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A1325 – June 23, 2013 – 2 Corinthians 1:1-2
Salutation

Last week we introduced 2 Corinthians, the most neglected NT epistle as evidenced by the fact that there are fewer commentaries written on this NT book than any other. And yet that is unfortunate because the book makes a number of unique contributions insofar as it relates to the pastoral ministry, to Christian giving and to the authority of the apostles.

Last time we began with a brief church history of the local church at Corinth, how it was founded, when it was founded, who it was founded by and Paul's interaction with them. Today we want to review this church's history, give a three-fold outline of the letter to help you remember the book, state the argument of the book so you get the thrust of what this book teaches us and finally begin by exegeting the first few verses.

As far as the church's history, Paul established the local church at Corinth on his second missionary journey in AD50-51 (Acts 18:1-18). A few years later Paul wrote a short letter, now lost, instructing them not to associate with immoral believers about AD53-55 (1 Cor 5:9-11). Shortly thereafter he received reports of divisions and carnality from people out of Chloe's house (1 Cor 1:11) as well as a letter from them revealing various problems at the church (1 Cor 7:1). In response Paul wrote the letter of 1 Corinthians and sent Timothy in order to secure repentance around AD54-56 (1 Cor 4:17; 16:10). Unfortunately, Timothy reported that they did not repent and so Paul was forced to make a short and painful visit (2 Cor 2:1). During the visit Paul was offended by a man who insulted him publicly (2 Cor 2:5-8). In response, when Paul returned to Ephesus he wrote a "severe letter," now lost, encouraging the assembly to discipline the man (2 Cor 2:3-4; 7:8-12). The letter secured the repentance of the majority who took action and engaged in church discipline. In response Paul wrote the letter of 2 Corinthians where he

expresses his joy over the majority's repentance (2 Cor 1-7) and encourages them to complete the good work of collecting for the saints in Jerusalem (2 Cor 8-9). To the minority who remained unrepentant Paul gave evidences of his apostleship and encouraged them to repent (2 Cor 10-13).

Therefore as A. T. Robertson said, "Chapters 1 to 7 deal with the report of Titus about the victory in Corinth and Paul's wonderful digression on the glory of the ministry in 2:12 to 6:10; chapters 8 and 9 discuss the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem already mentioned in I Cor. 16:1f. and which Titus is to press to completion on his return to Corinth; chapters 10 to 13 deal sharply with the Judaizing minority who still oppose Paul's leadership."ⁱ The book therefore easily divides into these three parts. First, Paul wrote 2 Cor 1-7 to Express his Joy over the Majority that Repented. Second, Paul wrote 2 Cor 8-9 to Encourage Them to Complete the Good Work of Collecting for the Saints in Jerusalem. Third, Paul wrote 2 Cor 10-13 to give Evidence of His Apostleship to the Minority. If you can remember that 2 Corinthians divides into three E's; Express, Encourage and give Evidence you'll be well on your way to understanding and recalling the book of 2 Corinthians.

As far as the argument of the book, what's the big idea? What's the common thread that unites all three sections of the letter? Paul's authority as an apostle. In the first and third sections Paul writes clearly about his apostolic authority but his strong urges in the second section also evidence his apostolic authority. Therefore the argument of the book is that the authority of the apostles must be obeyed or else church discipline will follow. However, we're in a different situation than the 1st century church since the apostles passed from the scene at the end of the 1st century. So where does apostolic authority reside today? In the apostolic writings of the NT canon. Therefore, from our standpoint, the argument of the book is that the authority of the apostolic writings captured in the NT canon must be obeyed or else church discipline will follow.

