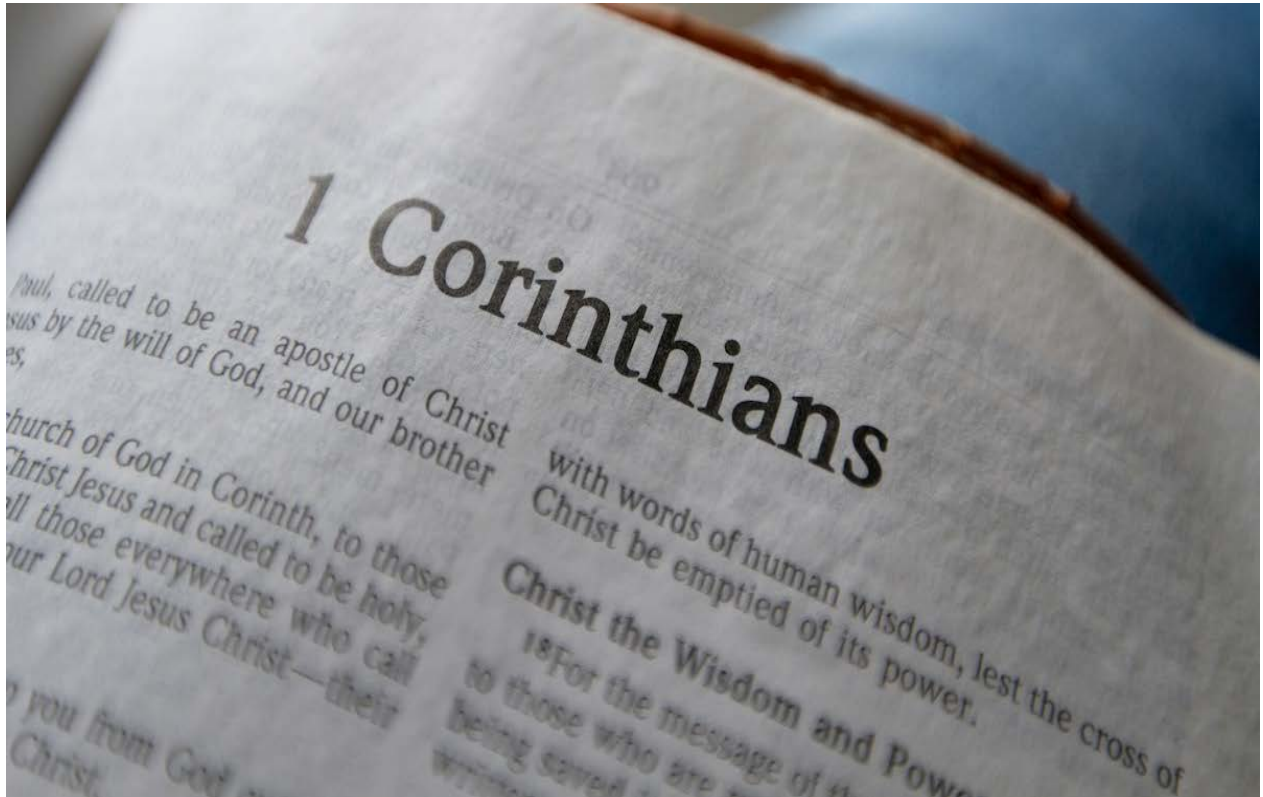


The Power of Grace

2 Corinthians 1

1 and 2 Corinthians Part 18



T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Power of Grace: 2 Corinthians 1
1 and 2 Corinthians Part 18
Copyright 2024 T. M. and Susie Moore
The Fellowship of Ailbe
www.ailbe.org

Except as indicated, all Scripture are taken from the *New King James Version*. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. All quotations: Scott M. Manetsch, *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: 1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2017). All quotes from John Calvin are from *Calvin's Commentaries*, Rev. John Pringle, tr. (Edinburgh: Calvin Translational Society). All quotations from Matthew Henry are from *Matthew Henry Concise Commentary*, E-text version Copyright 1996, 2002 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. All Rights Reserved. All quotes from Earl Radmacher are from *The NKJV Study Bible*, copyright ©1997, 2007 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All psalms for singing are from *The Ailbe Psalter* (West Grove: Waxed Tablet Publications, 2023).

Cover art: Yahoo images

Introduction to *2 Corinthians 1*

Throughout 1 Corinthians, Paul insisted the believers there must recover their unity and work together for mutual edification. The focus was on them overcoming their schismatic and self-centered ways to rediscover the unity they have in Christ. The report from Titus about how Paul's letter was received and what was beginning to happen in Corinth must have been very encouraging.

For in 2 Corinthians the focus changes subtly but truly. While 1 Corinthians' focus was on the believers in Corinth, here Paul emphatically identified himself with the Corinthians and drew them back into the orbit of his ministry.

Put succinctly, his focus has changed from "you" to "us".

If you find these studies, or any of our other resources, helpful, we hope you will consider making a contribution to help support our work. You can do so by using the donate button at the website or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 103 Reynolds Lane, West Grove, PA 19390.

We hope you find this study instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

T. M. Moore, Principal
tmmoore@ailbe.org

1 Maintaining Unity

Pray Psalm 125.1, 2.

