

Message #2**II Corinthians 1:1-2**

When I got back into my office this week and started listening to phone messages, there was one from a woman in Indianapolis who has been listening to our radio broadcast and wants our tapes. Her message was something like this: “Hello, I am ____ from Indianapolis and I have been listening...” Right up front she introduced herself. She gave her name, her location, her reason for calling and her phone number. In this way, we do not have to listen to someone talking on the phone and try to figure out who she is and what she wants.

That is exactly how biblical letters began. In biblical times, it was very important to tell who was writing the letter and to whom it was written at the beginning because otherwise one would have to unravel the whole letter to find out who sent it and wrote it. That is why the letters in the Bible begin in the way they do.

So in many ways Paul begins this letter of II Corinthians with “the stereotyped formula.” This does teach us something significant about the written Word of God. God’s written Word is designed to reach real people in the very culture in which they live. God did not float His Word down from heaven on stone tablets, He used the type of paper, ink and language of the people that was normal to them. However, as we consider the fact that Paul is writing inspired truth, it becomes obvious that He has a purpose for every word God is directing Him to write. It seems to me that:

PAUL BEGINS HIS LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS BY A SALUTATION THAT BEGINS TO LEAD THEM TO THINK ABOUT HIS APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY AND GOD’S GRACE .

While we were on vacation, I had the opportunity to watch some “Christian television.” The one thing that stood out to me about this is very few actually accurately expound the Scriptures. It is a very rare thing to find a man on television who systematically and accurately expounds God’s Word. But as rare as this is today, it was even more rare to actually have a real apostle of God write you an inspired letter and when you were privileged to have this, it was certainly right to view it as an authoritative letter.

This is an inspired letter of God and yet, as Paul begins, it follows the typical pattern of the Greco-Roman world in which it was written. Now there are four introductions that are given to us in these verses:

INTRODUCTION #1 – We are introduced to Paul . 1:1a

There are three facts we learn about Paul:

Fact #1 - Paul’s name is Paul . Acts 13:9

We may remember that Paul’s named was originally Saul. Luke recorded this name change for Paul in the book of Acts (i.e. Acts 13:9). Paul’s original name was Saul and just like King Saul he was from the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5).

But when Paul met Jesus Christ, everything about him was changed and he became Paul—one dedicated to grace, not Saul, the man who had been dedicated to law.

Fact #2 - Paul was an apostle of Christ Jesus.

Now it is interesting that Paul does not use an article “the” (anarthrous construction) before the noun apostle. **What that means is that Paul is not saying he is the only apostle, but he is saying I am one of the apostles. Paul had all the character and quality and attributes of being an apostle.**

This is important for Paul to begin this way because there were some people who were falsely alleging that he was not qualified to be an apostle (II Cor. 11:5; 12:12). **By using this anarthrous construction, Paul is saying I am as qualified to be an apostle just like every other apostle.**

Now the word “apostle” (αποστολος) refers to one who is specifically sent and commissioned by God to be an apostle. **The fact that he was an apostle “of Christ Jesus” means that Jesus Christ specifically was the source of his apostleship and the object of his apostleship.** In other words, the one who sent him and commissioned him was Christ Jesus, and Jesus Christ was the whole focal point of his apostleship.

By using the proper noun formula “Christ Jesus,” Paul maintains his Jew-first philosophy of ministry. Paul is saying “I am an apostle of the Jewish Messiah (Christ) and Savior (Jesus) of the world.”

I doubt that most of us who are not Jewish even begin to grasp the privilege we have of having a relationship with the God of Israel. I don’t think the Corinthians had any deep appreciation for this grace because if they did, they would not have been so troubled.

Paul begins this letter by telling these Corinthians that I have been chosen and commissioned to be an apostle by Jesus Christ Himself.

Fact #3 - Paul was an apostle by the will of God.

If it wasn’t a strong enough point that He was commissioned by Jesus Christ to be an apostle, he also adds this was all by the “will of God.” Paul says right up front that you need to know I did not become an apostle by some human appointment or human agency or by something I was looking to become. My appointment to being an apostle came by a direct commissioning “through the will of God.” **What these words mean is that Paul’s apostleship was that which was willed by God.** His apostleship was nothing he willed or anyone else willed for his life.

If ever there is a story of one who truly was sovereignly elected and chosen of God to be an apostle, it was Paul. The story in Acts 9 is an amazing story. Paul was not looking to become an apostle, so it certainly was not of his will.

