Second Corinthians 1

Introduction:

1. Paul had written a severe epistle to the Corinthians correcting many abuses and calling for the exclusion of a member.
2. This second epistle was written about a year after the first one (II Cor 8:10; 9:2; I Cor 16:4-9; II Cor 2:13; Acts 20:1-5).
3. For the most part, this church had accepted his instruction and rebukes and corrected their horrible situation as a church.
4. There were false teachers and a faction yet remaining at Corinth that despised Paul, whom he would address later.
5. While this chapter may not seem very exciting at first pass, every word of God is our solemn goal (Pr 30:5; Luke 4:4).
6. For a very simple outline of the book of II Corinthians:
   a. Introduction and explanation for not visiting (1).
   b. Instructions for restoration of fornicator (2).
   c. Superiority of the new covenant over the old (3).
   d. A vindication of Paul's conduct in the gospel (4-6).
   e. An exhortation to holiness and obedience (7).
   f. Follow up on giving for the poor saints in Judea (8-9).
   g. Defense of his person and ministry to some (10-12).
   h. Conclusion with exhortations and salutations (13).

Outline of Chapter 1:

1-2 Salutation and greeting.
3-7 Comfort from God for all.
8-11 Trouble and deliverance at Ephesus.
12-14 Confidence in his ministry.
15-17 Defense for not coming to Corinth yet.
18-22 Certainty of preaching Christ.
23-24 Reason for not visiting Corinth yet.

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:

A. Paul was to be heard, for he was an apostle, of Jesus the Christ, and ordained by the will of God.
   1. Paul usually used an identifying salutation, but for the unique epistle to the Hebrews (Heb 1:1).
   2. However, in this case it had extra value, for it confirmed his exalted position to his opponents.
B. Men do not choose the ministry like other professions, in spite of most ministers do today (Heb 5:4).
   1. Desire for the ministry is good and highly commended, but not enough (I Tim 3:1; I Cor 12:31).
   2. Other pastors can see God's selection of a man for the work (Ex 31:1-5; II Tim 2:2; Titus 1:5).
C. Paul spoke of Timothy as "our brother" to promote the young man's honor and unity with Corinth.
D. The "church of God" is not a denominational name, but rather a designation of God's ownership.
E. One local church in one place is the church of God, as here at Corinth, which is why more than one is referred to with the plural "churches of God" (I Cor 11:16; 12:18,27; I Thess 2:14; II Thess 1:4).
F. The epistle included all the saints in the region (likely in other churches) that knew about Corinth.

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

A. Here is a typical opening salutation for Paul: notice the focus on God as our Father. Glory to God!
B. God can provide grace and peace, both glorious blessings needed by all saints, but so is Jesus Christ.
C. What greater personal blessing or salutation can possibly be given beyond grace and peace?
D. Practical grace is necessary to do anything, for it is the ability and desire from God (I Cor 15:10).
E. Practical peace is incredible, as Paul states elsewhere it passes all human understanding (Phil 4:7).

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

A. Could a wonderful sermon be preached from the first three words? David could (Psalm 103:1-22)!
B. God is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, not by eternal generation as Roman superstition suggests, but by the glorious incarnation of His human nature in a virgin (Luke 1:31-35 cp John 1:14).
C. God our Father is the benevolent source of mercies, which every member of this sinful race needs.
D. God our Father is the divine origin of all comfort, encouragement and strength every saint needs.
E. What is comfort? To strengthen, encourage, hearten, inspirit, soothe, relieve, console, and solace.
F. Based on the verses shortly to come, Paul greatly appreciated God's comfort more than usual.

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.

A. Here are four occurrences of "comfort," teaching a great lesson about receiving and giving comfort.
B. What is comfort? To strengthen, encourage, hearten, inspirit, soothe, relieve, console, and solace.
C. The ones comforted in this text, "us," are Paul and other ministers, as seen by the context (1:4-11).
D. Ministers experience tribulation and trials to comfort others – consider the value of David's psalms – by showing to others the comfort that God has shown them.
E. Comfort in afflictions, persecutions, and trials has the side benefit of learning to comfort others.
F. The comfort here is quite meaningful in light of Paul's great trouble at Ephesus he will explain (1:8).
G. Though written from the perspective of ministers, all saints can comfort others with their comfort.

