

# 2 CORINTHIANS

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF 2 CORINTHIANS

This epistle, according to the subscription at the end of it, was written from Philippi of Macedonia; and though the subscriptions annexed to the epistles are not always to be depended on, yet it seems very likely that this was written from thence; for the apostle not finding Titus at Troas, as he expected, went into Macedonia, where he met with him, and had an account from him of the success of his first epistle; of the state and condition of the church, and of the temper and disposition of mind in which the members of it were, and which gave him great satisfaction; upon which he immediately wrote this second epistle, and sent it by the same person to them; (see ~~2~~ 2 Corinthians 2:12,13) (~~2~~ 2 Corinthians 7:5-7 8:6,16-18). It is very probable it might be written the year after the former; and so it is placed by Dr. Lightfoot in the year 56, as the former is in the year 55; though some place this in the year 60, and the other in 59. The occasion of this epistle was partly to excuse his not coming to them according to promise, and to vindicate himself from the charge of unfaithfulness, levity, and inconstancy on that account; and partly, since what he had wrote about the incestuous person, had had a good effect both upon him and them, to direct them to take off the censure that had been laid upon him, and restore him to their communion, and comfort him; likewise to stir them up to finish the collection for the poor saints they had begun; as also to defend himself against the calumnies of the false teachers, who were very industrious to sink his character and credit in this church; which he does by observing the doctrines of the Gospel he preached, which were far more glorious than, and abundantly preferable to, the ministration of the law of Moses, which those men desired to be teachers of; as likewise the success of his ministry in every place; the many sufferings he had underwent for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel; the high favours and privileges he had received of the Lord, as well as the signs, wonders, and miracles done by him in proof of his apostleship; and in which are interspersed many things useful and instructive.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO SECOND CORINTHIANS 1

This chapter contains the inscription of the epistle, the salutation of the persons to whom it is written, the preface to it, and the first part of it, in which is the apostle's defence of himself from the charge of fickleness and inconstancy. The inscription is in (~~400B~~2 Corinthians 1:1), in which an account is given of the person, the writer of this epistle, by his name Paul, and by his office, an apostle of Jesus Christ, which is ascribed to the will of God as the spring and cause of it; and with himself he joins Timothy, whom he calls a brother: also an account is given of the persons to whom the epistle is inscribed, who are both the church at Corinth, and all the saints throughout the region of Achaia, of which Corinth was the chief city: the salutation, and which is common to all the epistles of the Apostle Paul, is in (~~400B~~2 Corinthians 1:2), and the preface begins (~~400B~~2 Corinthians 1:3), with a thanksgiving to God, who is described by the relation he stands in to Christ, as his Father, by the manifold mercies and blessings he is the author and donor of, and by the consolation he administers; an instance of which is given, (~~400B~~2 Corinthians 1:4), in the apostle and his companions, who had been comforted by him; the end of which was, that they might be instruments of comforting others in like troubles with the same consolations; the great goodness of God in which is illustrated by proportioning their consolation by Christ to their sufferings for him, (~~400B~~2 Corinthians 1:5), and the end both of their afflictions and their comforts is repeated and explained; and by a dilemma it is shown, that both were for the good of the saints at Corinth, (~~400B~~2 Corinthians 1:6), and a strong assurance is given, that as they shared in sufferings for Christ, they would partake of consolation by him as they had done, (~~400B~~2 Corinthians 1:7). Next the apostle, in proof of what he had said, gives an instance of the trouble he had been in, and of the comfort and deliverance he had received, which he would not have the Corinthians ignorant of: he mentions the place where it was, in Asia, and gives an account of the nature of the affliction, how great it was; it was out of measure, above the strength of man, and induced despair of life, (~~400B~~2 Corinthians 1:8), so that the apostle, and those that were with him in it, expected nothing but death, and

were under the sentence of it in their own apprehensions; the end of God in suffering which, was to take them off of all self-confidence, and to engage their trust in God, to which the consideration of his power in raising the dead is a strong argument, (~~400~~2 Corinthians 1:9). And indeed this deliverance, which God wrought, for the apostle, and his friends, was a deliverance as it were from death, and a very great one; and which had this effect upon them, the designed and desired end, trust and confidence in God for future deliverance, having had an experience of past and present, (~~401~~2 Corinthians 1:10), which deliverance the apostle acknowledges, was owing to the prayers of the Corinthians, as a means or helping cause of it; and which favour was bestowed thereby for this end, that as it came by the means of many, thanks might be returned by many for it, (~~401~~2 Corinthians 1:11). And the reason why the apostle, and his fellow ministers, had such an interest in the prayers of the Corinthians, was their agreeable conversation in the world, and particularly at Corinth, which their consciences bore witness to, and they could reflect upon with pleasure; it being through the grace of God with great simplicity and sincerity, and not with carnal craft and subtlety: or this is mentioned by the apostle to remove the charge of levity, and to vindicate himself and others from it, (~~401~~2 Corinthians 1:12), which he next enters upon, premising that the constant course of their lives was such as before described, and which there was no reason to doubt would always continue such; for the truth of which he appeals to what they had seen, and owned to be in them, (~~401~~2 Corinthians 1:13), and that it was acknowledged, at least in part, that the apostles were their rejoicing, or of whom they boasted as to their conduct and conversation, even as they were persuaded they would be matter of rejoicing in the day of Christ to them, (~~404~~2 Corinthians 1:14). And then the apostle acknowledges his intention and promise of coming to them, which was in confidence of their value for him, and of their being real Christians and persevering ones; and for this end, that he might establish them in the grace which they had received, (~~401~~2 Corinthians 1:15), and also, after he had passed by them into Macedonia, and was returned from thence to them again, that he might be helped on by them in his journey to Jerusalem, with the collection for the poor saints there, (~~401~~2 Corinthians 1:16). But then he denies that he used levity, or carnal policy and purposes, or was guilty of any contradiction; all which expresses by certain interrogations, (~~401~~2 Corinthians 1:17), which confirms by the ministration of the Gospel among them, which was all of apiece, without contradiction for the truth of which he calls God to witness; and so argues from the

