the province.

21 Paul's position was unyielding with regard to *Gentiles*. As evidence, he had not allowed Titus, a full-blooded Gentile, to be circumcised (Gal. 2:3-5). This case was quite different from that of Timothy.

dishonesty in business, and for improvements in matters pertaining to money.

Paul has also been told by Timothy of idleness in the Thessalonian church that manifested itself in the neglect of daily duties. This appears to be the result of a general state of unrest and anxiety due to the belief that the end of the world was at hand.²² If so, those members of the church who had already died would not immediately share the glory of the kingdom, as would those who lived to witness the Lord's return. Paul argues that they should have been spared this error by their faith in the resurrection, because it is not possible for death to separate the Christian from Christ. Paul sets at rest this anxiety concerning the participation in the Lord's coming of those who have died in the faith by a specific word from the Lord. Those who are alive at the coming of the Lord will not precede those who have died, but the dead in Christ shall rise first. As to when the end should come and the length of time that must elapse before it, Paul holds these to be superfluous questions without practical value. For, he argues, it is one of the simplest elements of Christian preaching that for those absorbed in a worldly life, the coming of the day of the Lord will be unexpected and sudden. But the Christian who lives in constant expectancy of it will always be ready.

THE LETTER OF II THESSALONIANS

While still in Corinth, Paul again receives more recent news concerning the condition of the Thessalonian church, and in response writes II Thessalonians in August-September of the same year, 53. The source of this additional information is unknown since Silas and Timothy at this time are also with Paul in Corinth. Paul learns that in the case of many members of the church, the disposition to unruly idleness had developed into a condition of chronic disorderliness. In this second letter, Paul warns the Thessalonians against the error of supposing that the Day of the Lord had already come or appeared. The disturbance that existed in the church was due partly to prophetic utterances by their own members as well as oral and written statements in which this opinion had been falsely represented as coming from Paul and his helpers. Paul meets this error, not by proclaiming a new revelation, but by reminding his readers of what they had heard him say when he first preached the gospel to them. The Day of the Lord would not come before the falling away and the revelation of the man of sin whom Christ would destroy at his coming.

Paul urges the unruly members to resume their ordinary occupations. At the same time he advises the church to mark those who disregard this exhortation and to break off association with them until they reform, but not to give up hope of helping them.

In the autumn of 53, the Jews make a united attack on Paul and bring him into court before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia. Gallio dismisses the case, ordering the Jews to settle the matter themselves since it involved questions concerning their own law. The Jews take their indignation out on the ruler of the synagogue, Sosthenes, by beating him. They apparently

²² This is Zahn's phrase (I:221). The only phrase that actually occurs in I Thessalonians is "the day of the Lord" (5:2). Apparently, the church at Thessalonica was still in need of further clarification after they had read Paul's letter. In II Thessalonians Paul writes them again to correct the notion that "the day of the Lord" had already come (2:2).

felt that he had been inadequate in the presentation of their case.²³

Paul leaves Corinth before Pentecost, around May, 54, and sails for Syria with Priscilla and Aquila. Silas and Timothy are not along, since they apparently were no longer in Corinth at the time of Paul's departure. Paul arrives at Ephesus, where he stays only a short time. He leaves Aquila and Priscilla there and travels on to Caesarea and then to Antioch, completing his second missionary journey. However, this arrival in Ephesus is the beginning of a three-year ministry there that lasts until Pentecost 57.

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY (ACTS 18:23-21:14)

Apollos, a learned Alexandrian Jew distinguished for his Greek culture and rhetorical training, comes to Ephesus on his way to Corinth in the summer of 54. He possesses a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures and an accurate, though limited, knowledge of Jesus. He begins teaching in the synagogues of Ephesus and soon comes into contact with Aquila and Priscilla, who instruct him in the way of God more thoroughly. Apollos desires to go to Achaia, and the brethren encourage him to do so and write to the disciples there to welcome him.

After spending some time in Antioch, Paul leaves late in the summer of 54, beginning his 3rd missionary journey. He travels throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia. In October of 54, the Emperor Claudius dies, and the Jews return to Rome in large numbers, regaining their old rights under Nero, who reigns from October 13, 54, until his death in 68. Paul returns to Ephesus around February of 55. He finds twelve disciples there who were familiar with John's baptism only and had not yet received the Holy Spirit. When Paul lays his hands on them, the Holy Spirit comes upon them and they speak with tongues and prophecy.²⁴ Paul next goes to the synagogue where he speaks boldly for three months. Apollos most likely had arrived in Corinth by this time with the letters of recommendation that Aquila had given him.

