

2 CORINTHIANS 1

(INTRODUCTION)

2 Corinthians was written in between 55-57 AD from Macedonia written to the church at Corinth and Christians everywhere. The purpose of 2 Corinthians was to affirm Paul's ministry, defend his authority as an apostle, and refute the false teachers in Corinth. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul wanted to encourage the church to practice forgiving and restoring one another. One of the key words in this letter is comfort or encouragement. When you find yourself discouraged and ready to quit, get your attention off of yourself and focus it on God. Out of his own difficulties Paul tells us how we can find encouragement in God.

Greeting (vs. 1-2)

Vs. 1-2 – 2 Corinthians was written less than a year after 1 Corinthians. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to identify problems and divisions in the church while also teaching the believers how to live for Christ in a corrupt world. When Paul's advice was not taken and their problems weren't solved, Paul visited Corinth a second time. That visit was painful for both Paul and the church so he planned a third visit but delayed it and wrote 2 Corinthians instead. The word *apostle* refers to Paul's position as a messenger sent by Christ. To be an apostle like Paul or Peter you would have to be personally selected and called

out by Jesus when he was still alive on the earth in bodily form, you would have to be commissioned to perform a specific task for kingdom advancement by Jesus, and you would have had to have seen Jesus after He was resurrected. But in its most simple terms, apostle simply means sent one. *Paul's credentials are by divine appointment not human achievement.* Yes, he studied and practiced his faith; but all that he is...is by God's divine selection, grace, and mercy that is why he says "*by the will*" of God. Timothy was a son in the ministry for Paul, he had helped Paul start the church at Corinth, and had been on a fact finding ministry for Paul that preceded this letter. Timothy was a disciple of Paul...every Christian out to have a Timothy (one whom you are discipling); a Paul (one who is spiritually pouring into you); and a Barnabus (someone who encourages you). The phrase "*all the saints who are in all Achaia*" shows us that Paul intended his letters to be shared among all the churches. This letter was not just for the Christians in the city of Corinth but for all the Christians in the region who might read the letters. This also suggests every church need to have a kingdom mindset; don't be concerned just with your "Jerusalem" only. And finally, regarding *vs. 1-2* Grace and peace are key words in all of Paul's salutations and greetings. Grace = God's unmerited favor and Peace is not an absence of trouble but the addition of God through trouble. Additionally, peace does not mean an absence of

trouble and conflict; but rather the addition of Jesus in the midst of it. Peace is confidence that God's word will be fulfilled just as He said in every area.

Comfort in Suffering (vs. 3-7)

Vs. 3 – Paul begins his letter with a doxology - an expression of praise to God, especially utilizing a short hymn. Paul certainly could not sing about his circumstances, but he could sing about the God who is in control of all circumstances. Paul had learned that praise is an important factor in achieving victory over discouragement and depression. *Just like prayer changes things so does praise change things*. Paul acknowledges there is one God – that is why “the” – a definitive article is placed before God. We should praise God because He is God. In two other places in the N.T. we find the phrase *blessed be the God*” – ***Ephesians 1:3*** and ***1 Peter 1:3***. In ***Ephesians 1:3*** Paul praised God for what He did in the past when He chose us in Christ and ***Ephesians 1:4*** says and blessed us with every spiritual blessing. In ***1 Peter 1:3*** Peter praised God for future blessings and a living hope. But in 2 Corinthians Paul praised God for present blessings, for what God was accomplishing then and there. Regarding the phrase *“the Father of mercies and God of all comfort”* Paul opens this letter by praising the God who gives so much mercy and comfort to the apostle and all believers. The devil is called the father of lies (***John 8:44***)...because all lies originate from him (**Genesis 3:4**) is the first

lie in Scripture). Well, God is the Father of mercies because all mercy originates from Him. God in His grace gives us what we do not deserve (mercy); He gives us what we need (nothing greater than a Savior – Jesus).

