

PAUL'S SECOND LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 1

What you will learn:

In spite of Paul not going to Corinth when he said he would (read 1Corinthians 16:35), Paul reminds the Corinthian church of his authority and his decision not to go there. Paul says his ministry is not to dominate them but to help them and be a comfort to them.

1. Address and greeting (verses 1-2)
2. Paul thanks God for the comfort sent to him by God for his afflictions. The Corinthians were also sympathetic to him (verses 3-11)
3. He has earned a right to their sympathy by his sincerity (verses 12-14)
4. His change of purpose regarding his visit to Corinth plus a brief outline of the gospel (verses 15-21)
5. Explanation of his reasons (verses 22-24)

1. Address and greeting (verses 1-2)

To get a good understanding of the Bible, we need to understand **the meanings of the words and terms** and **who are the people** that are mentioned. So in the first two verses **we will explain the following:**

Who is Paul? What is an apostle? Who is Jesus Christ? What do we mean by God's will? Who is Timothy? What is a brother? What is the church? Who is God? Where is Corinth? What is a saint? Where is Achaia? What is grace? What is peace from God mean? Who is God the Father? Who is the Lord Jesus Christ?

Who is Paul? Paul was that young man, his name was Saul then, who stood by and watched Stephen being stoned (John 7:58-59). He persecuted the Christian churches, killed Christians and threw people into prison. God miraculously confronted him on the way to Damascus one day and he became a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, thereby becoming a Christian himself. Paul has written 14 of the 27 books of the new testament, which are the doctrine (teaching) for all Christian churches today. Paul has his ministry to the uncircumcised (the Gentiles – these are all the people of the world that are not Jews) and Peter had his ministry to the circumcised (Jews) (Galatians 2:7)

What is an apostle? An apostle is a messenger who delivers messages. Sort of like a postman with a letter. The word is almost the same (**a-postman-le**). So God had special men who were his chosen apostles to help teach, preach and guide his church here on earth. Jesus Christ chose 12 of them (Matthew 10:2). Now there are no apostles or prophets here on earth today (Ephesians 2:19-20). There is no more foundation to be laid and there is no prophecy (telling the future) to be had.

As the scriptures say, they were the foundation of the church (with Christ as the cornerstone. When a building is built, there is always one point on the corner, from which all measurements are taken). So the only titles for Christian men today are evangelists, preachers, pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:11).

Who is Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ is God himself come down from heaven in the form of a man. In heaven he is called "the Word of God".

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (Jesus is God). *The same was in the beginning with God.*

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. (He created and made everything)

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, John 1:1, 2, 3, 14 (KJV) (He came down from heaven and lived here on earth)

The first verse in the Bible also says that Jesus Christ made the universe. *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth* (this is Jesus Christ) (*Genesis 1:1*)

Thomas calls Jesus his God (John 20:28)

God the Father calls Jesus Christ God (Hebrews 1:8)

What do we mean by God's will? We all have a will. "I will do this!" or "I will do that!". Now people you live with also have a will that may not agree with your will. They want to do something that you don't. So God the Father is like this. Because he is all powerful, knows everything and can do anything, it's always a good idea when we pray to God about things, that we be very humble and say to God "Now I have asked you for this and that, but only if it agrees with your will." The Bible says *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: 1 John 5:14 (KJV)*. Often when

we pray we ask for things that would seem good to us, but God knows better, so he doesn't give it to us. We bow to his superior knowledge. Paul says that he is an apostle because God willed it. He has a commission from God himself.

Who is Timothy? Timothy was one of Paul's helpers. Paul led him to the Lord and he got saved (1 Timothy 1:2). Paul called him his son in the faith.

What is a brother? You may have an actual brother or sister in your family here on earth. Now when we get saved we are put into God's family. So we have **spiritual brothers** and sisters, because we have the same heavenly Father who lives in heaven.

What is the church? There are churches and the church. When you get saved you are spiritually put into (baptised) Jesus Christ by the Holy Ghost. This is not water baptism. Now **all those in Jesus Christ are called the church**. Where is Jesus Christ now? He lives in heaven and sits on the right hand of God the Father (Hebrews 1:3). **Where is the church? It is in heaven.** The church therefore is **invisible**. Now there are churches here on earth and these are the true Christians who get together for prayer, preaching, teaching and worship. **The church building is not the church.** The Christians who get together are the church. So when Paul writes to the **church** at Corinth, he is writing to those in Christ wherever they may be. These are called the churches in Corinth. Just like he writes to the churches in Galatia (Galatians 1:2). So for example, one Christian is a church. Two Christians are a church and so on. No buildings are needed.