uniformity of his ministry, to the constancy of his word of promise, (~~4018~~2 Corinthians 1:18). Which argument he amplifies and enlarges on, by observing the subject matter of the Gospel ministry, which is Jesus Christ the Son of God; and which, though preached by different ministers, himself, Silvanus, and Timothy, yet was the same, had no contrariety in it, as preached by the one, and by the other, (~~4019~~2 Corinthians 1:19), and therefore there was no reason to conclude that he was fickle and inconstant in his promise to them, when he was so invariable in his ministry among them: besides, as all the promises of God are sure and certain, being made by the God of truth, and being in Christ, and the performance of them being for the glory of God by the saints; so the promises of every good man, in imitation of God and Christ, are firmly and constantly observed, as much as can be by frail and finite creatures, (~~4020~~2 Corinthians 1:20); and that the apostle, and his fellow ministers, were not so fickle and changeable as they were represented, neither in their principles, nor in their practices, the apostle takes notice of some blessings of grace, which they enjoyed in common with other saints, and with the Corinthians; such as stability in Christ, the unction of divine grace, the seal and earnest of the Spirit in their hearts; all which they had from God, and which kept them close to God, and preserved them in his grace, and from a fickle variable temper of mind, and from changeableness either in doctrine or conduct, (~~4021~~2 Corinthians 1:21,22). And then the apostle proceeds to give the true reason why he had not as yet come to Corinth, according to his promise, which was on their account, and not his own, that they might not come under that severe discipline and correction, which their faults required; and for the truth of this he calls God to witness, (~~4022~~2 Corinthians 1:23). But lest it should be objected that this was assuming a dominion over them, a lording it over God's heritage, he observes, that he and his fellow ministers did not pretend to have dominion over their faith, only to be helpers of their joy, (~~4023~~2 Corinthians 1:24).

**Ver. 1.** *Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God*, etc..] The inscription of this epistle is pretty much the same with that of the former; only whereas here he styles himself an apostle of Jesus Christ, there he says he was “called” to be one: for he did not assume that character and office without the call of Christ, and will of God; and which he chooses to mention, in opposition to the false apostles, who had neither. Likewise, in the inscription of the former epistle Sosthenes is joined with him; in this Timothy, whom he calls

*our brother*, not so much on account of his being a partaker of the same grace, as for his being a minister of the same Gospel: and he the rather mentions him, because he had sent him to them, to know their state, and was now returned to him with an account of it, and who joined and agreed with him in the substance of this epistle. Moreover, the former epistle is directed as “unto the church of God which is at Corinth”; so to all that call upon the name of Christ in every place; and this is directed also to the same church, together

*with all the saints which are in all Achaia*; which was a very considerable part of Greece, and of which Corinth was the metropolis: and the apostle's intention in directing it in this form was, that copies of this letter might be sent to them, who equally, with this church, stood in need of the reproofs, exhortations, and instructions which are in it.

**Ver. 2.** *Grace be to you*, etc..] This salutation is the same with that in the former epistle, and is common to all his epistles; (see Gill on “~~6007~~Romans 1:7”).

**Ver. 3.** *Blessed be God*, etc..] This is an ascription of praise and glory to God, for he can only be blessed of men, by their praising and glorifying him, or by ascribing honour and blessing to him: and in this form of blessing him he is described, first by his relation to Christ,

*even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*: whose Son Christ is, not by creation, as angels and men, nor by adoption, as saints, but in such a way of filiation, as no creatures are, or possibly can be: he is his only begotten Son, his own proper Son, his natural and eternal Son, is of the same nature with him, and equal to him in perfections, power, and glory. This is rightly prefaced by the apostle to the other following characters, since there is no mercy nor comfort administered to the sons of men but through the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and Saviour of sinners. And next he is described by his attribute of mercy, and the effects of it, or by his merciful disposition to his creatures,

*the Father of mercies*. The Jews frequently address God in their prayers <sup>f1</sup> under the title or character of, **μymj rh ba**, “Father of mercies”. The plural number is used, partly to show that God is exceeding merciful; he delights in showing mercy to poor miserable creatures, and is rich and plenteous in the exercise of it: nothing is more common in the Talmudic writings, than to call him **amj r**, “the merciful”, and this is partly to

express the multitude of his tender mercies, of which he is the “Father”, author, and giver, both in a temporal, and spiritual sense; for there are not only innumerable providential mercies which the people of God share in, and partake of, but also a multitude of spiritual mercies. Such as redemption by Christ, pardon of sin through his blood, regeneration by his Spirit, supplies of grace out of his fulness, and the word and ordinances; all which are owing to the mercy of God, which they have abundant reason to be thankful to him, and bless him for, being altogether unworthy and undeserving of them. God is also described by his work of comforting the saints,

*and the God of all comfort*; most rightly is this character given him, for there is no solid comfort but what comes from him; there is none to be had in, and from the creatures; and whatever is had through them it is from him: and all spiritual comfort is of him; whatever consolation the saints enjoy they have it from God, the Father of Christ, and who is their covenant God and Father in Christ; and the consolation they have from him through Christ in a covenant way is not small, and for which they have great reason to bless the Lord, as the apostle here does; for it is from him that Christ, the consolation of Israel, and the Spirit, the Comforter, come, and whatever is enjoyed by the Gospel.

