



REFORMATION
COMMENTARY
ON SCRIPTURE

NEW TESTAMENT
IXb

2 CORINTHIANS

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COMMENTARY ON 2 CORINTHIANS

OVERVIEW: Paul's first letter to the Corinthians had been a painful one as the apostle was forced to rebuke the immature Corinthian believers for their quarrelsomeness, their spiritual pride, their shocking immorality, and their disordered public assemblies. Though this sorry state of affairs serves as necessary background, Reformation scholars commenting on 2 Corinthians are quick to point out that Paul has not given up on the struggling church. Indeed, there is clear evidence in this present epistle that Paul's strong words have achieved their intended purpose in godly sorrow and renewed obedience. The apostle's extraordinary goodwill and deep pastoral concern are evident throughout this second epistle, notwithstanding the slander he continues to endure from some false apostles at Corinth. In their introductions to 2 Corinthians, Reformation commentators praise the lofty and important matters that it treats, the beauty of the gospel it presents, and the intimate picture of Paul's life and ministry that it portrays. One writer compares Paul's teaching here in 2 Corinthians to a veritable "storehouse of celestial treasure." Several commentators employ the categories of classical rhetoric to classify the central message of the letter; though all agree that its governing genre is apologetic or judicial, some see prominent elements of exhortation and deliberation in it as well. The Lutheran commentator Cyriacus Spangenberg in particular praises Paul's rhetorical style as superior even to that of the great classical orators Isocrates and Cicero.

Prolegomena: Introduction to 2 Corinthians

THE CORRECT READING OF PAUL'S EPISTLES.

JACQUES LEFÈVRE D'ÉTAPLES: The human mind in itself is sterile; if it believes itself able to function by itself it is presumptuous; anything it brings forth will be sterile, ponderous, obscure, and detrimental to the mind, rather than being its true sustenance furthering the life of the soul. . . .

Therefore, one ought not give his attention to the mind itself, to the human agent (or whoever might finally be commissioned by God as his instrument), but one ought to attend above all to the heavenly gift and to the divine Giver himself. And therefore you, most humane Father,[†] and all you who are about to read the epistles of God's spokesman, Paul, gathered in this volume, I would pray and beseech you not to pay attention so much to Paul himself as to the grace of Paul and the giver of this grace. This applies all the more to expository sections of mine which might be read: If readers would find traces of food for the spiritual life of the soul, they should not concentrate on the human authors themselves, but they should realize that this power to bear fruit is a gift from above and should recognize the true author and follow him with all their might in purity and piety. . . .

Those who understand these epistles and the comments thereupon to be gifts of God shall profit from them. They owe such profit not to themselves but to grace. But those who attend to the worldly agent—yes, even to St. Paul himself who is more than worldly—as if these epistles were his work and not the work of a higher energy working in a divine fashion in him, and come with their own

understanding, they will receive little fruit from it. . . . Let Christ, the author of divine gifts, be present to give grace to all, to preserve and increase it in order that no one should presume to interpret by their own sense. For Paul is only an instrument. INTRODUCTION TO COMMENTARIES ON PAUL'S LETTERS.¹

SUMMARY OF THE EPISTLE. MARTIN LUTHER: In the first epistle, St. Paul rebuked the Corinthians severely for many things, and poured sharp wine into the wounds, and terrified them. But an apostle should be a preacher of comfort, to raise up terrified and fearful consciences, rather than to frighten them. Therefore, in this epistle, he praises them once more, and pours oil into their wounds, and shows himself wonderfully kind to them, and bids them receive the sinner back with love.

In chapters 1 and 2, he shows his love toward them, how all that he said, did, and suffered was for their profit and good, and how they ought to trust him for the best.

After that, he praises the office of the gospel, which is the highest and most comforting of all works and is for the profit and good of men and women's consciences. He shows how it is nobler than the office of the law, and how it is persecuted and yet increases among believers, and produces through the cross a hope of eternal glory. But with all this he touches the false apostles, who were concerned with the law rather than the gospel and taught mere outward holiness, which is hypocrisy and allows the inner shame of unbelief to continue. This he does in chapters 3, 4, and 5.

In chapters 6 and 7, he exhorts them to obey his preaching with works and sufferings and concludes by praising them so that he may incite them to go forward in it. In chapters 8 and 9, he exhorts them to contribute temporal support and help in a time of scarcity to the saints in Jerusalem, who, at the beginning, had given up all their goods. In chapters 10, 11, and 12, he deals with the false apostles. In chapter 13, he threatens those who had sinned and

not reformed. PREFACE TO THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.²

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S DIVINE AUTHORITY.