Lamentations 3:22 affirms these mercies are *fresh* and *new daily*. And regarding the final phrase of ***vs. 3*** – “*God of all comfort*” the words comfort or consolation are repeated 10 times in ***2 Corinthians 1:1-11*** alone. We must not think of comfort in terms of sympathy because sympathy can weaken us instead of strengthen us. God does not pat us on the head and give us a piece of candy or a toy to distract our attention from our troubles. No, He puts strength into our hearts so we can face our trials and triumph over them. The Greek word for *comfort* means to come alongside to help (paraclete or paraklesis) the same word used for the Holy Spirit in John chaps. 14-16.

Vs. 4 – Regarding the phrase “*who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble*” First notice the text says in **ALL** tribulation...God will never leave us nor forsake us. One great purpose of God in comforting us is to enable us to bring comfort to others. God’s comfort can be given and received through others. Often, we never receive the comfort God wants to give us through another person. Pride keeps us from revealing our needs to others, so we never receive the comfort God would give us through them. Even spiritual comforts are not given to us for

our use alone; they, like all the gifts of God, are given that they may be distributed, or become instruments of help to others. A minister's trials and comforts are permitted and sent for the benefit of the Church. What a miserable preacher must he be who has all his divinity by study and learning only, and nothing by experience!

Vs. 5 – First of all the sufferings Paul is referencing is the suffering we experience as we serve Christ (persecution; unsaved or fleshly acting Christians spitefully using you)...this is not meant suffering due to a Christian reaping what they have sown. With the type of Sufferings for Christ Paul is referencing means we will need to be comforted by Christ, and tribulation clearly reflect the Christian life is not a life of ease...if you have signed up to be a Christian because you think every day is going to be sunny...and the Sabbath will have no end...if you have signed up because you have read in the right hand of God are pleasures evermore you better realize *that is promised in heaven not on earth*...We are soldiers in the army of the Lord...soldiers sometimes are wounded; soldiers sometimes are scared; soldiers have to work and be accountable. Now, not every day will a Christian experience trials and troubles but in the life of a Christian we must embrace ***Philippians 1:29*** just like we do ***Philippians 4:19***. Because Paul's sufferings were the sufferings of Christ, Jesus was not distant from Paul in his trials. He

was right there, identifying with the apostle and comforting him. In our suffering for Christ we may not have “our thorn removed” but we will be comforted by Christ to assure us His grace is sufficient as stated in 2 Corinthians chapter 12. Notice the text says sufferings of Christ...not suffering because of rebellion and sin. And the more we endure *righteous suffering* the greater will be our comfort and our reward (1 Peter 4:12-14) for Christ.

Vs. 6 – Regarding the phrase “*If we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation*” - if Paul and other ministers were afflicted, it was for the sake of God’s people (like the Corinthian Christians). God had a larger purpose in Paul’s suffering than just working on Paul himself. God brought consolation and salvation to others through Paul’s sufferings. *So how could God bring consolation and salvation to others through Paul’s suffering?* As suffering brought Paul closer to God and made him rely more and more on God alone, Paul was a more effective minister. He was more usable in the hand of God to bring consolation and salvation to God’s people. Whenever we pray, “*Lord, just use me. I just want to be used by You to touch the lives of others,*” we do not realize what we are really praying. Through this good prayer, we invite God to bring suffering into our lives if that is the proper tool to make us more able to bring consolation and salvation to the lives of others. You see, when we

have been comforted we know better how to encourage others who may have to endure the same kind of troubles we endured.

Vs. 7 – Just like God comforted Paul in all his sufferings; Paul is assuring the Corinthians God will do the same for them. His hope for the Corinthians was steadfast, secure, or firm. *Consolation* means comfort received by a person after a loss or disappointment. It is taken for granted in the New Testament that believers have to suffer. The so-called prosperity gospel, which tells us to name it and claim it is another gospel – really, it’s no gospel at all (Galatians 1:7-9).

