

Introduction

One day Kathleen and I were in North Carolina, where she was going through a bone marrow transplant. She had watched me converse with a man, and when he left, she said, “You have never met a stranger.” She meant that I was able to hold conversations with everyone. One of the things that I have found to be helpful in conversations is to find out what they like. People love to talk about the things they are interested in. You can ask about their name, family, hobbies, and similar things, and when you find something that they are passionate about, you can ask them questions about it. Most people will gladly talk about it. They also like the fact that you are interested in the things that they are interested in.

Today, I am introducing Paul’s letter that is called 2 Corinthians. Scholars say that it is really his fourth letter to the Corinthians, but it is named, 2 Corinthians. I love to talk about the apostle Paul. He has been a real example to me, and anytime I can talk about him, it is a real joy. This letter is regarded as Paul’s most personal letter to a church, and over the course of the next few months, we will discover many things about his life. In the introduction Paul said that the letter was from himself and Timothy. Timothy is another one of my favorite people in the Bible. His name means one who honors God, and that is something that all of us aspire to do. I saw a picture a couple of weeks ago of Patrick Mahomes, the quarterback of the Kansas City Chiefs, and there was a quote written on it, “I try to glorify God in everything I do.” I believe that describes Timothy. Paul’s letters to Timothy are among my favorite books of the Bible. It is a joy for me to introduce these two great men of God. In addition to introducing Paul and Timothy, we will look at who the letter is written to. Finally, we will look at Paul’s greeting.

Introduction to 2 Corinthians

1. The Authors
2. The Recipients
3. The Greeting

(2 Co 1:1–2) “Paul, 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: {2} Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

1. The Authors (2 Cor 1:1)

Paul begins the letter by stating that he and Timothy are writing this letter. There is no question that Paul is the author of the letter. This is Paul’s most personal letter, and he speaks at length defending his apostleship, and the troubles and afflictions that he has gone through. He uses “I” rather than “we” throughout the letter.

(2 Co 1:1) “Paul, 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.”

Typically, Paul would have one of his traveling companions write his letters for him, and he would sign the letters himself to authenticate them. In Galatians 6:11, Paul wrote that he was writing large letters with his own hand. In 2 Thessalonians 3:17-18, Paul wrote the greeting with his own hand, and said that this was a distinguishing mark in every letter. Therefore, we believe that Paul dictated the letter to Timothy, and then signed it.

(Gal 6:11) “See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.”

(2 Thess 3:17) “I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write.”

In Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, he had Sosthenes write it for him. At the end of the letter, he wrote, “The greeting is in my own hand – Paul.” Even though Paul does not specifically mention his own signing in this letter, it was his distinguishing mark in every letter that he wrote.

(1 Co 1:1) “Paul, called *as* an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,”

(1 Co 16:21) “The greeting is in my own hand—Paul.”

Paul is the author of this letter, and he states that he was called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. Apostleship was not a goal that Paul set and then achieved. It was God’s will for Paul’s life. In Galatians 1, Paul wrote that God had set him apart from his mother’s womb so that he could preach to the Gentiles. Paul was a Pharisee, and had grown up as a son of a Pharisee. Paul was extremely zealous for his ancestral traditions and was advancing beyond his contemporaries, but God had different plans for his life. While Paul was enroute to Damascus to persecute Christians, the Lord revealed Himself to him, and revealed His will and calling on his life.

(Ga 1:13–16) “For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; {14} and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. {15} But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, was pleased {16} to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,”

Paul was a Jew, but he was born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia. He was born a Roman citizen, and his citizenship entitled him to certain benefits. Even though he was born in Tarsus, he was brought up in Jerusalem, and was educated under Gamaliel, one of the strictest Pharisees.

(Ac 22:3) “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today.”