NIELS HEMMINGSEN: Although I have spoken at length in my discussion of the letter to the Romans about the apostle Paul, who is the author of this present letter, nevertheless, because it is often useful to repeat the same thing and many people are like novices, I wish briefly to enumerate here a number of things that will be useful for readers to keep in mind as they take up reading Paul. Who and how great was this apostle of God and teacher of the Gentiles? His message gives testimony concerning the one of whom it was said: "This is my beloved Son. . . ." Now this eternal Son of God called Paul his chosen instrument to bear his name before the Gentiles and before the kings and children of Israel. His violent conversion gives testimony. His teaching gives testimony, drawn from the preaching of Moses, the prophets, and Christ. His passion and zeal in teaching give testimony, such that the one man Paul worked harder than almost all the other apostles, as he himself confesses in chapter 11 of this epistle. The many dangers he faced give testimony, which he did not hesitate to endure for the sake of spreading the truth and glory of God. And finally, his blood gives testimony, by which he at last confirmed his doctrine at the command of Nero. The testimony of the apostle Peter agrees with all this, along with the judgment of the whole church of Christ. In the meantime, I pass over in silence the power of his spirit, the wonders, the divine miracles by which Christ testified that he had spoken through Paul. Whence, Paul himself states in Romans 15: "I will not dare to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit of Christ." So, too, in chapter 12 of this present letter: "The signs of an apostle were performed among you, with patience, with signs and wonders and with mighty works." All these things are said about Paul,

¹Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation*, 302-4. ²A reference to Cardinal Guillaume Briçonnet, to whom his volume is dedicated.

²Luther, *Works of Martin Luther*, 6:465-66.

so that the Christian readers might recognize how great is the authority of this man; how certain his doctrine; and with what great reverence it is necessary to take up his teaching and instruction in this storeroom of celestial treasure. For otherwise, they are not accepting that which the Spirit of Christ promises here through this chosen instrument to the Gentiles, that is our apostle; and they are not accepting the heavenly message, which the Father uttered from heaven. Wherefore we know that all things which are found in this epistle and in Paul's other writings have God's authority so that whether establishing and confirming doctrine or refuting error, they have no less weight than if they were the very voice of the Son of God, whom Paul served as his apostle and ambassador. Therefore, the apostolic title reminds us, first of all, that Paul is speaking to us with the voice of Christ. Second, that Paul conveys heavenly doctrine. Then, that there is nothing of error mixed with his teaching. Moreover, that his teaching should be believed as the voice of God. Finally, that if anyone teaches a doctrine that is opposed to the doctrine of the apostle—even if it were an angel from heaven—we should consider it as a plague to our salvation and, as Paul himself states, condemn it as accursed, however they might arrogantly boast concerning apostolic succession.

Now, concerning the person of Paul, it should also be known that he had a very forceful nature and that his heroic passion increased his vehemence for proclaiming the gospel and restraining the false apostles. I mention this because it is from this that the sting of his disputations, his frequent arguments, and piercing refutations might be more easily understood. For with a singular wisdom and holy vehemence he examines everything that he says, and he anticipates carefully whatever can be contradicted by enemies or friends so as to deprive them the opportunity of making false accusations and free them from error. COMMENTARY ON THE ARGUMENT OF 2 CORINTHIANS.³

³Hemmingsen, *Commentaria in Omnes Epistolas Apostolorum*, 248-49; citing Acts 9; Gal 1-2; Rom 15:18-19; 2 Cor 12:12.

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED IN THE LETTER.

PHILIPP MELANCHTHON: In his first epistle, Paul severely rebuked the Corinthians because, though they were justified, they were lifeless and had no spiritual passion and were gradually returning to the desires of their flesh. For they were practicing rivalry among themselves; like little children, they were self-satisfied on account of their gifts; they supported in their midst an incestuous fornicator. Paul's rebuke had greatly upset the Corinthians, in a manner akin to when pious children are distressed when their father corrects them. It was this sadness among the Corinthians that prompted Paul to write this second epistle, for it was fitting that a pious father should console his children whom he had punished. . . . Paul's rhetorical style is not primarily didactic; rather, since many different topics from the previous epistle are repeated, the character of this present letter is more in the style of an epistolary sermon. We will point out the order of the sermon in the course of this exposition. The prominent themes [*loci*] in this letter are: Penance, since that incestuous fornicator, who had previously been excluded, was now to be received following his repentance. Second, the difference between the old and new covenants, between the law and gospel. Third, the example of the generosity of the churches of Achaia. Fourth, the nature of bishops. In addition to these subjects, Paul mentions in passing many things that happened to him and what kinds of afflictions he endured in various places. ANNOTATIONS ON 2 CORINTHIANS.⁴