**Ver. 4.** *Who comforteth us in all our tribulation*, etc.] The apostle in this verse gives a reason of the former thanksgiving, and at the same time confirms the above character of God, as “the God of all comfort”, by his own experience, and that of his fellow ministers; who, though they had been in great tribulation and affliction for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel, yet were not left destitute of divine help and support under their trials; but had much consolation and sweet refreshment administered to them by the presence of God with them, the application of his promises to them, the shedding abroad of his love in them, and the fellowship and communion they enjoyed with Father, Son, and Spirit. The end of this, or why God was pleased to comfort them in such a manner, was not so much on their own account; though it showed that they were loved, and not hated and rejected of God, but for the good of others:

*that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God*; many are the troubles and afflictions of the saints in this life, but it is the will of God that they should be comforted: and the persons he employs and makes use of in

this way are his ministering servants, whose principal work and business it is to speak comfortably to the people of God; (see <sup><340></sup>Isaiah 40:1,2), and that they may be able to do so, that they may be fitted and furnished for so good a work, they are blessed with a rich experience of divine consolation in themselves, under the various troubles and exercises they are attended with in the course of their ministry; and such persons are, of all others, the fittest, and indeed the only proper persons to speak a word in season to weary souls.

**Ver. 5.** *For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us*, etc..] By “the sufferings of Christ” are not meant those which he suffered in his own person for the sake, and in the room and stead of his people, the fruits and effects of which abound to them, and in them; but those which he suffers in his members, or which they suffer for his sake; and which are said to “abound in” them, because of the variety and greatness of them; though not as if they were more or greater than what Christ suffered in his soul and body, when he was made sin and a curse for his people: yet notwithstanding the abundance of them, such is the goodness and grace of God, that he proportions comforts to them; as their afflictions increase, so do their comforts; as their sufferings for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel, are more and greater,

*so*, says he, *our consolation aboundeth by Christ*: meaning, either that consolation which they felt and enjoyed in their own souls, under all their tribulations, which abundantly answered to them, and which they ascribe to Christ, from and by whom it comes to them; or else that consolation, which, by preaching Christ, abounded to the relief of others who were in distress and trouble.

**Ver. 6.** *And whether we be afflicted it is for your consolation*, etc..] The apostle repeats and explains the end of both his comforts and his troubles, and shows, by a dilemma, a strong way of arguing, that the afflictions and consolations, the adversity and prosperity of him, and the other ministers of the Gospel, were for the good of the saints: and it is as if he should say, when you see us continue to preach the Gospel with so much boldness and cheerfulness, amidst so many reproaches, afflictions, and persecutions, you must be the more established in the faith, and confirmed in the truth of the Gospel; and this cannot fail of ministering much peace, satisfaction, and comfort to your minds. This animates you to hold fast the rejoicing of your hope, and the profession of your faith firm unto the end; and with the

greater cheerfulness and pleasure meet with, and endure afflictions yourselves for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel: nay, he says, that the afflictions of Christ's ministers were not only for their consolation, but also for their

*salvation, which is effectual*, or is effectually wrought

*in*, or by

*the enduring*, patient bearing,

*of the same sufferings which we also suffer*. Not that the afflictions of the saints, or of others, and their patient enduring of them, are the cause of their salvation; for Christ is only the efficient cause, he is the sole author of spiritual and eternal salvation; but these are means the Spirit of God makes use of, as he does of the word and ordinances, to bring the saints to a satisfaction as to their interest in it, and are the ordinary way in which they are brought to the possession of it.

*Or whether we be comforted it is for your consolation and salvation*: for whatsoever comfort God is pleased to communicate to us, it is not kept in our breasts, and for our own use, but we immediately and readily impart it to you, that you may share with us the advantage of it, and be comforted together with us; that your faith in the doctrine of salvation may be established, your hope of it increased, and that you may be more comfortably assured you are in the way to it, and shall enjoy it.

**Ver. 7.** *For our hope of you is steadfast*, etc..] We have long ago entertained hopes of you, that the work of God is begun upon your souls, and will be carried on, and that you will hold on in the profession of your faith unto the end, and not be moved by the afflictions you see in us, or endure in yourselves; and so will pass on cheerfully in your Christian race, in the midst of all your troubles, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God, you may expect to be possessed of; and this hope, for or concerning you, continues with us firm and immovable.

*Knowing*, which may refer either to the Corinthians; so the Arabic version, “be ye knowing”, or “know ye”; you may, or should know; this you may assure yourselves of: or to the apostle and other ministers; so the Syriac version, *ny[ dy*, “we know”, we are persuaded of the truth of this,



*that as you are partakers of the sufferings*; that is, of Christ, and the same which we also suffer for him:

*so shall ye be*; or rather, “so you are also of the consolation”; for the apostle seems to respect not future happiness and glory, in which, as there will be no afflictions and troubles, so no comfort under them, but present consolation, which the saints enjoy here as a pledge and earnest of that fulness of joy which they shall have with Christ for evermore.

