

God's Character Over Us

2 Corinthians Chapter 1

Picture this: You are working along feeling like you are doing a good job. Then people you work with accuse you of laziness, fraud and deception. They think you are a lousy worker. They say things like “*You just don’t care.*” How do you defend yourself? Could they be right? Paul found himself in this same position. In 2 Corinthians Paul takes us through looking at our motives, our methods and handling misunderstandings. These are great areas to evaluate when opposition or conflict arises against us.

Paul is writing another letter to this church. Some people like Paul some people don’t.

How Did Paul Get In This Situation?

50 – 51 AD

- On Paul’s 2nd missionary journey Paul comes to Corinth for the first time.
- Acts 18 describes Paul’s 1st visit to Corinth.

53-55 AD

- On Paul’s 3rd missionary journey Paul came to Ephesus. (Stayed there 3 years)
- Paul sends Timothy to Corinth by way of Macedonia (**1 Cor 16:10**). Timothy doesn’t make it to Corinth and is still in Macedonia when Paul arrives 3 years later.
- From there he received a delegation from Corinth asking questions. Paul wrote 1st Corinthians. Paul writes 1 Corinthians and answers their questions.
- According to **2 Corinthians 13:1** Paul had made a unrecorded 2nd journey to Corinth between the writing of 1st and 2nd Corinthians.
- Later before leaving Ephesus, Paul sent Titus through Corinth to check on them and to gather a collection for the saints in Jerusalem.



56-57 AD

- Paul travels to Macedonia. Titus reports to Paul in Macedonia.
- Paul writes 2 Corinthians in response to Titus’ report.
- Paul follows up with a short visit to Corinth. His 3rd visit. No details are mentioned about this visit, but acknowledged that he will visit a third time in **2 Corinthians 12:14 & 13:1**. This visit is briefly mentioned in **Acts 20:1-3**

Mysterious “Sorrowful Letter”

- This letter is mentioned in **2 Corinthians 2:4** “*For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears*”
- Option 1 – The sorrowful letter is 1st Corinthians.
- Option 2 – The sorrowful letter is a letter written before 1st Corinthians (1 Corinthians 5:9)
- Option 3 – The sorrowful letter is written between 1st and 2nd Corinthians
- Option 4 – The sorrowful letter, whenever written is preserved as chapters 10-13

Paul’s Attention to the Believers at Corinth (Possible reconstruction)

- Paul visits them first.
- Paul plans additional visits.
 - o Paul writes a quick note 1 Cor 5:9
- Paul send a delegation back to them
 - o Paul writes 1 Corinthians
- Paul sends Timothy to them
- Paul makes a quick journey to them
 - o Paul writes a Sorrowful letter 2:Cor 2:4
- Paul sends Titus to them
 - o Paul writes 2 Corinthians
- Paul will visit again after writing this letter

2 Corinthians Outlined

- Chapters 1-7 Character of Paul
- Chapters 8-9 Collection for Saints
- Chapters 10-13 Credentials of Paul

2Cr 1:1

1) God of All Comfort vs 1-7

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia:

2Cr 1:2

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- *“Paul an apostle”* - Paul is very clear with his calling and by whom he was called. The Corinthians may have questioned it as times and had opposed his ministry; Paul did not question his call for he was not called by an approval of man.
- *“By the will of God”* - Being called by the will of God is the strength and confidence to continue in ministry. Many a man can perform will for awhile if Mom & Dad call them. Maybe a little longer if a denomination calls them. But if God calls it is a calling that cannot be shaken.
- **Jeremiah 20:9** says of trying to not fulfill the call, *“But if I say, “I will not remember Him Or speak anymore in His name,” Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; And I am weary of holding it in, And I cannot endure it.”*
- **2 Corinthians 11:23-31** there is no other explanation why Paul would continue. He said comparing himself to other apostles (so-called) *“ Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern? If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.”*
- *“It isn’t about you being in the ministry, it is about the ministry being in you.”* (Focht)
- Paul includes Timothy in his greeting possibly because Timothy was under criticism also because the Corinthians expected to see him visit just as they expected Paul to visit much earlier. (2 Cor 1:15-17)
- He is writing to the “Church of God” it isn’t Paul’s church. It is God’s and He doesn’t quit on her.
 - Also to saints throughout Achaia - this is intended to be shared to others.
- Paul is consistent with His “Grace and Peace” Blessing
 - There is no Peace without Grace first.
 - This is a wonderful message to you and me. Here were a people who caused Paul much trouble. And sincerely he invokes a blessing upon them. For he truly loves them.

