

II Corinthians

Chapter 1:1-11

Utley > This book, more than any other letter of Paul, shows us the heart and mind of the Apostle to the Gentiles. It is the closest we have to his spiritual/pastoral autobiography.

David Lowery > The nature and number of Paul's contacts and correspondence with the Corinthians is a matter not easily agreed on. The controversy concerns how many letters Paul dispatched to Corinth (opinions range from three to five), and how many times (two or three) and when he visited them. While not affecting the understanding of 1 Corinthians, the accepted scheme of Paul's visits and letters to Corinth does shape the interpretation of 2 Corinthians. In the following comments on the text, the view is taken that four letters were sent and three visits made.

Visit 1 > Paul first came to Corinth in the spring of A.D. 51 and ministered there for one and one-half years. He sailed in the fall of A.D. 52 with Priscilla and Aquila to Ephesus where they remained while Paul continued on to Jerusalem.

- At Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila met Apollos whom they instructed and subsequently sent to Corinth for a period of ministry (Acts 18:18-28).
- While Apollos ministered in Corinth (Acts 19:1) in the fall of A.D. 53 Paul returned to Ephesus on his third missionary journey. Paul remained there for two and one-half years, establishing it as a center for evangelizing the surrounding provinces as well (Acts 19).

Letter 1 (lost) > The letter mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:9 (a letter misunderstood by the Corinthians [1 Cor. 5:9-11] and now lost) was probably written during the early stages of this Ephesian ministry.

- Paul learned of the misunderstanding and of additional problems in the Corinthian church from members of the household of Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11). He then received an official delegation in the form of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (1 Cor. 16:17), who brought corroborating news and specific questions on issues dividing the church.

Letter 2 (First Corinthians) > Paul's second letter to the church, was written to address these matters.

- But apparently the problems in the church were still not resolved. It is possible that Timothy (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10) was the bearer of this news.

Visit 2 > Paul then decided to pay the church a second visit, sailing directly from Ephesus to Corinth. This, it seems, was the "painful visit" referred to in 2 Corinthians 2:1, apparently because of the action of the man mentioned in 2:5 and 7:12 and the failure of the Corinthians to support Paul.

Letter 3 (lost) > After this visit and Paul's return to Ephesus he sent a third letter to the Corinthians (now lost, like the first) borne by Titus. It grieved Paul deeply to write this (2 Cor. 2:3-4) because of its stark disciplinary nature (7:8-9).

- After a riot provoked by silversmiths (Acts 19:23-41) Paul left Ephesus in the spring of A.D. 56, bound for Macedonia (Acts 20:1) with a preliminary stop in Troas where he hoped to rendezvous with Titus (2 Cor. 2:13) and receive news from him about the situation in Corinth.
- Because he could not find Titus there, he anxiously pushed on to Macedonia, apparently with grave concern about Titus' safety (7:5-6).
- There he met Titus, who brought good news about the general well-being of the Corinthian church but bad news about a group opposed to Paul.

Letter 4 (Second Corinthians) > From Macedonia Paul wrote a fourth letter

Visit 3 > Paul then made his third visit to Corinth during the winter of A.D. 56-57 (Acts 20:2-3).

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

Here is the **Wuest Translation** of these opening lines > *Paul, an ambassador belonging to Christ Jesus through the desire of God, and Timothy our brother*

Timothy > (David Lowery) Timothy also had experience ministering at Corinth (Acts 18:5; cf. 1 Cor. 16:10-11; 2 Cor. 1:19), so his association with Paul in the greeting was more than a formality.

Acts 18:5 > *But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia (to Corinth), Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.*

I Corinthians 16:10-11 > *Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid, for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am. So let no one despise him. But send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me; for I expect him with the brethren.*

II Corinthians 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.*

Achaia > (Robertson) > The Romans divided Greece into two provinces (Achaia and Macedonia). Macedonia included also Illyricum, Epirus, and Thessaly. Achaia was all of Greece south of this (both Attica and the Peloponnesus). The restored Corinth was made the capital of Achaia where the pro-consul resided (Acts 18:12).