**Ver. 8.** *For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble,* etc..] The apostle was very desirous that the Corinthians might be thoroughly acquainted with the trouble that had lately befallen them; partly because it would clearly appear from hence what reason he had to give thanks to God as he had done; and partly, that they might be encouraged to trust in God, when in the utmost extremity; but chiefly in order to remove a charge brought against him by the false apostles; who, because he had promised to come to Corinth, and as yet had not come, accused him of lightness and inconstancy, in as much as he had not kept his promise. Now to show that it was not owing to any such temper and disposition of mind in him, he would have them know, that though he sincerely intended a journey to them, yet was hindered from pursuing it, by a very great affliction which befell him: the place where this sore trouble came upon him, is expressed to be in Asia: some have thought it refers to all the troubles he met with in Asia, for the space of three years, whereby he was detained longer than he expected; but it seems as though some single affliction is here particularly designed: many interpreters have been of opinion, that the tumult raised by Demetrius at Ephesus is here meant, when Paul and his companions were in great danger of their lives, (~~Acts~~ Acts 19:21-41), but this uproar being but for a day, could not be a reason why, as yet, he had not come to Corinth: it seems rather to be some other very sore affliction, and which lasted longer, that is not recorded in the Acts of the Apostles: the greatness of this trouble is set forth in very strong expressions,

*as that we were pressed out of measure.* The affliction was as an heavy burden upon them, too heavy to bear; it was exceeding heavy, καψ' υπερβολην, even to an “hyperbole”, beyond expression; and

*above strength*, that is, above human strength, the strength of nature; and so the Syriac renders it, ^l yj ^m, “above our strength”; but not above the

strength of grace, or that spiritual strength communicated to them, by which they were supported under it: the apostle adds,

*insomuch that we despaired even of life*; they were at the utmost loss, and in the greatest perplexity how to escape the danger of life; they greatly doubted of it; they saw no probability nor possibility, humanly speaking, of preserving it.

**Ver. 9.** *But we had the sentence of death in ourselves*, etc..] By the sentence of death is meant, not any decree of heaven, or appointment of God that they should die; nor any sentence of condemnation and death passed on them by the civil magistrate; but an opinion or persuasion in their own breasts, that they should die; so far were they from any hopes of life, that they looked upon themselves as dead men, as the Egyptians did, when their firstborn were slain, and said, “we be all dead men”, (<sup>4023</sup>Exodus 12:33), and to this extremity they were suffered to be brought by the wise counsel of God, for the following purposes, to learn to lay aside all self-trust and confidence:

*that we should not trust in ourselves*; in our strength, wisdom, and policy, to make our escape, and preserve our lives; and also to teach and encourage them to trust in God alone, and depend on his arm, on his almighty power:

*but in God which raiseth the dead*; who will raise the dead at the last day, and so is able to deliver persons when they are in the most distressed condition, and in their own opinion as dead men.

**Ver. 10.** *Who delivered us from so great a death*, etc..] Accordingly, being enabled to trust in God, when all human hope and helps failed, to believe in hope against hope, then the Lord appeared for them, and delivered them from this heavy affliction; which, because by reason of it they were not only in danger of death, and threatened with, but were even under the sentence of it, is therefore called a death, and so great an one, (see <sup>47123</sup>2 Corinthians 11:23). The apostle expresses the continuance of the mercy,

*and doth deliver*; which shows that they were still exposed to deaths and dangers, but were wonderfully preserved by the power of God, which gave great encouragement to them to hope and believe that God would still preserve them for further usefulness. The Alexandrian copy leaves out this clause, and so does the Syriac version.

*In whom we trust that he will yet deliver us*; all the three tenses, past, present, and future, are mentioned, which shows that an abiding sense of past and present deliverances serves greatly to animate faith in expectation of future ones.

**Ver. 11.** *You also helping together by prayer for us*, etc..] Though the apostle ascribes their deliverance solely to God, as the author and efficient cause of it; yet he takes notice of the prayers of the saints for them, as helping causes or means of their obtaining it. It was a very laudable practice in the churches, and worthy of imitation, to pray for the ministers of the Gospel, and especially when under affliction and persecution; (see ~~Acts~~ Acts 12:5), and the prayers of those righteous ones were heard by God, and often effectual for the deliverance of them, as they were in the present case: for

*by the means of many persons*, who wrestled together in prayer with God, *the gift* of deliverance from so great a death, which the apostle looked upon as a wonderful mercy, *χαρισμα*, “a free grace gift”, was “bestowed upon” them, which was granted for this end,

*that thanks may be given by many on our behalf*; which is but reasonable, and ought to be observed; for since many were concerned in asking for, and obtaining the mercy, they ought to join in thanksgiving for it: and the apostle's view in this is to stir them up to a joint acknowledgment of the deliverance with them, which better became them than to side with the false apostles in their charge against him.

**Ver. 12.** *For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience*, etc..] This rejoicing or glorying of the apostle's in the testimony of their consciences, to the goodness of their hearts, actions, conduct, and behaviour, was not before God, and in his sight, but before men, who were ready to accuse their good conversation in Christ: nor are these words to be considered as they generally are by interpreters, as if it was the testimony of a good conscience, which was the ground of their faith and confidence, that God would deliver them, and was an helping cause, together with the prayers of the saints, of their present deliverance. They refer to the charge exhibited against the apostle, that he had falsified his word in not coming to Corinth according to his promise; under which charge he could sit easy, having a witness within him, which was better than a thousand others, that

*we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-wards*; the Corinthians, of which they themselves must be conscious:

*in simplicity*; in opposition to double mindedness; they did not say one thing, and mean another, and act contrary to both; their heart and mouth went together, and their conduct agreed with both; what they promised they meant to perform; and where there was a want of performance, it was owing to intervening providences, which hindered, and not to any deceitfulness in them: the conscience of the apostle bore him witness, that he behaved in the simplicity and singleness of his heart; and also in

*godly sincerity*, or “in the sincerity of God”; that is, such as God requires, gives, and approves of, and which will stand in his sight, will bear his examination, and to which he gives his testimony; and that his conduct was

*not* influenced *with fleshly wisdom*: he used no artful sophisticated methods to impose upon, and delude persons, for any sinister ends, or worldly advantage:

*but by the grace of God*; which was bestowed upon him, implanted in him, and which taught him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world.

