

# 2 Corinthians

LESSON

1

■ A Study of 2 Corinthians 1:1–2:11

## DAY ONE

# Appointed and Anointed with Grace and Peace

Read 2 Corinthians 1:1-2.

1. Who wrote this letter, and how did he further identify himself?
2. To whom was the letter written?

At the time this letter was written, Achaia encompassed the southern half of present-day Greece. (The northern half was Macedonia.) The letter was addressed not only to the church in Corinth, the capital city, but also to all the Christians in Achaia. This would have included the church in Cenchrea (Romans 16:1) and the Christians living in Athens (Acts 17:15, 22, 34), two prominent cities in Achaia. Apparently they were aware of the problems in the Corinthian church and probably affected by them as well.

The Greek word from which we get the word “apostle” means “to send.” An apostle was one who had seen and heard the risen Lord, and had been commissioned and sent by Him, with the authority to speak for Him. False prophets in Corinth were opposing Paul and his teachings

and questioning the legitimacy of his apostleship, influencing some of these new Christians against Paul. Paul was reminding them that he was not speaking and teaching on his own authority but *as an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God*.

3. Record Christ’s words in Luke 10:16 to those He appoints to be His workers.

Paul’s apostleship had been accepted by the disciples in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-28) and his message confirmed at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-29).

4. Record 2 Corinthians 1:2.

God’s grace always precedes His peace. To know His peace, we must experience His grace. We do not deserve it and cannot earn it. Grace is a gift of God through His Son, Jesus Christ.

## MEMORY CHALLENGE

# 2 Corinthians 9:6

*Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.*

5. Personalize and record the following:

Romans 3:23-24

Ephesians 1:7 (Read verses 1-8.)

Ephesians 2:8

6. God not only provides saving grace but also blesses us with His keeping grace that sustains and strengthens us day by day, especially through the hard times, the trials and persecutions, the sorrows and disappointments. This is the grace Paul is referring to here. Record 2 Corinthians 12:9.

7. According to the following verses, what does God's keeping and sustaining grace do for us?

1 Corinthians 1:4-5

Hebrews 4:16

8. When we have experienced God's grace, we also experience His peace. As we grow in Christ, we experience this peace with others and within ourselves. Summarize the following verses:

John 14:27

Romans 5:1

Romans 8:6

If you have accepted the gift of God's grace through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, you have been appointed to witness to others (Matthew 28:18-20) through your obedient life and spoken testimony. And you will also receive the precious anointing of God's abiding grace and the peace, *which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand* (Phil. 4:7, TLB).

# The God of All Comfort

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7.

1. By what titles does Paul refer to God?
2. Why does God comfort us in all our troubles?
3. What does comfort produce in those who are suffering (verse 6)?

Paul praises God for His compassion and His comfort in times of trouble. God's mercies are great and never-failing.

4. Record Lamentations 3:22.

Jesus said, *If you love me, obey me; and I will ask the Father and he will give you another Comforter, and he will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit* (John 14: 16-17, TLB). When we are experiencing difficult circumstances, and God through His Holy Spirit comforts us, it does not mean that our troubles will just go away. God often comforts us by giving the strength, encouragement, and love we need to deal with our situation. "The more we suffer, the more comfort God gives us."<sup>1</sup>

5. Record the following verses.

Psalm 23:4

Psalm 145:8-9

God comforts us through His Word and His Spirit and often uses other believers to give us the encouragement we need. When we have received comfort, we are to pass it on to others. "We are not comforted to be comfortable but to be comforters."<sup>2</sup> Comfort is far more than mere sympathy. It is someone coming alongside you to provide support, encouragement, and strength. Those who have been through deep sorrow or trial know the right words to say and the comforting actions to take for those going through similar circumstances.

6. Make a note of a difficult time in your life when someone who had gone through a similar difficulty gave comfort to you.

Has an experience of yours enabled you to comfort someone who was suffering?

*The sufferings of Christ* refers to the trials we endure in Jesus' name because we are faithfully following God's will—suffering for righteousness's sake.

7. Read 1 Peter 4:12-16, 19, and summarize verses 16 and 19.

8. Record Matthew 5:10-11.

9. According to Matthew 5:12, why should we *rejoice and be glad* when we suffer because of righteousness?

As the sufferings increase, so does the supply of God's mercy and grace. *Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need* (Hebrews 4:16).

