

2Cor 26-10-04a

Good morning. Welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 4th of October, 2026.

We continue our study in 2 Corinthians. We're beginning the formal sojourn through the actual text here, having had an introduction last week to the background and the circumstances, the chronology of Paul's visits and letters, as best we can understand them. We move into the message itself this morning.

Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study, and we'll begin. Father, what a wonderful comfort it is to know that you are the God of all comfort, that you have made provision for us. You have foreseen our needs, our challenges, our opportunities, our blessings in advance, and have woven the perfect fabric of your plan together for our benefit and your glory.

We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, through whom our standing and our position before you is made possible. In Him we have so many wonderful opportunities and blessings. We pray that as we look this morning at this portion of your word, that God the Holy Spirit will help us to come to a fresh appreciation of those potentials and those wonderful provisions by your grace.

We pray that in all things the Lord Jesus will be glorified, both in our services this morning and in our lives in the days ahead. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

The church in Corinth was plagued with problems almost from the beginning. We saw last time the founding of the church, Paul's initial stay there, and his continued ministry to that group, either by personal visit, by letter, or by sending representatives such as Timothy and Titus to check on the group, to encourage them, to endeavor to bring them to the application of the word of God that had been preached to them so that these problems would be ameliorated and they could focus on growth and fruitfulness, production in their lives. This, of course, is a wonderful provision for us to hear these words and find these principles and doctrines explained because they are of great benefit to us.

We, in many ways, share in the trials that can happen when there is a mix of believers who are making progress and others who are not facing challenges, not only internally in that way, but also externally from the forces at work in the world. So without further ado, let's take a look at our passage. We'll read it and then we'll see what we can discover as we look at it more closely.

We're going to look at 2 Corinthians 1 verses 1-11. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia. Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in

any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer.

Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will be partakers of the consolation. For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble, which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.

Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us, in whom we trust that he will still deliver us. You also, helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many." It's a bit complex in the English translation, but Paul begins by introducing himself by name and by his primary companion at this time, and states the authority by which he writes. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God.

I have a wonderful book. I don't recommend you get it, but it's a useful study for someone like me. It's called Pauline Parallels, and at any given point in the letters of Paul, there will be a paragraph, and then in parallel columns, there will be similar passages elsewhere in Paul.

So, Paul's parallels to himself. Not the parallels of Pauline, but the Pauline parallels. So, in this section, we have 2 Corinthians chapter 1, and when Paul introduces himself here and says, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, it is fascinating to see of all of the different ways Paul can talk about his position as an apostle.

He often uses this form, which is an apostle by the will of God. So, you find this in 1 Corinthians, the previous letter that we have available to us. Paul called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes.

That was the previous letter. In Galatians chapter 1, Paul, an apostle, not from men, nor through man, but through Christ Jesus and God the Father, who raised him from the dead. Again, that resurrection theme.

In Ephesians chapter 1, we'll be looking a bit more at Ephesians. There are so many parallels to the Ephesian letter, and I think they were written within a few years of each other. But in Ephesians 1.1, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, to the saints, who are also faithful in Christ Jesus.

In Colossians chapter 1, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, and Timothy our brother. Remember Ephesians and Colossians, these two letters traveled together. An apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, and Timothy our brother.

That's Colossians. So, why the stress on the will of God? There are those who question Paul's apostleship because they think that he dreamed that he saw the Lord Jesus, that he was sort of a self-appointed apostle. So, Paul wastes no time in establishing the foundation of his apostleship.

It is by the will of God. This was important in the Corinthian day. It is equally important in our day.

Paul is an apostle by the will of God. What he wrote, the inspired scriptures that are sourced in him and sent to these various churches, are authoritative for us. This becomes pertinent as we move into our chapter because the first subject that he addresses in this letter is affliction and comfort.

Can we take these words as from the Lord? Is what he says true? Will it make a difference in our lives or not? It all depends on whether Paul is just an advisor. He's a seminar speaker, such as you see during PBS's fundraising efforts, where someone will come in and give life lessons and perspectives. It is of an observational and secular nature.

It's suggestions and different perspectives that are offered to try to work through relationships, challenges, difficulties, hardships. The advice is often well-intentioned. It may be sourced in someone's experience.

The difference between what we are going to get in this letter and self-help and seminar suggestions that are in the secular world is the latter have no power. We can consider them. We can believe them.

