

A PERSONAL
VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY

2 CORINTHIANS

by
Sharon Cravens

2Cor. 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:

The first phrase mirrors his introduction to his first letter to the Corinthians, so I'll borrow from my comments in that journal.

“apostle” = **apostolos**, *ap-os´-tol-os*; from 649; a delegate; specially, an ambassador of the Gospel; officially a commissioner of Christ (“apostle”) (with miraculous powers):—apostle, messenger, he that is sent.

Paul, the converted sinner Saul, loves to identify himself as an *apostle* of Jesus Christ. I don't think he ever got over the fact that God chose him. He is an apostle “through the will of God.” It was God's choice, God's pleasure, God's purpose for his life. That purpose is told us in Acts 9:15:

“Acts 9:15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:”

I decided to go to Acts 9 and read the account of his conversion. God didn't stand over Saul with a club and beat him into submission. He appeared to him in a miraculous way and questioned him. It's interesting that Saul asked for the “Lord” to identify himself. It must have truly shocked him to hear the voice identified as Jesus and to have that voice claim that he was the one Saul was persecuting. Saul was a Pharisee and well trained in the scripture. He truly thought he was serving God by destroying the Christians. He knew that the voice from heaven was from God, and now that voice was connected to the person of Jesus. That has to be his understanding since he immediately repents, changes his mindset, and asks for instruction as to what to do next. Once he is given instruction as to the Lord's will, he obeys—immediately and willingly. What does he do while he is waiting for further instruction? He prays; he wants to share his heart with God and hear from God's heart.

God has a purpose and a plan for each one of us. It is up to us to respond in acceptance, obedience and submission. If we choose to kick and rebel, it is not going to defeat God's plans and purposes, but it will determine our future, both in our lifetime and for eternity. Again I am reminded of a verse in Revelation:

Rev. 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

Paul's companion at this point is Timothy, a brother in the faith. Paul is always in fellowship with other Christians and working as part of a team, part of the greater whole. Timothy appears to be one of Paul's closest coworkers; in fact, he describes him as a son.

1Cor. 4:17 ¶ For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord....

Phil. 2:19-22 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I

have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

1Tim. 1:2 Unto Timothy, *my* own son in the faith:

2Tim. 1:2 To Timothy, *my* dearly beloved son:

The wording indicates that this letter is intended not only for the church at Corinth, but is to be shared with other churches in Achaia/Greece.

2Cor. 1:2 Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is one of the signatures of the writings of Paul. I have commented on this intro in several studies. Combining the thoughts of the following provides the fullest explanation.

1Corinthians - Paul always addresses the recipients of his letters with a blessing of grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The grace—God gave us what we didn't deserve—His Son, Jesus Christ—and continues to gift us because of our acceptance of that gift. The peace—Jesus' sacrifice made possible our peace, our ability to be at one again in fellowship with the Creator.

Galatians - In this verse [1:3] he wills them grace and peace from God the Father and Jesus (God the Son in flesh) Christ (Messiah, the anointed one). You've heard the old definition for grace - God's riches at Christ's expense. I think it is significant that they are listed in that order since we can never have peace without God's grace. I know the Godhead is three in one, but I think it is significant that he gives the preeminence to the position of the Father. The Spirit is always so careful to be consistent with the principles taught in the Word.

Ephesians - It is by His grace that we are saved (Ephesians 2:8), and it is only in Christ that we can find peace. Peace is a work of the Holy Spirit in our lives (Galatians 5:22), and we don't benefit from the presence of the Spirit in our lives until we are "in Christ."

Eph. 1:12-14 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Romans - It's worth repeating again, that you can't experience the peace of God without first experiencing His grace. It's by grace we are saved through faith (Ephesians 2:8). The word for "peace" includes the thought "set at one again." I love that expression. Through our salvation we become spiritually reconnected in fellowship to the Creator as was intended from the beginning. Peace is also a reflection of the temperament of our spirit. My favorite verse is Isaiah 26:3 (see journal for Isaiah); the key point in that verse is the promise of peace for the

person “whose mind is stayed on Thee.” We need to learn to keep our focus on Jesus and not on the things/trials/temptations of the world. We should “trust” that God is going to do/allow what is best in our lives.

Is. 26:3 Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose mind is stayed on thee*: because he trusteth in thee.

Rom. 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.

2Cor. 1:3 ¶ Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

As Paul makes reference to his privilege of being called as an apostle and the grace and peace that is ours through faith, he gives praise to God—not just any “god,” but the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah. This makes me think of Isaiah’s words.

