

## II Corinthians - Lesson 1

II Cor. Chapter 1

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*Website: [www.KjvBibleStudies.net](http://www.KjvBibleStudies.net)*

*E-mail: [mailKjvBibleStudies@gmail.com](mailto:mailKjvBibleStudies@gmail.com)*

Memory verses for this week: *1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*

**Introduction:** In the final chapter of I Corinthians, Paul discussed church finance and his intentions on travels before coming to Corinth. He also told the church that Timothy and Apollos would soon visit, and instructed the church to support and encourage these men as they labored in the ministry. The whole book of I Corinthians was written to correct problems that existed in the church. In Titus, we learn that these problems had been cleared up.

The second letter was written not long after I Corinthians, in the latter part of A.D. 57 probably from Macedonia. Paul wrote the second letter to the Corinthians for several reasons. One was that after encouraging the church to issue discipline, Paul feared that they might have been too severe with the offender. Secondly, Paul wanted to give further instructions regarding the offering that the church was raising to send to the poor saints in Jerusalem. And thirdly, Paul saw that there was further necessity for him to defend his apostleship against false teachers who were seeking to establish themselves by criticizing him.

This second epistle addresses the attack on Paul's ministry. Chapters 8 and 9 gently rebuke the Corinthian church for not fulfilling their promise to send financial aid to their impoverished Judean brethren. The epistle concludes with Paul's further defense of his own ministry against the ongoing skepticism of some in the Corinthian church.

We know that we must always be on guard for false teachers who seek to beguile those who are not grounded in God's Word.

*2 Peter 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.*

**Overview of II Corinthians 1:** Chapter 1 begins with Paul's greeting. He then declares the blessings of God. He also reveals the perils he had recently undergone in the province of Asia and the matter of his planned but failed visit to Corinth.

**Comments from W.A. Criswell from the Believer's Study Bible on 2 Peter 2:1:**

Though persecution was never pleasant and always feared, a greater antagonist was the false prophet or false teacher. Peter initiates an entire section of his second epistle with a warning about such teachers. Peter describes them as "denying the Lord who bought them." These are not people who were once saved and then forfeited their salvation but individuals who had never

experienced regeneration by faith in Christ. They are characterized by stealth and by destruction, as in the heresies which they engender. The term “heresy” means a faction. False doctrine inevitably breeds factions, disrupting the unity and peace of the churches.

## I. The Salutation

*2 Corinthians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: 2 Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

As is the case in most of Paul’s epistles, the first word of the epistle is his name. “Paul”. He immediately identifies himself as “an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God”. This was not a custom or literary courtesy. Some at Corinth questioned his apostolic authority. He made clear his apostleship, not backing down in the least.

The subject matter of his apostolic authority was previously addressed in the beginning of the first epistle to the Corinthian church. The church at Corinth was divided in many ways. Strife, rebellion, perversion and false teaching were present. Their view of apostolic authority was distorted. Unfortunately, this describes many churches existent in this present hour. His mention of Timothy in his salutation does not imply that Timothy participated in the writing of the epistle, though he may have been a help as Timothy had recently returned from Corinth.

The epistle is addressed unto (1)the church of God which is at Corinth and (2) all the saints which are in all Achaia. Greece was comprised of two provinces. Macedonia was to the north and Achaia to the south. Corinth was the provincial capital of Achaia. Typical of most of his epistles is his invocation, Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Though we are saved by grace, the Apostle here refers to God’s imparted grace which manifests itself by strength and help along the path of the Christian life. The peace of God is a rich benefit, undergirding joy and happiness and should ever be taken for granted.

Paul says in verse 2 that Grace and peace were to be to the church from God the Father.

*Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*

I really appreciated what J. Vernon McGee had to say concerning Paul and his total faith in God and the Bible.

Paul is writing in the *authority* of “an apostle.” I feel that any minister today should speak with authority. There is no use trying to give out God’s Word unless the speaker is convinced of the truth of it himself. If he isn’t speaking the Word with authority, then he ought to start selling insurance, or work in a filling station, or do something else. He should not be in the ministry. We already have too many men who are unsure that the Bible actually is the Word of God—that is the weakness of the contemporary church.