PAUL'S PURPOSE IN WRITING. JOHN CALVIN: As much as the context of this letter allows us to conclude, it seems that Paul's first letter was not without some benefit among the Corinthians, yet it was not as successful as it could have been. Moreover, some wicked people, who despised Paul's authority, persisted in their defiance. For the fact that he devotes so much effort to proclaiming his trustworthiness and maintaining the dignity of his

⁴Melanchthons Werke, 4:85.

office indicates that they had not yet been fully convinced. Now Paul himself complains in express words that there were some people who ridiculed his former letter more than they derived benefit from it. Therefore, since he understood this to be the situation of the church among them, and being occupied with other matters so that he would be slower in coming to them than he originally planned, he wrote this letter from Macedonia. We now know the purpose he had in mind for writing this letter—namely, so that he might complete what he had already begun, in order that, when he came, he might find everything well-ordered.

ARGUMENT OF 2 CORINTHIANS.⁵

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE LETTER.

ANDREAS HYPERIUS: The general consensus is that this letter was sent from the city of Philippi in Macedonia, and indeed through Titus. Whether Luke also played a role, as certain Greek copies indicate, is uncertain. Now, even if it is stated in the eighth chapter of this letter that a brother accompanied Titus, who is “famous for preaching the gospel throughout the churches,” nevertheless it does not follow that Luke must be understood as that person—as we have noted in that chapter.

Even so, this is nothing that we should squabble about. COMMENTARY ON 2 CORINTHIANS 13:14.⁶

SUMMARY OF 2 CORINTHIANS. TILEMANN

HESSHUS: This letter of the apostle is intended for comfort. Now, Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians was written differently and more gravely in that it rebuked them sharply. By means of his apostolic authority, Paul reproached them for their many vices, because they were zealous in creating factions; they were filled with pride; they polluted themselves with sexual lusts; they tolerated scandals in the church; they abused Christian liberty; they participated in sacrifices to idols; they profaned the sacred assemblies; they fought over

the display of tongues and spiritual gifts; they falsified the doctrine concerning the resurrection of the flesh. Great sadness had been aroused among other churches, not only because the Corinthians had offended the apostle, but also the divine majesty. The man who committed incest with his stepmother was thrown into the greatest distress when he was handed over to Satan by the apostle and excommunicated by the church—and he exhibited hope of improvement. But some people, offended by the sharpness of Paul’s correction, became more hostile toward the apostle; others persisted in their defiance. And it happened that false apostles, who disparaged Paul’s authority, scoffed in their writings at his vehemence, as if he were blaming them for more than was right.

Therefore, this letter to the Corinthian church heals these wounds. Paul encourages with great comfort those who had been aggrieved by the scandal. He commands that the incestuous man, who was now repentant, should be received into the bosom of the church. He demonstrates that he has not attacked them from a bitter heart but out of apostolic authority and paternal concern and goodwill. He shows them the source of true comfort in the midst of such grief.

Next, he draws a comparison between the old and new covenants and reveals how much more exalted the glory of gospel ministry is compared to the whole Mosaic system and law, and at the same time he explains the greatness of the benefits of Christ’s spiritual kingdom. So he bestows real comfort upon terrified consciences. Then, since some people, imbued with Jewish opinions, were anticipating the external glory of the old covenant and the earthly kingdom of the Messiah, and were thus offended by the afflictions and pitiful condition of the apostles and the church—Paul refutes and instructs these people correctly regarding the gospel. But lest the Corinthians should be sluggish in their zeal for good works and their practice of piety, Paul urges them to persevere in the faith and the fear of God, and to prove their obedience to God in every kind of virtue. They should separate themselves from participating in defiled practices;

⁵CO 50:5 (CTS 40:102).

⁶Hyperius, *Commentarii . . . in Epistolam D. Pauli ad Romanos, et Utramque ad Corinthios*, 418.

instead, they should exhibit reverence and sincere love toward the ministry.