Those who trust in the LORD
Are like Mount Zion,
Which cannot be moved, *but* abides forever.
As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
So the LORD surrounds His people
From this time forth and forever.

Sing Psalm 125.1, 2.

(St. Gertrude: *Onward, Christian Soldiers*)
All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!
Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!
Like the hills surrounding safe Jerusalem,
Christ surrounds His Church and holds her in His mighty Hand!

Refrain, v. 1

All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!
Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!

Read and meditate on 2 Corinthians 1.1, 2.

Preparation

1. How did Paul identify himself?
2. How did he describe the Corinthians?

Meditation

Paul did not waste words. Nor did he merely throw them out as some thoughtless convention. He identified himself with the mission of Jesus Christ and the will of God, thus giving gravitas and authority to his words. He was inspired by the Holy Spirit, and everything he wrote was intended for one purpose: that the people of God might know His grace and dwell in His peace.

Timothy had joined Paul in Ephesus by the time he wrote 2 Corinthians. Apparently, Titus also had arrived, having come from Corinth with news about how the church was getting back on track with the Lord (2 Cor. 7.13-17).

We note that Paul wanted all believers in Achaia—southern Greece—to benefit from this letter, and not just the Corinthians. Why? Because 2 Corinthians has a totally different tone from 1 Corinthians. Here Paul is deeply spiritual. He commends the Corinthians for their faithfulness and identifies with them in their ministry. And he establishes them as a kind of hub for the collection to the Judean believers. His stamp of approval on the churches in Corinth would have positioned them favorably to serve all the other believers in Achaia as well.

As in 1 Corinthians, Paul's desire was that they might know the grace and peace of the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Whereas a typical letter of Paul's day would begin with a mere epistolary convention—"Greetings and good health" or "Salutations"—Paul embedded both his desire for and message to the Corinthians in his opening words. He wanted them to know the grace of God, spreading from them to more and more people, and the peace of Jesus prevailing in the hearts of them all. God's grace is sufficient for all our needs, that we may be at peace as we know, love, and serve Him.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

NKJV preface notes to the Second Epistle to the Corinthians: “Since Paul’s first letter, the Corinthian church had been swayed by false teachers who stirred the people against Paul. They claimed he was fickle, proud, unimpressive in appearance and speech, dishonest, and unqualified as an apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul sent Titus to Corinth to deal with these difficulties, and upon his return, rejoiced to hear of the Corinthians’ change of heart.”

And the amazing Spirit-filled and forgiving Paul was able to start the letter with “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 1.2). That 1 Corinthians 13 love he felt for those people puts a big lump in my throat and brings tears to my ears. Having been through a somewhat similar family situation in bygone years, I must admit, grace and peace were not first on my list for things I was wishing on the perpetrators!

But I long to be and do what Paul suggested: “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11.1).

What a beautiful example he was of grace under fire, loving through all circumstances, and feeling and acting upon “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding” (Phil. 4.7)!

And Titus and Timothy, what dear friends in Christ, supporting, defending, and loving him through his trials. “Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad” (Prov. 12.25). They brought that good word and human touch to a very difficult time in Paul’s ministry. And it helped him survive it.

And of course, Paul’s relationship with God also carried him through this.

“Uphold my steps in Your paths, that my footsteps may not slip.

I have called upon You, for You will hear me, O God; incline Your ear to me, and hear my speech.

Show Your marvelous lovingkindness by Your right hand, O You who save those who trust in You from those who rise up against them. Keep me as the apple of Your eye; hide me under the shadow of Your wings, from the wicked who oppress me, from my deadly enemies who surround me” (Ps. 17.5-9).

Maintaining unity within the church is often a super-human effort, requiring Herculean strength, only available and possible through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. But well worth the effort. Look now at the growth of these churches in Corinth, which Paul’s determination and love beyond human capabilities enabled. Superman could never fill that man’s shoes. Paul wins, hands down.

We have the same powerful Holy Spirit living within us. We can love just that hard and well. We can, amazingly, call down grace and peace on those who hurt us (Matt. 5.44-48). We merely need to imitate the right examples—surely Jesus and Paul are a good start.

For reflection

1. What is grace? Why do we need grace every day?
2. Why do we need the peace of Jesus as much as the grace of Jesus?
3. How will God use you today as an agent of His grace and peace?

Since the gift of God and of Christ is one and the same, Paul wants them to be partakers in the grace of God, that is, in the grace of Jesus Christ. Ambrosiaster (fl. ca. 366-384), Commentary on Paul’s Epistles

Pray Psalm 125.1, 4, 5.

Pray that the grace and peace of the Lord will prevail in your church, and that your church will be strong in furthering its mission of making all the nations disciples.

The Power of Grace: 2 Corinthians 1

Sing Psalm 125.1, 4, 5.

(St. Gertrude: Onward, Christian Soldiers)

LORD, do good and care for those upright in heart.

Those who turn to evil shall from You depart.

Sinful men may increase on their way to hell!

Save Your people, let your peace abound in Israel!

Refrain, v. 1

All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!

Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!

2 Encouraged!

Pray Psalm 30.1-3.