In fact, when Paul reflected on this point he never believed he deserved to be an apostle, actually saying that he was the chief or foremost of sinners (I Tim. 1:12, 15-16). When I get to heaven, I intend to look Paul up and point out he wasn't really the chief of sinners, because he has just met one far worse than he ever was.

But Paul was not an apostle by his will and his apostleship was confirmed by the other apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 9:28), and his apostolic message was confirmed by the Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-21).

Now again, some people were attacking Paul's right to be an apostle and they actually got some people to question whether or not Paul had the right to be an apostle. So Paul is very strong in stating my apostleship came directly from God's will.

INTRODUCTION #2 – We are introduced to Timothy. 1:1b

Now Timothy is identified as “the brother” (ο αδελφος). Timothy had a special relationship with Paul and with the Corinthian church. On Paul's second missionary journey, Paul asked Timothy to travel with him (Acts 16:1-5) and he traveled with Paul all over the Mediterranean world. He became Paul's friend who helped Paul establish many churches. Sometimes Paul would send Timothy out on various assignments and he did become his personal agent to the church of Corinth.

Timothy had been with Paul when he first founded the church in Corinth on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1, 5). Timothy had been sent by Paul to Corinth to deliver I Corinthians and to check up on the church (Acts 19:22; I Cor. 4:17; 16:10). Timothy was a very loyal and faithful brother to Paul. In fact, he was Paul's son in the faith.

Paul's integrity was being attacked by people in the church, but Timothy was right at Paul's side. He knew the truth and he was a great defender of the truth. He knew of Paul's integrity and his intensity, and by reminding the Corinthians that Timothy was with him, it would help to remind these Corinthians that his commitment to Jesus Christ was known and seen by more than just himself.

When you are being criticized, it is good to have loyal eyewitnesses who come to your defense. Timothy was that kind of man for Paul.

INTRODUCTION #3 – We are introduced to the church. 1:1c

There are three facts given to us about this church:

Fact #1 - It was the church of the God. (τη εκκλησια του θεου)

This point was something these Corinthians needed to remember—this was not their church, this was God's church. This was a true church of the true God.

This was a specific church that God had established. God sovereignly worked in people and saved them and he caused them to form a church.

The Corinthians were all fuzzy in their thinking about church. They viewed it as their church and Paul says no way, this is God's church. **Right from the beginning of this letter Paul wanted to establish his legitimate apostleship and God's legal ownership of the church in Corinth.**

The fact that the Church is God's Church makes the Church totally and completely different than any other organization in the world.

Fact #2 - It was the church of God in the city of Corinth.

This church was located in a real city with real people with major sin issues and problems. As far as we may determine, God did not choose to plant a church in Athens, but He did choose to plant a church in Corinth.

Corinth was, as one commentator said, a "wild boom town." It was the political capital of southern Greece and it was a city that featured Roman politicians, commercial businessmen and luxurious lifestyles. As G. Campbell Morgan said, this city was "infected" with masses of people who were given to corrupt and indecent practices (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 427).

When we visited Ephesus, one thing that became apparent is that Ephesus was a very immoral city filled with idolatrous temples that featured immorality. In fact, immorality lured people to the city. **Now keep this in your mind; of all the immoral places in the world, Corinth was the worst.** In fact, the phrase "they live like a Corinthian" became a metaphorical figure of speech that meant people lived an immoral, drunken life style of debauchery. Corinth was the world center for a corrupt life. It was a city completely given over to sensual and immoral behavior. It was in this crazy, corrupt city that God said to Paul, "I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:10). In other words, **God was saying I am going to save many people in this city and establish My Church.**

This would be the equivalent of God saying I have many people in Amsterdam of the Netherlands or New Orleans of Louisiana or San Francisco of California. Those places are known to be wild, immoral, somewhat lawless places and these are just the kind of places where God pours out His grace and plants His church.

It seems to me that believers in a particular location can lose sight of the blessing and privilege it is to have a true church in the place where they live. As I mentioned, when we were in Turkey we stayed in a city located 50 miles south of Ephesus called Kusadasi. This city has a population of 60,000 people and no church. Think about that. Just 50 miles from where Paul and John and Timothy and Apollos and Aquilla and Priscilla and Gaius were known to have been and there is no church.