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

A. The sufferings of Christ = sufferings for Christ, sufferings like Christ, sufferings because of Christ, sufferings in fellowship with Christ, and sufferings from Christ (Acts 9:16; II Cor 11:23; Phil 3:10; II Tim 1:12; I Pet 2:21).
B. Sufferings abounded in the apostles, in that they suffered often and severely, just as Jesus had prophesied (Matt 10:16-28; John 15:18-21; Rom 8:36; I Cor 4:9; II Cor 4:10).
C. But the Lord also supplied His ministers with abounding consolation, as His grace was sufficient for all their needs (Matt 10:19-20; Acts 18:9-11; II Cor 7:6; 12:9-10; Phil 2:1; II Thess 2:16-17).
D. What is consolation? To comfort in mental stress or depression; to alleviate the sorrow (of any one).

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.

A. Affliction, trouble, and persecution in the ministry lead to consolation and salvation in the saints.
B. How? It is effective in giving an example and illustration that God's best experience the same things.
C. How? It is effective in giving an example and illustration that God's best face them with bold faith.
D. Consider how Paul's boldness in the face of prison trials provoked boldness in others (Phil 1:13-14).
E. This is why the life and psalms of David are so precious and practically valuable to God's saints, for they show David's attitude and actions toward afflictions and God's deliverance of him from them.
F. "Salvation" here is from the distress, despair, forsaken, and destruction response (II Cor 4:8-9).
G. Observe the parallelism of "consolation and salvation," which applies to afflictions and comfort.
H. Comfort in the ministry leads to consolation and salvation in the saints by the example of strength.
I. How? It is effective in giving hope and reassurance that God will eventually comfort them as well.
J. "Salvation" here is certainly not regeneration, justification, sanctification, glorification, or heaven.
K. Context is so crucial as we read and study the word of God, lest we take sound bites out of context.

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.

A. Paul had great confidence that God would faithfully deliver the Corinthians as He had delivered him.
B. The early church endured much affliction and persecution, and the apostles had to encourage them.
C. If a child of God cheerfully accepts the sufferings of Christ, he will also receive his consolation.

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:

A. Paul refers to his great personal difficulties in Ephesus (Acts 19:23-44; 20:1-3; I Cor 16:8-9).
B. He despaired for life at Ephesus; but he did not continue in it, if we read everything (II Cor 4:8-9).
C. Can we relate to this description of despair? Does it ever apply to us? Pressed above strength?
D. God will sometimes allow severe afflictions that seem very likely to totally overwhelm and destroy.
E. While some may have thought Paul was lollygagging in Ephesus, he was being severely troubled.
F. Luke described a terrible storm at sea, in which he had lost all hope of being saved (Acts 27:20).

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:

A. The "sentence of death in ourselves" is based on "despaired even of life," an internal sentence (1:8).
    1. The rulers of Ephesus had not sentenced them to death; they had assumed death for themselves.
    2. The situation was so severe in Ephesus that death seemed certain, and they lost their hope.
    3. When hope is lost, and you are sure you will not survive, you pass a sentence of death yourself.
B. The reason for the severity was to reduce them to trust God alone for an impossible deliverance.
C. Have you been there? God has, can, and will deliver you from any horrible set of circumstances.
D. God has to make the situation bad enough to destroy your self-confidence, or you trust yourself.
E. Death is usually an impossible situation, as with David's baby, but God can raise the dead!
F. Abraham was not worried sacrificing Isaac, for He God could raise him up (Hebrews 11:19).
G. Remember God's ability to call those things that are not as though they were (Rom 4:17).

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

A. God did deliver Paul … from the hopeless situation in Ephesus and other dire situations he faced.
B. God was delivering Paul … from persecution in most cities, for "deaths" were often (II Cor 11:23).
C. God would yet deliver Paul … from afflictions and trouble, even as at Rome (II Tim 4:16-18).
D. The "death" here is based on their own sentence of death by despairing even of life (1:8).
E. This verse cannot and should not be used for describing the phases of salvation, though many do.
F. Do you still trust God to deliver you from anything? Death is usually impossible, but God delivers!

