

## Worksheet #2: 2 Corinthians 1:1–2:11

### Introduction:

In the book of 2 Corinthians, Paul again writes to the church at Corinth, though some time after the writing of 1 Corinthians. During the period of time between the writing of these two epistles, it appears that at least some of the Corinthians had begun to question Paul's authority and personal character.

As Paul opens this letter to the Corinthian church, he begins by affirming his apostolic authority (1:1–2) and then proceeds to offer a thanksgiving prayer in 1:3–11 that compresses many of the themes found in chapters 1–7. Immediately after the opening formalities, Paul launches into an unusually personal section where he defends himself against the charges of his critics (1:12–2:11). From Paul's statements in this section, we can glean that the Corinthians apparently questioned his character (1:12–14), possibly due to some change in the apostle's travel plans (1:15–2:4). Additionally, it appears that there is ongoing disagreement regarding the restoration of a certain individual from the Corinthian church who apparently had been disciplined, but is now repentant (2:5–11). Although some have identified this individual with the incestuous man in 1 Corinthians 5, that identification is somewhat dubious since the individual is not specifically identified in this passage.

### Abbreviated Outline<sup>1</sup> (current passage in bold):

- I. Introduction (1:1–11)
  - A. Salutation (1:1–2)
  - B. Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:3–7)
  - C. Explanation of Paul's Thanksgiving (1:8–11)
- II. Paul's Relationship with the Corinthians (1:12–2:11)
  - A. Paul's Pure Conduct (1:12–14)
  - B. Paul's Change in Plans (1:15–22)
  - C. The Reason for the Change in Plans (1:23–2:4)
  - D. Forgiveness to the Repentant Sinner (2:5–11)
- III. Paul's Defense of his Ministry (2:12–7:16)
  - A. Paul's Ministry in Troas and Macedonia (2:12–17)
  - B. Paul's Letters of Recommendation (3:1–3)
  - C. Paul's Competence (3:4–6)
  - D. Ministry of the New Covenant (3:7–18)
  - E. The Unveiled Truth (4:1–6)
  - F. Treasure in Clay Jars (4:7–18)
  - G. The Coming Resurrection (5:1–10)
  - H. The Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11–6:2)
  - I. Catalog of Paul's Sufferings (6:3–13)
  - J. Call to Separate from Paul's Opponents (6:14–7:1)
  - K. Paul's Final Defense (7:2–16)
- IV. The Collection for the Believers in Jerusalem (8:1–9:15)
- V. Paul's Renewed Defense of his Apostleship (10:1–13:4)
- VI. Final Exhortations (13:5–12)
- VII. Closing (13:13)

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 484.

**Interpretation:** *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. Notice how Paul affirms his apostolic status in 1:1, “an apostle of Jesus Christ *by the will of God*” (emphasis added). Compare Acts 9:15. Why might Paul be emphasizing this aspect of his calling here?  

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2. Explain how Paul can say that his “consolation” can abound in the same measure as his “sufferings” do in 1:5. How does the relationship between these two experiences explain vv. 3–4?  

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3. Notice the way that Paul alternates between “us” and “you” in 1:3–7. What does Paul share with his audience in 1:7? What is his goal for them?  

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4. Apparently the Corinthians were already aware of the perilous situation Paul describes in 1:8–11. To whom does Paul credit his deliverance (1:10)?  

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5. To what witness does Paul appeal in his response to the Corinthians’ personal attacks (1:12)? Why is it important for Paul’s writings to clearly express his beliefs and motivations (1:13–14)?  

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6. In 1:15–17, Paul describes a change of travel plans and notes some complaints that these reflected weakness in his own character. To what witness does Paul appeal in v. 18 when he claims that his character remains blameless?  

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7. To whom does Paul credit true stability, and to what extent does that stability exist (1:21–22)?  

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8. What is the goal of church discipline, as described in 2:6–7?  

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**Application:** *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

9. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?  

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10. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?  

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