In the early church, when persecution began, the believers said, “O Lord, Thou art God.” My

friend, if you are not sure that He is God, you are not sure of anything. And they were sure of the Word of God. They rested upon it at all times. And Paul writes with this authority. Paul was an apostle “by the will of God.” You can’t go any higher than that. That is authority. If your life is in the will of God, there is no question in your mind. If you are in the will of God, it makes no difference *where* you are or *how* you are or *what* your circumstances may be, you are in a wonderful, glorious place. You may even be lying in a hospital bed. If that is the will of God, that is the proper place for you.

*3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; 4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. 5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. 6 And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.*

Paul recognizes God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Father of mercies. When trials or heartache comes in our lives, God is the one who brings comfort. Paul does not go into detail as to how God does this, but we who know the Lord know that in the time of great distress, God is an ever present help. When the world has nothing to offer, God can give us peace in the time of sorrow. Sometimes when we read the scriptures, it brings great comfort to us. Those verses we read a few weeks ago in John about death having no power over the child of God is a great source of strength in the day when we lose a loved one.

Christ suffered so much for us, and when we suffer for the cause of Christ, it says our consolation abounds by Christ. Paul knew his sufferings were all for the good of others. We need to see this in our lives, and let the sufferings we endure never faze us. Paul said that he wanted to know Christ, and to take part in the fellowship of His sufferings. Many want to bask in the joy, but few want to suffer for the cause of Christ.

*Phil 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;*

*Phil 3:11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*

Notice that phrase “blessed be God.” The thought is simple: "praise be to God" or "bless His holy name!"

He then makes three positional observations.

1. He is “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;” (John 3:16-18).
2. He is “the Father of mercies.” (Psalms 103:11, Psalms 145:8).
3. He is “God of all comfort.” (Isaiah 49:13).

It is evident that if it's good it's from God. Equally evident is that which is not good is not from God. Discouragement for a Christian comes from another spirit. We would do well to consider the source when we are discouraged.

## II. Paul Expresses Joy over God's Deliverance

*7 And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. 8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:*

The trouble that Paul speaks of was perhaps that which he had in Ephesus. Paul was always about doing the work of an evangelist, and he suffered so much for the cause of Jesus Christ.

God comforts us in our tribulation so that we can comfort others in their time of trouble by the means of the comfort that comes from Him. This is a provision that our Lord has provided for a specific purpose. It is a part of our ministry. (See Isaiah 61:1-3). God provides comfort that we may be able to administer comfort. It is sad that many will never grow enough to understand and experience this truth.

*Acts 19:22 So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.*

*Acts 19:23 And the same time there arose no small stir about that way.*

*Acts 19:24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;*

*Acts 19:25 Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.*

*Acts 19:26 Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:*

*Acts 19:27 So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.*

*Acts 19:28 And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.*

You cannot be robbed of something that doesn't belong to you. We can however rob ourselves, others and God by not taking refuge in Him. His salvation, His Mercy and His comfort. Paul suffered much for Christ. A study of his life reveals these sufferings as well as the benefit of his sufferings. That suffering literally abounded in him. But as that suffering for Christ abounded, so did also encouragement abound through Christ.

Though there indeed may be sufferings in serving Jesus Christ, He in turn is our source of encouragement. He will not put upon you more than you can bare. Paul begins to

move from general principle to a more personal application.

Paul underwent considerable trouble and persecution in Ephesus. In leading up to that, he wrote that when he was troubled, it was for their encouragement. They, as well, were facing opposition at Corinth. Paul's trouble and subsequent encouragement could serve for their salvation. The word salvation here has the sense of deliverance from persecution. Their deliverance was effected in enduring the same opposition which Paul also suffered.

Paul endured his persecutions by the encouragement which came from Christ. They could endure the same way. Likewise, whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. When Paul and his fellow brethren were encouraged in the midst of their afflictions, it was for the sake of their Corinthians brethren's encouragement and deliverance.

*9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: 10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us; 11 Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.*

In verse 9 he goes on to say, But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead. Their point is simple. Opposition became so harsh in the province of Asia that they could only trust God to deliver them. God delivered them then. He was continuing to do so. And, they trusted He would continue to deliver them.