Who is God? Who is God the Father? God is a Spirit and he lives in heaven (John 4:24). There are many things we do not know about God. As God says *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. Isaiah 55:8 (KJV)*. However, Jesus Christ is God in the flesh and the Holy Ghost is God as well. All we need to know about God, he has shown us in his scriptures. So we can know much about the nature, character and operations of God as revealed in his scriptures. As Jesus is God and the Holy Ghost is God, what we know about these two also is a description of God himself.

There is only one God but he has three persons (Hebrews 1:3). A good way to imagine God is an apple. There is only **one apple** but it has **three parts** – the skin, the flesh and the core. Is the skin the apple? Yes. Is the core the apple? Yes. Is the flesh the apple?

God is called the Godhead – God has three 'heads' if you like. There is God the Father, God the Son Jesus Christ and God the Holy Ghost (Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9).

Where is Corinth? Where is Achaia? Corinth is a main city in Greece. It is on the left side of the Aegean Sea. Achaia is the general region surrounding these cities.

What is a saint? A saint is a person who is **saved** – saved from the wrath of God. This is also called having **salvation**. When Adam sinned in the garden of Eden, that sin was passed onto everyone that has ever been born. We are born sinners and that is why we sin. Because God's standard is perfection and sinlessness, he will not let sin or sinners into heaven. That is why God became a man, Jesus Christ, and lived a perfect life on our behalf. As in the old testament, when God saw sin, he called for blood of animals to be shed. This only gave them short term and temporary relief from the wrath of God.

Those who have Jesus Christ as their Saviour are called saints because they have trusted in the shed blood of Jesus. They now have permanent security and protection for the wrath of God.

(Hebrews 10: 12,14)

What is grace? Grace is a gift. It's something you can't work for, you can't earn it and you can't buy it. When God sends himself, in the form of Jesus Christ, down to earth from heaven to pay the penalty for our sins, that is the best gift anyone can have. The scriptures say *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9 (KJB)*.

What is peace from God mean? People misunderstand by thinking that God will bring peace on earth between people and nations. No, this will not happen (Luke 12:51). It means we can only have peace with him to escape his wrath (Luke 12:14). There will be no peace between men and nations, (in fact it's only going to get worse) till the Prince of Peace returns to rule and reign here on earth at the end of the 7 year tribulation coming very shortly. Now when Jesus Christ returns to earth to rule and reign, then there will be peace on this earth.

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:

Right from the start Paul establishes his office of being an **apostle** and that it had come by **the will of God**. He says this that all may know, especially the Jews that were opposing him at Corinth. He calls Timothy 'our' brother to let the Corinthians know that they were members of the household of faith as well. Achaia was a country that surrounded the city of Corinth in Greece.

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

Grace is something that God gives you which we don't deserve.

For example, God sends Jesus Christ do die on the cross for us. This is grace.

Mercy is being 'let off' and not getting the punishment you do deserve for something you have done wrong. Now we have peace with God the Father because Jesus has taken the punishment for our sins.

2. Paul thanks God for the comfort sent to him by God for his afflictions.
They were also sympathetic to him (verses 3-11)

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

When you are saved, God in the form of the Holy Ghost, comes to live in you. He is called the Comforter (John 14:26). This means that no matter what, you know God is comforting you when under persecution and distress. Sometimes you may not feel this, but you can trust the words of God that he will never leave you nor forsake you in times of trouble (Hebrews 13:5). Furthermore we are reminded that 'all things work together for good for them that love God' (Romans 8:28).

Now the meaning of the word 'mercy' is covered above. Mercy is not getting what you deserve. It's like if you have done wrong, you deserve to be punished but you get let off. That's mercy. So God is merciful to us all the time isn't he?

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.

Sometimes you might wonder why God lets you go through trouble and hard times? The reason is that you will be a blessing to others by comforting them when they are tried and tested. So because of our afflictions, we can be an example to others. God gives us comfort that we might comfort others.

Now when we see a word with "-eth" on the end of it – like "comforteth" that means the comfort never stops for one second forever more. It goes on and on and on. If someone is just a 'comfort' to you, that can mean it can stop and start. They might comfort you for a day or two, but then you might never see them ever again. But when God **comforteth** us he never lets up. He is with us every second of the day forever.