Throughout the world Christians are allowing themselves to be persecuted and killed rather than denying Christ. Have you (or has someone you know) been cut off from

your family, perhaps considered “dead,” because you are a follower of Christ? Have you ever felt isolated or ridiculed in the workplace or school because you would not join in some un-Christlike activity? If you have endured suffering and trials for no reason except that you are a follower of Christ and you have experienced God’s grace and comfort, be prepared to share with your group. It may be the word of encouragement someone needs. And don’t forget to praise God, *the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles.*

### MEMORY CHALLENGE

If our comfort to others is given sparingly, we will reap \_\_\_\_\_ . If it is given generously, we will reap \_\_\_\_\_ .

### DAY THREE

# Rely on God

Read 2 Corinthians 1:8-10.

1. How does Paul describe the way he and his companions felt as a result of the hardships they had suffered in Asia?

Paul had endured many trials and difficulties as he served in obedience to His Lord: he had been insulted, chased from town, beaten, imprisoned, and stoned. People had even tried to kill him.

Paul refers in this passage to some extreme hardship his companions and he had suffered recently in Asia. Whatever had been the cause of his suffering, he believed that there was no escape, that he would surely die. He was under pressure so severe that he felt it was *far beyond [his] ability to endure*. No person could save him; he could not save himself; his hope was in God alone.

*God does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men* (Lamentations 3:33), but He does not always protect His children from trials and suffering. Sometimes He delivers us from trial; other times He allows the trial but walks with us. “The Arabs have a proverb, ‘All sunshine makes a desert.’ The danger of prosperity is that it encourages a false independence; it makes us think that we are able to handle life alone.”<sup>1</sup> God wants us to learn, as Paul did, to rely on Him, to place our trust in Him.

No one enjoys trials or suffering, but during our trials we do tend to spend much more time in prayer and in God’s Word. We identify with Abraham Lincoln, who said, “I have often been driven to my knees in prayer because I had nowhere else to go.”<sup>2</sup>

2. On Day Two you recorded Psalm 23:4 and Isaiah 43:2. God gave us a promise found in each of these verses that we can rely on. What is it?

3. What do the following verses say that God will do for you if you put your trust in Him?

Psalm 9:9-10

Isaiah 41:10

Nahum 1:7

4. Sometimes we suffer trials and persecutions because we are followers of Christ (refer to Day Two). What benefits do the following scriptures assure us?

Romans 5:3-4

2 Corinthians 4:17

1 Peter 1:6-7

1 Peter 5:10

If we rely on God when we are in the furnace of affliction and testing, God will shape and mold us, refine and purify us, and strengthen our faith. We will draw closer to God and grow more Christlike. And we will experience God's love, compassion, and comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). When we have experienced the presence of the Lord walking with us through the fiery furnace, we develop an unshakeable confidence that God is very present in the midst of our trials. And that produces peace and freedom from fear—in the present trial and for the future.

5. Personalize and record the following verses:

Deuteronomy 31:8

Isaiah 41:13

Romans 8:28

Jesus gave this wonderful promise: *In me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world* (John 16:33). We may not know what our tomorrows hold, but we can say with assurance that we know who holds our hand.

### MEMORY CHALLENGE

Ask God to help you give (sow) more generously. Thank Him for His generous blessings.

# Pray for Each Other

Read 2 Corinthians 1:10-11.

*Pray for each other. . . . The power of a righteous [person] is powerful and effective (James 5:16).*

1. According to today's scripture, what does Paul say God had done for him and will continue to do?
2. What help does Paul request from the church at Corinth?
3. What will be the result of answered prayer?

Paul requested prayer for himself and his companions in ministry. These brave missionaries faced dangers, hardships, and persecutions in their travels to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. They needed the prayers of the church. Paul also knew that as the members of this troubled church prayed together, they would experience a greater sense of unity. Paul would have believed that "the [church] that prays together stays together."

One of the greatest gifts that we as members of the Body of Christ can give to one another is the gift of prayer. It is an honor and a privilege to be asked by someone to pray for him or her. And what a blessing and comfort to know that others are praying for us!

4. Explain in a few words how the truths in the following verses relate to today's lesson:

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Matthew 18:19-20

Romans 12:5

5. Record Galatians 6:2.

6. If you have experienced a time when the prayers of others changed the difficult circumstances of your life or that of a family member, share this answer to prayer with your group.

Lea was a college freshman, an accomplished pianist. She was dating the young man who is now her husband when she developed a strange swelling and severe pain in one of her fingers. She had the recommended surgery on the finger, but soon the pain and swelling reoccurred. A rheumatologist was consulted; the diagnosis was psoriatic arthritis, a form of arthritis that attacks various joints sporadically.

Lea was placed on a low dosage of the chemotherapy drug, Methotrexate. Regular blood tests had to be conducted to check for life-threatening side effects. The arthritis seemed to improve, but Lea was warned that if she should someday want to start a family, the medication would need to be discontinued months before she became pregnant.