Grace to you > (Utley) The traditional opening of Hellenistic letters was "greetings" (cf. Acts 23:26; James 1:1), not "grace." Paul made a word play from "*chairein*" (Greetings) to "*charis*," (Grace) which made it uniquely Christian (cf. 1 Thess. 1:1; Gal. 1:3).

³***Blessed be the God*** and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of ***mercies*** and God of ***all*** comfort,

Blessed be the God > (Barnes) This entire passage is one that is exceedingly valuable, as showing that there may be elevated joy in the midst of deep affliction, and as showing what is the reason why God visits his servants with trials. The phrase "blessed be God," is equivalent to "praised be God;" or is an expression of thanksgiving.

Plummer > "St. Paul usually thanks God for some grace bestowed on those whom he addresses, and hence his omission of the Thanksgiving in the stern letter to the Galatians; here and in 1 Tim. 1:12 he gives thanks for benefits bestowed on himself. But his readers are not forgotten (vv. 6, 7); it is largely on their account that he is so thankful."

Mercies > (Utley) There are three Greek terms which are related to "mercy" or "compassion."

1. *eleos*, usually referring to feelings of mercy or piety (cf. 2 Cor. 4:1; Rom. 9:15, which is a quote from Exod. 33:19)

2. *splanchna*, which refers to the supposed physical location of compassion or mercy in the lower viscera (cf. Phil. 2:1; Col. 3:12)
3. **oikirmos, to feel or express a sense of mercy or compassion at another's condition** (cf. **2 Cor. 1:3,4-6**; Rom. 12:1)

All > (Strong's) all, every

Vincent > "All" is better rendered "every": the God of "every" consolation.

Wuest Translation > *Eulogized be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassionate mercies and a God of every consolation and encouragement*

⁴*who **comforts** us in all our **affliction** 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.*

Comforts > (Utley) This term, *paraklēsis*, in its different forms, is used **ten times** in 2 Cor. 1:3-11. It is the key term throughout the entire passage, and also in chapters 1-9, where it is used **twenty-five times**. The word means "to call alongside." It was often used in a judicial sense of an advocate who rendered legal aid, comfort, and guidance. In this context it is used in the sense of encouragement and consolation.

Affliction > (Strong's) *tribulation* > from a word meaning *pressure*

Robertson > to press, old and common word, as *tribulation* is from Latin *tribulum* (roller)

Utley > There are two reasons stated in this context as to why Christians suffer:

1. So they can comfort others, 2 Cor. 1:4
2. To keep us from depending on ourselves, 2 Cor. 1:9

Any > (Constable) Paul's idea here seems to be as follows: No matter what variety of ("all"; "any") "affliction" we may be experiencing, and no matter what its intensity, God will provide strength and encouragement ("comfort") that is adequate for our need (cf. 12:9). He will bestow more comfort than we have affliction.

Hughes > "The present tense of the verb shows that this God of ours comforts us constantly and unfailingly, not spasmodically and intermittently; and He does so in all our affliction, not just in certain kinds of affliction."

Those who are in any affliction > (Constable) Nevertheless God does not intend for this encouragement and strength to end with our personal benefit. Its further purpose is to enable us to become God's agents in extending God's comfort to others in their afflictions.