I will extol You, O LORD, for You have lifted me up,
And have not let my foes rejoice over me.
O LORD my God, I cried out to You,
And You healed me.
O LORD, You brought my soul up from the grave;
You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.

Sing Psalm 30.1-3.

(Madrid: *Come, Christians, Join to Sing*)

We will extol Your Name! You have lifted us, O LORD!
Our foes retreat in shame—You have lifted us, O LORD!
You healed us when we cried; safe shall our souls abide;
hell's claim have You denied—
You have lifted us, O LORD!

Read 1 Corinthians 16.1-7; meditate on verses 3-7.

Preparation

1. What is the source of all comfort and encouragement?
2. Why does God allow us to be afflicted?

Meditation

Paul was overflowing with *παράκλησις* (*paraklesis*). Nine times in these 5 verses, he used some cognate of this word, sometimes as a noun and sometimes as a verb. The NKJV acknowledges the flexibility of this word by translating it as both “comfort” and “consolation.” The idea behind each translation is similar: We’re having a tough time due to some trouble (v. 4), suffering (v. 5), or other affliction (v. 6), and we need to be lifted, as it were, out of the dumps and doldrums. God does this. He does it for us and through us. He is the “God of all comfort” and spreads His comfort and consolation around through us to one another (v. 4).

This is certainly a valid way to translate *παράκλησις* and its cognates.

When you think of “comfort” or “consolation”, what comes to mind? I hear, “There, there, it’s going to be all right. You’ll feel better soon.” Even “Better luck next time.” God knows we need such comfort, so He gives it to us through our fellow believers, who themselves have experienced that comfort and consolation for others.

But what strikes me—and frankly, puzzles me—is why “comfort” and “consolation” are uniformly used to translate various forms of *παράκλησις*. What about “encouragement”? That’s another, equally valid translation, but it does not appear in our translation. Not in NKJV, NAS, ESV, or NIV. But “encouragement” just sounds more Pauline to me. Paul is Mr. Press On, Stay the Course, Run Your Race with Endurance, Fight the Good Fight. That is, he is always seeking to impart courage to the people of God so that they will not grow weary of doing good (Gal. 6.9) but will endure every hardship and grow stronger through it to know and do exceedingly abundantly more than they ever have before (Eph. 3.20).

Paul had just received good news from Titus about the situation in Corinth. He was encouraged. This whole

epistle is chock full of encouragement. Paul was bubbling over with encouragement, and he wanted to encourage the Corinthians as well. Try reading this passage, substituting “encouragement” for “comfort” or “consolation” and see if you don’t get a different feel for the text.

Then, try reading John 14-16 substituting “Encourager” for “Comforter”, and see if your view of the Holy Spirit, Who lives in you, doesn’t take on a different and more exciting coloration.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

I, for one, am thankful for the non-heroics of this passage. We are allowed to see Paul up close and personal. We see that he “was burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that [he] despaired even of life” (2 Cor. 1.8). He was human after all. And he depended upon the power of the Holy Spirit in the very same way we do.

It was Paul, after all, who was told comfortingly by Jesus, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12.9). Paul was weak, but Jesus made him strong. In the very same way, He does for us.

The writer of Hebrews suggests that those who have “fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us” will begin to experience “this hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast” (Heb. 6.18, 19). Even the floundering and immature church of Corinth was now finding comfort and encouragement clinging to that anchor.

As Paul wrote, “And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation” (2 Cor. 1.7). They were in the battle and were winning. They were suffering and despairing, but allowing God to console and comfort them, and were then able to comfort others who were suffering and despairing even of life (2 Cor. 1.4).

As he wrote to the church in Rome, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” (Rom. 8.16, 17).

We must never allow ourselves to bear the unrequested burden of giddy happiness. God doesn’t expect it and we shouldn’t expect it of ourselves or others. Jesus was despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Is. 53.3). He wept (Jn. 11.35). We do not have a Savior Who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet He was without sin (Heb. 4.15). And in the days that He was on earth He “offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered” (Heb. 5.7, 8).

Our comfort and consolation in suffering and despair is that we have hope (1 Thess. 4.13). All people suffer, but we have God, the God of all comfort, and Jesus, Who promised not to leave us comfortless—as orphans—but would send us the supreme Comforter/Helper—the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14.18, 26).

Comfort and consolation do not happen overnight. It is a process in which we must be patient. And full overcoming may not happen this side of glory. We can have hope, but still sorrow. Each person, in the arms of Jesus, is special and different. He understands and knows we are dust (Ps. 103.14).

As Jeremiah wrote: “Remember my affliction and roaming, the wormwood and the gall. My soul still remembers and sinks within me. This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. Through the LORD’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. ‘The LORD is my portion’, says my soul,

“Therefore I have hope in Him!” (Lam. 3.19-24).

For reflection

1. Do you find it interesting that one Greek word can mean “comfort”, “consolation”, and “encouragement”? Explain.
2. What kind of a situation might lead you to “comfort” a fellow believer? How would you do that?
3. How does the Holy Spirit comfort/console/encourage us? To what ends?

See how far they had advanced since Paul wrote his first epistle. Now his hope for them was unshaken by their behavior. Paul also tells them that if he has been comforted, they will be comforted as well. If the Corinthians regarded Paul’s sufferings as their own, then his comfort would also be theirs. By saying this, Paul hoped that he would be able to encourage them... John Chrysostom (344-407), *Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 2.2*

Pray Psalm 30.4-12.