Lea was married in August 1992. The young couple did not have health insurance at that time, and because the medication and necessary blood tests were very expensive, Lea tried to discontinue the medication but suffered flare-ups of crippling pain. Sometime the pain was so severe that she was unable to carry on her usual activities, walk without limping, or even get up without help.

Here is Lea's testimony:

In the midst of these trials, God was so faithful to me, and I learned to depend on Him in very real ways. Although I hesitate to call these trials "suffering," I learned that in a mysterious sort of way, suffering is one of God's greatest blessings. I know that sounds strange, but when you are in the midst of suffering, you must depend on God so completely. Rather than dreading or begrudging these physical trials, with God's help I was able to thank Him and ask Him for His strength and endurance to get through them and to teach me what He wanted me to learn through my circumstances.

When the time came that we wanted to start our family, I had no choice but to get off the Methotrexate. These were probably the most difficult days of my life physically. On November 3, 1996, my 25th birthday, I received a very special letter from my dear friend Glaphré Gilliland. My parents and my husband and I all sat in my living room and read it together. God had spoken to her, directing her to ask a few people to pray and fast for me on November 4. . . .

The letter read as follows:

*Dear Lea:*

*Because we believe in God's power and His love for you . . . because we believe in you and love you . . . on Monday, November 4, 1996, we will each be doing our own personal fasting and praying for you. We will be asking God to help your medicine be effective, to retard and stop the progression of the arthritis, and to release His healing within your body and begin recreating wholeness there.*

In God's unique and perfect timing, it was exactly one year later that I became pregnant with our daughter, Emma. Pregnancy was physically a very good time for me. As many autoimmune conditions go and as my doctors had hoped, the arthritis virtually vanished for the whole nine months. But exactly nine days after Emma was born, the pain and inflammation reappeared. It was discouraging, though not unexpected. My husband and I made the decision for me not to go back on the Methotrexate at this time, and as an alternative, my doctor put me on steroids to try to keep the arthritis under control, though we knew this couldn't be a permanent solution.

After several busy months of taking care of a new baby . . . I was having my devotions one day and reflecting on the pain I used to deal with when God spoke to me in a very clear voice and said, "Do you not even realize that I'VE HEALED YOU?"

It was such an overwhelming realization! I couldn't even tell anyone about it for several days. Later, after sharing the news with my family and my doctor, I began to wean myself off the steroids. It wasn't very long before I was totally off the steroids and controlling the arthritis with only a very small dose of one anti-inflammatory medication.

A few months ago I was telling Glaphré that my days of such extreme pain seem to be a very distant memory. . . . Before Emma was born I remember thinking . . . *Maybe I shouldn't have children. Is it really fair to have a mom who can't run and play with you?* And yet, through my doubts and worries, God continued to be faithful!

After I got pregnant with our second daughter, Lily, the arthritis again totally vanished, and I was able to get off all medications. . . .

If this were the end of the story, it would certainly be incredible enough. But you know, God is always greater than we could ever hope or imagine! After Lily was born in January, I quietly counted as the days passed waiting for the arthritis to reappear. I guess I really thought that God had done enough by giving me two beautiful, healthy daughters and by just letting the disease be controlled with so little medication. After 18 days had passed, I cautiously commented to my husband and to my mom that I really had not had any pain to speak of.

Well, Lily is now a toddler, and I am still arthritis free! I don't know if the arthritis will ever come back, and you know what? It doesn't even matter! God has healed me! I truly believe that if it all were to come back tomorrow, it would not in any way take away from this miracle in my life. Our God is so good!

## MEMORY CHALLENGE

If you are generous with your prayers for others, you will reap \_\_\_\_\_ blessings.

# Stand Firm in Christ

## Anointed, Sealed, and Guaranteed

Read 2 Corinthians 1:12-22.

1. Paul states that he has conducted himself in the world and with the Corinthians \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . . . not  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_.

2. In verse 20 what does Paul say about the many promises God has made?

False teachers had infiltrated the church at Corinth and caused the church to be divided into factions. They had attacked Paul's character and questioned his authority as an apostle. Paul begins now to defend himself, his ministry, and his message. He testifies that he has conducted himself not with deceit or hypocrisy but with holiness and godly sincerity, not according to worldly wisdom but relying on the wisdom that comes from the grace of God. His letters to them contain no hidden meanings; the message is clear and understandable.