Next, because great poverty was afflicting the saints in Jerusalem and Palestine, Paul urges them to make a contribution of alms. Finally, Paul refutes the false apostles' empty boasting and the perverse scoffing by which they were railing at Paul's authority and the apostolic office, and were attempting to render him suspicious to the church. He defends the dignity and certainty of his office; he mentions the divine revelation shown him in the third heaven. Paul threatens by means of his apostolic authority those ferocious and careless people who were not allowing themselves to be moved by either reproofs, consolations, revelations, or demonstrations of the truth. And he lets them know that he will come to see them soon. ARGUMENT OF 2 CORINTHIANS.⁷

PAUL'S ELOQUENCE. CYRIACUS SPANGENBERG: But this epistle is more artful and charming in words, although it deals with great and lofty matters. They slander Paul as not especially eloquent, but in this epistle one sees it clearly, because as far as the charm of words and the embellishment of speech according to the art of rhetoric are concerned, in this epistle Paul is far ahead of Isocrates, Cicero, and all others. FIRST SERMON.⁸

THE ARGUMENT OF THE EPISTLE. HEINRICH BULLINGER: Paul's second letter to the Corinthians is almost completely apologetic, written in the judicial genre, sharp, argumentative, and energetic—a style still used in the law courts, but adapted to the situation. For Paul is responding to both the objections and calumnies of the false apostles. . . . In addition to bringing up his inconsistency and lying, they were also accusing him of tyranny and ambition, as if he were striving for dominion when he ordered in such an authoritative manner that the fornicator be handed over to Satan. So too they

now desired to raise suspicions regarding the ministry of his gospel, accusing him of both unfaithfulness and impurity. Paul responds to all these things in the first chapter of this epistle, beginning with praise for his affliction, and explaining what happened in Asia and how God had been favorable toward him at just the right moment. He adds that he was not lying, even if he had not come when he said he would come in his previous letter. Moreover, he explains the reason why he ordered that the fornicator be handed over to Satan, to show that those who accused him of tyranny were wronging him. So too he proves here that he has faithfully performed his duty of purely delivering the truth to them (which he continues to do) when he strenuously opposes the Nazarenes, who were trying to lead them into legalism. Therefore, Paul shows how excellent the gospel is, and how weak the law is; at the same time, he shows with what purity and diligence he has preached the gospel (and with how much success)—a gospel ministry that in truth owes more to divine power than to human power, though it is not without trouble. And so, Paul discusses many things here concerning hope and perseverance, as well as consolation amid suffering. Next, he exhorts them by his example to hope and good works, especially that they not associate themselves with impure things. Paul identifies this part of his letter as belonging to the genre of advice-giving [*deliberativum*]. Having addressed these matters, Paul returns to that subject with which he began, concerning the adulterer, which he completes in chapter 7.

In chapters 8 and 9, Paul employs a wonderful argument to encourage generosity, weaving together an exceptional discussion on this matter—an argument that is ascribed to the deliberative [*deliberativum*] genre. Finally, he openly defends his authority for the sake of his ministry, ascribing praise to himself in a way that may seem excessive to many people. But this was necessary lest the truth be jeopardized by that faction. Therefore, he compares himself to those false apostles, and shows by that comparison both his innocence and his

⁷Hesshus, *Explicatio Secundae Epistolae Pauli ad Corinthios*, 19v-21r.

⁸C. Spangenberg, *Die ander Epistel Pauli an die Corinthier*, 3r.

opponents' deceit. At the end of the letter, having established his authority, he threatens that he will come with authority—although he concludes by softening this harshness and wishing them farewell. ARGUMENT FOR 2 CORINTHIANS.⁹

PAUL'S APOLOGETIC PURPOSE. DAVID

DICKSON: The first epistle did not fail in its effect among many of the Corinthians, yet there were some people, especially vain-talking teachers, who persevered in their rebelliousness and not only challenged the apostle's authority but also dared publicly to compare themselves with him, and to prefer themselves to him, while diminishing the authority of the apostle among the people, with no small detriment and prejudice to the gospel. That he might restrain these people, and find all things better ordered when he visited the church of Corinth, Paul wrote this second epistle that is entirely apologetic. Besides an exordium and conclusion, there are three parts to the epistle. In the first part, having removed the scandal of the cross that was laid on him, and the suspicion of his alienated mind from the Corinthians (chapters 1–2), he defends his ministry (chapters 2–3), and thereby proves his constancy and fidelity (chapters 4–5). He exhorts them to bring forth the fruits of his ministry (chapter 6) and to be persuaded of his goodwill toward them (chapter 7). In the second part of the epistle, Paul exhorts them to make a collection for the poor brethren, the afflicted Jews (chapters 8–9). In the third part he vindicates his authority from contempt, and the aspersions of false teachers who labored to render the apostle vile among the Corinthians (chapter 10), and boasts in a holy fashion against them (chapters 11–12), endeavoring to render his authority formidable and also amicable to the Corinthians (chapter 13). EXPOSITION OF 2 CORINTHIANS.¹⁰

⁹Bullinger, *In Posteriores D. Pauli ad Corinthios Epistolam Commentarius*, 265.