Give thanks and praise to God for all the many ways He encourages you day by day. Ask Him to lead you to people you can encourage in Him today.

Sing Psalm 30.4-12.

(Madrid: *Come, Christians, Join to Sing*)

LORD, we extol Your Name! You have lifted us, O LORD!
Thanks we with joy proclaim—You have lifted us, O LORD!
Anger shall not prevail; grace will for us avail;
joy frees us from travail—
You have lifted us, O LORD!

Firmly in You we stand—You have lifted us, O LORD!
Kept by Your gracious hand—You have lifted us, O LORD!
LORD, when You hide Your face, I cry to You for grace;
living, I’ll sing Your praise—
You have lifted us, O LORD!

LORD, hear our earnest plea—You have lifted us, O LORD!
And our strong Helper be—You have lifted us, O LORD!
You turn our tears to song; praises to You belong.
Thanks is our endless song!
You have lifted us, O LORD!

3 Ultimate Help

Pray Psalm 143.1, 2.

Hear my prayer, O LORD,
Give ear to my supplications!
In Your faithfulness answer me,
And in Your righteousness.
Do not enter into judgment with Your servant,
For in Your sight no one living is righteous.

Sing Psalm 143.1, 2.

(Divinum Mysterium: *Of the Father's Love Begotten*)

Hear my earnest prayer, O LORD! Give ear to my pleas for grace!
In Your faithfulness and righteousness, look upon me with Your face!
Enter not to judgment with Your servant, LORD, with Your loving servant, LORD:
None can stand before Your Word.

Read 2 Corinthians 1.1-11; meditate on verses 8-11.

Preparation

1. How did the Corinthians help Paul in his time of trial?
2. What was the result of that?

Meditation

Paul may be referring to the trouble he encountered in Ephesus when riots broke out, led by pagan idol-makers (Acts 19). Here we glimpse just how deeply concerned Paul was when that happened. It was “trouble” “beyond measure, above strength” so that Paul even feared for his life (v. 8).

But rather than back down from his faith, Paul refortified his soul to continue trusting in God (vv. 9, 10). For he determined that, even if he should die from this trial, God would “still deliver” him. Death had no hold on Paul, and the prospect of it was not enough to thwart his ministry.

Especially not when so many other believers—including the Corinthians—were praying for him (v. 11). The prayers of other believers helped Paul to continue in his ministry, despite threats and trials, so that the grace of God could spread to more and more people, issuing in thanks and praise to the Lord (2 Cor. 4.15).

Let us never underestimate the power of prayer. God uses the prayers of His people to further His Kingdom and glory on earth as these exist in heaven. He allows us to participate in this work by seeking Him in prayer, calling on Him for strength and interceding for one another in our callings. Those who are prayed for must report to those who pray for them on how the Lord is answering their prayers, that all may join in public thanksgiving for the grace of the Lord.

We tend to think of prayer as our last line of defense in times of need. In fact, prayer is our greatest help, the ultimate help, because it keeps us before the face of Him Who loves us with everlasting and never-failing love.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

We have two dogs: one is food driven, the other not so much.
The same with people. Some live to eat, others eat to live.

Either way, food is important.

As I am very food driven, my mind went to Paul's previous complaint of the church not supporting him, thus in order to eat and have shelter, he needed a job in addition to his church work. Being hungry could certainly suffice for his words "burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired of life" (2 Cor. 1.8).

"Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary. And Esau said to Jacob, 'Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary.'" Then the brothers dickered about the red stew and what Esau would have to give for it, when he finally said, "Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?" (Gen. 25.29-34). Esau gave away his birthright for a bowl of stew because he was so hungry.

"Two things I request of you (deprive me not before I die):
Remove falsehood and lies far from me;
give me neither poverty nor riches—feed me with the food allotted to me;
lest I be full and deny You, and say, 'Who is the LORD?'
Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God" (Prov. 30.7-9).

Prayer for our fellow Christians and for ourselves is supremely important and should be the first step to any other activity we pursue. But after we have prayed for the hungry, we must make our best effort to eradicate this dire condition. Jesus listed this as the first thing He loved that was done for Him, and by extension others, "I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink..." (Matt. 25.35). These physical needs being met are tantamount to survival.

With all the Christians on the planet there is no reason why anyone should be hungry. Or anyone, like Paul, should not be paid. And yet, many go to bed at night, in this country and elsewhere, without having had enough to eat that day.

Enter tithing. "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me!" (Mal. 3.8). By not doing so. "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house. And try Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, 'If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it'" (Mal. 3.10).

That sounds definitive to me.

Pray. Tithe. Work. And no one should ever "despair of their life" from hunger or thirst, because God's people are on the job, tending to those needs of the Church worldwide.

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4.16).

For reflection

1. Who are the people who pray daily for you? Have you thanked them lately?
2. For whom do you pray daily? Do you let them know that you're praying for them (Paul did)?
3. Why do we say that prayer is our "ultimate help"?