Paul was traveling to Damascus to round up any people belonging to the Way, i.e., Christians, so that he could have them bound and brought to Jerusalem, where they would be imprisoned and/or put to death. While traveling, a light from heaven suddenly flashed upon him, and he fell to the ground. He heard the Lord say to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” Even though Paul was a religious leader, he did not know Christ, and he answered, “Who are You, Lord?” And the Lord responded, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.” Then the Lord told him to get up and enter into Damascus.

(Ac 9:1–9) “Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, {2} and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. {3} As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; {4} and he fell to the ground and heard a

voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” {5} And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He *said*, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, {6} but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.”

The men traveling with Paul heard the voice, but they did not see anyone. Paul got up, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing. The men with him had to lead him by the hand, and they brought him into Damascus. Paul was blind for three day and did not eat or drink.

(Acts 9:7-9) “The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. {8} Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. {9} And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.”

In Damascus, there was a disciple named Ananias. Christians were called disciples or saints at that time. Only twice are believers called Christians. We are to be disciples, which means a learner. There was a disciple named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision to go to a street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man named Saul. Ananias had heard of Saul and the harm he had done to the saints in Jerusalem, and that he was coming to Damascus to bind all the believers there. But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.”

(Ac 9:10–16) “Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” {11} And the Lord *said* to him, “Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, {12} and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight.” {13} But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; {14} and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.” {15} But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; {16} for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.”

Ananias did what the Lord said to him in the vision, and after laying hands on Paul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Immediately something fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. He got up and was baptized, and then he took food and was strengthened. This was how Paul met the Lord and was baptized, and was told the calling on his life to preach to the Gentiles.

(Ac 9:17–19) “So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” {18} And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; {19} and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus,”

It was many years later that Paul was officially called into apostolic ministry. When the Christians in Jerusalem were being persecuted, many left and went into other areas. Some went to Antioch, and they preached the gospel to Gentiles. The grace of God was there and many

people came to Christ. The apostles heard about it and sent Barnabas to Antioch to find out what was going on. When Barnabas saw all these new believers, he knew that they needed a teacher to help them grow. He went to Tarsus and found Paul, and brought him to Antioch. For an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers. It was there that the disciples were first called Christians.

(Ac 11:19–26) “So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. {20} But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and *began* speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. {21} And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. {22} The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. {23} Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and *began* to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain *true* to the Lord; {24} for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. {25} And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; {26} and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”

During that year at Antioch, Barnabas and Paul trained and raised up three other leaders. In Acts 13, the five leaders were ministering to the Lord and fasting, and the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” After fasting and praying, they laid hands on them, and sent them away. The word, apostle, means a sent one. That began what is known as Paul’s first apostolic or missionary journey. In reality, it was Barnabas’ first apostolic journey and Paul was his partner. From that point on, Barnabas and Paul are called apostles. That was the calling of the apostle Paul by the will of God.

(Ac 13:1–3) “Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. {2} While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” {3} Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”

(Ac 14:4) “But the people of the city were divided; and some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles.”

(Ac 14:14) “But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out”

Paul started the letter by stating it was from him and Timothy, our brother. The Corinthians knew Timothy, and he did not need much of an introduction. On Barnabas and Paul’s first apostolic journey, they were in Iconium, and the Jews tried to mistreat and stone them, and they fled to Lycaonia, Lystra, and Derbe, and the surrounding region, and preached the gospel. We do not have scriptural proof of how Timothy was saved, but most scholars believe that Timothy and his mother, who lived in Lystra, heard Paul preach and received Christ.

(2 Co 1:1) “Paul, 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:”

(Ac 14:5–7) “And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them, {6} they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region; {7} and there they continued to preach the gospel.”

At the end of Acts 15, Barnabas and Paul broke up into two different teams. Barnabas took John Mark with him, and Paul took Silas with him. Paul and Silas came to Derbe and to Lystra, and a disciple was there, named Timothy. He was the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. Timothy was well spoken of by the brethren, and so Paul wanted Timothy to go with him. Because Paul ministered to both Jews and Gentiles, he took Timothy and circumcised him. This was not so that he could be saved, as circumcision is not required. We are saved by grace through faith, not by works. Timothy was circumcised so that he could go into the temples. Since his mother was a Jew, as long as he was circumcised, he could also go into the Jewish temples. He was circumcised for the sake of ministry to the Jews.