After being publicly maligned, Paul withdraws to the lecture hall of Tyrannus, about Pentecost 55, where he and the disciples have daily discussions.²⁵ This continues for at least

23 Sosthenes was the successor to Crispus, who had just recently been converted. He may also be the same Sosthenes mentioned by Paul in II Corinthians. If so, it was probably due to this painful experience that he decided fully in favor of a cause that he had not the requisite hostility and will to prosecute.

24 Acts 19:1-6. This passage is often cited as a case of re-baptism, indicating that John's baptism was quite distinct from Christian baptism. However, that these twelve Ephesians were actually re-baptized is open to debate; see, e.g., L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941], p. 623. If the quote from Paul beginning in v. 4 actually continues through v. 5, it would read as follows: "And Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus. And when they [the people] heard this, they were baptized [by John] in the name of the Lord Jesus.'" The "they" of v. 5 would refer to the "people" baptized by John in v. 4 rather than the disciples at Ephesus. Interpreting this passage as a re-baptism opens many serious questions: Did all those baptized by John have to be re-baptized? Why was Apollos not re-baptized by Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:24-26)?

25 The lecture hall of Tyrannus was a place for spending one's leisure. The uncial D (Bezae Cantabrigiensis) adds the phrase, "from 11:00 A.M. to 4 P.M." Although probably not genuine, it is quite likely correct. "Tyrannus no doubt gave his lectures before 11:00 A.M., at which hour public life in the Ionian cities, as elsewhere, regularly ended...So we must picture Paul spending the hours from daybreak to 11:00 A.M. at his

two years. During this time Paul makes a short visit to Corinth sometime after Apollos' arrival there.

In Corinth Paul is thoroughly depressed at the condition of the church. In contrast to the Thessalonian church, which was suffering persecution from the Jews, the church in Corinth was enjoying a condition of undisturbed peace. Corinth was a great commercial city where a number of different religious cults were tolerated. In religious matters the proconsul showed impartiality. Some members of the church enjoyed social standing, and others were placed in prominent positions of government. Many of the Corinthians were living in the world as if it were the millennium, in contrast to Paul and his fellow missionaries who experienced considerable suffering. However, this condition of peace had been secured at too great a cost. The word of the Cross had not made a deep and lasting impression. The Corinthian church needed to be reawakened to the fact that they were a body of believers separated from the world about them through faith and baptism. Members of the church were actually bringing suits against each other in heathen courts. No scruples were felt about maintaining friendly and social intercourse with the heathen. A number of members were living as unchastely as their heathen neighbors. Many went so far as to take part in festivities connected with idolatrous worship, believing this liberal attitude toward heathen worship entirely justifiable. Paul exhorts them very earnestly against engaging in this behavior but refrains from employing disciplinary measures of a more severe kind.²⁶

Upon returning to Ephesus, Paul writes a letter to the Corinthians toward the end of 56 or the beginning of 57. This letter is no longer extant. In it Paul gives instructions against associating with those who are sexually immoral, greedy, idolatrous, slanderous or who are drunkards or swindlers.²⁷ It most likely touched upon many other subjects including Paul's plans to come again to Corinth very shortly directly by sea from Ephesus. However, Paul does send Timothy and Erastus, the treasurer of Corinth, on ahead to Macedonia and from there to Corinth in Achaia. While in Macedonia Timothy stops in Philippi. For the time being Paul remains in Ephesus.

THE LETTER OF I CORINTHIANS

Paul writes his second letter to the Corinthian church, our I Corinthians, about Easter 57. It is a long letter, and in it Paul covers many topics. He is apparently responding to several

manual labour (cf. xx.34; I Cor. iv.12), and then devoting the next five hours to the still more exhausting business of Christian dialectic. His hearers must have been infected with his keenness and energy [because]...normally more people would have been asleep in Ephesus at 1 P.M. than at 1:00 A.M." (F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951], p. 356).

26 II Cor. 13:2.

27 I Cor. 5:9-10.

sources of information concerning the church in Corinth.