Paul was accused of not keeping his word because he had not gone to Corinth after his visit to Macedonia as he had originally planned. (He explained the reason in 2 Corinthians 1:23—2:1.) Therefore, according to his accusers, Paul was untrustworthy, and the message he preached could not be trusted. So Paul reminded the Corinthians that all God's promises concerning the Messiah had been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and it was through believing in the message of Christ that the people of Corinth had received God's grace.

3. According to 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, what four things had God done for Paul and the Corinthian Christians and does for all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?

4. God establishes and empowers the believer; He makes us *stand firm in Christ*. Summarize the following verses:  
 Romans 8:9

Romans 8:37-39

2 Thessalonians 3:3

5. Read Ephesians 6:10-18. What are we told that we must do in order to stand firm?

List the parts of *the full armor of God*.

Paul assures all believers that God has anointed them and placed on them His seal of ownership. Old Testament kings, priests, and prophets were anointed with oil for God's service. Today God anoints those of us who belong to the royal priesthood of believers (1 Peter 2:9) with His Holy Spirit, who commissions, equips, and empowers us.

6. Summarize 1 John 2:26-27.

In former times, as a guarantee of their authenticity, letters were sealed with wax that was imprinted with an identifying mark. Legal documents today are often imprinted with an official seal. Ranchers brand their cattle to identify them as belonging to them. And God places His seal of ownership on His people; the presence of the Holy Spirit is the identifying mark of a true believer.

7. Jesus gave us this promise: *I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. . . . You know him, for he lives with you and will be in you* (John 14:16-17).

Record the following verses:

1 Corinthians 2:12

1 John 4:13

8. *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit* (Galatians 5:25). List the character traits (fruit) of the Spirit-filled life as recorded in Galatians 5:22-23.

9. God has also put His Spirit in the believers' hearts as a deposit, a guarantee of His promise of eternal life with Him in heaven. Summarize and personalize the following verses:

Romans 8:11

Ephesians 1:13-14

Titus 3:5-7

*Thank You, Lord! Praise Your holy name!*

## MEMORY CHALLENGE

Fill in the blanks:

Whoever \_\_\_\_\_ will also \_\_\_\_\_, and whoever \_\_\_\_\_ will also \_\_\_\_\_.

## DAY SIX

# Forgive!

Read 2 Corinthians 1:23—2:11.

1. What reason did Paul give for not returning to Corinth as he had originally planned?

2. What did he hope he would accomplish by writing to them instead of visiting? (Refer to 2 Corinthians 13:10.)

3. Describe Paul's emotions as he wrote the earlier letter to the Corinthians (2:4).

4. Paul wrote that letter not to \_\_\_\_\_ but to let them know \_\_\_\_\_ for them.

What reason did he give in 1 Corinthians 4:14 for writing the letter that is now 1 Corinthians?

5. Now that the transgressor had been punished and had repented, Paul instructed the church to do three things. According to 2:7-8, what were they?

6. What reason did Paul give for forgiving the person *for your sake* (2:10)?

Paul had sent Titus to Corinth in his place and had sent with him the severe letter that he, Paul, had written with such anguish. Titus had returned with the report that the Corinthians had been obedient in carrying out the discipline, and the person had repented (2 Corinthians 7:6-16). Some commentators believe this to be the immoral man of 1 Corinthians 5. Most, however, believe this individual, whether a member of the church or a visitor, had challenged Paul's authority as an apostle and possibly was the leader of a group opposing Paul. The Corinthian Christians had tolerated the sin, and it was this attitude that had caused Paul to write to them in such a severe manner.

There was apparently some division in the church concerning the punishment of this person; some had been unwilling to punish him, while others believed that he had not been punished enough. Paul tells them he agrees with the punishment but that now they must forgive this person, comfort him, and reaffirm their love for him. He does not want him to be overwhelmed by sorrow or by their disapproval and lack of acceptance. Satan could use the situation (1) to embitter and defeat the transgressor, (2) to cause division within the local Body of Christ, and thus (3) to destroy the influence of the church in the community.

7. Read Matthew 18:15-35. Record Peter's question in verse 21 and the answer Jesus gives in verse 22.

Explain in one sentence the spiritual lesson in this parable.

8. Summarize the following verses:

Matthew 6:14-15

Luke 17:3-4

Ephesians 4:32

Colossians 3:13

1 John 3:18

Churches too often are lax about punishing sinners in their fellowship. When *godly sorrow brings repentance* (2 Corinthians 7:10), churches should be forgiving and loving. The purpose of church discipline should be (1) repentance, (2) reconciliation, and (3) restoration. Examine your attitude toward the repentant sinner.

### MEMORY CHALLENGE

Quote 2 Corinthians 9:6 from memory.