(Ac 16:1–3) “Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, {2} and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. {3} Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.”

Timothy is introduced as a brother in this letter to the Corinthians. In Paul’s letter to Timothy, he called him his “true child in the faith.” In Philippians 2, Paul writes that he wants to send Timothy to them, and that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father, Timothy has served Paul in the work of the gospel. In those days, a son would carry on the family business. If a father was a fisherman, his sons would become fishermen. The son would serve and be an apprentice under his father. Timothy served Paul in his missionary journeys to preach the gospel. Timothy was not just mentored by Paul, he became part of Paul’s apostolic team, and Paul referred to him as a bond-servant of Christ Jesus.

(1 Tim 1:2) “to Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”

(Phil 2:19-22) "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel."

(Phil 1:1) “Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons.”

After Timothy joined Paul in Acts 16, Paul had a vision where a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him to come and help them. Paul, Silas, and Timothy concluded that God was calling them to go to Macedonia and preach, so they went to Philippi, a leading city in Macedonia. (See Acts 16:6-10.) After leaving Philippi, they went through Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to Thessalonica. After Thessalonica, they went to Berea. The Jews from

Thessalonica came and stirred up things. The brethren sent Paul out by sea to Athens, while Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea. Paul sent for Silas and Timothy, and he preached the gospel in Athens while waiting. Athens was in Achaia, and this letter was addressed to the church in Corinth and all the saints in Achaia, which includes those that were saved through Paul's ministry while in Athens. Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

(Ac 18:1-5) "After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth."

When Silas and Timothy finally arrived from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word. Paul planted the church in Corinth, and he settled there for a year and six months. So, Timothy was in Corinth for a year and a half, helping Paul plant the church in Corinth.

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

(Ac 18:11) "And he settled *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them."

In 1 Corinthians 4:17, Paul wrote that he was sending Timothy to them, so that he could remind them of Paul's way of life in Christ Jesus. Timothy had gone to Corinth, and sowed into them spiritually. The fact that this letter comes from Paul and Timothy is relevant, because both of them know and love the people in Corinth. The Corinthians knew Timothy very well, and did not need much of an introduction.

(1 Cor 4:17) "For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church."

Paul introduces Timothy as our brother. He was a spiritual son to Paul, but he was also an apostle, serving on Paul's apostolic team. Although most Bible scholars say that Timothy was the pastor at Ephesus, the Scriptures do not specifically say that. Timothy was an apostle and did apostolic ministry with Paul. We find in 1 Thessalonians that Paul, Sylvanus and Timothy wrote to the Thessalonians. Verse two reads, "We give thanks..." The we is Paul, Sylvanus, and Timothy. As we go through the first chapter, all the references to "we" or "our" refer to all three of them.

(1 Thess 1:1-2) "Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. {2} We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;"

In verse five Paul says, "our gospel did not come to you in word only." Our refers to Paul, Sylvanus, and Timothy. Verse six says, "You also became imitators of us." The word us again refers to the three of them.

(1 Thess 1:5-6) "for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. {6} You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,"

Then, in chapter 2, we find, “our coming to you was not in vain, but after we had already suffered...” The “our” and the “we” refers to Paul, Sylvanus, and Timothy.

(1 Thess 2:1-3) "For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, {2} but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. {3} For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit;"

Verse four continues, “just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak.” The we refers to all three men. Verse five continues, “for we never came with flattering speech...” The we is still referring to all three men. Then, verse six reads, “nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ, we might have asserted our authority.” The we again refers to all three men. Paul, Sylvanus, and Timothy were all apostles.

(1 Thess 2:4-6) "but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts. {5} For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed-- God is witness-- {6} nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority."