Delivered from Suffering (vs. 8-11)

Vs. 8-9 – *Ignorant* means to be unformed...In these two verses Paul does not provide details of the specific types of trouble and trials they endured but he does say they were of the type they thought they *could die* (***Acts 13:2 – 14:28 and Acts 15:40-21:17*** provide details of their 3 missionary trips and their troubles). Too often we rely on our own perceived strengths, skill, and abilities when things are seemingly going well and only call on God when trouble arrives. But as we realize our own powerlessness without the Lord and our constant need of His help in all aspects of our lives, we come to depend on the Lord more. God is our source of power...we are branches connected to the

true vine. We receive help by constant contact with the Master. Trouble and trials should drive the saved to God never away from God. Thom Rainer the CEO of Lifeway Christian Resources said this about the church...*we must cease seeing the church as a place of comfort and stability in the midst of rapid change.* Certainly, God's truth is unchanging. So we do find comfort and stability in that reality. But don't look to your church not to change methods, approaches, and human-made traditions. Indeed, we must learn to be uncomfortable in the world if we are to make a difference. "We've never done it that way before," is a death declaration. In vs. 9 when Paul says "sentence of death" this is a reference to a situation humanly speaking was hopeless and inescapable...so when they overcame it; he is stressing it was nobody but the Lord. I have shared many times that I received a sentence of death in regards to Lauryn just days after being born prematurely weighing 1:11 ounces..."But God"

Vs. 10-11 – Paul is saying since God delivered them from such a great and certain disaster, he and all Christians could set their hope on God for continued deliverance...if God did it before He can do it again. Everyone knows about the feeding of the 5,000 plus but are you aware shortly thereafter Jesus feeds 4,000 plus in a similar way with similar results. God is faithful, reliable, trustworthy...He can do anything but fail. Hope means confident

expectation in the word of God that God will do exactly what His word says.

In **vs. 11** Paul also called on the Corinthians to join him in the fellowship of suffering and comfort through prayer. As Christians join together in suffering and prayer, they will together experience God's comfort and deliverance.

Paul's Sincerity (vs. 12-14)

Vs. 12 – The Corinthian Christians were so accustomed to dealing with ministers who were calculating and manipulative, they figured Paul must be the same way. Again, he did say he was coming and did not show up like he said. The Corinthian Christians were becoming cynical. They believed that everyone had bad motives and was out for personal gain and power. They didn't trust Paul initially because they were cynical. Therefore, Paul knew the importance of honesty and sincerity in word and action, especially, in a situation as in Corinth, where constructive criticism was necessary. So Paul did not come with impressive human knowledge (earthly wisdom). Now regarding "boasting" Paul rejected any boasting that involved showing off or suggesting that one succeeded by human strength, ingenuity, or ability...his boast was in Christ and what the Holy Spirit was doing through him. Paul's behavior sprang from the grace of God, which serves as magnetic north to show the direction and shape of Christian behavior.

Vs. 13-14 – Regarding the phrase “*we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand*” - Paul wanted the Corinthian Christians to know he had no “hidden meanings” in his letters. His meaning was right out on top for all to see. This is why it is so important when we teach and preach the Bible is our pilot...teacher/preachers can’t cherry pick a verse for their own agenda; solid teaching/preaching should include preaching from a paragraph and you actually walk people through the meaning and application of the text...too many people read a text; close the Bible and just start talking. Paul used the word conscience 23 times in his letters and spoken ministry in Acts. Conscience comes from two Latin words – com – meaning with and scire meaning to know. Conscience is the inner faculty that knows with our spirit and approves when we do right, but convicts us when we do wrong. Conscience is not the law of God, but it bears witness to that law or word. It is the window that lets in the light; and if the window gets dirty because we disobey, then the light becomes dimmer and dimmer. When a person has a good conscience they will exhibit integrity.