Wuest Translation > *who consoles and encourages us in our every affliction and tribulation in order that we may be able to console and encourage those who are in any affliction or tribulation by means of the consolation and encouragement with which we ourselves are being consoled and encouraged by God.*

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

The sufferings of Christ are ours > (Barnes) As we are called to experience the same sufferings which Christ endured; as we are called to suffer in his cause, and in the promotion of the same object. The sufferings which they endured were in the cause of Christ and his gospel; were endured in endeavoring to advance the same object which Christ sought to promote; and were substantially of the same nature. They arose from opposition, contempt, persecution, trial, and want, and were the same as the Lord Jesus was himself subjected to during the whole of his public life;

Abundance ... abundant > (Strong's) to be over and above, to abound (from a word meaning to *superabound*)

Constable > Note that it is a particular kind of suffering to which he referred: "the sufferings of Christ" (cf. 1 Pet. 2:20). These were the sufferings Paul was experiencing: because he belonged to Christ, and because he stood up for Christ in a hostile environment ... Paul's point in this verse was this: Regardless of how great our sufferings for Christ may be, God will not only match them, but exceed them—with His comfort, strength, and encouragement.

This is not Paul making "religious" talk ... he is about to reveal his personal experience that will validate his enthusiasm for the comfort of the Lord.

⁶But ***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; ⁷and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.

If ... If > (Utley) These are two first class conditional sentences (*If we are afflicted ... and we are ... If we are comforted ... and we are*). In this fallen world Christian leaders will be afflicted, but this provides a wealth of help and salvation to those who hear.

For your comfort and salvation for your comfort (Constable) Paul had endured sufferings for the "comfort and salvation [deliverance]" of his brethren in Corinth. These sufferings enabled him to "comfort" them better ("which is effective"), so that they would patiently bear up under ("in the patient enduring of") their afflictions for Christ's sake.

⁸*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;*

For we do not want you to be unaware > (Constable) The fact that Paul did not explain exactly what caused his affliction is significant. Evidently he wanted the Corinthians and us to focus on the intensity of the "affliction" as he was feeling it. This is what he emphasized here, rather than the specific cause of his suffering.

Affliction ... despaired > (Swindoll) We do not know what specific "affliction" Paul faced in Asia, but clearly it was extreme. The Greek word for "despaired" is *exaporeō*, which implies "the total unavailability of an exit."

Wuest Translation > *so that we despaired even of living*

Robertson > It was beyond Paul's power to endure if left to himself ... Probably in Ephesus, but what it was we do not know whether sickness or peril.

⁹*indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; 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,**

Sentence > (Barnes) The word rendered "sentence" means properly an answer, judicial response, or sentence; and is here synonymous with verdict.

Robertson > This late word from ἀποκρίνομα > *to reply*, occurs nowhere else in N.T., but is in Josephus, Polybius, inscriptions and papyri and always in the sense of decision or judgment rendered.

Sentence of death > (Vincent) The sense is well given by Stanley: "When I have asked myself what would be the issue of this struggle, the answer has been, 'death.'"

So that we would not trust in ourselves > (Robertson and Plummer) "This dreadful trial was sent to him in order to give him a precious spiritual lesson"

He on whom we have set our hope > (THIS is why I love the Greek! Look at the clarity found in this phrase when you utilize the Greek grammar) (Utley) The verb is ...

perfect (an action already completed in the past),

active (the subject of the sentence is the agent of the action described in the verb),

indicative (presents the information as real),

which implies a past completed act with abiding results

Robertson > We still have that hope

Delivered ... deliver ... deliver > (Strong's) to draw to oneself, deliver

¹¹you 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**.

Joining in helping > (Constable) "Joining in helping" is the translation of a Greek word used only here in the New Testament: *synypourgounton*. It consists of three words meaning "with," "under," and "work." It paints a picture of laborers bowed down under some heavy burden that they are working hard together to lift.

Hughes > "In prayer, human impotence casts itself at the feet of divine omnipotence."

Persons > (Vincent) *Face* is the usual rendering of the word in the New Testament ... The expression is pictorial; that thanksgiving may be given from many faces; the cheerful countenances being an offering of thanks to God.

Constable > "A literal rendering presents the attractive picture of "many faces" turned upward toward heaven, offering thanks to God, for His answers to the united prayers of Paul and his readers."

Barclay > "The Arabs have a proverb, 'All sunshine makes a desert.'"