¹⁰Dickson, *An Exposition of All St. Paul's Epistles*, 72*.

PAUL'S ARGUMENT IN 2 CORINTHIANS. THE ENGLISH ANNOTATIONS: The occasion for writing this second epistle was to vindicate his ministry from contempt and his person from various accusations laid upon him by the false apostles. To this end, Paul professes his sincere affection to the Corinthians, and his faithful behavior in the whole course of his ministry. And being thereby compelled, he relates in detail both his sufferings for Christ and the visions and revelations he received from Christ. The epistle consists of the following: (1) Paul gives an excuse for himself not coming to them according to his promise (chapter 1). (2) Paul deprecates the incestuous person who had been excommunicated that he might be restored again to the church (chapter 2). (3) Paul offers a justification for his ministry against the calumnies of false teachers (chapters 3–5). (4) Paul offers an exhortation to Christian duties in general (chapter 7) and, in particular, to a generous contribution to the poor saints in Jerusalem (chapters 8–9). (5) Paul provides a disputation against his combative adversaries and rehearses his manifold trials and the happy result of them (chapters 10–12). (6) Paul denounces severity and defends the power of his apostleship against obstinate sinners (chapter 13). INTRODUCTION TO ANNOTATIONS ON 2 CORINTHIANS.¹¹

MINISTRY LABORS ARE NOT IN VAIN. RICHARD SIBBES: Our blessed apostle had written a sharp epistle to the Corinthians, especially reproving them for tolerating an incestuous person. His first epistle was at least partly effective (though not as much as he desired) in that it prompted them to excommunicate the incestuous person and, likewise, reform various other abuses. Yet, even so, since Corinth was a proud, factious, and rich city where there was a confluence of many nations and an excellent port and marketplace, there were many proud, insolent teachers there who thought poorly of St. Paul. Thus, he writes this second epistle, whose scope is partly apologetic and partly hortatory. . . .

¹¹Downname, ed., *English Annotations*, FF2r*.

The general scope of this letter is to show that the ministerial labor is “not in vain in the Lord,” for the fruit of the first epistle to the Corinthians is seen in this second epistle—the first epistle had its effect. Therefore, we should not be discouraged, whether we are ministers of the church or ministers of our own families (as every man should be). Do not be discouraged at unlikelihood. There will

always be some success to encourage us, though not so much as we look for in this world, because we deal with a reprobate generation that is always raising trivial objections and opposing us. Yet there will be some success, as we see here. COMMENTARY ON 2 CORINTHIANS.¹²

¹²CWRS 3:7*; citing 1 Cor 15:58.

1:1-2 GREETING

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,
and Timothy our brother,*

*To the church of God that is at Corinth, with all
the saints who are in the whole of Achaia:*

²*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and
the Lord Jesus Christ.*

OVERVIEW: In his customary fashion, the apostle Paul begins his letter by greeting the church in Corinth and extending to them God's grace and peace. Reformation commentators recognize that Paul has good reasons to assert his apostolic authority at the outset, given the accusations of the false teachers in Corinth who ridicule Paul's person and dismiss his gospel message. Paul has been faithful in executing the duties of his apostolic office that he received from Christ—something these false apostles cannot claim for themselves. The fact that Paul addresses the Corinthian church with its many problems as “the church of God” also invites comment from several Protestant exegetes, who note that (contrary to the claims of some Anabaptists) Christ's church in this world will never be perfect, free from all error and sin. And yet, Christian believers continue to receive the abundant riches of God's grace and peace, the two most illustrious benefits of the gospel that come from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

PAUL, TIMOTHY, AND THE CORINTHIANS.

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS: Paul, a missionary in the name of Christ Jesus by the authority of God the Father, and Timothy, our brother in religious fellowship and colleague in ministry: to the Christian flock who lives in Corinth—and not only in Corinth—but also to all the saints who serve Christ through the whole of Achaia, whose capital city is Corinth. We pray for you grace, peace, and harmony, which are bestowed by the Lord Jesus Christ and God his Father, with whom we share the same Father. PARAPHRASES ON 2 CORINTHIANS 1.¹

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NAME PAUL. CYRIACUS SPANGENBERG: Some (such as St. Jerome¹) say that the name Paul is Hebrew and means as much as *mirabilis*, wonderful. Others make it half-Hebrew and half-Greek, meaning “the mouth of the trumpets.” The third group says that it is from the Greek word *pauomai* and means *quietus*, calm, quiet. The fourth group allows it to be Latin, *Paulus*, that is, *modicus*, small, little. Let that be as it will, Paul was indeed a wonderful man, with whom it went wonderfully in his apostleship and who was wonderfully sustained, protected, and led by God, as he himself shows in this epistle, and whose voice was over all like a trumpet. His sound has gone out through every land and is also still heard in all Christian congregations, such that one might well say that God has fulfilled through him the prophecy of Zechariah 9: “The Lord, the LORD, will sound the trumpets and will march in like the storms of the South.”