When did Timothy begin operating as an apostle? We do not have a clear and definitive word, but it is very possible that when the presbytery laid hands on him and bestowed on him a spiritual gift, that this is when he began operating with an apostolic anointing. Because Paul exhorts him to pay close attention to himself and his teaching, it is also possible this was a teaching gift that was bestowed upon him.

(1 Ti 4:14–16) “Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. {15} Take pains with these things; be *absorbed* in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. {16} Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.”

The letter is from Paul and Timothy, but the context of the letter clearly shows that it was from Paul, and that Timothy was assisting him by writing it for him. The church in Corinth and the saints in Achaia all knew both Paul and Timothy very well.

2. **The Recipients** (2 Cor 1:1)

Paul addresses this specifically to the church of God which is at Corinth, but he also added “all the saints who are throughout Achaia.” Achaia is the province that Corinth is in. Achaia would have included Corinth, Cenchrea, Lechaem, Athens, Delphi, Sparta, Olympia, and a number of other towns.

(2 Co 1:1) “Paul, 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:

Corinth was in the part of ancient Greece called Achaia. In 400 BC, it had a population of about 400,000 people and was the largest city. In 146 BC, the Romans fought and captured Corinth. Lucius Mummius, the Roman commander, killed all the men and sold the women and children

into slavery, and then burned the city. In 44 BC, Julius Caesar, refounded the city as Colonia Laus Iulia Corinthiensis, which means the colony of Corinth in honor of Julius. Julius brought in people from everywhere, and it became populated with Greeks, Romans, and Jews. At the time Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians, it had reached a population of about 90,000, which was five times larger than Athens.

Why was Corinth so important? One of the main reasons for its size and growth was its location. There is an isthmus that connects the mainland to Achaia. The isthmus is four miles wide and the Corinthian Gulf is on the northwest side and the Saronic Gulf is on the southeast side. The area is called the Peloponnese, and the travel route around the Peloponnese was very treacherous. There was an ancient saying among the sailors that if you made it around the Peloponnese twice, you should go home, meaning that your luck was probably used up. So, there were two ports on either side of this isthmus, Lechaion on the Gulf of Corinth, and Cenchrea on the Saronic Gulf side. Ships wanting to travel east to west would elect to go to one of these two ports, unload their cargo, and then transport the ship and cargo by land across the four miles, and then reconvene their travel. That paved road between the two ports was called a diolkos, and there was some sort of track that was used to pull the ships across the isthmus. In the 1800's a canal was built and ships can now cross the isthmus on the canal. So, Corinth was a strategic place that controlled both of these ports. It became very wealthy from all the shipping that went through it.

There were six major temples in Corinth, all to various gods or idols. The temple of Aphrodite was the largest and it was in the heights above the city of Corinth. Aphrodite was the goddess of love. The temple of Poseidon, the ruler of the sea, was also very famous. The temple of Apollo, the god of archery, stood on a hill overlooking the main forum in the city. In addition to these, there were temples to Apollo, Venus-Fortuna, Isis, Pantheon, and Demeter. In addition to the temples, there were numerous shrines dedicated to various gods. It was a pagan and idolatrous city. In 1 Corinthians 8:5-6, Paul alludes to this, "For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him."

(1 Cor 8:5-6) "For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, {6} yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him."

Corinth was also a very immoral city. There was a Greek word formed out of the name of Corinth, korinthiazomai, which means fornication. To Corinthianize meant to become sexually immoral. The temple of Aphrodite was the largest and most well-known. The worship of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, included sexual encounters. To facilitate that, there were over 1,000 temple prostitutes, both male and female, with the majority of them being female sex slaves. The temple of Aphrodite drew people from all over the Roman Empire. Idolatrous worship and sacrifices to idols were a normal way of life in Corinth. With all the various temples and gods, people were free to worship whoever and however they pleased.

The Greeks and Romans had a number of different athletic competitions. The Olympics was just one of them. Corinth hosted the Isthmian Games, which was held every two years. The amphitheater in Corinth could seat between 18,000 and 20,000 people.