Sparing the Church (vs. 15-24)

Vs. 15-16 – Regarding the phrase “*I intended to come to you before*” the Corinthian Christians accused Paul of being unreliable and untrustworthy because he said he would come at a certain time and did not. He was unable to

come as planned, so instead he sent a letter. Because the first visit was so unpleasant and sensing no benefit in a second visit, Paul abandoned his plan to see them on the way back from Macedonia. Proverbs 16:9 says, “A man’s heart plans his way; but the Lord directs his steps.” We can make our plans; but we must yield to the Lord for the final authority. In vs. 16 when it says, “*Helped by you on my way*” this acknowledges the ancient custom of sending a traveler on his way at the outset of his journey. In the ancient world, when a distinguished guest came to a city, his friends and supporters met him a distance away from the city and walked into the city with him. They also sent him away the same way, walking with him for some distance away from the city. And then when Paul says, “*When I was planning this, did I do it lightly?*” The Corinthian Christians accused Paul of being fickle and insisted that if Paul were a man of integrity he would have come in person. It was all right for the Corinthian Christians to be disappointed that Paul didn’t come and visit them. But they were wrong in trying to blame Paul for the disappointment. They needed to see Paul’s heart and God’s hand in the circumstances.

Vs. 17 – Paul was using a writing technique called rhetorical questions where the answer is obvious. The Greek text indicates a negative response to this question. Beginning in vs. 22 through chapter 2 vs. 4 Paul explained why he

changed his mind. To help restore fellowship in the face of strained relationships is clear communication.

Vs. 18 – As God’s message is yes, yes, that is, unchanging, so Paul’s message was likewise unchanging. Paul defended his teaching as true and trustworthy because he knows from where it came – the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Vs. 19-20 – Just as the Corinthians could trust God to keep His promises, they could trust Paul as God’s representative to keep his. God changed Paul’s plans and he would visit Corinth again; but at a later time. All of God’s promises regarding what the Messiah would be like are fulfilled in Christ. Matter of fact for those who read the Scriptures they should have recognized who Jesus was before He died on the Cross and was Resurrected...remember how Jesus responded to John the Baptist’s question regarding was Jesus the One (the Messiah) or should they seek another in Matthew 11:1-5. Jesus was completely faithful in His ministry and He never sinned (1 Peter 3:18). What are some Bible promises you hang your hat on? (share from Bible promises document).

Vs. 21-22 – The Holy Spirit guarantees that we belong to God and we will receive all His benefits as stated in (*Ephesians 1:13-14*). The Holy Spirit guarantees that salvation is ours right now, and that we will receive so much

more when Christ returns. The great comfort and power the Holy Spirit gives in this life is a foretaste or down payment of the benefits of our eternal life in God's presence (*remind everyone of the opening statements before I preach*). With the privilege of belonging to God comes the responsibility of identifying ourselves as His faithful servants.

Vs. 23 - Regarding the phrase “*moreover I call God as witness against my soul*” Paul is taking a serious oath. While Jesus said we should live our lives in such a way so that oaths are not necessary (*Matthew 5:33-37*), it does not mean that oaths are prohibited. On occasion, even God swore an oath to Himself (that is why it cannot be anything evil as mentioned in Matthew 5 (*Hebrews 6:13*)). The phrase “*that to spare you I came no more to Corinth*”- the Corinthian Christians had assumed that Paul did not come in person because of selfish reasons. They wanted to think he simply was not a man of integrity or was just afraid of conflict. Paul sets them straight: to spare you I came no more. Paul insists that it was out of concern for the Corinthian Christians that he did not make the visit at that particular time.

Vs. 24 – regarding the phrase “*not that we have dominion over your faith*” - Paul is careful to point out that he is no one's lord in the church, even though he is an apostle. Paul is pointing out that his leadership is not lording over them but working with them for their joy...the leadership team should lead

and come along side the membership in prayer; in serving; in witnessing, in giving. God reserves total dominion over: creation, knowing future events, the salvation process, and men's consciences just to mention a few. There are far too many that are entirely willing to take dominion over other believers in a manner that Paul would not. "The Sacred Writings, and they alone, contain what is necessary to faith and practice; and that no man, church, or denomination has dominion over any man's faith. The word of God alone is his rule, and to its Author he is to give account of the use he has made of it." Finally in vs. 24 when Paul says "*but are fellow workers for your joy, for by faith you stand*" - Instead of seeing himself as some kind of "lord" over the Corinthian Christians, Paul gives a great description of what ministers should be: *fellow workers...not do as I say; but do as I do.* Leaders among Christians should work alongside their people to increase their joy...lead not in word but also in deed.