2Cr 1:3

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all **comfort**,

- *“Blessed be”* - The Greek word is *eulogetos*. We get the word eulogize. This is what we speak at funerals. At funerals we speak about who the person is. His character. If we tell stories about what they did it is to illustrate his character, who he was. Here Paul speaks of God’s Character.
- *Father of Mercies* - a Father is one who creates the life of a child. God created the life of mercy. As His child He watches over it and directs it. Mercy in our life has its origin and is under the direction and authority of Father God.
- *God of all Comfort* -
 - Gk = *paraklesis* to help; to strengthen Latin = *fortis* to embolden
 - Another thought that is derived from *paraklesis* is the *paraclete*. = One who comes along side to help, strengthen, to embolden.
 - o The Father a Paraclete (*paraklesis* is the Greek word in 2 Corinthians 1:3).
 - o We also know the Holy Spirit is our Paraclete (John 14:16, 26; 15:26, 16:7)
 - o And God the Son is our Paraclete (1 John 2:1; Hebrews 2:18, Luke 2:25)

Father- Ps 34:6 Job, Joseph, Jonah
 Holy Spirit - Acts 2 Upper room
 Jesus - Mark 5 Man from the Tombs

Here is Paul with all the difficulties of his ministry and dealing with difficult people he knows where his comfort comes from. With that understanding it then makes perfect sense to Praise God, give Him thanks even in all situations.

2Cr 1:4

who **comforts** us in all our affliction

- God helps strengthens and emboldens us in ALL (not most) of our troubles.

- Everyone has an affliction.
 - Greek = *thlipsis* meaning pressure Latin = *tribulum* tool to crush out grain
- From a new mother figuring out the new adventure of motherhood to the mom of teenagers there are pressures. From the young man beginning his new career to the senior who wonders if he will make it to his next treatment.
- God will come along side **in** our troubles. It doesn't say we will be immune from trouble or pressure. What God promises is that we will be comforted.
 - **John 16:33** " *These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.*"
 - **2 Timothy 3:12** " *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*"
- God allows pressure in our lives.

Why?

so that we will be able to **comfort** those who are in any affliction with the **comfort** with which we ourselves are **comforted** by God.

- So that WE (you and me) are used as a *Paraclete*. We (you and me) come along side to bring help, strength and to embolden.
- It is sad that there are those who so pray for God to help and yet refuse the comfort from the brother or sister right next to them. They want a divine experience. Brothers and sisters that divine experience is right next to you.
- Minister - why do you suffer? You think you have lost favor? No. It is that you may comfort those with ANY affliction.
 - If you were in trouble and two people offered help. One read a book on the subject, another had the same experience and survived, who would you go to?
 - A Great Samurai isn't great for his amazing skill with a sword. Even though he has great skill, a Great Samurai is recognized by the battles with his enemy
 - With this in mind LET'S PRAY - "Lord use me to touch the lives of people." All of a sudden that prayer is a little disconcerting. What do I need to experience to better minister to God's people.

2Cr 1:5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our **comfort** is abundant through Christ.

(KJV = consolation)

2Cr 1:6 But if we are afflicted, it is for your **comfort** and salvation; or if we are **comforted**, it is for your **comfort**, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer;

2Cr 1:7 and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are **sharers** of our **comfort**.

- When we read in verse 4 that God "*comforts us in ALL our affliction*", we acknowledge it as true because it is written. But we fail to acknowledge it in our everyday life.
- Our experience trains us to readily acknowledge our suffering with Christ. But Paul is teaching that God's Comfort is readily available too.
- Verse 5 says "*Our Comfort is ABUNDANT*" ... "*through Christ!*"
- **In What Way? Our coming along side another who is suffering provides:**
 - Comfort - help strengthening and an emboldening
 - Salvation - deliverance
 - Patient Enduring - not as a weary victim but a BELIEVER who Blessed God and comforts others
- "Our Hope for you" - Paul still has hope for the troublesome Corinthian church.
 - The scriptures lift the standard for us too. We are to be "*firmly grounded*" "*knowing*" that we are sharers in comfort not just troubles.