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

Yes, if you are a Christian, you will suffer many things for Christ's sake. You may be attacked and your body may be harmed with cuts and bruises and broken bones. Christ also suffered on the cross for us and paid the penalty, with his actual shed blood, for our sins to God the Father. But we are consoled (comforted) by Christ, because when he left this earth, he sent the Holy Ghost to come and live in us. This is called the Spirit of Christ which comes and dwells in us (Romans 8:9).

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.

If you are a minister or pastor and have never had any trouble, you won't know how to comfort anyone. God will send you trouble and he will comfort you with his grace, You are then able to know how to comfort others in trouble.

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

So Paul says "Dear Corinthians, I have endured many things for your sakes, so that I can comfort you. There is nothing that is happening to you that I haven't already experienced." The words that Paul uses to describe these sufferings all through his second letter to the churches at Corinth are "anguish, perplexity, devour, smite, bondage, weak, despair, forsaken, faint, persecuted, sorry, grieved, down, perish, burden, cast down, groaning, poor, chastened, hunger, beaten, perils, pain, infirmity, stoned, reproaches, offended, weariness, mourning, trembling, fear, poverty, affliction, despair, necessities, imprisonments, distressed, destruction, tumults, killed, tribulation, dying, suffering, terrified, death.

Paul said he was stedfast (absolutely sure) that just as they have had sufferings, they will also be consoled and comforted by him and God himself.

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:

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:

Paul then tells them about his trouble when he travelled in Asia (over in Ephesus and surrounding region). They had no hope of getting out of trouble. They thought they were going to die. They were 'pressed out of measure' means they like something that had been squashed so flat, that you couldn't measure the height of it. It was so thin because so much pressure had been applied to it. They were pushed down so flat and beyond measure above and beyond the strength of the common man or that any ordinary man could endure. But they knew that even if they were killed God could raise them up anyhow if he wanted to. God did that to his own son Jesus Christ didn't he (see Galatians 1:1).

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

In case you didn't know dear Corinthians, Paul says, we had no strength left, our lives were in great danger and the only one who could deliver us was God himself. And I suspect, that should we have died, God could bring us back to life again if he wanted to.

Now dear people in Pakistan, you may be wondering why the Lord is putting you through many trials and tests? Good question. Look at it this way. When you throw yourselves totally on the Lord to save you, you will give him all the glory won't you? Of course you will! It's like Moses at the Red Sea when the Egyptians were chasing the people of Israel through the desert. They had no hope of saving themselves. Imagine all the praise and glory God got from that when they got to the other side? You see, in the West here, in Australia, England and America, we can rely on many things to get us out of trouble. So God can be a bit of an 'add on' in our lives. Nice to have him hang around a bit and give us a lift at Sunday services for an hour. So a lot of Christians forget about him the rest of the week. God hates this.

You see, this is why the church grows in places like Pakistan, because you are totally dependent on him for food, work and security. There is a verse that says *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. Psalm 116:15 (KJV)*. Be absolutely convinced dear Christians in Pakistan, that God just loves you very much and you are very precious. You are the apple of his eye (Zechariah 2:8). Great are your rewards in heaven and for all eternity because of the tests you are undergoing at the moment.

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.

Thank you for helping us by praying for us. On the behalf of many others we send you their thanks as well. The Corinthians had heard about his trouble in Asia and many of them had gotten together in prayer for him. The result was that a lot of people had thanked God for what he had done. It's like when Peter was in prison. (Read Acts chapter 12 when Peter was in prison and many were praying for him as well). The important thing is that God gets all the glory and he gets all the thanks.

3. He has earned a right to their sympathy by his sincerity (verses 12-14)

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.

Paul was able to look back with joy about the things he taught the Corinthians with a clear conscience. In fact Paul had dealt with the world in this way also. He had done his best. He had used the right methods. He had no regrets or a bad conscience. He had used "simplicity and godly sincerity, and not with any of his own fleshly wisdom. He was not being wise in his own eyes. He had not tried to trick them in any way but had been open and honest with them.

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;

In this verse Paul says that the first letter he has written to them (1st Corinthians) was indeed from him. Some of the Corinthians had read the 1st letter to them, but had not realised that he was speaking with the authority of God as an apostle sent by the will of God and did not appreciate what he had said. So he refers back to 1 Corinthians 14:37 which says *If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.*

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.

For they had recognized him in part only, from a human point of view – Paul had a part in their being saved, he had lead them to the Lord and they rejoiced that God had sent him.

'The day of the Lord Jesus' is the rapture when very shortly all true Christians shall be taken home to heaven to be with the Lord forever. When "... the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

At the rapture Paul said we will rejoice in each soul that has been saved.