...when we mutually pray one for another, and obtain our desire, the glory of God is so much the more set forth, inasmuch as we all acknowledge, with thanksgiving, God's benefits — both those that are conferred publicly upon the whole Church, and also those that are bestowed privately upon individuals. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on 2 Corinthians 1.11

The Power of Grace: 2 Corinthians 1

Pray Psalm 143.5-12.

Give thanks and praise to God for your salvation, past deliverances, daily help, and guidance in all your ways. Wait on Him in listening prayer as you prepare for your day.

Sing Psalm 143.5-12.

(Divinum Mysterium: *Of the Father's Love Begotten*)

I recall the days of old; on Your works I meditate—
all the wonders of Your mighty hand, works both small, O LORD, and great.
LORD, my thirsty soul cries out for help to You! To You, LORD, I reach my hand
in a dry and weary land.

Answer quickly, O my LORD! Do not hide from me Your face!
For my spirit fails and I am like those who do not know Your grace.
In the morning let me hear Your steadfast love; LORD I trust You, show my way!
I lift up my soul and pray!

Rescue me from all my enemies! LORD, I refuge seek in You.
Let me know Your will, O LORD my God; make me know what I must do.
Let Your Spirit lead me on to level ground; save my life! Preserve my soul!
Rescue, LORD, and make me whole!

4 Boasting in Grace

Pray Psalm 142.1-3.

I cry out to the LORD with my voice;
With my voice to the LORD I make my supplication.
I pour out my complaint before Him;
I declare before Him my trouble.
When my spirit was overwhelmed within me,
Then You knew my path.
In the way in which I walk
They have secretly set a snare for me.

Sing Psalm 142.1-3 (5, 6).

(Dix: For the Beauty of the Earth)

With my voice, O LORD, I cry—hear my plea for mercy, LORD!
My complaint mounts up on high, bringing You my troubled word:

Refrain vs. 5, 6

LORD, You are my Refuge strong! O receive my plaintive song!

When my spirit faints away, You my falt'ring pathway know;
where I take my journey they traps have hidden to my woe.

Refrain

Read 2 Corinthians 1.1-14; meditate on verses 12-14.

Preparation

1. How did Paul conduct himself in the world?
2. What was his boast?

Meditation

Paul invites the Corinthians to examine his motives in ministering to them. He did nothing merely to gratify the flesh; that is, personal advantage or pecuniary gain was never a consideration in any of Paul's work. His conscience was clear because his motives were always pure and virtuous, considering first the truth that is in Christ Jesus, and with that, the spiritual interests of the Corinthians. He conducted himself and his ministry in the grace and truth of God, and not by the ways of the world.

And this was his great boast, not that he accomplished anything but that the grace of God abounded through his labors to the people of Corinth (v. 12). Only the grace of God was able to accomplish the work Paul did in Corinth—the many conversions, a new church founded, leaders appointed, and more. Paul could look at that work without letting his ego get in the way. He knew it was the work of Jesus, building His Church precisely as He had said He would (Matt. 16.18).

And he encouraged the Corinthians to boast in him, that is, in the grace they experienced through his faithful labors (v. 14). When Jesus returns, all the boasting and rejoicing and celebrating will be toward Him, because of the grace He has shown in creating, keeping, saving, sanctifying, preserving, and glorifying us as a people for Himself. Since this will be our boast then, let it also be our boast today and every day.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Paul was able to say, without boasting in himself, as the psalmist did:

“Those who fear You will be glad when they see me, because I have hoped in Your word.”

“Let those who fear You turn to me, those who know Your testimonies.”

“Let my heart be blameless regarding Your statutes, that I may not be ashamed” (Ps. 119.74, 79, 80).

Paul and the psalmist were able to say those things because their consciences were clear and clean before the holy God. They knew God’s Law (Ex. 20.1-17) and they both strove to keep it. Not to be saved, but because they were saved (one through believing the promise of salvation and the other through experiencing it first-hand).

As we recall, Paul was bold to say, in the knowledge of his good conscience, “Imitate me, as I imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11.1).

We, like Paul, by the “grace of God” (2 Cor. 1.12) can enjoy a good conscience, if, in fact, keeping the Law of God and studying His Word to know Him, is first and foremost in our minds and intentions.

Wisdom/Jesus cries out:

“Now therefore listen to me, my children,
for blessed are those who keep my ways.
Hear instruction and be wise, and do not disdain it.
Blessed is the man who listens to me,
watching daily at my gates,
waiting at the posts of my doors.
For whoever finds me finds life,
and obtains favor from the LORD;
but he who sins against me wrongs his own soul;
And those who hate me love death” (Prov. 8.33-36).

God’s Words are not futile or idle words, they are our life (Deut. 32.47).

And when they are the essence of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, our conscience will be clean.

And when it is not, we need only seek His gracious forgiveness and start afresh—clean conscience in tow.

“Thank You, Jesus, for making that possible! Boasting only in Your grace.”

For reflection

1. What is the conscience? What role does the conscience fulfill in your soul?
2. Paul said he had a “good” conscience? How can you know if your conscience is “good”?
3. How does the Word of God help us in having a “good” conscience? How do you know when the Word is speaking directly to your conscience (Heb. 4.12)?