But he directed all such sound so that the people received keen, calm, and clear consciences through faith in his Word, and he did it in such humility that he lorded it over no believer, but humbled himself as the very smallest of all, although he did not want to and must not allow himself to be despised by the godless. As then the word *Paul* in Latin is a name of humility and lowness, on the other hand the word *apostle* is a name of exaltation and worth, with which he lifts high and praises his office, which was highly necessary with respect to the Corinthians. FIRST SERMON.²

¹Erasmus, *Paraphrases*, 355.

²C. Spangenberg, *Die ander Epistel Pauli an die Corinthier*, 51; citing Zech 9:14. ¹Jerome, *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*, PL 23:851-52.

PROOFS OF APOSTLESHIP. JOHN CALVIN: None are to be listened to except those who have been sent by God and who speak from his mouth. And accordingly, there are two things required for persons to have authority: a calling and fidelity in the execution of their office of those people called. Paul claims he has both of these. The false apostles also do the same, but as they usurp a title that does not belong to them, they do not make headway among the sons and daughters of God, who find it easy to convict them of impertinence. Hence the name apostle alone is not adequate, unless that reality is also present, so that those who allege that they are apostles must also give evidence by their works. COMMENTARY ON 2 CORINTHIANS 1:1.³

PAUL ESTABLISHES HIS APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY. WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ.” Because Paul places this title at the very beginning, I think he had to establish his apostolic authority. He does this in all of his letters, as do James and Peter. They wish to be humble, as when a private person who writes to his superior places his title under the inscription of his name. For he always emphasizes his apostleship, calling himself an apostle of Jesus Christ, not rashly out of a spirit of boasting, but because it was completely necessary. For he knew that his apostleship was not recognized by many people due to the fact that he was not among the twelve chosen disciples who had lived with the Lord when he was in the flesh. Whereby, since the false apostles disparaged his apostleship everywhere, he himself emphasized it everywhere, not for the sake of his own glory, but for this one reason, that he might serve his Lord Christ both faithfully and fruitfully.

True and faithful ministers of Christ should consider what to imitate here. They should not only faithfully perform their office but also defend valiantly the authority and esteem of their ministry against reprobate and factious persons, lest they give a foothold to Satan by their negligence and

carelessness. For Satan plots with the greatest diligence to destroy the fruit of ministry, and to this end he undermines the esteem of ministers as much as he can through his imposters. Meanwhile the false apostles, false teachers, and pseudo-bishops extol their titles of rank and preeminence, and with their false presumed authority they oppress the ignorant common people under the yoke of their domination. How much more right is it that true ministers of Christ guard the legitimate titles of their ministry against the enemies of the truth to the end that they might be able to perform more effectively their ministries in the church of God? COMMENTARY ON 2 CORINTHIANS 1:1.⁴

TIMOTHY, OUR BROTHER. CARDINAL CAJETAN: This is the Timothy to whom Paul later wrote two letters and whom Paul remembered to praise at the end of his previous letter to the Corinthians.

According to some books, this Timothy was one of those men by whom Paul sent his first letter to the Corinthians from Philippi. And after having spent a certain amount of time in the Corinthian church, Timothy reported to Paul (as we rightly conjecture) the obedience of the Corinthians with regard to that incestuous man; and the complaint that Paul had not come personally to the Corinthians as he had promised; and examples of how certain Jewish teachers were extolling the old covenant among the Corinthians; and the vehement opposition toward Paul (and even the Christian faith) that the Jewish teachers were sowing—and, in brief, all that was happening among the Corinthians. And since Timothy was not only an informant but also their instructor, he is named here in the beginning [of the letter]. And he is called “brother” because of his brotherly service, his care and interest shown to the Corinthians, so that they might be more fully instructed through this letter. COMMENTARY ON 2 CORINTHIANS 1:1.⁵

⁴Musculus, *Commentarius . . . in posteriorem epistolam Pauli ad Corinthios*, 3-4.

⁵Cajetan, *In Posteriorem Pauli Epistolam ad Corinthios Commentarii*, 151.

