

## **2 Corinthians 1**

*(New International Version)*

<sup>1</sup> *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,  
To the church of God in Corinth, together with all his holy people throughout Achaia:*

<sup>2</sup> *Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Praise to the God of All Comfort*

<sup>3</sup> *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. <sup>5</sup> For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. <sup>6</sup> If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. <sup>7</sup> And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.*

<sup>8</sup> *We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. <sup>9</sup> Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. <sup>10</sup> He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, <sup>11</sup> as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.*

*Paul's Change of Plans*

<sup>12</sup> *Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace. <sup>13</sup> For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that, <sup>14</sup> as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

<sup>15</sup> *Because I was confident of this, I wanted to visit you first so that you might benefit twice. <sup>16</sup> I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia, and then to have you send me on my way to Judea. <sup>17</sup> Was I fickle when I intended to do this? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner so that in the same breath I say both Yes, yes and No, no?*

<sup>18</sup> But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not *Yes* and *No*. <sup>19</sup> For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us *by* me and Silas and Timothy *was not Yes and No, but* in him it has always been *Yes*. <sup>20</sup> For no matter how many promises God has made, they are *Yes* in Christ. And so through him the *Amen* is spoken by us to the glory of God. <sup>21</sup> Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, <sup>22</sup> set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

<sup>23</sup> I call God as my witness *and I stake my life on it that* it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. <sup>24</sup> Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm.

## Study Notes

### 2 CORINTHIANS 1:1

Paul visited Corinth on his second missionary journey and founded a church there (Acts 18:1ff). He later wrote several letters to the believers in Corinth, two of which are included in the Bible. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is lost (1 Corinthians 5:9-11), his second letter to them is our book of 1 Corinthians, his third letter is lost (2:6-9; 7:12), and his fourth letter is our book of 2 Corinthians. Second Corinthians was written less than a year after 1 Corinthians.

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to deal with divisions in the church. When his advice was not taken and their problems weren't solved, Paul visited Corinth a second time. That visit was painful both for Paul and for the church (2:1). He then planned a third visit but delayed it and wrote 2 Corinthians instead. After writing 2 Corinthians, Paul visited Corinth once more (Acts 20:2, 3).

### 2 CORINTHIANS 1:1

Paul had great respect for Timothy (see also Philippians 2:19, 20; 1 Timothy 1:2), one of his traveling companions (Acts 16:1-3). Timothy had accompanied Paul to Corinth on his second missionary journey, and Paul had recently sent him there to minister (1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10). Timothy's report to Paul about the crisis in the Corinthian church prompted Paul to make an unplanned visit to the church to deal with the problem in person (see 2:1).

### 2 CORINTHIANS 1:1

The Romans had made Corinth the capital of Achaia (the southern half of present-day Greece). The city was a flourishing trade center because of its seaport. With the

thousands of merchants and sailors who disembarked there each year, it had developed a reputation as one of the most immoral cities in the ancient world; its many pagan temples encouraged the practice of sexual immorality along with idol worship. In fact, the Greek word *to Corinthianize* came to mean *to practice sexual immorality*. A Christian church in the city would face many pressures and conflicts. For more information on Corinth, see the first note on 1 Corinthians 1:2.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-5

Many think that when God comforts us, our troubles should go away. But if that were always so, people would turn to God only out of a desire to be relieved of pain and not out of love for him. We must understand that being *comforted* can also mean receiving strength, encouragement, and hope to deal with our troubles. The more we suffer, the more comfort God gives us. If you are feeling overwhelmed, allow God to comfort you. Remember that every trial you endure will help you comfort other people who are suffering similar troubles.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 1:5

Suffering for Christ refers to those afflictions we experience as we serve Christ. At the same time, Christ suffers with his people, since they are united with him. In Acts 9:4, 5 Christ asked Paul why he was persecuting him. This implies that Christ suffered with the early Christians when they were persecuted.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 1:6, 7

Paul explains that when he and his companions suffered, it resulted in their *benefit and salvation*. But just as God comforted Paul, God would also comfort the Corinthian believers when they suffered for their faith. He would give them the strength to endure.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 1:8-10