Conscience witnesses concerning the steady course and tenor of the life. Thereby we may judge ourselves, and not by this or by that single act. Our conversation will be well ordered, when we live and act under such a gracious principle in the heart. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 2 Corinthians 1.12-14

Pray Psalm 142.4-7.

Cast all your burdens on the Lord. Call on Him to give you a clear conscience so that you may serve Him this day in simplicity and godly sincerity.

Sing Psalm 142.4-7.

(Dix: For the Beauty of the Earth)

LORD, look to my right and see: None takes notice of my plight.

Is there refuge left for me? Is my soul out of Your sight?

Refrain m. 5, 6

The Power of Grace: 2 Corinthians 1

LORD, You are my Refuge strong! O receive my plaintive song!

Hear my cry, LORD, I am low! They are strong who seek my soul.
Jesus frees from every foe; He will keep and make me whole!

Refrain

Out of prison lead me, LORD; thanks and praise to You shall be.
Righteous men armed with Your Word will Your grace bestow on me.

Refrain

5 On the Yes Path

Pray Psalm 23.1, 2.

The LORD *is* my shepherd;
I shall not want.
He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.

Sing Psalm 23.1, 2.

(The Gift of Love: *Though I May Speak with Bravest Fire*)
Because the LORD my Shepherd is I shall not want, for I am His!
He makes me lie in pastures full; I rest in Him by waters still.

Read 2 Corinthians 1.1-19; meditate on verses 15-19.

Preparation

1. What had Paul planned to do?
2. In what sense was Paul's word to the Corinthians "Yes"?

Meditation

Paul had planned to visit the Corinthians (1 Cor. 16.5), to bring them "a second benefit" in the form of more instruction in the Gospel and to be "helped" on his journey to Jerusalem (vv. 15, 16). But his plans changed, and he was not able to come to them as he'd hoped. He sent Titus instead and was refreshed and encouraged when he returned with a good report (2 Cor. 7.6, 7).

Paul did not want them to think that he made plans "lightly" (v. 17). Or that he was duplicitous, saying he would come but knowing he would not ("Yes, Yes, and No, No"). His word to them was true: He planned to come, but, following the lead of Jesus, he changed his mind. He does not tell us why but implies that He was following the Lord. Paul would not deliberately mislead anyone. But he was always subject to the leading of God, and God is always free to change our plans.

God is faithful, and so is His Word, which Paul had faithfully declared to them (v. 18). He preached Jesus, Who is always "Yes" (v. 19). There is no Yes, No, or Perhaps with Jesus. God is faithful and His Word is true. Jesus is the "Yes Path" in that He leads us into all the promises of God. When we proclaim Jesus as the eternal Son of God, according to the Word of God, we are calling people to join us on the Yes Path of eternal life. Our plans might change. We might not always be able to carry out what we have promised or hoped. But God's Word never fails. God will never be anything other than faithful to His Word. And as we cling to that Word, we can be sure that we are where God wants us to be, doing what He has called us to do.

Following along on the Yes Path with Jesus.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

"In Him was Yes" (2 Cor. 1.19).

Yes, I have given you My Law (Ex. 20.1-17).

Yes, I have set before you My life-giving Words (Deut. 32.46, 47).

Yes, underneath you are My everlasting arms (Deut. 33.27).

Yes, no doubt, you have sinned (Rom. 3.23).

Yes, those sins are deserving of death (Rom. 6.23).

Yes, I have sent My Son into the world to pay for those sins (Jn. 3.16; Rom. 5.8).

Yes, I love you (1 Jn. 5.16).

Yes, I chose you (Jn. 15.16).
Yes, I have plans for you (Jer. 29.11)
Yes, I have Kingdom work for you to do (Eph. 2.10).
Yes, I want you to know Me (Jn. 17.3).
Yes, I want you to obey Me (Jn. 14.15).
Yes, I want you to be one with other believers (Jn. 17.22, 23).
Yes, I want you to be with Me in glory (Jn. 17.24).
Yes, I AM preparing a place for you (Jn. 14.1-4).
Yes, I AM coming again (1 Thess. 4.16-18).
Yes, I will create a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21.1).
Yes, I will make all things new (Rev. 21.5).

“In Him was Yes” (2 Cor. 1.19).

For reflection

1. In what ways is Jesus the “Yes” of your life?
2. God is faithful to His Word. What does He expect of us where His Word is concerned?
3. To whom will you bring the “Yes” of Jesus today?

[T]he servant of the Spirit is led by the Spirit. He cannot just do what he likes. He is dependent on the Spirit's authority. Paul was not able to come to Corinth because it was not the Spirit's will for him to go there. John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 3.3

Pray Psalm 23.3-6.

Only God is infallible. Only God never changes. Thank God that, infallibly and unchangeably, He cares for you according to His Word. Call on Him to guide your every step today and always.

Sing Psalm 23.3-6.

(The Gift of Love: *Though I May Speak with Bravest Fire*)

My soul He quickens and will bless; He leads in paths of righteousness.
Though I may walk in death's dark vale, I shall not fear – He will not fail!

The LORD is ever by my side; His rod and staff with me abide.
A table rich for me He spreads; with oil my LORD anoints my head.

Goodness and mercy, full and free, shall ever after follow me,
and in the house of God, my LORD, shall I abide forevermore!