2Cr 1:8 **2) God Who Delivers** vs 8-11

For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came *to us* in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;

2Cr 1:9 indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves, so that we would not trust in ourselves

- This is an amazing statement by the great apostle Paul.
 - While in Asia (Ephesus) they were afflicted. This isn't so surprising. This seemed to occur where ever he went. What IS surprising is the depth / weight of the affliction.
 - Burdened Excessively - (KJV-pressed out of measure) pressure way beyond normal
 - Sounds like: "I don't know what to do"
 - Beyond Strength - unable to endure or maintain faith, beyond our means/experience
 - Sounds like: "Can't take it anymore"
 - Despaired of Life - (not suicide) but a disdain for life in this world.
 - Sounds like: "I Quit" or "When is the Rapture" for escape rather than to be with Jesus in Heaven.
 - Sentence of death within - hopelessness in heart (within suggests internal struggle)
 - Sounds like: "This is killing me"
- Back to verse 8 - he doesn't want them unaware or ignorant of these things.
 - Good to know 1st that a man of God CAN FEEL these feelings
 - Good to know 2nd that a man of God will SHARE these feelings
 - Psalm 88 David shares these feelings
 - Mark 14:33-34 speaking of Jesus "And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch.""
 - This shows you and me that these feeling are common to mankind and is not sinful to experience this internal trouble.
- At times like these WE CANNOT TRUST OUR SELVES.
 - As a Christian we have a new set of tools.
 - Before Christ we would be in affliction and we would figure it out. We would manage it or drug ourselves until the circumstances change.
 - Now, we have new tools. Our basic tool set is:
 1. **WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE THAT WE CANNOT TRUST OURSELVES.**
 - We will deceive ourselves as to the severity of the situation.
(hopelessness leading to destructive behavior)
 - Or We will ignore the issues leading to the pressure.
(blame others or take no action what so ever)
 - We can no longer use a butter knife as a screwdriver or a pliers for a hammer

(so that we would not trust in ourselves,) 2. **WE NEED TO TRUST IN GOD.**

but in God who raises the dead;

2Cr 1:10 who delivered us from so great a *peril of death*, and will deliver *us*, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us,

- We CAN trust God because He has proven Himself
- God's threefold work in our lives,
 - He Has Delivered us from our penalty because of our sin
 - Romans 8:1-2 "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death."
 - He is Delivering us from our current struggles, temptations
 - 1 Corinthians 10:13 "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it"

- He will YET Deliver us from future struggles and judgment on the Last Day
 - o 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."
- God is not a onetime shot in the arm. We are in need of His continuous attention and intervention. And we will be in need of His attention and intervention.

3. WE NEED PRAYER.

2Cr 1:11 you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through *the prayers of many*.

- Paul's incredible ministry is reckoned by us due to the amazing character and determination of a man. But Paul attributes success in ministry to those who intercede for him.
 - "*helping us through your prayers*" even the troublesome Corinthians. Our help can come through, in our opinion, the most unlikely of people Intercessors do not need to be perfect.
 - Prayers of the intercessor are effectual. Many times unappreciated and mostly unnoticed. But for any minister who desires a good work, he must enlist intercessors for himself.
 - "*many persons*" - Gk = *prosopon* means face So Paul is saying that there are many faces turned to God giving thanks.

2Cr 1:12 **3) God Who Establishes, Anoints, Seals and Guarantees** vs 12-24

For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.

2Cr 1:13 For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end;

2Cr 1:14 just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.

- The Corinthian Church had a number of "so-called" apostles come through with false promises and manipulations. They became cynical of ministers or ministries that were really only out for themselves and taking advantage of the congregation.
- Paul had promised to come to them, but it didn't work out. Paul didn't show up when they thought he would. Being manipulated by so many other ministers, they thought Paul was the same.
- Paul was confident the defense of his ministry. Four things Paul had previously practiced so he could stand confident:
 1. **He lived Simply** (NKJV - Simplicity, - Gk - *haplotes* Singleness) virtue of one who is free from pretense or hypocrisy - he lived according to godliness. God's standard of living. (NASB - "*Holiness*" not the best translation)
 - o Holiness (Gk - *hagiosyne*) correctly translated in 2 Corinthians 7:1
 - o 1 Corinthians 1:1-5 "*And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.*"