What a privilege it is if God establishes a church in a particular city and he certainly had done that in Corinth.

Fact #3 - It was the church of God that was in the state of Achaia .

Achaia was the southern portion of Greece. It was like a state, separate from Macedonia. Now there were many believers in Achaia (II Cor. 11:10). There were believers in Corinth and believers in Cenchrea and there were believers in areas that, as far as we know, did not even have a church.

It seems to me that one of the points of this was to further show how rare it was to have God to have pinpointed this part of the world and establish a church in Corinth. This did not happen everywhere in the world.

Now you will notice that Paul calls the believers “the saints” (τοις αγιοις). **The word “saint” means that believers are positionally set apart unto God as sacred.** In other words, every believer is classified by God as a sacred saint by virtue of the fact that God has saved him.

This point really does disprove Lordship salvation. **The Corinthians were saints by position, but they certainly were not saints by practice .** The main problem Paul had with the Corinthians was trying to convince them to yield their lives to Jesus Christ. They were truly saved, but they were not allowing Jesus Christ to be Lord of their lives. This is why Paul wrote these letters.

There were obviously many of them throughout the region of Achaia.

INTRODUCTION #4 – We are introduced to God’s grace and peace . **1:2**

Grace is the undeserved, unmerited, unearned favor of God that comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Peace is the positional peace that means a sinner is no longer in hostile war against God. There are three observations we want to make:

Observation #1 - Grace and peace is to you . **1:2a**

It is an amazing thing to think about the fact that it was possible for these Corinthians, as fleshly as they were, to have experienced the grace and peace of God. These Corinthians had been heathen sinners, caught up with some of the most evil and immoral sins known to mankind. Yet, God’s grace and God’s peace was given to them.

The two letters to the Corinthians prove any sinner can experience the grace of God and be at peace with God. These same two letters also disprove Lordship salvation. The whole point of Paul writing four letters to the Corinthians, two of which are inspired, is to try to get these distorted believers to try and yield their lives to God. In other words, the whole point was to try to get them to make Jesus Christ the Lord of their lives.

Even though they were not doing that, they still had experienced the grace of God and the peace of God. In other words, they were truly saved, but they were not letting Jesus be Lord of their lives or their church.

Observation #2 - Grace and peace is from God our Father.

Grace and peace originate with God the Father.

God could have been and would have been just if He would have destroyed us all, but He decided not to do that.

In an amazing demonstration of grace, He decided to make it possible for us to have a relationship with Him through providing a sacrifice for us that would take care of all of our sin.

No person will ever have real peace in their life until they have experienced the grace of God. Until a person is in a right relationship with God, peace will be lacking in life. It is that simple.

Last week I had the opportunity to visit with someone I had worked with many years ago in radio. He told me of a man who had been an alcoholic but very successful in business who died and left behind a fortune of about 4 million dollars. I pointed out that isn't it interesting that he could not take one dime with him. Then my friend said, "That is true, but I will tell you this, he truly enjoyed his life." I said to him, "if he so enjoyed his life, why was he an alcoholic." Alcoholics are typically drinking to try to forget about their miserable life and it doesn't matter if one has ten dollars or ten million dollars, they do not have peace because they have never experienced the grace of God.

Observation #3 - Grace and peace is from the Lord Jesus Christ.

By using three nouns for Jesus Christ, Paul is saying **Jesus Christ is God (Lord), Jesus Christ is the Savior (Jesus), and Jesus Christ is the Messiah (Christ).**

Now the preposition "from" is one that means that this is where grace and peace originate. **By virtue of the fact that the conjunction "and" (καί), which joins the Father to Jesus Christ, is a coordinating conjunction and not a subordinating conjunction, we know that God and Jesus are co-equal in Deity and co-equal as the source of grace and peace.**

You cannot have peace with God apart from Jesus Christ. You are in war with God until you come to terms with the fact that Jesus is God, Jesus is the only Savior and Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. God demands that we see ourselves as sinners and see Jesus Christ as our only Savior.

Now what is grammatically interesting about the "grace and peace" is that neither one contains an article "the." What this means is that the character and quality of all grace and peace is from God and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

So what this means is that no one will have grace or peace apart from God the Father and apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. **God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are a single source of grace and peace.**

You may be here today all confused about life. You may have a life that has been filled with all kinds of sin. If you will turn your life over to Jesus Christ, you will experience the grace and the peace of God.