Paul addressed the letter to the church of God in Corinth. Scholars say that the church in Corinth was probably around one hundred people. For a city of 90,000 people, a church of one hundred people is pretty small. The Greek word that is translated as church is ekklesia (Strong's G1577), which means called out. It is used 116 times in the New Testament. Peter tells us that we have been called out of darkness into His marvelous light that we might proclaim the excellencies of God. The church is not an organization, and it is not a facility where people gather; it is the people who have been called out of darkness into His marvelous light. We do not go to church; we are the church. We do not meet in a church; the church meets in a house or other building that can accommodate the assembling of the saints.

(1 Cor 1:2) "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:"

(1 Pet 2:9) "But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;"

Paul addressed the letter to the church of God which is at Corinth. The church belongs to God. We are a part of the church. I like it when people take ownership and say, "This is my church." When people take ownership, they take personal responsibility and initiative. That is the positive side of taking ownership. Unfortunately, some take ownership literally, and they want to control things. God owns everything and we are His stewards. The church is the body of Christ, and Jesus is the head. We are to be submitted to Jesus, and every decision must be made with this in mind. We are to carry out His will. That is why one of the qualifications of elders is that they are not self-willed. We need pastors to be submitted to Jesus and to seek His will in all matters.

In some of my conversations with people, they will make a comment about my church. I am always tempted to tell them that this is God's church, and I am just His appointed leader in this local church. I am also wishing that they had said, "our church," because when they say, "your church," they are also communicating that they are not a part of it, and we want people to have a sense of belonging to a local church.

3. **The Greeting** (2 Cor 1:2)

Paul gives Timothy a standard greeting for that day and time. He says, "grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." In our culture, we say, "Hi!" Sometimes we ask a question with our greeting, "Hi, how are you doing?" In the Hebrew culture they did not ask how a person was doing; they blessed one another with grace and peace. Paul's letters all give a similar greeting of grace and peace.

(2 Co 1:2) "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

There are two definitions of grace that I want to quickly mention. Grace can mean the unmerited favor of God. It is by this unmerited favor or grace that we are saved. Our salvation is not as a result of works that no man should boast. This is an unmerited, undeserved favor that we are given by God. We cannot earn this grace. This grace should create in us a gratefulness and should be reflected in our worship and praise to Him. We find this grace in Ephesians 2.

(Eph 2:8-9) "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; {9} not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

There is another type of grace that we have. The Lord told Paul in the midst of his afflictions that His grace was sufficient for him. This grace is not just the unmerited favor, but it is the desire and ability to carry out God's will. Grace can also mean the measure of God's provision in strength, ability, power, gifts, and resources to carry out His will.

(2 Cor 12:9) "And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

In Romans 12, Paul speaks about this grace a couple of times. He speaks into their lives by the grace that was given to him. Paul was doing an apostolic work and was given the grace to do this work. Paul did not have any more favor with God than you or I. Paul had a desire and ability to do a certain work that God had called him to. He alludes to this grace again at the close of his letter. He wrote them very boldly on some points and he could do that because of the grace that was given to him by God.

(Rom 12:3) "For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith."

(Rom 15:15) "But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God,"

Paul also greeted the Corinthians with peace. Because the letter was written in Greek, Paul used the word, *eirene* (Strong's G1515), which means health, welfare, prosperity, quietness, and every kind of good. The Jews would normally say, "Shalom," which also meant health, welfare, quietness, and prosperity. Having grown up in the Middle East, our normal greeting to people was "Salaam," which is the Arabic and Persian word for Shalom, and means the same thing. It is customary to greet and bless people with peace. The peace that Paul blesses them with is a peace that surpasses all comprehension. It is a supernatural peace. It is not the absence of trouble, conflict, hardship, or difficulty, which are all external matters. God's peace is an internal manifestation. He gives us peace in the midst of troubles. We need God's peace in our lives. Jesus said in John 16:33 "that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." There is a lot of chaos, disorder, and strife in the world, which is not something that any of us want; we want a life of peace.