Is. 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us **a son is given**: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

He is also affirming the truth that Jesus declared the truth when he declared Himself the Son of God.

John 3:16-18 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

He is also praising God as the “Father of mercies” and the “God of all comfort.” *Mercy* includes a reference to pity and compassion. As the “Father” of mercy, He is the originating source of that characteristic. *Mercy* speaks of restraint in spite of provocation. I’ve always heard it described as not getting what you deserve. *Pity* is the ability to sympathize with the grief or misery of someone else. *Compassion* takes it a step farther and references suffering with someone else, feeling someone else’s pain, so to speak. The Hebrew seems to indicate that “The God of *all comfort*” is an acknowledgement of God as the only One who can answer prayer. It also identifies Him as the only true source of solace and consolation. According to Webster, *solace* is the ability to alleviate grief or anxiety and bring cheer in the process. *Consolation* adds the thought of refreshing (restoring strength and reinvigorating) the spirit.

I think it is significant to note that the wording emphasizes that God is the only true source of mercy and comfort. One can minister mercy to unbelievers, but there is no real comfort that one can minister to the unbeliever except to share the gospel. You can comfort the body, but not the spirit. That truth hits home vividly when you try to comfort the unbeliever experiencing life threatening circumstances or the death of a loved one.

2Cor. 1:4 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.

This verse emphasizes the point I was making at the end of the previous verse. God is the source of comfort to the child of God who is under pressure or afflicted by trouble or persecution (from the Greek for *tribulation*). How is the believer comforted by God? Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

John 14:16-17 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

The context limits the ability to comfort to the comfort we experience from God. Only those who are children of God can experience that type of comfort. It doesn't mean we can't minister to the unbeliever in kindness and pity; there is just no basis for giving comfort to the spirit except through the sharing of spiritual truth.

2Cor. 1:5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

It's hard not to focus in on the suffering of Christ associated with the crucifixion when one reads the phrase "the sufferings of Christ." In context, however, I think the emphasis is on the suffering Christ endured as a man generally and a man of God specifically. Point is made in the scripture that He was a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." (Isaiah 53:3) I'm currently doing a study of Hebrews and am reminded of a verse in chapter 2.

Heb. 2:10 ¶ For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Following is a quote from the comments on that verse:

It is also important to note that Jesus endured many sufferings—plural—including physical, emotional and spiritual. His sufferings positioned Him as the unarguable Lamb without blemish who alone could atone for man's sin. He didn't come to earth as a handsome man and live a privileged life that was free from persecution and sorrow. He was a man "of sorrows and acquainted with grief"; He was "despised" and scorned. (Isaiah 53:2-3) In spite of it all, He never yielded to the flesh; He remained without sin and obedient to the Father. He came into this world a man without sin, as did Adam; but very unlike the first man, He never yielded to temptation and died victorious over sin to become the captain of our salvation.

Verses 17-18 of that chapter tie directly to this verse.

Heb. 2:17-18 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

Again, an excerpt from that journal.

Why was it so important for Jesus not only to become a man, but to experience the sufferings of man? To prove Him as One who could relate

to the sufferings of mankind and help them through their own sufferings. Since His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father, Jesus has been serving as our High Priest....Unique to any other high priest that served before Him, Jesus is worthy through his obedience to the cross to impute His righteousness to each child of God and provide unrestricted personal access to the Father for each one. Jesus is the fulfillment of all that the temple practices pointed toward. Jesus' sacrifice of Himself made atonement for the sin of man once for all for all who will accept it....As our High Priest, He is merciful/compassionate and faithful/trustworthy. Jesus the man could relate to showing mercy and compassion as One who knew from His experience as a man its powerful effect in the life of a person.

Paul, unlike most believers throughout history, is part of a special company of believers that suffered much for their faith. He could testify personally to the abundant provision of God through answered prayer, refreshment of spirit and renewal of physical strength.

2Cor. 1:6 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.

In this verse Paul is emphasizing the truth of verse 4. The trials and troubles that the Lord allows the child of God to experience in life are purposeful. As this passage emphasizes, one of the primary purposes is to position the believer to be able to comfort and encourage other believers as they endure similar experiences. They also serve as a refining fire in the process of sanctification of the believer.

Rom. 5:3 And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

They strengthen one's faith through the experience of God's provision in light of future trials and testing.