³CO 50:9 (CTS 40:109-10).

PAUL'S AUTHORITY CAME FROM GOD. WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: It should be observed that when he said "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus," he did not qualify it with the phrase "according to his will," but "according to the will of God." He had been chosen as an apostle by Christ himself. For this reason, he could have said "according to the will of Christ." But, instead, he attributed the authority to the will of God because Christ himself is seen to have done this in several passages. For the entire sum and origin of the longed-for dispensation was dependent on God's will. Moreover, since only believers recognized the name of Jesus Christ, while even unbelievers acknowledged God, Paul preferred to say, "by the will of God" rather than "by the will of Christ" so as to make clear that he performed his apostleship by no human authority but was undergirded entirely by divine authority. This is not to say that the name of Christ somehow lacks divine authority; but what believers accept as so weighty, unbelievers disregard completely. COMMENTARY ON 2 CORINTHIANS I:1.⁶

THIS LETTER WRITTEN TO LAITY, NOT ONLY TO PRIESTS. CYRIACUS SPANGENBERG: The address or title is, then, as follows: "To the congregation of God in Corinth, together with all the holy ones in all Achaia." From this it is known and obvious that this epistle is not written to the priesthood alone, but to the whole congregation, that is, written to the laypeople also. If this is the case, as no one can deny, then the first epistle is also written to the laypeople as well as to the clergy. See, then, on what grounds the papists dare to prove from the same that the sacrament should be given to the laypeople only in one kind.

Paul is especially advised in not setting the title down badly, "to the congregation in Corinth," but says expressly, "to the congregation of God in Corinth," because the devil also had his congregation and church there, of false teachers and heretics, as is the case everywhere, just as the proverb says,

"Where our Lord God builds a church, the devil builds a chapel next door." FIRST SERMON.⁷

THE CHURCH EXISTED IN CORINTH. JOHN CALVIN: It should always be observed that Paul recognizes a church where there was such a wicked mixture of evils. For the faults of certain persons do not prevent there being a church where true tokens of religion are present. But what does he mean by the expression, "with all the saints"? Were those saints outside of the church? I answer that this phrase refers to believers who were spread here and there throughout various corners of the province. For it is likely that, in that turbulent time, when the enemies of Christ were raging furiously, that many were scattered abroad, who were not at all able to gather together in sacred assemblies. COMMENTARY ON 2 CORINTHIANS I:2.⁸

LOCAL CHURCHES MAKE UP THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH. MARTIN BUCER: In Romans, Corinthians, and Ephesians, "churches" is the description given to the assemblies of people in particular regions, cities, parishes, families, and houses, who by the same faith call upon and worship the same God. These gatherings, though separated by distance, by virtue of their common faith constitute the one universal church. They possess the ministry and the dispensing of the Word and sacraments, and of every aspect of religion, out of the supply and direction of the Spirit according to the Word; and the same Spirit implants in these ministers the requisite gifts. ON THE CHURCH.⁹

THE TRUE CHURCH ON EARTH IS NOT A PERFECT CHURCH. TILEMANN HESSHUS: Paul addresses the church of God and the saints, whom he had nevertheless severely rebuked in his previous letter for its many vices and errors. In this way, Paul testifies that one should not imagine a Platonic ideal of the church in this life, free from sins, scandals, and errors, for such perfection and

⁶Musculus, *Commentarius . . . in posteriorem epistolam Pauli ad Corinthios*, 4.

⁷C. Spangenberg, *Die ander Epistel Pauli an die Corinthier*, 5v.

⁸CO 50:9 (CTS 40:110).

⁹CPMB 203.

complete happiness is reserved for the next life. The elect and holy church of God is the one in which the doctrine of Christ shines and the sacraments are administered—even if there are many people in it who have serious weakness. And even if scandals appear and errors sneak into it, and even if some men and women are subject to great failures, nevertheless God truly dwells in that church. God is powerful in it for the salvation of many people; truly he sanctifies the disciples with his Word through the Holy Spirit and establishes them as heirs of eternal life. Therefore, we disapprove of the craziness of the Anabaptists and similar fanatics who imagine a kind of church in this life that is free from all sin and immune from the fog of error.