6 The Triune God Who Saves

Pray Psalm 80.8-11.

You have brought a vine out of Egypt;
You have cast out the nations, and planted it.
You prepared *room* for it,
And caused it to take deep root,
And it filled the land.
The hills were covered with its shadow,
And the mighty cedars with its boughs.
She sent out her boughs to the Sea,
And her branches to the River.

Sing Psalm 80.8-11.

(St. Theodulph: *All Glory, Laud, and Honor*)

You set us free from sin, LORD, and planted us in grace.
We rooted in Your strong Word have spread from place to place.
Our shadow covered mountains, our branches reached the sea;
Your grace flowed like a fountain of life, abundantly.

Read 2 Corinthians 1.1--24; meditate on verse 20-24.

Prepare

1. How are the three Persons of God involved in our salvation?
2. Why did Paul change his mind about going to Corinth?

Meditation

All the Persons of the Godhead are involved in our salvation. God the Father ordained and promised it (v. 20). Jesus the Son fulfilled all the promises and requirements of our salvation (v. 20), so that God the Father can establish us in Him, together with all who believe (vv. 21, 24). God the Spirit is “given us” as “a guarantee” (v. 22; cf. Eph. 1.13, 14). He brings the power for salvation and indwells us for our sanctification. And all of this, which daily redounds to our joy (v. 24), is unto the glory of the Triune God Who saves (v. 20).

That’s as close as we get to having all three Persons of the Trinity appear in a single passage (cf. also Matt. 28.18-20). God has sealed in Jesus, by the power of His Spirit, all who believe (vv. 22, 24). He makes us one together in Christ (vv. 21, 22) and calls us to take up the work of the Gospel with joy (v. 24).

Paul did not want the Corinthians to fail in their work or to lack the joy of the Lord. He decided that, by returning to them so soon after his first epistle, he would only add to their burden, since they would not have had time to amend the issues he broached in that letter (v. 23). Moreover, he did not want to seem as though he was “lording it” over the Corinthians (v. 24). His only desire was that they might labor together in the joy of the Lord for the progress of the Gospel.

We also, who have, by the grace of the Triune God, believed unto salvation are called to be laborers in the Lord’s vineyard, workers who rejoice in making Jesus known in all we say and do.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
The whole earth is full of His glory!” (Is. 6.3). Three in One.

“Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God Almighty,
Who was and is and is to come!” (Rev. 4.8). Three in One.

“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ
and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us
and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (2 Cor. 1.21, 22). Three in One.

We, the beloved children of God, have been established, anointed, sealed, and given the guarantee of the truth of all these promises through the Holy Spirit—the life-giving Spirit who empowers and enables us to do the work that God has planned beforehand especially for us (Eph. 2.10).

And what a Spirit this is!

“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Rom. 8.11).

We don’t lack Power; we just lack the ability/wisdom/faith/trust/courage/gumption (choose one) to obey, claim, believe, and use it.

We serve a Holy, Holy, Holy Triune Powerful Majestic God.

“Among the gods there is none like You, O Lord;
nor are there any works like Your works.
All nations whom You have made
shall come and worship before You, O Lord,
and shall glorify Your name.
For You are great, and do wondrous things;
You alone are God” (Ps. 86.8-10).

“For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen,
to the glory of God through us” (2 Cor. 1.20).

Filled with His Spirit.

“...as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,
because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I AM holy’” (1 Pet. 1.15, 16).

For reflection

1. How do you respond to knowing that all three of the divine Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are intimately involved in your salvation?
2. How does Their cooperation in our salvation encourage us in the church in our work for the Gospel?
3. How can you become more consistent in your witness for the Lord?

Everywhere the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one operation, one sanctification.... How? God, who anointed you, and the Lord sealed you and placed the Holy Spirit in your heart. Therefore, you have received the Holy Spirit in your heart. Ambrose (333-397), The Sacraments 6.2.5, 6

Pray Psalm 80.1-7.

Call on the Lord to renew you, your church, and churches everywhere in the great salvation He has accomplished for us in Christ and bestowed upon us by His Spirit.

Sing Psalm 80.1-7.

(St. Theodulph: *All Glory, Laud, and Honor*)

O God of grace, restore us, and shine on us Your face!
O save us, LORD, work for us; renew us by Your grace!
Give ear, O gracious Savior, Who leads us as Your flock:
Stir up Your pow'r and favor, our King and LORD and Rock!

How long will You ignore all Your people's fervent prayer?
Shall bitter tears fall ever? O LORD, renew Your care!
Our neighbors mock and scorn us, they laugh at our distress.
Renew, O LORD, and turn us, look down on us and bless!

7 The Power of Grace

Pray Psalm 71.14, 15.

But I will hope continually,
And will praise You yet more and more.
My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness
And Your salvation all the day,
For I do not know their limits.

Sing Psalm 71.14-16.

(Solid Rock: *My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*)

But as for me my voice I raise to sing in hope and constant praise!
With saving grace my voice will swell Your never-ending grace to tell.

Refrain v. 3

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;
my Rock and Fortress ever be!

Review 2 Corinthians 1.1-24; meditate on verses 21, 22.