- The first is a letter from the church itself. After receiving Paul's first (lost) letter, the Corinthian church writes back to him in Ephesus. This letter is carried by Stephenas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, and is in direct response to Paul's letter. It includes questions pertaining to marriage,²⁸ food sacrificed to idols,²⁹ the Lord's Supper,³⁰ spiritual gifts,³¹ and the collection for the poor in Jerusalem.³² It even went so far as to criticize the authority of the Apostle himself.³³ In its letter to Paul, the church also asks that Apollos, who is now back in Ephesus, return to Corinth.³⁴ Much of I Corinthians is written in response to these questions and requests.
- Paul also receives information from members of the household of Chloe. They had arrived in Ephesus prior to the letter carried by Stephenas and the others, and they tell Paul of strife within the church.³⁵
- Finally, Paul seems to speak on his own initiative about things that had happened in the church with regard to which he had been definitely informed, though not by the church itself.³⁶

The strife mentioned by members of the household of Chloe was the result of factional divisions that had recently arisen. These divisions were apparent in the church services where the "followers of Apollos," the "followers of Paul," the "followers of Peter," and the "followers of Christ" all sat in their own groups. Paul was unaware of these discords since they had arisen subsequent to his short visit not long ago. Apollos' successful work in Corinth undoubtedly was a contributing cause.

Many of the Corinthians, "the followers of Apollos," apparently had been so carried away by the brilliant discourses of the eloquent Alexandrian that thereafter the unadorned "plain" Paul seemed in comparison very deficient. It was not until the Christian message had been presented to them by Apollos' logic, so they thought, that they had come to have a true understanding of Christianity. On the other hand, these remarks about Apollos were disparaging to Paul, and the less one approved of Apollos' method, the more earnestly did he champion that of Paul. This gave rise to "the followers of Paul." The differences, then, between the followers of Apollos and those of Paul had nothing to do with the essentials of the Christian message, but involved simply the question as to the value of rhetoric and logic in setting them forth.

Paul foresees that this division among the members will eventually result in the division of

28 I Cor. 7:1.

29 I Cor. 8:1.

30 I Cor. 11, esp. v. 34.

31 I Cor. 12:1

32 I Cor. 16:1.

33 I Cor. 9:1-3.

34 I Cor. 16:12.

35 I Cor. 1-4.

36 Possibly I Cor. 5:1-8; 6:1-11; 15.

the church into a number of sects. The existence of these cliques imperil the pleasant relations between the church and Paul as well as the church's own inner harmony. Paul condemns the foolishness and unchristlikeness of those who use his name. It is certain that Apollos and Peter share this same feeling. Consequently, the men who the Corinthians claimed to follow had either already disowned them or would have done so had they been asked. Paul charges the church as a whole and its individual members with being conceited. It was presumptuous enough for individuals to take sides with Apollos or Peter (Cephas) against Paul, and vice versa. However, this was not to be compared with the height of presumption of those individuals who claimed to follow Christ. From an exaggerated sense of their own independent knowledge, they responded to the others who claimed to follow mere human authorities by asserting that *they* belonged to Christ. Therefore, Paul endeavors to bring not only the Church in general, but also any individual who feels himself to be of importance to the acknowledgement that everything of which he boasts has been received from God through other men.

Paul had also learned of a case of sexual immorality within the church itself. A man had taken his father's wife.³⁷ Apparently this man's stepmother had left the house of her husband and taken up residence with her stepson at his request, thus entering into a relationship of concubinage. There is no need for Paul to mention the source of this information, as this incestuous relationship was spoken of quite publicly; more openly, in fact, than was customary in such cases even among the heathen.³⁸ The haughty manner in which the church had written Paul about contact with sexually immoral people and the general moral condition of the church indicated that there was no shame about the matter. Neither had anything been done to remove the scandal. The only atonement that Paul deems adequate is the removal of the offender from the church by official condemnation to death.³⁹ His decision in this matter had already been reached, even though he was absent from them. Paul therefore proposes that the Corinthian church arrange a definite day and hour to assemble and carry out this action. Paul will be with them in spirit, and together they will constitute a court and ask the Lord to deliver the offender over to Satan for physical death. This prayer is to be offered in the name of Jesus and in the confidence that Jesus' miraculous power will be vouchsafed to them.⁴⁰ Paul's intent is not only to purge this evil from the Corinthian church but also to save this man's spirit in the day of judgment.

While discussing the subject of this immoral church member, Paul offers a clarification. Apparently, an exhortation in his previous (lost) letter to refrain from social intercourse with wicked people, particularly unchaste persons, had been either misunderstood or unfairly misconstrued. Paul was represented as demanding impossible avoidance of all contact with immoral people. Paul now makes it clear that he was speaking only of immoral members of the church.⁴¹

37 I Cor. 5:1-8.

38 Zahn, I:277.

39 Zahn (I:278) believes that Paul here is adapting the principle in Deut. 17:7, 12 to a New Covenant application; cf. vv. 2 and 13.

