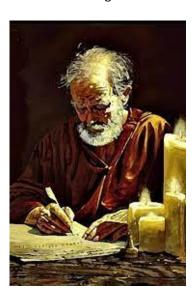


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## **Setting the Scene**

## 1: 1-11

There is only one page separating **First Corinthians** from **Second Corinthians** in the Bible. But in reality, there was a vast separation of circumstances dividing one letter from the other. Times were tough on the apostle **Paul**. It's safe to say that **he** wrote **Second Corinthians** with a heavy heart. **He** was in the middle of intense spiritual warfare on several fronts. And while **he** was in that troubled state, problems at **his** beloved church at **Corinth** hung over **him** like a dark cloud that would not go away.



Paul's opening greeting sounds eerily similar to that of First Corinthians. One almost gets the feeling of "déjà vu all over again." However, as we shall see, the tenor and tone of Second Corinthians are radically different from First Corinthians. Second Corinthians is perhaps the most introspective and self-revealing of all Paul's letters. The apostle made himself remarkably vulnerable as he spoke of his lowly standing, human weaknesses, and his reluctance to defend himself in the face of an onslaught of false accusations. False apostles who claimed apostolic authority arrived in Corinth, infiltrated the church, cast doubt on Paul's character and teaching, and led the church into doctrinal error (to see link click Af - The Problem of the False Apostles).



As soon as **Paul** received word of this new threat, **he** immediately left Ephesus and traveled straightaway to Corinth, a visit he would later characterize as painful (see Ao - Paul's Painful Visit). Apparently someone in the church, probably one of the false apostles who claimed apostolic authority, went on the attack and caused Paul much grief. Upon his return to Ephesus, **he** sent a severe **letter** to **them** (not preserved for us). This is the letter Paul referred to when he wrote: I wrote to you with a greatly distressed and anguished heart, and with many tears, not in order to cause you pain, but to get you to realize how very much I love you (2:4). It was delivered by Titus and pleading with the Corinthians to change their behavior and to mend their relationship with him (2:3-9:13; 7:6-15; 8:6). Apparently, this letter was quite effective in producing repentance (see Bl - The Effects of the Severe Letter). Paul wrote Second Corinthians from Macedonia in 56 AD, a letter which vigorously defended his apostolic authority, and reminded **the Corinthians** of the continuing financial support needed for the poor believers in Jerusalem, and leveled his strongest rebuke yet of the church's leaders tolerance of the false apostles in their midst. Nevertheless, Paul gave us a remarkable insight into his personal sufferings. Through the next several chapters, we will again and again get a glimpse into the soul of one of **God's** greatest servants.<sup>8</sup>