Preparation

1. What does Paul say about “us”?
2. What is the believer’s seal and guarantee?

Meditation

Throughout 1 Corinthians, Paul insisted the believers there must recover their unity and work together for mutual edification. The focus was on them overcoming their schismatic and self-centered ways to rediscover the unity they have in Christ. The report from Titus about how Paul’s letter was received and what was beginning to happen in Corinth must have been very encouraging.

For in 2 Corinthians the focus changes subtly but truly. While 1 Corinthians’ focus was on the believers in Corinth, here Paul emphatically identified himself with the Corinthians and drew them back into the orbit of his ministry. Put succinctly, his focus has changed from “you” to “us”.

He began by praying grace and peace to prevail among them (v. 2). Then he invited them to join him in blessing God for the comfort, consolation, and encouragement they enjoyed together in the Lord (“our Lord”, “comforts us”, “the same sufferings which we also suffer”, vv. 3-7). From there he thanked them for their prayers during his time of affliction—“you also helping together in prayer for us” (vv. 8-11)—and invited them to mutual boasting about God’s work in him and them (v. 14).

Then he reminded them of their common foundation in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that they shared together joyfully in the saving work of the Triune God (vv. 15-24). In 1 Corinthians, Paul was pointing the finger: “you”, “you Corinthians”. Here he spreads wide his arms and draws them back into himself and his ministry, for they were no longer babes in Christ but “fellow workers” in the Lord (v. 24).

The rest of 2 Corinthians will travel this high road of thanksgiving, congratulations, and pointing forward to greater Christlikeness. From the exasperation and admonitions of 1 Corinthians, Paul, acknowledging the abounding grace of God, was encouraged and encouraging as he took up his pen again.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“Now He who establishes us *with* you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (2 Cor. 1.21, 22).

With is defined as accompanied by; accompanying; in some particular relation to (especially implying interaction, company, association, conjunction, or connection). Its synonyms being: alongside, amidst, among, beside, by, for, including, and near.

“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion” (Eccl. 4.9, 10).

With connotes mutual togetherness, with helpfulness, denoting camaraderie, and singular focus.

Jesus had this kind of relationship with His disciples. In fact, He had just answered the people who were nagging Him about His mom and brothers trying to see Him, by saying, “My mother and brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it” (Lk. 8.21).

But hear the words of our Savior about togetherness, camaraderie, and singular focus: “Now it happened, on a certain day, that He got into a boat *with* His disciples. And He said to *them*, ‘Let *us* cross over to the other side of the lake.’ And *they* launched out. With. Us. They.

Our Christian friends, fellow-workers in the Kingdom, mutual church participants, those established with us in Christ, those sealed by God and given the Holy Spirit, those with whom we are one in the faith, are prayed for by Jesus. “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them” (Jn. 17.9, 10).

And here is what He wants for us: “...that they may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (Jn. 17.21).

There is a grand purpose to all of this, which has everything to do with His glory, and that others will believe in Him and offer Him glory as well.

We have, together with the saints of God, a mutual song of glory and praise to sing:

*Could we with ink the ocean fill,
and were the skies of parchment made;
were every stalk on earth a quill,
and everyone a scribe by trade;
to write the love of God above
would drain the ocean dry;
nor could the scroll contain the whole,
though stretched from sky to sky.*

*O love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure—
the saints’ and angels’ song.*
(Frederick M. Lehman, 1917)

Together, let’s sing this song, accompanied by our guaranteed fellow-believers and mutual Kingdom workers,

The Power of Grace: 2 Corinthians 1

proclaiming amidst the world the glory of God, with a singular focus on the power of His grace.

For reflection

1. How do you contribute to the unity in Christ in your church?
2. Today, whom will you encourage to work for the unity of the Body of Christ?
3. Meditate on Jesus' prayer in John 17.21. Make this part of your daily prayers.

The Holy Spirit makes Christians firm in the faith of the gospel: the quickening of the Spirit is an earnest of everlasting life; and the comforts of the Spirit are an earnest of everlasting joy. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 2 Corinthians 1.15-24

Pray Psalm 71.1, 2, 7, 8, 12-13.

Give thanks to God for His salvation and strength. Look to Him for mercy and grace for all your times of need today.

Sing Psalm 71.1, 2, 7, 8, 12, 13.

(Solid Rock: *My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*)

In You, O LORD, I refuge claim; O let me never be ashamed.
in righteousness deliver me; incline Your ear and hear my plea.

Refrain v. 3

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;
my Rock and Fortress ever be!

While many see in me a sign, I shelter in Your strength will find.

LORD, fill my mouth with endless praise and with Your glory all my days.

Refrain

O God be not too far from me; my ever-present Helper be!

Consume and shame my enemies; let them reproached and humbled be.

Refrain

The Power of Grace: 2 Corinthians 1

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What did Paul mean by saying that all the promises of God are “Yes” in Jesus Christ?
2. How does the Lord comfort, console, and encourage His people? What are the effects of this in our walk with and work for the Lord?
3. Would you say that Paul’s attitude toward the Corinthians has changed from what we saw in 1 Corinthians? In what way?
4. How did the Corinthians help Paul in his time of affliction?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from this part of our study of 1 and 2 Corinthians?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at www.ailbe.org to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 103 Reynolds Lane, West Grove, PA 19390.

Thank you.