40 Cf. Matt. 18:19.

41 I Cor. 5:11.

Paul writes about the subject of Christian liberty,⁴² stating that not everything permissible is advantageous to one's neighbor and that not everything permissible is best even for the Christian himself. He cites the history of Israel in the wilderness as an example. To long after the pleasures enjoyed in the old life before conversion, to incline toward the use of heathen forms of worship, and to indulge in heathen immorality is to tempt God and bring down destruction even upon the redeemed.

In his letter, Paul also informs the Corinthians of his plan not to come to them now directly by sea but by the longer route through Macedonia that Timothy and Erastus had taken earlier.⁴³ To come directly by sea now would mean only a passing visit. But according to the plan he now lays before them, while arriving considerably later, he hopes to be able to pay them a much longer visit. Since the Passover was now being celebrated, Paul plans to leave Ephesus around Pentecost. He expects this letter to arrive in Corinth before Timothy does, so he gives directions about how Timothy is to be received by the church and also asks that Timothy be sent back at once to Ephesus where Paul will wait for him.

Finally, Paul tells the Corinthians that he had urged Apollos to return with the messengers who would carry the letter. However, Apollos was unwilling to do so at this time but agreed to go when he had the opportunity.

The letter of I Corinthians is sent directly by the sea route, most likely in the care of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, and Paul therefore expects it to arrive in Corinth before Timothy does. Paul comes across as somewhat harsh in his letter. He is a man of deep feeling, and it required effort on his part to reply as calmly as he did to the arrogant communication that the church had sent him. It was out of great distress and anguish of heart that Paul wrote this letter in order to prepare the Corinthians for his coming visit. He would prefer to come ready to forgive rather than to punish, but that would be up to the church to decide.

Timothy returns to Ephesus. He had no news for Paul about the effect of I Corinthians. Either Timothy never reached Corinth, or else he arrived and departed before I Corinthians reached the church. Whichever was actually the case, Paul immediately sends Titus, in the company of another Christian, to Corinth in order that they might bring Paul news concerning the effect of this letter that he awaited with so much anxiety.

In the meantime, a disturbance arises in Ephesus due to Demetrius and other silversmiths. Demetrius is a maker of silver shrines of the goddess Artemis.⁴⁴ He and other craftsmen had a very lucrative trade in the sale of these sacred mementos and charms. However, business begins to wane as the people not only in Ephesus, but in practically the whole province of Asia, are drawn away from idolatry by Paul's preaching. Demetrius calls together the craftsmen as well as workmen in related trades and warns them that their prosperity is in jeopardy. Not only will their business continue to suffer, but the temple of the goddess will also be discredited and Artemis robbed of her divine majesty. Upon hearing this, the men

42 I Cor. 8-10.

43 I Cor, 16:5-7.

44 Artemis is called *Diana* in the Roman pantheon.

become enraged and begin shouting, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians".⁴⁵ Soon the whole city is in an uproar. A mob gathers in the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's companions. Paul wants to appear before the crowd, but the disciples will not let him. Even officials of the province, friends of Paul, beg him not to venture in. The crowd is in great confusion. Some shout one thing, others something different. Most caught up in the riot do not even know why they are there. The Jews are anxious to make a defense for themselves and so push Alexander⁴⁶ to the front of the mob. He motions for silence, but when the crowd realizes that he is a Jew, opposed to idolatry like Paul, they continue to shout, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" for two hours. Finally the city clerk quiets the crowd. His reasonable arguments and warning of censure calm the crowd and the uproar ends.

Paul and Timothy set out for Macedonia by way of Troas, around Pentecost 57, ending their three-year stay in Ephesus. It is possible that Aquila and Priscilla also leave Ephesus at this same time and return to Rome to prepare quarters for Paul, who hopes eventually to go there. Paul and Timothy are accompanied by Epaenetus, the first convert in Asia.⁴⁷ Before reaching Troas, they are threatened with certain death while in the province of Asia. Upon arriving in Troas, Paul is anxious and unable to preach because Titus, whom Paul had sent to Corinth before his journey began, had not met them there. Therefore, they continue right on to Macedonia where Titus does meet them with the good news that the Corinthian church has received Paul's letter in a spirit of obedience.

THE LETTER OF II CORINTHIANS

However, Titus had a letter with him from the Corinthian church in which, among other things, they write of Paul's coming visit. They express their dissatisfaction with Paul that this promise of an immediate visit has yet to take place, and that he has now gone instead to Macedonia. They charge him with fickleness. If Paul were conscientious, they argued, he would not have made his original plan of coming to them first directly by sea unless he was sure he could carry it out. Moreover, he should not have aroused their expectation by announcing this visit unless he was indeed resolved to come at any cost. Possibly the Corinthians in this letter also accused Paul of being influenced by purely worldly designs and motives of self-interest when he changed his plans.