**Ver. 13.** *For we write none other things to you*, etc..] The things we write unto you concerning our conduct; and behaviour, are no other

*than what you read*; not in our letters to you, but in our lives and conversations, when we were among you, and which you must own and acknowledge to be just and right; we can appeal to you, that what we say, and are obliged to say of ourselves, in our own defence, is what, upon a recollection, you will easily remember to have seen and observed:

*and I trust*; or “hope”, through the grace of God, we shall be enabled so to walk, as that

*you shall acknowledge even to the end*; that our conversations are as become the Gospel of Christ, and are clear of that hypocrisy and deceit our adversaries would insinuate concerning us.

**Ver. 14.** *As also you have acknowledged us in part*, etc..] This may refer either to the thing known and acknowledged, namely, the integrity of the apostle's conversation, and others; which though they did not know thoroughly and perfectly, yet did in part, and that so far as that they might

acquit them from the charge brought against them; or to the persons who knew this, as that there were some in the church of Corinth, a part of them, though not all, who knew and had acknowledged them to be upright and sincere ministers of the word, and had declared that they had reason to rejoice and bless God that ever they heard them: and

*that we are your rejoicing*: or “glorying in”, or “unto the day of the Lord Jesus”: when he shall come to judge the world in righteousness, then they should before him, angels and men, rejoice and glory in this, that they had been blessed with such sincere and faithful ministers, who sought not any worldly advantage, but the glory of Christ, and the salvation of souls:

*even as*, adds the apostle,

*ye also are ours*; we do now, and so we shall then, rejoice and glory in this, that our labour among you was not in vain, but was blessed for your conversion and edification.

**Ver. 15.** *And in this confidence I was minded*, etc..] Being fully persuaded of your affection for me, as having been instrumental in the conversion of many of you, and of your esteem of me as a faithful and upright minister of the word, and of your being my rejoicing in the day of Christ, I was desirous, and had determined, and so promised,

*to come to you before*; when I sent my first epistle to you, or before now, or before I went into Macedonia; and what I now say was the sincere intention of my mind; I thought really to have done what I had such an inclination to: and my view in it was,

*that you might have a second benefit*; the meaning of which according to some is, first by his letter to them, and then by his presence with them; or as others, one benefit when he should pass by them to Macedonia, and a second, when he should return to them from thence, according to the following verse; or rather, as the first benefit which they received from him, and under his ministry, was their conversion, so this second benefit may design their edification, and establishment in the faith, their growth in grace, and improvement in spiritual knowledge.

**Ver. 16.** *And to pass by you into Macedonia*, etc..] It was his first intention and determination to have come first to Corinth, and then to Macedonia, to have took this city in his way thither; which was an

argument of his love to them, and his great desire to see them; since he might have gone, as he did, a nearer way to Macedonia, than by Corinth:

*and to come again out of Macedonia to you*; when he had gone through that, and done his business there unto the Corinthians; and after some stay with them,

*of you to be brought on my way towards Judea*; where he intended to go, with the collections he had made for the poor saints at Jerusalem, in the several churches in Asia; but though this was his first resolution, which he had signified either by letter, or messengers, yet he afterwards changed his mind, for some reasons within himself; it may be, having heard some things disagreeable of them, which he thought more convenient to acquaint them with in an epistle first, and to try what effect that would have upon them, before he came in person: that he changed his mind, appears from the former epistle, (~~4:16~~ 1 Corinthians 16:5), where he says, “I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia”; and upon this account it is he excuses and vindicates himself in the following verse.

**Ver. 17.** *When I was therefore thus minded, did I use lightness?* etc..]

When I had thus determined to come to you, and had signified the same by writing, or messengers, did I use lightness in my resolutions and promises? did I act rashly, unadvisedly, and without consideration? did I promise certainly that I would come, without annexing any condition to it? did I not say, I would come to you shortly, if the Lord will? (see ~~4:18~~ 1 Corinthians 4:19).

*Or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh?* do I consult myself? my own interest and advantage? do I seek the gratification of any carnal affection, as covetousness, ambition, or vain glory? etc.. what sinister end could have been obtained, if I had come as I purposed, or is answered by my not coming? or when I have purposed anything, have I resolved upon it in my own strength? have I thought it lay in my own power to effect it?

*that with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay?* as if I could make my “yea” continue “yea”, and my “nay, nay?” when all actions are weighed by God, and all events are at his dispose; man appoints, and God disappoints; and who can help these things? or thus, has there appeared such contradictions in my words, and such inconstancy in my conduct, that my “yeas” are “nays”, and my “nays yeas?” that I say one thing at one time,

and another at another time, or both in the same breath? that I should say one thing, and mean another, on purpose to deceive, and change my mind and conduct without any reason?

**Ver. 18.** *But as God is true*, etc..] It seems that the false apostles had insinuated, that as the apostle had not kept his word in coming to them as he had promised, that he was not to be depended upon in his ministry; that he might as well contradict himself, and deceive others in the one, as well as in the other: wherefore he appeals to God in a very solemn manner, calls him to witness to the truth of his doctrine; for these words may be considered as the form of an oath; or he argues from, the truth and faithfulness of God, to the certainty and invariableness of the word preached, who is so true and faithful as that he will never suffer his word to be yea and nay: for when the apostle says, that

*our word towards you was not yea and nay*, he does not mean his word of promise to come to Corinth; but the word of his preaching, the doctrine of the Gospel, which was not uncertain, changeable, sometimes one thing, and sometimes another, and contradictory to itself. And by this the apostle would intimate, that since he was faithful and upright, uniform, consistent, and all of a piece in preaching the Gospel to them; so they ought to believe, that he was sincere in his resolutions and promises to come and see them, though as yet he had been hindered, and had not been able to perform them.