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.

A. Paul thanked the Corinthians for their prayers for him, which is how saints participate with teachers.
B. The deliverance from Paul's great troubles at Ephesus was partly based on their prayers for Paul.
C. The "gift" was the deliverance from certain death, like a resurrection, bestowed by God as a favor.
D. All church members can help one another – the means were by many persons – by prayer (Ep 6:18).
E. Answers to prayer bring much thanksgiving, which is due to the blessed God answering the prayers.

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.

A. Paul and Timothy rejoiced in their ministerial conduct in general and toward Corinth in particular.
B. Their consciences were honest in their ministerial labors, never trying to deceive any (Heb 13:18).
C. They rejoiced in their own consciences, which is far weightier than others' approval (I Cor 4:3-4).
D. Simplicity = manifest conduct and preaching, plain, uncomplicated, understandable, without sophistication, sophistry, deception, or art.
E. This is against belly worshippers, who use good words and fair speeches to deceive (Rom 16:17-18).
F. Sincerity = honest without hypocrisy, without duplicity, with a single mind, with true spiritual zeal.
G. They did not use means of fleshly wisdom – man's philosophical learning (I Cor 2:1-5; Col 2:8,18).
H. "By the grace of God" contrasted to those in the flesh, for Paul was all of grace in all that he did.
I. True ministers rejoice in character, integrity, simplicity, sincerity, without worldly learning, etc.

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;

A. This verse is based on the previous verse, where Paul appealed to a sincere conscience to Corinth.
B. Paul was honest in his dealings and his writings, and they should not presume any variableness.
C. Paul's methods were straightforward: you did not need to work hard at figuring out what he said.
D. False teachers are not straightforward, but deceptive (Matthew 7:28-29; Colossians 2:8,18).
E. Ministers must make things manifest – very clear, obvious, and visible in preaching (Col 4:4).
F. There is a connection and contrast here to the "fleshly wisdom" he has already mentioned (1:12).
G. No hidden messages, philosophical sophistry, or complex sophistication of words or concept.
H. Paul was plain, clear, direct, blunt, manifest, obvious, and without efforts to seduce his hearers.
I. False teacher or teachers at Corinth may have been Greek philosopher types without plain speech.
J. Elijah, John, Jesus, and Paul are patterns for straightforward, direct, plain, understandable speech.
K. Paul had confidence – and provoked their loyalty – by assuming they would acknowledge him.
L. Compare Paul's methods with the recent presidential debates, which were not very straightforward.

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.

A. They had acknowledged Paul and Timothy "in part," not all of the church was so excited about Paul.
B. The church for the most part rejoiced in Paul, but there were enemies, as we shall see in this epistle.
C. And Paul returned the esteem, both now and in the future event of Jesus Christ's second coming.

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

A. "In this confidence" refers to their general appreciation for him, both past and present (1:14).
B. Paul had intended to visit them earlier, which he had expressed rather clearly (I Cor 16:4-9).
C. The "second benefit" was in addition to the first benefit of his first visit to Corinth (Acts 18:1-18).
D. A man with the gospel can seriously help believers, which is almost lost to Arminians (Rom 1:8-15).

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 Judea.

A. See I Corinthians 16:4-9 and Acts 19:21 and II Corinthians 2:13 to get a feel for his intentions.
B. These were his honest and sincere intentions, when he finished the first epistle to the Corinthians.

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?

A. Paul's defensiveness and explanation indicate he was being criticized for not keeping his intentions.
B. Paul, the greatest apostle, a miracle-worker, the greatest conversion, a friend of Jesus Christ, was disliked, resented, and persecuted by some in the church.
C. All ministers that strive to serve the Lord Jesus Christ will be despised or resented for something.
D. Compromising ministers will always be loved, because they never teach or require anything.
E. Was Paul flippant in writing I Corinthians 16:4-9? Not at all! Those were his intentions at that time.
F. Did Paul purpose things in the flesh, depending on himself? Not at all! Paul lived by God's grace
G. The words, "yea yea, and nay nay," means changing your mind from one moment to another.
H. It means "yeah, yeah" one minute or day, and saying "no, no, I changed my mind" the next day.
I. These words describe that kind of uncertain and inconstant person that agrees with any trend.