So two basic things; authority, the issue of authority and church discipline, the role of believer's holding other believers accountable. Both of these are hot issues today. The question of authority and where our ultimate authority resides is an obvious point of contention. Does authority reside in the individual's experience such that the believer's experience validates or authenticates the Scriptures? No. An individual may experience many things

but those experiences do not validate or invalidate the word of God. Does authority reside in human reason such that human reason validates or authenticates the Scriptures? No. Human reason is fallen and when redeemed it is a finite tool that is the handmaiden of the Scripture. Its proper role is not to dismantle the Scriptures but to submit to them and organize them into a systematic whole. So experience is not where authority is grounded and neither is human reason. Ultimately authority resides in the Scriptures alone such that both experience and human reason are subject to the explanation given to them in the Scripture. The Scripture stands above all because it is the very word of God Himself spoken into history from outside of history through apostles and prophets.

The question of church discipline is how fellow believers relate to sin within the believing community. There are two kinds of sin. First, private sin. Private sin occurs mentally in our thought patterns and as fellow humans we don't have access to other believer's private sins unless they tell us so they are not the subject of church discipline. Although God does know about them and He does discipline them. Second, public sin. Public sin occurs visibly or openly before fellow humans and so we do have access to believer's public sins and so they are the subject of church discipline and this is where people get antsy. They don't want to be called into the open for their sin but they've already drawn attention to it themselves by doing it publicly so really they are the ones who made it an issue, not the people who confront them about their public sin. People say, well, we should just exercise grace, by which they mean an unbiblical view of grace, overlooking public sin and not fulfilling their God-directed duty. It's easier to go that route and feel pious about yourself while you rationalize it by saying, "Well, we all sin." Yes, we do, but public, open sin is declared by God to be a subject fellow believers must confront and how arrogant of you to set aside the word of the living God and not do it and thereby make yourself out to be the God of the universe. Why is church discipline necessary? Two basic reasons. First, it is necessary on a local church level in order to keep the church pure so it will remain a lighthouse to the community. What happens if the church doesn't resolve its open sin problems? Gradually the church becomes like the world so that the church is no longer a light to the world but a dark place like the world. "a little leaven leavens the whole lump." Second, it is loving toward a fellow believer. How is it loving them to confront them about their public sin? Because sin enslaves, it puts them in bondage. So the most loving thing you

can do is turn them from their sin so they can be set free. Then they are restored to fellowship with God and can continue to grow in grace and knowledge so they will be ready to stand at the judgment seat of Christ and receive reward. “He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”

Therefore, the argument of the book is along the lines of authority residing in the word of God, not in reason or experience and on the necessity of church discipline as a means of maintaining purity in the local church so the church remains a light to the world and restoring believers to fellowship so they can grow in grace.

Beginning with the exegesis in verse 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: 2Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** You will notice right away in verse 1 that the book argument is proleptic in Paul’s claim to be **an apostle**. It is laid out beforehand in seminal form and will be developed throughout the book. But before we deal with his apostleship let’s deal with **Paul** himself. If you’ll turn to Acts 9. Paul had two names, his other name was Saul. Saul is clearly his Hebrew name just like King Saul, in fact he was of the same tribe as King Saul, the tribe of Benjamin. And was therefore part of the southern kingdom of Judah that had been partially restored to the land after the Exile even though his family lived in the Diaspora in Tarsus of Cilicia. But his father sent him to Jerusalem to study to be a great rabbi. He was brilliant, excelling far above all his classmates and moving rapidly toward becoming the next great rabban under professor Gamaliel, one of only seven rabbi’s to reach the status of rabban, “the teacher of all Israel.” However, in the course of Saul’s studies, as he honed his knowledge through debate halls of the Synagogue of the Freedmen, he met Stephen, a believer in Jerusalem who was also from the Diaspora and they entered into debate and Saul was unable to cope with Stephen’s ability to handle the Scriptures and so Saul became furious. He had never been so destroyed in a debate and so he determined to destroy Stephen by murder, which he successfully did in violation of the very Law of Moses he claimed to maintain. Saul then went on a vicious rampage against the church in Jerusalem which resulted in the church being scattered out of Jerusalem into the surrounding regions of Judea and Samaria. He was