**Ver. 19.** *For the Son of God, Jesus Christ*, etc..] The apostle having asserted that the Gospel preached by them was not yea and nay, variable and different, or what was affirmed at one time was denied at another, proceeds to point out the subject of the Gospel ministry,

*the Son of God, Jesus Christ*; that Christ is “the Son of God”: this article he began his ministry with, (<sup>400</sup>Acts 9:20), and all the apostles affirmed the same thing; and which is of the greatest moment and importance, and ought to be abode by, insisted on, and frequently inculcated; as that he is the eternal Son of God, existed as such from everlasting, is of the same nature, and has the same perfections with his Father; and therefore is able to destroy the works of the devil, for which he was manifested in the flesh, and every way equal to the business of redemption, which he has finished; and having passed into the heavens under this character, is a powerful advocate with the Father; and which renders him a sure foundation for the church, and a proper object of faith: that the Son of God is Christ, anointed

to bear and execute the office of a mediator in the several parts and branches of it; a prophet to teach his people, a priest to make atonement and intercession for them, and a King to govern and protect them: and that the Son, who is become the Lord's Christ, is Jesus, a Saviour; and that salvation is alone by him, to which he was appointed from eternity, and was sent in the fulness of time to effect it; and by his obedience, sufferings, and death, is become the author of it, and is the only able, willing, and suitable Saviour for poor sinners. This is the principal subject and strain of the Gospel ministry; and which makes it good news, and glad tidings to lost perishing sinners. The agreement between the faithful ministers of the Gospel is here plainly hinted,

*who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Silvanus and Timotheus.* These ministers being mentioned by the apostle with himself, shows his humility in putting them on a level with himself; and his modesty and candour in not monopolizing the Gospel to himself, but allowing others to be preachers of it as well as he: and his design herein seems to be for the confirmation of the Gospel, and to show that he was not singular and alone, and could not be blamed by them, without blaming others; and chiefly to express the harmony and unanimity of Gospel preachers. The prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles of the New, agreed in all the doctrines and truths of the Gospel; so did the apostles themselves; and so all faithful dispensers of the word have in all different times and places agreed, and still do agree; which serves greatly to corroborate the truth of the Gospel. The Gospel being faithfully preached by these persons,

*was not yea and nay;* it had no contradiction in it; each part agreed together, was entirely harmonious, and consistent. Their doctrine was, that Christ is the Son of God, truly and properly God; that he took upon him the office of a Mediator, and executes it; that he is the only Saviour of sinners; that God has chosen a certain number of men in Christ before the foundation of the world, has made a covenant with them in Christ, and blessed them in him; that Christ has redeemed them by his blood; that these are regenerated by the Spirit and grace of Christ, are justified by his righteousness, and shall finally persevere, and be partakers of eternal life; which is all of a piece, and in it no yea and nay. Yea and nay doctrines are particular election, the possibility of the salvation of the non-elect, the salvability of all men, and universal redemption; justification by faith, and, as it were, by the works of the law; conversion, partly by grace, and partly by the will of man; preparatory works, offers, and days of grace; and final



perseverance made a doubt of: but such is not the true ministry of Christ and his apostles,

*but in him was yea*; the Gospel, as in Christ, and as it comes from him, and has been preached by his apostles, and faithful ministers, is all of a piece; its constant and invariable strain, and by which it may be known and distinguished, is, to display the free, rich, and sovereign grace of God, to magnify and exalt the person and offices of Christ, to debase the creature, and to engage persons to the performance of good works, on Gospel principles, and by Gospel motives, and for right ends. The apostle using those words, “yea and nay”, conforms to the language of the Jews, his countrymen, who to magnify their doctors and Rabbins, and to raise their credit, say such things of them;

““yea, yea”, are the words of the house or school of Shammai; ךָ  
 ךָ, “yea, yea”, are the words of the school of Hillel<sup>f2</sup>.”

And in another place<sup>f3</sup>;

“the receiving and giving, or the dealings of a disciple of a wise man, are in truth and faithfulness. He says, ךָ ךָ ל [w wal wal  
 ל ], “concerning nay, nay, and concerning yea, yea”.”

But what is here said better agrees with the principles and practices of the disciples and followers of Christ.

**Ver. 20.** *For all the promises of God in him* [are] *yea*, etc..] This is a reason or argument proving what is before said, that “in” Christ “was yea”, since “all the promises of God in him are yea”; and shows, that God has made many promises to his people: mention is here made of “promises”, and of “all” the promises; or, as the words may be rendered, “as many promises of God”. There are some which concern the temporal good of the saints; as that they shall not want any good thing; and though they shall be attended with afflictions, these shall work for their good, and they shall be supported under them. Others concern their spiritual good; some of which relate to God himself, that he will be their God, which includes his everlasting love, his gracious presence, and divine protection. Others relate to Christ as their surety and Saviour, by whom they are, and shall be justified and pardoned, in whom they are adopted, and by whom they shall be saved with an everlasting salvation: and others relate to the Spirit of God, as a spirit of illumination, faith, comfort, strength, and assistance, and

to supplies of grace by him from Christ: and others concern everlasting life and happiness, and are all of them very ancient, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; are exceeding great and precious, suited to the various cases of God's people; are free and unconditional, immutable and irrevocable, and will all of them have their certain accomplishment. These promises are all "in" Christ; with and in whom could they be but in him, since he only existed when they were made, which was from everlasting? with and in whom should they be of right, but in him with whom the covenant, which contains these promises, were made, and who undertook the accomplishment of them? where could they be safe and secure but in him, in whose hands are the persons, grace, and glory of his people? not in Adam, nor in angels, nor in themselves, only in him. Moreover, these promises are "in him yea",