Verse 9 speaks of this death sentence. This was permitted so that Paul would not depend on himself, but rather rely more fully on God. Note the three tenses of deliverance mentioned: Has delivered, doth deliver, and will yet deliver. This is faith, and is what we should display in our lives. Jesus is the same today, yesterday, and forever. As Paul could believe God, so can you and I. Paul gives the Corinthians part credit for his deliverance due to the fact that they prayed for him. We will never know this side of eternity how our prayers have affected others. When we pray for our missionaries and for those who are sick, our prayers are heard of the Father and He responds to those requests. We ought to be known as people who pray.

W. A. Criswell in the Bible Believers Study Bible said this about Paul and the prayers of those there in Corinth.

**1:8–11** Paul had personally experienced the comfort of God in the midst of the greatest sufferings, as well as His deliverance from a life-threatening experience. To express the anguish he had felt Paul uses a number of words with which many of us can identify: “tribulation” (v. 4), “sufferings” (v. 5), “afflicted” (v. 6), “burdened”, “despaired” (v. 8), and “sentence of death” (v. 9). Paul's deliverance was made possible through a Sovereign God (v. 10) because of the prayers

of fellow believers (v. 11). How the prayers of the saints can in some sense move a Sovereign God is both a beautiful and a mysterious truth taught in the Word of God

### III. Paul's Defense

*12 For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.*

Paul affirms that his conscience is clear in his dealings with the Christians at Corinth. His dealings with them from the beginning had been with "simplicity and godly sincerity", not with fleshly wisdom. The Apostle does not miss the opportunity to thank the Corinthian brethren for praying for them. Prayer by the Corinthian church on behalf of Paul had been a cooperative effort in which he and Timothy were helped. The gift Paul referred to was their deliverance from death. The prayer of many in the church had helped effect his deliverance. Therefore, many could now give thanks to God in this regard. They had a clear conscience before God and thus could rejoice therein. Specifically, their outward testimony was that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward. He refers to his conversation.

The word conversation so translated (anastrefw anastrepho) pertains to the way one lives his life. Paul here refers to their behavior before the world, and even more so to the Corinthian church. They had lived their lives before them in four ways. the first of which was

- (1) In simplicity. The word so translated ('aplothv haplotes) is defined as 'the virtue of one who is free from pretense and hypocrisy.' They were honest in their dealings with all.
- (2) In godly sincerity. There is no higher level of sincerity rendered by man.
- (3) Their behavior was not "with fleshly wisdom." The thought is of the wisdom of the flesh. (James 3:14-16.)
- (4) Their behavior was "by the grace of God. They behaved themselves as in accord with the grace of God.

*13 For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end; 14 As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus. 15 And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; 16 And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea.*

Paul speaks of the total harmony of the bible when he says “we write none other things unto you.” Paul was one of those special men God chose to pen the Word of God by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He speaks of how that he desired to have fellowship with the church there in Corinth.

*2 Pet 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

There evidently had been some confusion in Corinth regarding Paul's previous epistle. He commented to them, For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end. The thought is, 'For we are writing nothing else to you than what you are reading or know; and I hope such understanding will continue.' Though there were some in the Corinthian church which would not acknowledge Paul's apostolic authority, the majority did. He refers to that part which did acknowledge him and that he was their rejoicing even as he rejoiced in them. He leaps ahead to the Day of the Lord, perhaps the Bema, whence he looked forward to rejoicing in them then as well.

Paul had written prior to them of his plans to visit (I Corinthians 16:5-6). However, for reasons to be later revealed, his travel plans had been delayed. His critics in the church had used this as ammunition for further criticism. His plan originally had been to come directly across the Aegean Sea to Corinth from Ephesus. After spending some time with them, he would travel overland to Macedonia to the north. Then, he would return south again to visit them a second time before heading back to Judea. That plan did not work out. He will explain the reason for his delay in 1:23 and 2:12-13.