EXPLICATION OF 2 CORINTHIANS 1:1.¹⁰

TO THE SAINTS. THE ENGLISH ANNOTATIONS: [The saints are] all who embrace the holy profession of Christians, who were admitted into the church, which is the communion of saints, who attend upon the holy ordinances of God and follow after peace and holiness, without which no one shall see God. ANNOTATIONS ON 2 CORINTHIANS 1:1.¹¹

THE FOUNTAIN AND CONDUIT OF DIVINE BLESSING. JOHN TRAPP: The Father is the fountain, the Son the conduit, whereby all good things are derived to us. COMMENTARY ON 2 CORINTHIANS 1:2.¹²

GRACE AND PEACE. CYRIACUS SPANGENBERG: Now Paul wishes for them the two highest goods, between and in which all other goods are comprehended, since the beginning of all good and all salvation is God's grace. Where God's grace is absent, there is no happiness, no salvation, no well-being or anything good or virtuous with humankind; if, however, something good is to be or to begin, God must arouse it with and through his grace; and it is called grace because it is not earned.

After this, peace is the final good. All things are directed to it, that one might gladly be content. If a regent or sovereign has brought about in his country that there is peace everywhere, that he himself and everyone is content, he may concern himself with nothing else; if the human heart is at peace with God, it longs for nothing else; now when we come from this restless world into the heavenly country, into eternal peace, where there is no fear, no worry, no hoping, but God will be all in all, then we will long for nothing else. So peace is everywhere the end of all good, such that Paul can wish for nothing more than when he says, "Grace and peace be with you." Grace is God's good and kind will, his fatherly, faithful, benevolent heart toward us poor men and women, by which he desires our good and loved us even when we were still his enemies. Peace is God's blessing, all happiness and well-being, and everything good beyond the forgiveness of sins, which he allows to happen to human beings.

FIRST SERMON.¹³

GRACE AND PEACE ARE JOINED TOGETHER. ANDREAS HYPERIUS: Paul always prays on behalf of the pious for two most illustrious benefits, which are joined one after the other. One is the cause of the other. Unless grace is present, peace does not follow, because peace is a result of grace. On the other hand, if peace is not present—especially that spiritual peace in the conscience—this is evidence that grace is not present. Now since these blessings are spiritual, they cannot be obtained or preserved by human strength. And so, Paul adds "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," for both the power and the goodwill [of the Father and the Son] are adequate for us. . . . The Father gives for the sake of the Son; the Son gives because he has received all power and all judgment from the Father. COMMENTARY ON 2 CORINTHIANS 1:2.¹⁴

¹⁰Hesshus, *Explicatio Secundae Epistolae Pauli ad Corinthios*, 24r-v.

¹¹Downname, ed., *English Annotations*, FF2r*.

¹²Trapp, *A Commentary or Exposition*, 705*.

¹³C. Spangenberg, *Die ander Epistel Pauli an die Corinthier*, 5v-6r.

¹⁴Hyperius, *Commentarii . . . in Epistolam D. Pauli ad Romanos, et Utramque ad Corinthios*, 338.

GOD IS OUR FATHER IN A CONDITIONAL SENSE. PHILIPP MELANCHTHON: “Father” is not God’s personal name, but his conditional name. For it is the title that finds expression in those who believe. The law did not call God “Father”; rather, it was the gospel that called God “Father” and made us children of God. As John 1 states: “He gave to them power to become children of God.” And in the Lord’s Prayer: “Our Father . . .” Since Paul here adds the phrase “of our Lord Jesus Christ,” he thereby testifies concerning the grace of God, as if he were to say: “I wish for you God’s grace and peace, and you can be certain that you will experience it, for look here, it is granted through Christ who has given you all things!” ANNOTATIONS ON 2 CORINTHIANS 1:2.¹⁵

HUMANS ARE MADE TO PRAISE GOD. CYRIACUS SPANGENBERG: Praise be God, that is praise, honor, and worship be to God. Praise is and belongs properly to God and also remains his

eternally; even though no human being were to praise him, he nonetheless has praise in and from himself, and he is therefore also praiseworthy; and what he does not praise is not deserving of praise, no matter how highly all human beings might exalt and prize it. Therefore, we should also not praise what he does not want to be praised, as we sing, “Do not praise right or good, except what God himself says and does.”

But now he wants the angels and all creatures and especially human beings to praise him. He made them for this, and he therefore bestows all kinds of good things on them, as Moses also says, “that the people of Israel must praise the Lord their God for the good land that he had given them.”

Therefore, we must praise and bless God, for all benefactions. This happens when we recognize his benefaction, that he has given it to us without our merit, from pure grace, love, and goodness, and we thank him for this. SECOND SERMON.¹⁶

¹⁵Melanchthons Werke 4:86; citing Jn 1:12.

¹⁶C. Spangenberg, *Die ander Epistel Pauli an die Corinthier*, 6v-7r; citing Deut 8:10.

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