1Pet. 1:7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

They provide the believer with an opportunity to glorify God and give powerful testimony to the love of God and His power and ability to provide for those who call Him Lord.

2Cor. 4:15 For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

1Pet. 4:14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye*; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

2Cor. 1:7 ¶ And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so *shall ye be* also of the consolation.

I think Paul is basically saying that he is confident that the Corinthian believers will persevere through their sufferings because they will receive God's comfort and provision to carry them through just as surely as have Paul and his

companions. Part of that comfort and provision was being provided through the words and ministry of Paul and his companions. This is a good time to echo your thoughts, Dixie--The strength one receives to endure is as great as the trouble one experiences. There is a great verse in Psalms that applies here.

Psa. 34:19 Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

2Cor. 1:8 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:

Paul is not trying to paint a rosy picture of things; neither is he crying “woe is me.” He is being truthful about the troubles they experienced in Asia, and these troubles were extreme—to the point that they weren’t sure they would survive.

2Cor. 1:9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

Because their situation pointed to their imminent death, they knew that their only hope lay in placing their faith in God—Almighty God who has the power to bring the dead back to life.

Frankly, this is where our faith is to be focused at all times.

Is. 26:3 Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose mind is stayed on thee*: because he trusteth in thee.

It’s a loving act of the Father to allow us to have experiences that remind us of that fact. It shouldn’t take “extreme” trouble to focus our faith on God; it should be a way of life. Praise God that His faithfulness is unwavering.

Deut. 7:9 Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he *is* God, the faithful God....

1Cor. 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

Psa. 119:89-90 For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness *is* unto all generations:

Is. 25:1 ¶ O LORD, thou *art* my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful *things*; *thy* counsels of old *are* faithfulness *and* truth.

2Cor. 1:10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;

In this verse Paul is declaring His faith in a faithful God—as shown in the past, as shown in the present, and as He will continue to show in the future. It’s from our past experience that we grow in faith to endure present trials and testing to continue to build upon to face future trials and testing. I am reminded of the words of the three Hebrew children.

Dan. 3:17-18 If it be *so*, **our God whom we serve is able to deliver us** from the burning fiery furnace, **and he will deliver us out of thine hand**, O king. **But if not**, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

These men had faith in God; they had experienced His faithfulness in spite of their captivity. They knew He could and would deliver them even though it might be different from their expectation. I think this was Paul's mindset. God had proven Himself in the past and would continue to prove faithful to deliver His servants even though it might be different than their expectation.

2Cor. 1:11 **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.**

I liked the translation of the CJB for this verse.

And you must add your help by praying for us; for the more people there are praying, the more people there will be to give thanks when their prayer for us is answered.

Paul was a firm believer in the power of prayer as declared by the Lord's brother, James.

James 5:16The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

His epistles are full of exhortations to prayer.

Rom. 12:12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

Eph. 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Phil. 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Col. 4:2 ¶ Continue in prayer,

1Th. 5:17 Pray without ceasing.

1Tim. 2:8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

2Cor. 1:12 ¶ **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.**

In this verse Paul states that his conscience is clear regarding how they have conducted themselves in the ministry wherever they have gone and especially in Corinth. They have been united in a single purpose—to glorify God. Paul recognizes that it is only by God's grace that this has been possible. God's grace is His divine influence upon your heart through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and we learned in verse 4 that this "grace" is given to us by Jesus Christ. This truth was affirmed by the Apostle John.

John 1:17 For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Paul was very specific regarding the grace of God as the power behind his ministry in his first letter to the Corinthians.

1Cor. 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

It's interesting that in spite of a testimony of ministering with love and integrity, Paul feels the need to declare that he was not serving God in ministry according to "fleshly wisdom," or human knowledge and judgment. To me this emphasizes that God's ways are not our ways, as recorded by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 55:8-9). What may seem wise in the eyes of men, may actually be foolish in the eyes of God. I pray often for my pastor to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit as opposed to the "wisdom of men." So many in the church today measure success in ministry in numbers and dollars, and I am convinced that many of the churches that are considered the most successful today are ministering "with fleshly wisdom." I think this truth is revealed clearly in the Lord's letters to the seven churches in Revelation (chapters 2-3). Smyrna is considered to be poor, but the Lord sees them as rich. The Laodiceans see themselves as rich and in need of nothing, but the Lord sees them as "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

Paul is establishing a foundation for explaining that even though he had originally planned to visit the Corinthians again after leaving Macedonia, he had changed his plans with good purpose. The first point in his argument is that his testimony has been one of ministering in sincerity according to God's grace.