dragging off men and women and putting them in chains in prison. But those who were scattered went about preaching the word of God and seeing people set free from the chains of sin and death. As the church spread out Saul set off to Damascus with letters in hand, breathing threats, even murder against them. Determined to stomp out this teaching in verse 3 a bright light from heaven flashed around him and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” 5And he said, “Who are you, Sir?” And He said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, 6but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.” It was on that day on that road, we learn later, that Saul believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and was justified instantaneously. And when he got into the city and his scales fell from his eyes he was given this apostolic commission related in verse 15, “he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; 16for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.” So right there is Saul’s apostolic commission and therefore Saul is not his non-Christian name and Paul his Christian name, has nothing to do with that, in verse 17 Ananias refers to him as brother Saul, and references to him as Saul continue until Acts 13:9. So the one who had set out to Damascus to destroy Christians walked into Damascus a Christian himself. The greatest persecutor of the Christian faith became the greatest proponent of the Christian faith. Now in Acts 13:9, after several years of training we find Saul in Acts 13:9 on his first missionary journey with Barnabas and Mark and they’re on the island of Cyprus where Saul defeated Sergius Paulus and here we are notified for the first time that “Saul was also known as Paul.” Why a double name? Not because one is his Jewish name and one is his Christian name. Nonsense, we’ve already shown that. And why not the Greek form of the Hebrew Saul? Paul is not the Greek form. Well, probably because the Greek form of Saul means “effeminate” and that was not fitting. Some suggest he chose Paul because in the Greek it means “little” and Paul was little in stature. As *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, an early apocryphal work describes Paul, “little in stature, bald-headed, bow-legged, well built (or vigorous), with knitted eye-brows, rather long-nosed, full of grace, appearing now as a man, and now having the face of an angel.”ⁱⁱ Not the most flattering description. Others consider he was named Paul because it means “little” and depicts his humiliation as the “least of the apostles and not fit to be called an apostle because he persecuted the church of God.” Still others, and self-included, think that Paul was his Roman name and when in Rome you do as the Romans. So when Paul went out on his missionary

journeys in the Roman world he went by Paul.ⁱⁱⁱ When he was in and around Jerusalem he went by Saul. However, he eventually became more well-known as Paul since he was the apostle to the Gentiles. It may also reflect his humility as least among the apostles but less likely his physical stature, Paul was more concerned with the spiritual and not the physical.

As we return to 2 Cor 1 you see that Paul attributes his apostleship to **the will of God** and that is what we saw in Acts 9 on the Damascus Road and subsequent entrance into Damascus and his commissioning. He was **an apostle of Jesus Christ** since it was Jesus Christ who gave him the commissioning to take Christ's name to the Gentiles, to kings and to the sons of Israel. In other words, to preach the gospel. And the loose sense of the Greek word *apostolos* is "one who preaches the gospel." However, Paul was more than that because he also saw Jesus Christ in His resurrection body and received orders from Him. Therefore he also qualifies for the narrow use of the term *apostolos* which means "one sent in the authority of the sender, a messenger with orders, a delegate," such that when Paul spoke he did not speak in his own authority but in the authority of the one who sent him, Jesus Christ. So to reject the message of Paul was not a rejection of Paul but a rejection of Jesus Christ. Therefore to disobey the apostolic writings is to disobey Jesus Christ. Paul spoke with Christ's authority.