*17 When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?  
18 But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.*

In verse 17, Paul's critics were thus accusing him of being undependable and untrustworthy. To combat that charge, he continued, When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay? The thought is, 'When I had so planned, was it done lightly? Or the things which I had determined to do, did I do it in the flesh so that my word doesn't mean anything?' The question of "yea yea, and nay nay" is idiomatic of using the words 'yes' or 'no' lightly. The idea by way of metaphor could be of a politician who is free with his words, promising, yes indeed, or, no indeed, according to what his audience wanted to hear. Paul's point is, that is not how he operated.

It appears that God changed Paul's plans to come and visit with them in Corinth. When this happened, some of the Christians felt he had not done what he had promised, and they accuse him of telling them one thing and doing another. Paul explains that we may purpose to do many things in the flesh, but that may not be in harmony with the leading of the Holy Spirit. Paul did what God directed him to do,

even if this conflicted with his personal plans. Oh that we might all have that same closeness to God and let the Spirit of God direct our every footstep.

J. Vernon McGee had this to say about this accusation of Paul.

Paul had hoped that he would be able to come to Corinth, but he hadn't come there yet. Some of his enemies in Corinth were saying that he didn't mean what he said. They accused him of being insincere. Now Paul is telling them that he certainly was sincere. He says that when he says yes, he means yes, and when he says no, he means no. Believers today ought to be that kind of folk. They should not use lightness in making appointments and arrangements in the business world and in their daily appointments. We need Christian men and women who will stand by the things that they have said.

**But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay [2 Cor. 1:18].**

Paul didn't say, "I will come," then, "I won't come"—as though he was being fickle. Why? Because *God* had led him. He was in the will of *God*.

#### **IV. All the Promises of God are Yea**

*19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea.*

Paul directs their attention to his original ministry with them. He did not waver in his preaching. He was to the point and direct. He appeals to the unwavering message of Christ as his standard of character.

Paul points out that he and his helpers had preached Christ among those there in Corinth. Their message had been a positive message, not yea and nay, but a "Yea" message. I think that too many messages center on the gloom and doom, and don't show the great love that God has bestowed upon us through Christ. As Brother Barry said in a revival several years ago, when we preach on the judgment of God and the flames and terrors of Hell, we should always do it with a tear in our eye to show what great mercy God has given to us through Jesus Christ. Except for the grace of God, that lost sinner could be you or I. We need to reach people with a message of YEA. God has wonderful promises in the Word of God, but we must also warn them of the judgement if they fail to come to God.

But it all needs to be a message of faith, hope, and deliverance. How we bring the message makes all the difference in the world as to how they will respond to us. If the lost man or woman can not see our love towards them, we are not likely to reach them with the Gospel of Christ. We are Christ's ambassadors, and if we are not loving like Christ, they most likely will not come to the one we point them to for salvation. But when we show love and true concern, we preach the gospel like Paul did with honesty and simplicity, God can still save that lost man or woman. But salvation is wholly of God.



All we do is accept or reject.

*20 For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. 21 Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; 22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.*

As the chapter ends, the Apostle notes, Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God. The common denominator between Paul and the Corinthian church was God. He had provided their mutual relationship in Christ.

Paul says that all the promises of God are truly YEA. They are true, and through Christ we can be established. God had not only established Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus with them in Christ, but he had sealed them. Every one of us who truly know Christ as our Savior are sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption.

*Eph 4:30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

*23 Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. 24 Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.*

Another reason for the delay in Paul's coming to Corinth is touched upon. Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. He in effect called heaven to witness that he had delayed his coming to spare them. It has been suggested he wanted time for his previous epistle to take effect and for them to repent. This hopefully would spare both the unpleasantness of sternly dealing with their carnality in person. Paul sought to make clear that he did not rule over them.

The local church has autonomy. Paul's apostolic authority was largely one of influence. He did not wield ecclesiastical authority over them. He made no pretense of lordship over them. (Neither should presumed ecclesiastical hierarchy even today do so.) Rather, his purpose was to help them toward the joy of the Lord.

Paul's reason for not coming to Corinth at this time was due to a desire to spare them. Paul knew that he was not one to rule with dominion over their faith, but to the helpers of their joy. "By faith we stand" is true for all of us. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. And when we have faith in God, we stand on a firm and solid foundation.

*1 Cor 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.*

*1 Cor 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

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*Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

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