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

A. Paul swears in the name and truthfulness of God, that he was not uncertain toward them.
B. Paul transitions from the accusations against his honesty by moving toward preaching Jesus Christ.
C. They did not preach uncertainly, questionably, weakly, confusedly, or anything else like that.
D. The "yea and nay" means a changing of opinions, and an uncertain doctrine or message.
E. There was the "word" of his travel plans, and there was the "word" of their preaching.
F. Paul's opponents obviously were accusing him of not keeping his word and changing his mind.

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.

A. Paul transitioned to the gospel preaching of the trio that had been in Corinth.
B. All doctrine and preaching must go back to Jesus Christ, the Son of God (I Cor 2:1-5; Gal 6:14).
C. When Paul was there with Sylvanus and Timothy, they did not have a weak or mixed message.
D. They did not preach like the scribes and Pharisees (Matt 7:28-29) or philosophers (Col 2:8).
E. Most ministers today are politically correct and seeker sensitive; they say nothing confidently.
F. Most ministers today undo their sermon with their pitiful invitations, turning from God to man.

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

A. All the promises of God in Jesus Christ are certain, sure, and final. There is not yea nor nay in Him!
B. What does "Amen" mean? A solemn expression of concurrence in, or ratification of, a prayer, or wish; Be it so really! Retained in the Bible from the original Greek or Hebrew: Truly, verily.

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

A. God's certain promises in Christ have established our faith and future, whether teacher or saint.
B. And it was this God that had anointed Paul and the Corinthians as His sanctified kings and priests.
C. It is of God! Paul was always making references to the source of all spiritual blessings – God!
D. Which came first, being established in the gospel, or being anointed? The tenses say anointed!

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

A. God had also sealed them as His children, and given the down payment of the Spirit to them, which is the presence of the Spirit that causes us to cry, "Abba, Father," (Rom 8:14-15; Gal 4:4-6).
B. The earnest, or down payment, of the eternal inheritance is the presence of the Spirit (Eph 1:14).
C. Paul will make another reference to this very thing later in this second epistle (II Cor 5:5).
D. The foundation of God is sure, having this seal, the Lord knows those that are His (II Tim 2:19).

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

A. Paul swore again to confirm the truthfulness of his words, just as he had earlier (1:18).
B. He confirmed by oath the real reason why he did not press to visit Corinth earlier.
C. Paul had waited for his first epistle to take effect in this church, which shows great longsuffering.
D. It was Jesus that had taught to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves," (Matthew 10:16).
E. It was Paul that practiced David's frequent combination of "mercy and truth."
F. Here is wise management for parents, pastors, masters, and magistrates.

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

A. Having said something harsh and hard (1:23), he modified it with kindness and tactfulness.
B. He confessed that he was not the ruler or lord of their faith, but truly a servant of their joy.
C. Ministers are not lords over God's heritage, but examples and servants for their faith (I Pet 5:2-3).
D. The goal of a minister is to do all in his power to help the saints obtain and enjoy the abundant life.
E. They already stood by faith and were standing by faith, and he would not dominate their faith.
F. The saints stand by faith in God (Heb 11:6), not by faith in men (Ps 118:8-9).

Conclusion:

1. God brings trials in life and comforts and delivers us, so we might comfort others and give thanks to Him.
2. We must be thankful and apply ourselves to have pure consciences in conduct and preaching His word.
3. We must be careful to use great plainness of speech and avoid any confusing or sophisticated presentation.
4. Let us not be "yea yea, and nay nay" people; but let us be slow to speak and certain in our intentions.
5. Let us rejoice in the promises of God that are most certain and not capable of being broken by anything.
6. We have the Holy Spirit of God as a down payment on our future inheritance in heaven.
7. If you do not have the Spirit of God, you are none of His! Search yourself this morning, and fly to Christ.