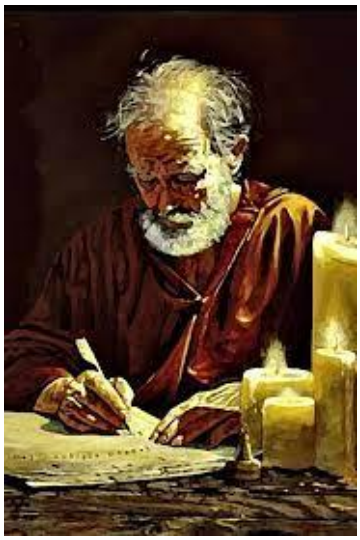
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Setting the Scene
1: 1-11

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.[8]