2. **He was Sincere** - there wasn't an artificial image of himself presented.
 - Acts 14 Paul and Barnabas was in Lystra and a crippled man was healed. The people considered them gods. Paul said *"Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God"*
 3. **He gave the Grace of God** not fleshly wisdom - Paul knew what the Corinthians really needed, He knew what you and I really needed. The Grace of God not another bible scholar.
 - Acts 20:32 Later, when Paul left the Ephesians elders he said this *"And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."*
 4. **He Conducted himself Accordingly** - Paul was confident because he was consistent in his conduct. He was not one thing with one group of people and another thing with another group.
 - Oswald Chambers - *"The apostle Paul had a strong and steady underlying consistency in his life. Consequently, he could let his external life change without internal distress because he was rooted and grounded in God. Most of us are not consistent spiritually because we are more concerned about being consistent externally. In the external expression of things, Paul lived in the basement, while his critics lived on the upper level. And these two levels do not begin to touch each other. But Paul's consistency was down deep in the fundamentals. The great basis of his consistency was the agony of God in the redemption of the world, namely, the Cross of Christ."*
- With this confidence, Paul tells the Church at Corinth that when he writes there is no hidden meaning or saying of one thing with the intention of another. We mean what we say.

2Cr 1:15 **In this confidence I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing;**

2Cr 1:16 **that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea.**

- Paul intended to visit Corinth first then go to Macedonia then back through Corinth as he headed to Jerusalem.
- His itinerary changed. Not his intention to be a blessing to Corinth and Macedonia.

2Cr 1:17 **Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?**

- Paul defended himself with his consistency. Yet his plans changes and he realizes the Corinthians think he is vacillating (fickle). Saying Yes and No at the same time.

2Cr 1:18 **But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no.**

- Paul is telling them that he realizes what it looks like but that they should judge him based upon the message preached.
- God is Faithful. He is not fickle, saying yes one minute then no the next. He doesn't change his mind forgetting what he promised.
- So our word is not fickle. The character of God trains our conduct. God is Faithful. He does what he says. If I am trained by His character I should be faithful. I do what I say.

2Cr 1:19 **For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him.**

2Cr 1:20 **For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.**

- Paul realizing that his, Silvanus' and Timothy's reputation have been tainted, here we see Paul's consistency. He is concerned that the Corinthians do not project flaws onto the Character of Jesus
- The Situation: False Manipulative So-Called Apostles have come in and abused the church. Paul seemingly failed to fulfill his itinerary. Because of the So-Called Apostles Their flaw is projected

on Paul. Paul does not want the same to be projected on His Lord and God.

- Vs18 - "God is Faithful"
- Vs 19 - "For the Son of God, Christ Jesus...is YES"
- Vs 20 - "The promises of God, in Him they are YES" (the gospel -salvation through Jesus)

Here are the Promises

2Cr 1:21 **Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God,**
2Cr 1:22 **who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.**

- "With You" These promises are for the church, not just Paul, Silvanus and Timothy
- **He Establishes us** - to make firm, permanently grounded, fixed.
 - Paul goes on to say we are established where? IN CHRIST! And that God does it.
 - **John 10:28** "*I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand*"
- **He Anointed us** - Prepared and Empowered for Service
 - There are only 2 places in the New Testament where it talks about anointing. Here and **1 John 2:20+27** Yet we in the church throw this word around more than most.
 - Both places refer to the believers having a common anointing. Not a special anointing that elevates one person or ministry over another.
 - We all have this anointing.
- **He Sealed us** - A seal was a wax emblem affixed to a document to
 - 1) make it clear whose document it was
 - 2) to give the document the proper authority
 - 3) to protect the document from being tampered withGod placed His seal upon us to demonstrate Whose we are, to Grant proper Authority and to protect us from being tampered with (**Eph 4:30** sealed us until the day of redemption)
- **He Gives a Guarantee** - A deposit, pledge, earnest (engagement)
 - God has given the Holy Spirit as a payment for Greater things to come.
 - This is remarkable when you consider how great the Holy Spirit is.
 - But this also assures us His faithfulness to fulfill His promises. God has invested greatly in you and me. He will not default on his investment and lose His deposit.

2Cr 1:23 **But I call God as witness to my soul, that to spare you I did not come again to Corinth.**

2Cr 1:24 **Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm.**

- Paul explains why his itinerary changed. To Spare Them.
 - Paul didn't want to come immediately after a very harsh letter.
 - He wanted to give it time and allow the Lord to work in their faith.
- Paul tells the Corinthian Church that he isn't the Lord of their faith. They are simply workers in the kingdom. Jesus is the Lord of their faith and Jesus need to work in them. And he was.
 - Paul continues this thought in chapter 2

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