The church also addresses the problem of the immoral man living in an incestuous relationship. A majority within the church had decided upon a punishment less severe than Paul had proposed. It was most likely an ordinary case of discipline according to rules Paul set out in his last letter.⁴⁸ The more severe punishment proposed by Paul had been embraced by only a minority. However, the church feels that Paul might still insist upon it. Since the offender was now deeply penitent, the church wishes to know whether the discipline

45 Acts 19:28.

46 Some suggest the possibility that this is the Alexander of II Tim. 4:14; see, e.g., Charles John Vaughan, *Studies in the Book of Acts* [Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1985; reprinted from MacMillan & Co., (New York, 1890)], p. 443. Zahn sees little evidence for this identification and suggests that he probably is the Alexander of I Tim. 1:20 (II:21, n. 3).

47 Rom. 16:5.

48 I Cor. 5:11.

they imposed was sufficient.

In response, Paul writes II Corinthians about November-December of 57 from Macedonia. He sends this letter by Titus, who is to be accompanied by a representative of the Macedonian Christians and one other brother. It is directed not only to the church at Corinth but to all the other Christians throughout the province of Achaia as well. However, it is questionable whether Titus informed the other churches of the contents of the entire letter since some portions of it dealt largely with the special conditions of the church in Corinth.

In this letter Paul writes that his coming visit will not be delayed much longer. The purpose of this visit will be to establish order in the church. He fears that he may find many of the old disorders and be compelled to make use of harsh measures. It is true that he had intended to go to Corinth sooner than will now be the case. His original plan had been to go directly from Ephesus to Corinth, on to Macedonia, and then to return to Corinth on his way to Jerusalem. His intention was to show his love for them by paying them two visits. However, he has put off his visit until now due to his desire to spare the Corinthians a harsh exercise of his apostolic authority given to him by the Lord. It is with this purpose in view that he requests the whole church to submit itself in obedience to what he had already written them with more diligence than it had done up until now.⁴⁹ As to the appearance of any hesitancy on his part based on worldly or selfish motives, Paul calls upon God to witness to the truth of his real motive, that of sparing the Corinthians.⁵⁰

With regard to the matter of the immoral man, Paul declares at once that the church's punishment was sufficient and now they should reaffirm their love for him, lest he be entirely overcome by his great sorrow.⁵¹ For the church to forgive him is not only permissible, but in view of the harm that may thereby be avoided, it becomes their duty. The primary purpose of Paul's original judgment had been to save this man's soul, and this has been accomplished without resort to the extreme measures he had at first proposed. But more than this, what Paul had hoped to accomplish in the church was in large part done and soon to be entirely realized, namely, that of moving the church to a more modest judgment of itself and a more rigorous disciplining of its sinful members.

Paul also writes about the generosity of the Macedonians in the collection for the saints in Jerusalem. He asks that the Corinthians complete their collection, which has been dragging on for a considerable time.

This final letter is more joyful in some respects than the previous one since Paul's fears of being alienated from the church have not been realized. However, he finds fault with the church for not having silenced and ejected the "followers of Peter." These men had been converted through Peter's influence, perhaps baptized by him, and had come to Corinth from Palestine. They had letters of recommendation from outside authorities, and on the basis of these letters claimed to possess authority at least equal to that of Paul. They boasted of the purity of their Judaism and projected the superiority that this gave them before the Gentile Christians in Corinth. These "followers of Peter" were travelling preachers who accepted the

49 II Cor. 10:6.

50 II Cor. 1:23.

51 II Cor. 2:5-11.

hospitality of the Corinthian church and took advantage of their position as evangelists to claim support from their hearers. To boast with pride that one was a follower of Peter in a church founded by Paul was to belittle Paul, whom they refused to admit had the same apostolic rights as the Twelve. Paul requests that the church in Corinth not permit these aliens to carry on their pernicious work any longer. It was this more than anything else that had caused the trouble and bitterness in the relations between Paul and the Corinthians.

Paul also finds fault with the church in regard to those who belonged to the Christ party. These were men who assumed a superior air of neutrality, were continually criticizing Paul, his letters, his personal appearance in Corinth, and his conflict with the followers of Peter, who looked upon Paul as their rival. Paul rebukes the church for not having informed these haughty members of the Christ-party of their proper place.