Of course **Christ Jesus** is the Anointed One, the Messiah who is the Lord who saves. The very name implies both His Person and Work; He is the Lord Himself, sent as the Messiah to seek and save that which is lost. And of course Paul's apostleship was **by the will of God**. Paul did not choose to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul was a persecutor of the Lord Jesus Christ. But in the eternal plan of God Paul was chosen to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. God is the one who's calling the shots in history. Paul had no interest in becoming an apostle on the Damascus Road. Paul had an interest in killing some Christians. But the will of God was that Paul was not going to kill those Christians, Paul was going to become a Christian, and more than that, an apostle, a special class of person who are set apart for a specific purpose. When Paul explains his apostleship in Gal 1:15-16 he lifts the language used of the OT prophets who said they were set apart from their mother's womb and applies it to himself. What these descriptions mean is that Paul recognized that God had planned for him to be an apostle from all eternity past. It was a part of the eternal plan of God. He was set apart from all

eternity past to be an apostle. And the fact he uses the same expression used of OT prophets like Jeremiah and Isaiah shows you that Paul considered his apostleship on par with the OT prophets. He was no lesser authority because they were all sent by God.

And notice what Paul says next, **and Timothy our brother** or literally, **brother Timothy**. What relationship does Timothy have to Paul and this letter? Is Timothy a co-author, an amanuensis or a co-sender of the letter? Timothy is not a co-author, Paul is the author. Timothy is probably not an amanuensis either since on occasion when the amanuensis is named it's at the end of the letter not the beginning. Timothy appears then to be a co-sender of the letter.^{iv} Why does Paul mention Timothy as co-sender? What difference does it make? Well, every accusation must be confirmed by two or three witnesses for there to be a valid accusation. Is Paul making an accusation in this letter? Yes. He's calling the minority to repent. So who are the two or three witnesses in verse 1? Paul and Timothy (2 Cor 13:1). Could Timothy confirm the accusations Paul is going to make? Of course he can, he was sent by Paul to secure repentance about the same time 1 Corinthians was sent. So Timothy knows the problems, Timothy personally saw and could confirm the carnality of the Corinthians. So the mention of Timothy is because he's co-sender of the letter and that's necessary for there to meet the criteria of two or three witnesses whenever you make an accusation.

Middle of verse 1 and we see the addressee of the letter, **To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia**. So the recipients involve the entire region of **Achaia** which is the southern province of Greece and especially the Peloponnesian Peninsula. It was distinct from Macedonia, the northern province of Greece. So Paul would be writing this letter in particular to the believers at Corinth but in general to all the saints throughout Achaia, this would include the saints at Athens and Cenchræa and Lechaëum and Delphi and Sparta as well as other cities throughout **Achaia**. However, Corinth was the central city in Achaia since the seat of government was in Corinth and the believers at Corinth were some of the first fruits of Achaia and obviously the gospel had spread out from Corinth into the surrounding cities.

Now the word **church** is *ekklesia* and refers to "an assembly, a gathering." This assembly belongs to **God**, it is **the church of God**, that is, the

assembly that belongs to God in distinction from the world. Since it belongs to God it is clearly a distinct group of people who have been blood bought, purchased, redeemed by the blood of Christ, set free from the slave market of sin at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone. That is, saints, as this refers to those who have believed throughout all **Achaia**. **Saints** is the Greek word *hagios* and refers to “set apart” or “holy” ones. All believers are set apart by God at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone. Set apart unto God and therefore “saints,” a title all believers hold and not a title for a special subset of believers. This letter is written for all saints in this region in general and the assembly in Corinth in particular. Even so, while some issues are clearly *ad hoc* the principles contained throughout 2 Corinthians are for all believers in all places at all times.

Confirming that they were indeed believers Paul says, **Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**, a loaded expression. Most people fly over this salutation and explain it away saying **grace** was a Gentile greeting and **peace** was the Jewish greeting so Paul is just greeting the Gentiles and Jews at this church. Nice try but it’s a bit more involved than that. This language of **grace** and **peace** comes from Numbers 6:24-26 which is the High Priestly Blessing. Paul was a Jew, a well-trained Jew who knew his OT and he’s always quoting and alluding to the OT throughout his letters so I want to show you where Paul is getting this expression **grace and peace**. Every year, once a year, on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, the high priest would go into the most holy place where the *shekinah* glory was enthroned above the cherubim on the lid of the ark of the covenant. The lid was called the *kiporet* or atonement seat because that’s where the blood was spilled out in order to atone for the nation Israel. So picture it, the high priest is going into this most holy place with the blood and he’s going to spill it on the lid of the ark very carefully, then he’s going to exit and when he exits with the blood on his hands he would quote this to the nation. Numbers 6:24,

“The Lord bless you, and keep you;
²⁵The Lord make His face shine on you,
And be *gracious* to you;
²⁶The Lord lift up His countenance on you,
And give you *peace*.”