We can endeavor to follow them. But the suggestions of someone who is a life coach or a career counselor, those words do not have the power to change our heart. They can change our mind, but we can't always follow our mind.

Paul says in Romans, what I don't want to do is what I end up doing. And what I want to do, I don't do. How many of us would like to stop a bad habit, lose weight, get in better shape, clean the garage, organize the cupboards, make more money, have a nicer looking lawn? We have many intentions.

We have many plans and purposes. We have goals. We have things we want to see happen in us and around us.

Where does the power come from to accomplish things that are in our heart? We saw in our James study how central the desires of our heart are to relationships and to progress in this life, to our view of life. Do we say, I'm going to go to this city and spend a year and make a profit? Do the things that we desire break relationships and cause divisions and wars and fightings amongst us? Is our conscience unreliable in telling us the truth? Life coaches, seminars, speakers that are speaking because they are charismatic and they have a way with words can dazzle us. They can entertain us.

They can motivate us temporarily. They cannot change our heart. They can't provide what only God provides, which is the divine power to encourage, to strengthen, to comfort, and to transform us by the renewing of our minds.

So, the question becomes, where is this transforming word that in the hands of the Holy Spirit makes us a new creation in Christ? Do we take for granted that anybody that mentions God and claims to know Jesus Christ as Savior is speaking the word of truth? We focus on what has been authorized by the will of God, and this in the New Testament is the apostolic witness. The book doesn't have to have been written by an apostle, but it has to record the apostolic witness. Paul used amanuensis for most of his epistles.

Somebody writing down what he spoke verbally, his eyesight became extremely bad. We think this could have been due to being stoned and left for dead in Lystra. He says to one congregation, I know that you would have given me your eyes if you were able because your love was of that quality.

Others can write the words down, but it has to be the authoritative word of God. So, this is not just some introductory matter to pass the time until we get to the heart of the book. When Paul says he is an apostle by the will of God, it matters.

What follows is going to be authoritative scripture. It is for faith and practice. God the Holy Spirit will use this and we will see fruit.

If we make this the object of our faith, the object of our prayer, if we incorporate it into our heart and our soul, it will change us. Because it comes from an apostle who was appointed by the will of God to represent the living word, the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't take these first verses lightly.

When Paul says I'm an apostle by the will of God, he says what follows is what God is going to use to change us, to strengthen us, to conform us to the image of his Son. And this is unique. You can only get it in the inspired scriptures.

That is what is going to follow. Timothy, our brother, he says, Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God and Timothy, our brother, to the church which is at Corinth with all the saints who are in Achaia, grace you in peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Why is Timothy included in verse one? Not because he is the author of the book.

Timothy is not an apostle. Timothy is Paul's son in the faith, his ministry companion, his emissary. He will visit the Corinthians more than once.

But Timothy is not the author. So why is he included here? Two reasons. One, it reminds the Corinthians that Timothy is an authorized messenger, emissary, representative.

Timothy isn't going to speak with apostolic authority except as he communicates the words of

Paul. It is the same with pastors who come to the apostolic witness in the New Testament, exegete, exposit, expound, endeavor to expose the truths. That preaching in our age, our time, is only valid as it reflects the inspired scriptures delivered to us through the apostles.

A pastor who strays from the text and begins to import and exegete and add ideas of his own, ideas from culture, from politics, from economics, from other sources, deviating from what is given to us by the will of God through the apostles, is on very thin ice. Timothy is mentioned because Timothy is a pastor and he faithfully communicates what has been delivered to the apostle Paul through Jesus Christ from God the Father Himself. We saw this in the Revelation, the message that came from God the Father to Jesus Christ and through a messenger to John, who is the messenger to us, John the apostle.

It is an apostolic witness. So what follows here is authoritative for us. And if a pastor brings it to us, it is no different than when Timothy brought it to the Corinthians.

It is still the witness of Paul who received it from God Himself by the will of God. But Paul says, Timothy is here with me and he shares in extending to you this greeting, grace to you and peace. The standard greeting in a Roman letter in this day and time was Kyrein.

It just means greetings in Greek. Paul changed this and had a unique Christian greeting. Instead of Kyrein, C-H-A-R-E-I-N, he changed it to Kyreis, grace to you, and Kyrein, peace.

C-H-A-R-E-I-S, Kyreis, grace to you all, plural, and peace. These are constantly paired in Paul's greetings. How many times have you seen it? Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why? If God's grace is active in our lives, if we have positioned ourselves, if we have cleansed ourselves, if we have claimed the grace of God that is available to us through the Lord Jesus, the result in our heart and our soul will be peace. When grace comes to you, Paul says, peace is its constant companion. If we do not have peace, it doesn't mean we don't have tribulation and difficulty, challenge, concern.