2Cor. 1:13 For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end;

2Cor. 1:14 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.

Paul is declaring that he is being careful to write clearly so that there can be no misunderstanding as to what he is saying—at least that is what he hopes. And that is the desire of every writer. No matter how careful you are in choosing the words that you use, there is always the possibility that someone will read something into it that you did not intend. I have certainly experienced that frustration. So Paul expresses his hope that his intent is fully understood (from the Greek for "to the end").

In verse 14 Paul is making a statement about the importance of ministry to one another in the body of Christ. As we invest in one another in ministry, we become a reason for rejoicing when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ as a contributing factor to one another's reward.

2Cor. 1:15 ¶ And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit;

2Cor. 1:16 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.

The wording is a bit difficult in the KJV, but Paul is essentially explaining to the Corinthians that he had planned to visit them on the way to serving in Macedonia and again on the way back to Judea. The "second benefit" is a

reference to two visits. It stood out to me that Paul was sure that his visits would be anticipated with pleasure and looked upon with gratitude (from the Greek for *benefit*).

2Cor. 1:17 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?

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

I think the point that Paul is making in this verse is that he didn't draw up his itinerary without giving it careful consideration. He has previously stated that he ministered according to God's divine influence upon his heart. Having done so, he was assuring the Corinthians that he had fully intended to visit them. He didn't tell them he was coming and then lightly change his mind and decide not to come. (He will go into further explanation as to the reason he changed his itinerary in the upcoming verses.)

He emphasizes that truth by stating that just as God's word is true and He says what He means, so was Paul's intent in declaring that he was coming to see them twice.

2Cor. 1:19 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.

2Cor. 1:20 For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

Paul is declaring that his intent is to model himself after Jesus Christ. Paul and others that ministered with him in Corinth, Silas and Timothy, were careful to preach Jesus Christ as One who always kept His word. Every promise of God to man is/will be fulfilled in Jesus. Every "Amen" we utter in response to those promises is attesting to that truth to the glory of God.

2Cor. 1:21 Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;

Amazing! It is almost like I am seeing this verse for the first time. In the many times I've read through this section, it has never stood out to me like this before. The Apostle Paul is declaring through the inspiration of the Spirit that it is God the Father who makes us "firm, steadfast, and sure" (from the Greek for *stablisheth*) in Christ. This is another powerful statement of the security of the believer. The many statements in scripture worded similar to "if we hold fast" to the faith are all referencing evidence or proof of our position in Christ. The true believer is held firm and secure through the power of God and will "hold fast" to his/her faith. God never fails!

To be *anointed* is to be consecrated to the service of God. To serve God is to be obedient to His commands from a heart of love and devotion.

2Cor. 1:22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

When God *seals* us with His Spirit, He is marking us as secure and protected in our position in Christ. As I searched the scripture for enlightenment, I realized that the seal is simply the fact that God knows those that are His.

2Tim. 2:19 ¶ Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

The Holy Spirit is given us as the *earnest* of our salvation and is proof to the believer of His position in Christ. *Earnest* is reference to an advance of the rest of our inheritance to come as a child of God and joint-heir with Christ.

Rom. 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

Rom. 8:17 ¶ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

There can be no stronger seal of security than to have the Holy Spirit indwelling you as God's guarantee of your salvation.

I thought it was interesting that Paul made reference to the *heart*, a reference to our thoughts and feelings from the Greek, as the place the Spirit occupies. I just don't see how it is possible to have the Holy Spirit in residence with your thoughts and feelings and simply ignore Him. His love is so strong and powerful that it is bound to produce evidence in the life of the believer.

2Cor. 1:23 Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.

2Cor. 1:24 Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

This is one of those places that the chapter break is unfortunate. You have to read on into the next chapter to understand that Paul didn't want to make another visit in heaviness that would require confrontation. (His first visit is recorded in Acts 18.) His desire is not to be their spiritual overlord; His desire is to work in fellowship with them for their spiritual benefit.

His next statement is very important—"by faith ye stand." Paul knew that the believers couldn't stand strong in "his" faith; it had to be "their" faith. It's the faith of the individual that produces spiritual growth and maturity. That is the problem that deceives or shipwrecks so many people in their spiritual journeys today. They root their position in the position of their parents, or their pastor, or their heritage, etc. The only sure foundation for one's faith is found in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.