(2 Co 1:2) "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

(Jn 16:33) "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

Consider the following things about our peace from God. God is a God of peace. His name is Jehovah Shalom, or Lord of Peace. In Judges 6, Gideon built an altar and named it Jehovah Shalom. The Hebrew word for Lord is Jehovah, which means the self-existent, eternal God. He is the God of all peace. In 2 Thessalonians 3, Paul refers to God as the Lord of peace. In Romans 15:33, he refers to God as the God of peace. Paul gives a greeting of peace from God, who is the God of peace and gives peace that surpasses our comprehension.

(Jg 6:24a) “Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and named it The LORD is Peace.”

(2 Th 3:16) “Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!”

(Phil 4:7) “And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Conclusion and Applications

Paul wrote to the Corinthians because he was the apostle that planted the church. He was a spiritual father to them. In 1 Corinthians 3:6, he wrote, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.” Paul was an apostle by the will of God. This is what God had called him to do. We will see in the coming weeks how much Paul suffered while fulfilling the call on his life.

(1 Co 3:6) “I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.”

(2 Co 1:1a) “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,”

What is God’s will for your life? What has God called you to do? What gifts and abilities has he given to you? Each one of us has been given a special gift, and God wants us to employ it in serving one another. He wants us to be good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

(1 Pe 4:10) “As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

There are a number of reasons why people do not serve. Some people have been hurt or wounded, and they are staying on the sidelines. If you have been wounded by someone or by a church, God wants you healed. He does not want you living the rest of your life in the hospital. Paul wrote in Philippians 1 that to live is Christ. God wants you healthy and serving in the body.

Some people do not serve because they are not connected to a body. God wants each person to be part of a local church. We need to be properly connected to the other members in that body. We are to place ourselves under the care and leadership of that church, and they are required to watch over your souls. They are required to feed and protect you. They are going to give account to God for those that He puts under their care. If you would like to be connected to the Connection Church of East Rome, just let me know. We would love to have you as part of our body, a functioning member of the body.

Some people do not serve because they are not sure what God has called them to do. If you are not sure, we would like to pray for you, and pray that God will make His will for you clear. Here are some questions that are good to think and pray about.

- What are the things that I enjoy doing?
- What things am I gifted at and see good fruit?
- What are things that I have a desire to do, even though I may need some further training to do them?
- What are things that need to be done that I have the ability to do?

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for the apostle Paul. Thank You for his example and his ministry. Lord, we want to be like the apostle Paul and fulfill the calling on our lives. We want Your will to be done in each of our lives. We want to be good stewards of special gifts that you have given to each of us. We want to be a church where every joint is supplying and each individual part is properly working so that the church can grow and be built up. Paul served the people that you called him to serve. Help us to faithfully serve the people in the body that You are placing us in. Help us to honor and glorify You with our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Introduction to 2 Corinthians (2 Co 1:1–2)

1. **The Authors** (2 Cor 1:1, Gal 6:11, 2 Thess 3:17, 1 Cor 1;1, 16:21, Ga 1:13–16, Ac 22:3, 9:1-19, 11:19–26, 13:1-3, 14:4, 14:14, 14:5-7, 16:1–3, 1 Tim 1:2, Phil 2:19-22, 1:1, Ac 18:1–5, 18:11, 1 Cor 4:17, 1 Thess 1:1-2, 1:5-6, 2:1-6, 1 Tim 4:14-16)
2. **The Recipients** (2 Cor 1:1, 1 Cor 8:5–6, 1 Cor 1:2, 1 Pet 2:9)
3. **The Greeting** (2 Cor 1:2, Eph 2:8-9, 2 Cor 12:9, Rom 12:3, 12:15, John 16:33, Jg 6:24, 2 Thess 3:16, Phil 4:7)

Conclusion and Applications