But when all is said and done, when we go to the Lord in prayer, when we claim His promises, when we know and keep His word, there will be a foundation in our soul of peace. So, what if we don't have peace? What if we're waking up in the middle of the night and something's rolling around in our head and we can't get it to quit? What if there is a concern and it doesn't matter how we think of it, how many promises we claim, how many times we pray, we don't have peace. We are troubled.

It is not a sin to be troubled. The Lord Jesus, on more than one occasion, said, my soul is troubled. This is an occasion of being troubled.

It's not wrong to be troubled. It is wrong to remain troubled. Things appear, blindsides us, suddenly

come over the horizon and loom large, and we can be troubled.

We can be deeply troubled. We should be troubled. We can be troubled by our own failures.

We can be troubled by interruptions of relationships and hardships and circumstances and sufferings that come our way. As I said, the Lord Jesus claims, my soul is deeply troubled. Read the Psalms.

David is troubled over and over again. He does not remain troubled. Even within the body of a Psalm, you will see the concern and the threat of worry and resort to human solutions remedied by God's grace.

We are troubled in order to turn us to God's grace, to claim God's grace. If we are troubled, Jesus says, let not your heart be troubled. John 14.1. Why? You believe in God and you believe in me.

Here are some reminders. There is a bright future awaiting in my Father's house. I go to prepare a place for you.

I'm going to come again and receive you to myself. Where I am, that's where you will be. Your heart is troubled.

Don't let it be troubled. Go back to your faith. You believe God.

You believe me. Remember the future. Remember this is a phase.

And what is the end result of considering, claiming, concentrating on the grace of God? Peace. Grace to you and peace. The source of grace is God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The peace that comes is from God. We're going to see this as we move forward. So, this letter is addressed to the saints, the sanctified ones.

Saints, Hagios, H-A-G-I-O-S. This is a combination of being sanctified. Sanctification, in this sense, isn't just washing away of sin.

It is the viewing of that process in terms of its purpose. Does God wash away our sin just because we're miserable when we're in it? There are facets and aspects to the dealing with sin through the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross. We have various terms for this.

Redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, atonement, different facets. What happens to the penalty of sin? What happens to the guilt of sin? What happens to the defilement of sin? What happens to the consequences of sin? What happens to the disqualification and separation that sin can cause? Your iniquities have separated between you and your God. Your sins have hid His face from you that He will not hear.

These various Medusa heads of sin are dealt with by various aspects of the work of the Lord

Jesus Christ, and they are claimed by us as we spend our days and our time. Why Hagios? To the saints, he says. Saint means separated one, sanctified and separated.

It was used of the priests who were cleansed and set apart from the rest of the people for a specific function and purpose. God's cleansing of our sin isn't just to make us feel better or just to allow Him to not destroy us. There are many reasons why God eliminates our sin, forgives our sin and cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

This word, Hagios, the Hagioi, the saints, and by the way, in all but one case in the New Testament, it's plural. We are considered as a group, the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus. Paul never says Phoebe is a saint, Timothy is a saint, Sosthenes is a saint.

They are termed as servants, co-workers, fellow ministers. No one individually in the New Testament is ever called a saint, ever. Not until you get a King James English that says the gospel according to Saint Mark.

That's not in the text. This is something made up by the church centuries after the fact. No individual in the New Testament is ever labeled a saint.

It is saints, plural. There's one use of it in the singular, but it is still referring to a group where Paul says something about every saint in the group. But the notion that there are saints and you can wear their metal around your neck for safety or claim their oversight when you're shooting artillery.

The patron saint of artillery allegedly is Saint Barbara because she was cooped up in a castle and lightning struck and she was set free. So artillery, lightning, any pretext will do to associate a saint with something in some quarters. We are set apart for service and function.

There's a reason why we were cleansed and it is to be separate and distinct, to live a life that looks different than the world, to experience the grace of God and the peace of God in a way that is distinct. If we are not actively enjoying the grace of God, we need to check and figure out what the problem is because this is our destiny. This is our purpose.

This is why we were cleansed, to be examples and emissaries of God's grace, as he's about to argue in the next paragraph. Grace and peace should characterize us. If you cannot stop, go to the Lord in prayer.