Now look at that, verse 25 “grace,” verse 26 “peace.” Why did the high priest pronounce grace and peace to the nation Israel? Because atonement had just been made for the nation. God had graciously provided a way of approaching Him, through blood sacrifice and the result was peace to the nation Israel. So why does Paul pronounce grace and peace to the Church at the beginning of 2 Cor? Because the final atonement has been made once for all. God has graciously provided the final payment for sin, through the blood sacrifice of His own Son and the result is peace to the Church. We have peace with God! So when Paul says **grace to you and peace** it’s not just a nice little saying. It does sound nice but it’s much more than that. God the Father has shown us grace by sending His unique Son to provide the atoning sacrifice for the sins so that we now have peace with God.

If we look at these two words grace and peace individually we see how significant they are. **Grace** is the word that means “unmerited favor.” That is, minus your work, minus my work, minus all human works. God just smiles on us because of who and what He is and it has nothing to do with who and what we are. It’s pure grace. It was grace that He sent His Son to die for our sin. Then **peace, peace** is the result, it means “harmony,” we have harmony with God through the blood of Christ. Formerly we were enemies of God and hostile to Him but because of His grace we are now in harmony with God. So grace is the cause of our relationship, peace is the effect of our relationship. What a wonderful thing to have, peace with God. If you have that let me tell you something, you already have everything you need. You may have turmoil in this world but if you have peace with God everything else pales in comparison.

Now the end of verse 2, what’s the source of **grace** and **peace**? **From God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** It’s from two persons but only one source, it’s not coming from two sources even though there are two persons, it’s coming from only one source because in the Greek both persons are brought under one preposition. The one preposition is **from**, the two people are **God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** What that grammar means is that the two persons share the same essence. To make the two persons have two distinct essences would require it to say, “from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” But that’s not what it says and by so much Paul is grammatically laying out the Trinity. Trinity says God is one in essence and three in person. Paul agrees despite the Mormon’s and the

Unitarians and the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Muslims who all worship a false image of God, a projected concept of God created by the mind of man which for them is the ultimate god.

So the grace and peace come from the one God who is Father and Christ and in eternity past the Father determined to graciously send the Son and the Son determined to graciously die for our sin and the result was peace with the Father through the Son. All that is coming out of verse 2.

Alright, what can we learn from today's lesson? First, the apostolic writings are authoritative because the apostle's writings did not originate with the apostles but with God who chose the apostles. Therefore the apostolic writings are the rule of life for all believers. They are authoritative and to disobey them results in loss of fellowship with God that can be recovered through confession of known sin. Second, all believers have been shown the grace of God through God's provision of His own Son to be the sacrifice for our sins by which we have peace with God. We may get out of fellowship with God but we can never lose our peace with God which is an eternal standing we have with Him. So from this strong position concerning the Scriptures and the Corinthian's position Paul begins to Expound the Joys of the Ministry despite the continuous difficulties.

ⁱ Robertson, A. (1933). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (1 Co 16:22). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.

ⁱⁱ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol 1, p 282.

ⁱⁱⁱ Of course Judea and Jerusalem were part of Rome but there was a degree of Jewish rule and certainly predominate Jewish population in Judea and Jerusalem and such that he went by Saul.

^{iv} Vincent, M. R. (1887). *Word studies in the New Testament* (2 Co 1:1). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

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