*and in him amen*; they are like the Gospel which exhibits them, consistent, and all of a piece; like the covenant which contains them, and is ordered in all things, and sure; and like the author of them, whose faithfulness and lovingkindness to his in Christ shall never fail; and like Christ himself, in whom they are, who is "the amen, the true and faithful witness, the same today, yesterday, and for ever"; by whose blood, the covenant, and all the promises of it, are ratified and confirmed, and in whom, who is the truth of them, they are all fulfilled. And these are

*unto the glory of God by us*; these serve to illustrate and advance the glory of God, when they are preached by us, and held forth by us in the Gospel, just as they are in Christ, free, absolute, and unconditional; and when they are received "by us" as believers in Christ; for the stronger we are in the faith of the promises, the more glory we give to God; faith by laying hold on, and embracing the promises, glorifies the veracity, faithfulness, power, and grace of God. The Syriac version puts the "Amen" into this last clause, and reads it thus, "therefore by him we give Amen to the glory of God".

**Ver. 21.** *Now he which stablisheth us with you*, etc..] Two things are in this verse ascribed to God. First, the establishing of the saints in Christ; in which may be observed, that the people of God are in a firm, settled, established state and condition; they are encircled in the arms of everlasting love; they are secure of the favour of God; they are engraven on his hands, and set as a seal on his heart, from whence they can never be removed; they are taken into his family by adopting grace; and will never be turned out; they are in a state of justification, and shall never enter into

condemnation; they are regenerated and sanctified by the Spirit of God, and shall never finally and totally fall from that grace they have received. This their establishment is “in” Christ, and in no other. They had no stability in Adam, nor have they any in themselves; their standing is alone in him; the unchangeable love and favour of God, which is their grand security, is in Christ; the covenant of grace, in which is all their salvation, is made and stands fast with him; their persons, with all their grace and glory, are put into his hands, and made his care and charge, and there they are safe. They are espoused unto him, made one with him, incorporated into him, and are built upon him the rock of ages, where they are so established, that hell and earth cannot shake them, so as to remove and unsettle them from this foundation: one and all of them, and all together, are established in him,

*us with you*; all the elect of God are alike, and together in Christ, and have the same place and standing in his love, power, and care; they make up one body, of which Christ is the head, and not one of them shall be lost, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, ministers or private believers; for so this phrase may be interpreted, “us” Jews “with you” Gentiles, or “us” ministers “with you” believers. This work of establishing the saints in Christ is wholly the Lord's act; he

*is God* that does it; which does not contradict the word and ordinances being means of establishment; nor does it hinder or discourage persons making use of means for their stability; for the apostle here is not speaking so much of the stability of hearts, frames, and exercise of grace, as of state; though a firm, steady, and stable assurance of interest in Christ, is what God gives by his Spirit. The apostle's view seems to be this, that whatever steadfastness and stability the saints have, whether ministers or people, they ought to ascribe it entirely to God, Father, Son, and Spirit. “Secondly”, the anointing of them:

*he hath anointed us*; which is to be understood either of the unction of ministers, with the gifts of the Spirit for ministerial service; or rather of the anointing of private Christians with the grace of the Spirit, compared to oil or ointment, in allusion to the anointing oil under the law, by which the tabernacle, and its vessels, Aaron, and his sons, were anointed, who were typical of the saints and priests of God under the Gospel; or to the lamp oil in the candlestick, which was pure, and for light; or to oil in common, for its sweet smell, refreshing nature, and for its usefulness for ornament and

healing. This also is the Lord's work, and not man's; this unction comes from the God of all grace, through Christ, by the Spirit.

**Ver. 22.** *Who hath also sealed us*, etc..] “Two” things more are here attributed to God; “first”, the sealing of his people. The use of seals is various, as to denote property in things, to distinguish one thing from another, to show esteem and affection for persons or things, and for security and protection, and to hide and conceal; all which might be applied to sealing, as expressive of the grace of God to his people, in claiming a property in them, distinguishing them from the rest of the world, setting his affections on them, securing and protecting their persons, and hiding them under the shadow of his wings: but sometimes a seal is used to certify, make sure, or assure the truth of a thing; (see <sup><4183></sup>John 3:33 <sup><4003></sup>1 Corinthians 9:3 <sup><4330></sup>Jeremiah 33:10) in which sense the word “sealing” is used here, and intends that assurance which God gives his people of their interest in his love, and the covenant of grace; of their election of God, and redemption by Christ; of their interest in Christ, and union with him; of their justification by him, and adoption through him; of the truth of grace in their hearts, their perseverance in it, and sure and certain enjoyment of eternal glory. The persons thus sealed are not carnal and unconverted persons, only believers in Christ, and these, after they commence such; the seal by which they are sealed, is not any of the ordinances, as circumcision under the Old Testament, or baptism, or the Lord's supper under the New; for these are no seals, nor are they ever so called; but the Spirit of God himself, as the Holy Spirit of promise; for the same who, in the next clause, is called the earnest, is the seal; (see <sup><4013></sup>Ephesians 1:13). “Secondly”, the giving of the earnest of the Spirit:

*and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts*: by “the Spirit” is meant, not the gifts and graces of the Spirit merely, but the Spirit of God and Christ himself; who was concerned in the creation of the world, in inditing the Scriptures, in forming and filling the human nature of Christ, and in his resurrection from the dead; he himself is given as an “earnest”: the word **ἄρραβων**, here used, and in (<sup><4185></sup>2 Corinthians 5:5 <sup><4014></sup>Ephesians 1:14) is the Hebrew word **ʾwbr** [ , and comes from **br** [ , which signifies “to become a surety, to give a pledge”; and is used for a pledge in covenants and bargains, both in Scripture, (see <sup><1387></sup>Genesis 38:17,18,20), and in Jewish writings <sup>f4</sup>; which is given as an earnest, and in part of what it is a pledge of, and is never returned: the Spirit of God is an earnest or pledge of the heavenly inheritance, which is not only prepared for us, and

promised to us, and Christ is in the possession of in our nature, in our room and stead, and as our representative; but the Spirit of God also is sent down “into our hearts” as a pledge of it; where he dwells as in his temple, supplies us with all grace, witnesses to us our sonship, and assures us of the heavenly glory: and as such he is “given”; and an unmerited free grace gift he is; for him to be given in this manner, and for such a purpose, is a wonderful display of the love of the Father, and of the Son, and is a surprising instance of his grace and condescension of the Spirit, and for which we should be abundantly thankful.

**Ver. 23.** *Moreover, I call God for a record upon my soul,* etc..] The apostle having asserted his stability, both as a minister and a Christian, which, with others, he had from God, appeals to him in the most solemn manner, in full form of an oath, for the truth of what he was about to say; and is all one as if he had said, I swear by the living God, the searcher of all hearts; I call upon him to attest what I say, and bear witness to my soul, that it is true,

*that to spare you, I came not as yet unto Corinth;* however fickle, unstable, and inconstant, it may be insinuated to you I am, or you may take me to be, I do assure you in the name and presence of God, that the true reason of my not coming to you hitherto, since I gave you reason to expect me, was, that I might not be burdensome or chargeable to you; or I have delayed coming to you, hoping for a reformation among you, that when I do come, I may not come with a rod, and severely chastise you for the many disorders among you; that I might not use sharpness according to the power God has given me, in an extraordinary way, as an apostle, to punish for offences committed. Hence we learn, that an oath is a solemn appeal to God, and may be lawfully made in cases of moment and importance, as this of the apostle's was; whose character was traduced, and with which was connected the usefulness of his ministry; and it being an affair that could not be determined in any other way, and an oath being for confirmation, and to put an end to strife, he makes one in this serious and awful manner.

**Ver. 24.** *Not for that we have dominion,* etc..] Since he had spoke of “sparing” of them, lest it should be thought that he and his fellow ministers assumed to themselves any tyrannical power over the churches, or lorded it over God's heritage, these words are subjoined: in which there is something denied of the ministers of the Gospel, as that they

*have not dominion over your faith:* by which may be meant both the grace and doctrine of faith: they cannot give or produce in the heart the grace of faith; that is the gift of God; of which Christ is not only the object, but the author; it is of the operation of the Spirit, and the effect of almighty power; it flows entirely from the free grace of God; all that ministers can do is to propose the object of faith, and, by arguments taken from the word of God, encourage souls to believe in the object proposed, and so are, through a divine blessing on their ministrations, instruments by which some believe; but they themselves cannot command faith in any; nor can they increase or add unto it where it is; this also is the Lord's work: nor have they any dominion over the doctrine of faith; they are to deliver nothing to the people but what is contained in the Scriptures, and the people are obliged to believe no more than what they find there; no alteration is to be made in the rule and doctrine of faith; ministers have no power to make and impose new articles of faith, though they may require and insist upon an assent to those truths which they deliver, according to the word of God. Likewise, something is asserted of them,

*but are helpers of your joy.* "Joy" is a grace wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, of which Christ is the object; it goes along with faith, and as that improves, so does this; it is often interrupted by the corruptions of the heart, the temptations of Satan, and divine desertions, and so is in this life imperfect; though it may be increased, as it sometimes is, and that by the ministration of the Gospel; for as the ministers of it are the means and instruments of that joy which is first felt in conversion, so likewise of increasing it by their comfortable doctrines and instructions; for their ministry is, and is often blessed, for the furtherance and joy of faith. A reason of which is given,

*for by faith ye stand;* and so are not subject to men, nor to any tyrannical government of ours; nor have we anything to charge you with concerning your faith: which may design the grace of faith, and express its use in the perseverance of the saints, who stand not upon their faith, but "by it"; and by it, not as a cause but as a means of their perseverance; by which they rely on the power and faithfulness of God, lean upon Christ, and walk on in him, live upon him, continually receive from him, and in his strength stand against the temptations of Satan, and snares of the world: and it may also denote the strength and continuance of faith; a man may be said to stand by it, when he strongly believes his interest in God, in his love, and the covenant of his grace, his interest in Christ, and salvation by him; is

satisfied about the truth of grace on his soul, makes no demur upon the promises, nor hesitates about the doctrines of grace, or his future happiness, but rejoices in hope of the glory of God; as also, when he continues in the exercise of faith, notwithstanding the corruptions of his nature, the temptations of Satan, the hidings of God's face, and the many afflictions and trials he meets with in the world. Moreover, this passage may be applied to the doctrine of faith, in and by which the saints may be said to stand, in opposition to any wavering or hesitation about it, to a cowardly spirit in giving way in the least to the adversaries of it, or to a departing from it; which by no means should be done, though a greater number is on the other side, and they be the rich and learned; though the doctrines of it are disagreeable to the carnal reason of man, are loaded with reproach, and followed with the rage, malice, and persecutions of men: or these words may relate to a profession of faith: care should be used in taking up a profession of faith; where the true grace of God is, it ought to be done; when it is made, it ought to be stood in, and abode by; and it is the honour of saints to stand in it, and to it, and hold it fast.