And at the outset, when we say our Father and we enter into the thanksgiving portion, we should have abundant examples of gratitude for God's grace, his provision, his protection, his presence, his past work on our behalf, his current work on our behalf, his future work on our behalf, where he has been at work, what he is doing in the present, and what he is going to bestow on us in the future ought to occupy minutes at the beginning of our prayer. And if we can't think of God's grace, examples of it, and gratitude for it, how can we ever experience peace? Because they are

two sides of the same coin. Our peace comes to us by God's grace.

So grace to you and peace from God our Father. What a privilege that he is not our dictator. He's not the sovereign majesty that sets distant and apart and above and beyond.

He's our Father. This expresses intimacy, familial love and concern. It reminds us that God is always approachable regardless of how badly we fail.

The parable of the prodigal son is really the parable of the father of the prodigal son. It is about the grace and the forgiveness, the provision, the love of that father for both of his sons in that story. So he continues in verse 3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.

Do you notice that in two verses God has been referred to as Father three times? This is a part of the grace. This is a part of the peace. We are enfolded in the love of our Father.

What a relief. Our Father is all-powerful. He is all-loving.

He is forgiving to those who will meet these simple conditions for forgiveness and cleansing and the manifestation of his grace and love. He always loves us, but he cannot always express it or manifest it. There are conditions for receiving the grace of God and not doing so in vain.

But what a privilege that the Creator God of the universe created the angels, who created the heavens and the earth, the galaxies, the stars, the infinitude of the expanse with all of its splendor and its complexity. Whether you look at the macroscopic or the microscopic, the person who accomplished all of that, whose glory and wisdom and beauty is manifest in all of that, is our Father. When Jesus said, Abba, when Paul says, by the Spirit, we can come to God and call him Abba, in Aramaic and in Hebrew, Abba is dad.

That's my dad. It's a familiar term. It's awkward.

I'm not comfortable going to the Lord in prayer and saying, hi, dad. But we are encouraged to think of our Heavenly Father in intimate and loving terms with reminders of that nature. So three times in two verses, Paul reminds the saints, not only in Corinth, but throughout Achaia.

There was a time when Achaia was used for all of Greece. It began as a province and it expanded in Roman times, in Roman terms, to everywhere in Greece. This happens similarly if you live in a suburb of a large city such as Dallas.

You can be from Mesquite or Plano or any one of the other surrounding communities and you just say Dallas. It encompasses the whole area. Same thing here.

Achaia pretty much encompasses Corinth and its surroundings all the way as far as Athens. So this is to anyone there. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Why does he say the God of our Lord Jesus Christ? Is he not our God also? Why is he termed the God of the Lord Jesus Christ? No man has seen God at any time. It is the Son who has revealed him. John 1, the fullness of deity in bodily form.

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the God who is revealed to us by the Lord Jesus Christ. And this goes back to that idea of chain of custody. How do we know that what we find in Scripture is true and authoritative? We are told that this is truth that came to us through the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is the Lord Jesus who appointed all of the apostles, including Paul. It is the will of God. It is accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the God that we come to know through that chain of custody, that chain of communication, is recognizable as such because he is the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, who reflects his character and his glory and his love, his patience, his desire that all repent and none perish. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. The Father of mercies.

This is almost a, not quite a pun, but it is a double-edged phrase because God is a Father characterized by multiple mercies. And he is the Father of mercies, the source and originator of mercies. So it's a doubly significant phrase.

He is the Father who is merciful and he is the Father from whom all blessings flow, all mercies come. The Father of our country helped to bring it into being. The Father of mercies brings those mercies into being for us.

And they're not distant deistic mercies. They're mercies from our Father. The Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.

The mercies are associated with our intimate relationship. The comfort is associated with God, which references his power, his authority, his ability. God is the formal title for the all-powerful, the Pantocrator, the God of the universe, the God of creation, in the beginning, God.

It's the third major term in the Bible, but Rashi Barah Elohim, in the beginning, created God. We have this combination, this wonderful combination of intimacy and authoritative power. Behind our comfort, the God of comfort.

What is that comfort like? Well, with this background and this introduction, we will be able to understand the 10 uses in this paragraph of the noun and verb that we translate comfort, whether it is the verb to comfort or the noun providing comfort, 10 times in these verses we have this referred to. So, are we interested in being comforted? Not necessarily comfortable, but comforted, encouraged, strengthened, supported? That's what we'll find out as we move forward after the break.

