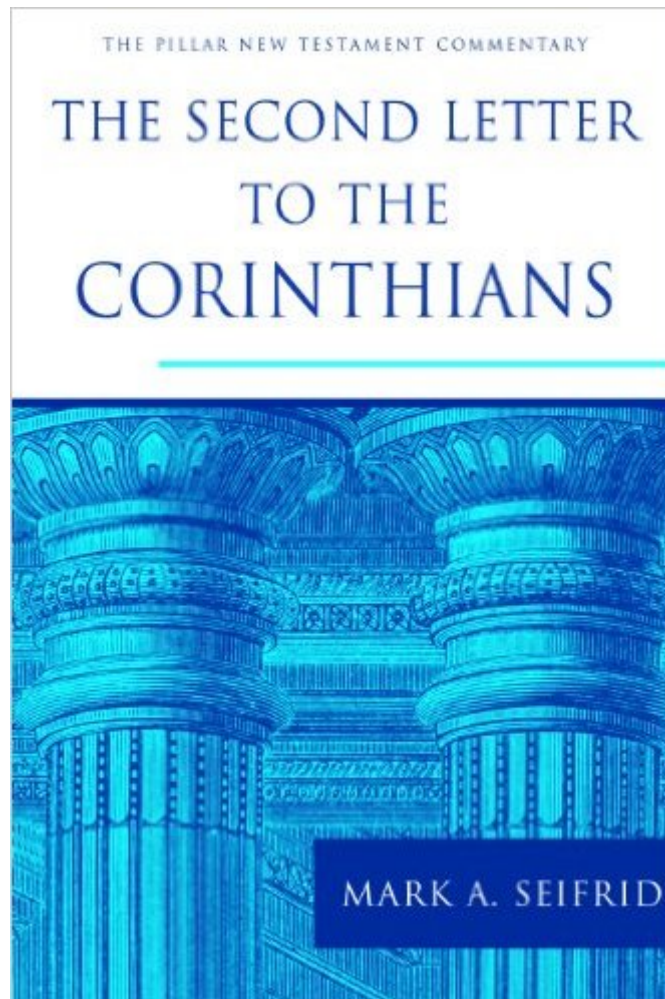


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The Second Letter To The Corinthians (The Pillar New Testament Commentary (PNTC))



Synopsis

Newest volume in the acclaimed Pillar New Testament Commentary series The question that Paul set before the ancient church in Corinth -- Do you not recognize that Jesus Christ is in and among you? (2 Cor 13:5) -- remains a critical question for the church today. This commentary by Mark Seifrid seeks to hear Paul's message afresh and communicate it to our time. Seifrid offers a unified reading of 2 Corinthians, which has often been regarded as a composite of excerpts and fragments. He argues that Paul's message is directed at the "practical atheism" of the Corinthian church -- the hidden heresy that assumes God's saving work in the world may be measured by outward standards of success and achievement. Like all of the Pillar volumes, Seifrid's commentary on 2 Corinthians offers careful grammatical analysis and exegesis with clear pastoral application.

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Customer Reviews

Let me begin with a brief confession. In earlier days I found a little discomfort and a lack of interest in Second Corinthians. But a PhD thesis majoring on suffering resulted in me coming to greatly admire and appreciate this vital epistle, and it is now perhaps my favourite Pauline letter, if one is allowed to have favourites about such things. It deals not only with issues about suffering and affliction in a number of key passages, but it is a great refutation of various errors found not just in Corinth but in sections of the church today, including a misplaced triumphalism and a dangerous

over-realised eschatology. There have been a number of helpful commentaries on this letter from those in the conservative/evangelical camp over the past few decades, but not so much in the past few years. Some of these include: R. P. Martin (WBC, 1986); Linda Belleville (IVPNTC, 1996); Paul Barnett (NICNT, 1997); David Garland (NAC, 1999); Scott Hafemann (NIVAC, 2000); and Murray Harris (NIGTC, 2005). If one wanted to throw another older volume into the mix, such as the commentary by Victor Paul Furnish (AB, 1884), I would not mind that inclusion. And one could also mention the 2-volume contribution in the ICC series by Margaret Thrall (1994-2000) - but since I do not have that work, I cannot properly speak to it. Mention can also be made of the 750 page addition by George Guthrie to the BECNT series - but that does not appear for another 2 months yet. So my point remains that not much of substance has appeared in the past dozen years from the above-mentioned theological perspective, except for Harris. Thus it is great to see Seifrid's volume join the list of solid commentaries on this epistle.

Other than Jesus himself, there is perhaps no more important figure in Christian history than the apostle Paul. As the one given as a "light to the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47), Paul embodies a unique role as Christ's instrument for a massive shift in redemptive history. While the gospel message itself is timeless and transcendent, it also cannot be divorced from the character of its greatest messenger. In his new commentary on 2 Corinthians, Seifrid presents Paul as the unimpressive minister of an infinitely powerful gospel. The message of 2 Corinthians lies in its paradox: Paul is forced to legitimize his own apostolic ministry as superior to other "super-apostle" claimants, but instead of drawing on impressive physical presence or rhetorical flair, he appeals to his own hardship and frailty. He is the suffering apostle of the crucified and resurrected Christ. Seifrid interprets Paul's thanksgiving to God, who "in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession" in 2 Corinthians 2:14, as Paul's participation in the suffering and shame of the crucified Christ. Paul is "always carrying in the body the death of Jesus" (2 Cor. 4:10-11) in his own life, and even in his boasting, he boasts in the midst of weakness and in the power of Christ expressed through him (2 Cor. 12:9-10). The life of Paul is also the life of the believer, Seifrid argues, for the apostolic experience is the Christian experience "written large" and in "large-screen display". Paul not only begs us to understand his apostolic purpose but invites us to participate in the life of Christ in suffering just as he does, Seifrid writes.

Second Corinthians is something of a lost letter. We steal phrases from it like "ambassadors of

Christ" and "jars of clay" and "ministry of reconciliation", but we rarely study their full context. Part of the reason is that it is a sequel, and we all know sequels are not as good as originals. First Corinthians gets all the attention with its teachings and tough guidance. Second Corinthians is just the resolution of that, right? (No, not right.) The three year lectionary or assigned readings for Sunday reads 2 Corinthians continuously in the Sunday's after Pentecost this year (2015). While I typically preach on the gospels, the epistles are often a good choice for bible study. We started reading and studying a little earlier so that as it comes up on Sunday something might be recalled. We will end shortly after the readings end such that if there were any questions we could go back and answer. It is my habit to start out any new study with anywhere from three to five books on the topic or the book itself. As I progress in preparation and teaching, what often happens is that some of the books fall to the side. Not that they are necessarily bad, although some are, but because they just are neither hot or cold. They neither mesh perfectly with the class and my personal reading, nor are they good foils challenging those. Eventually you get to the end and there is one book. This is already that book. And it is that rare commentary that manages to both present an interpretation that meshes while also at times challenges. Seifrid's 2 Corinthians is a great commentary. Let me add a few more specific comments. At some point in the history of "critical studies" the only part of a commentary that was important became the introduction.

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