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy. 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20.

4. His change of purpose regarding his visit to Corinth plus a brief outline of the gospel (verses 15-21)

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

Paul went to them first in Acts 19:1 and formed the church. This was their first benefit (gain, good, profit) in that he taught them and got them saved and so on. After he leaves, he then writes to them with 1st Corinthians. Paul then says that he is planning, and is confident, on going to them again in (1st Corinthians 16:3-7). But he doesn't make it. (So when we get to 2nd Corinthians 13:1, Paul says that he is coming to them a third time.

In summary: He went to them the first time. He was going to them the 2nd time but he didn't make it. But he is coming to them the 3rd time.

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.

Paul would leave you then travel North to Macedonia and then return to Corinth again and then return across the Aegean Sea to Judea.

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?

Paul says "Was I joking or being light-hearted when I said these things about coming to you?" Paul then asks the question "Was it just my flesh talking? Did I just promise to come to you on the spur of the moment? Was It off the top of my head?" You can hear him say under his breath "God forbid it was not!" He goes on to say "Look dear Corinthians, my 'yes' is a 'yes' and my 'no' is a 'no'! I mean what I say and I say what I mean. There was no half-hearted promise to come to you. I WAS COMING!"

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

Let God be true, that my promise was not a 'yes-no' or fifty-fifty." I wasn't being half-hearted when I said I was coming to you.

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.

When I, Paul, and Silvanus and Timotheus, who are my helpers, preached the gospel to you, we were not half-hearted about it. We were 100% committed and 100% sure about what we preached. It was not "Well, you know, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to save you, he might do it and he might not. No, it is a gold edged promise that Christ will, in no way, refuse or reject anyone who comes to him to be saved. We are sure of that just as I was sincere when I said I would come to you. I said 'yes' I was coming and before God, he knows that I am not lying."

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

When God promises something, he means 100% yes. Not 98% yes and 2% no. Paul says "When we say 'Amen', we say it in perfect faith and 100% grateful adoration, glory and worship to God the Father."

1:21 Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;

The Corinthians have been established by God in Christ through Paul. He has taught them many things on how to live the Christian life and so on. In addition God has anointed us all with the Holy Ghost. Our foundations are firm as concrete because we are children of God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. Explanation of his reason for not coming to Corinth (verses 22-24)

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

Just like you seal a glass jar with screw-on lid, God has sealed us. No-one can steal us from the jar and we can't get out either. And inside of us we have the Holy Ghost which can never leave us or 'get out the jar'. We have eternal security. But, much more than that, Paul uses the example of buying something. It's like someone goes into a shop but they don't have all the money for a certain item. So they put a **deposit** down of say 5%, 10% or 50% on that item they want. Now, the shopkeeper by law, can not sell that item to anyone else. **The person buying the item is earnest and serious and determined to get it** so much so, that he has given the shopkeeper some money to keep it for him. So they call it an 'earnest', because they are, determined to come back, pay what is owing and then take it home.

Now God the Father is earnest with us also. He has put the deposit of the Holy Ghost in us when we get saved (believe on the Lord Jesus Christ). We are his. No-one else can buy us. We are simply waiting for the rapture (being caught up), which will happen shortly. As stated before, the best scripture is as follows and you should learn it by heart.

¹⁶ *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

¹⁷ *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

¹⁸ *Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18)*

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

Paul says "God is my witness and I lie not, that when I first wrote to you in 1st Corinthians, about your church disorder of factions, immorality, incest, lawsuits, meats offered to idols, Lord's supper abuse, divisions, strifes, false apostles, marriage problems, disorderly conduct of assemblies, lack of ministry support, self-promotion, women's role in the church and resurrection heresies, I was so upset that I was afraid that I would be too harsh on you and give you a very stern talking to ('rip you to shreds'). This is why I didn't come the second time to you."

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

Paul says "We (Paul, Silvanus, Timotheus) do not and will not dominate your faith. Yes, we rule over you (1Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24) but we are not dictators. We want to help your joy in the Lord because the joy of the Lord, and the joy that comes from the Lord, is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10). You stand because of your faith not your works or our rules and regulations (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Questions to discuss/ things to learn:

1. What did you learn about in 1st Corinthians?
2. Trust in the Lord despite the circumstances that you find yourself in.
3. Don't jump to false conclusions
4. Grow up and be more mature Christians.
5. Stop listening to false teachers
6. Look to the Lord in all things and get your eyes off others