Paul does not give details about their hardships in Asia, although his accounts of all three missionary journeys record many difficult trials he faced (Acts 13:2-14:28; Acts 15:40-21:17). He does write that they felt that they were going to die and realized that they could do nothing to help themselves—they simply had to rely on God.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 1:8-10

We often depend on our own skills and abilities when life seems easy and only turn to God when we feel unable to help ourselves. But as we realize our own powerlessness without him and our need for his constant help in our lives, we come to

*depend on him more and more. God is our source of power, and we receive his help by keeping in touch with him. With this attitude of dependence, problems will drive us to God rather than away from him. Learn how to rely on God daily.*

#### *2 CORINTHIANS 1:11*

*Paul requested prayer for himself and his companions as they traveled to spread God's message. Pray for pastors, teachers, missionaries, and others who are spreading the Good News. Satan will challenge anyone making a real difference for God.*

#### *2 CORINTHIANS 1:12-14*

*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). God wants us to be real and transparent in all our relationships. If we aren't, we may end up lowering ourselves to spreading rumors, gossiping, and second-guessing.*

#### *2 CORINTHIANS 1:15-17*

*Paul had recently made a brief, unscheduled visit to Corinth that was very painful for him and the church (see 2:1). After that visit, he told the church when he would return. But Paul changed his original travel plans. Instead of sailing from Ephesus to Corinth before going to Macedonia, he traveled from Ephesus directly to Macedonia, where he wrote a letter to the Corinthians that caused him much anguish and them much sorrow (7:8, 9). He had made his original plans, thinking that the church would have solved its problems. When the time came for Paul's scheduled trip to Corinth, however, the crisis had not been fully resolved (although progress was being made in some areas; 7:11-16). So he wrote a letter instead (2:3, 4; 7:8) because another visit might have only made matters worse. Thus, Paul stayed away from Corinth because he was concerned over the church's unity, not because he was fickle.*

#### *2 CORINTHIANS 1:17-20*

*Paul's change of plans caused some of his accusers to say that he couldn't be trusted, hoping to undermine his authority. Paul said that he was not the type of person to say yes when he meant no. Paul explained that it was not indecision but concern for their feelings that forced him to change his plans. The reason for his trip to bring joy (1:24) could not be accomplished with the present crisis. Paul didn't want to visit them only to rebuke them severely (1:23). Just as the Corinthians could trust God to*

keep his promises, they could trust Paul as God's representative to keep his. He would still visit them, but at a better time.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 1:19, 20

All of God's promises of what the Messiah would be like are fulfilled in Christ (he is the divine Yes). Jesus was completely faithful in his ministry; he never sinned (1 Peter 3:18); he faithfully died for us (Hebrews 2:9); and now he faithfully intercedes for us (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 4:14, 15). Because Jesus Christ is faithful, Paul wanted to be faithful in his ministry.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 1:21, 22

The Holy Spirit guarantees that we belong to God and will receive all his benefits (Ephesians 1:13, 14). The Holy Spirit guarantees that salvation is ours 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 (first installment) of the benefits of our eternal life in God's presence. With the privilege of belonging to God comes the responsibility of identifying ourselves as his faithful servants. Don't be ashamed to let others know that you are his.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 1:23

The Corinthian church had written to Paul with questions about their faith (see 1 Corinthians 7:1). In response, Paul had written 1 Corinthians. But the church did not follow his instructions.

Paul had planned to visit them again, but instead, he wrote a letter that caused sorrow (7:8, 9) but caused them to change their ways. He didn't want to visit and repeat the same advice for the same problems. He wrote the emotional letter to encourage them to follow the advice that he had already given in previous letters and visits.

## Differences Between 1 and 2 Corinthians

The two letters to the Corinthian church that are found in the Bible are very different, with different tones and focuses.

1 Corinthians	2 Corinthians
Practical	Personal
Focuses on the character of the Corinthian church	Focuses on Paul as he bares his soul and tells of his love for the Corinthian church
Deals with questions on marriage, freedom, spiritual gifts, and order in the church	Deals with the problem of false teachers, whereby Paul defends his authority and the truth of his message
Paul instructs in matters concerning the church's well-being	Paul gives his testimony because he knows that acceptance of his advice is vital to the church's well-being
Contains advice to help the church combat the pagan influences in the wicked city of Corinth	Contains testimony to help the church combat the havoc caused by false teachers