



# **POWER IN WEAKNESS!**

**The Epistle of 2 Corinthians**

**Comforted so that we can comfort!**

**2 Corinthians 1:1-11**

**Message #1 of 16 – S871**

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**Sunday Morning Service**

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# Comforted so that we can comfort!

## 2 Corinthians 1:1-11

### Opening Comments

- Turn to **2 Corinthians**
- Today we begin a new study through the second letter to the church in Corinth
- In actuality it may be the fourth letter that Paul wrote to this imperfect church, but God only preserved two of them
- Many of Paul's letters were written in response to something he heard was going on in the church
- One of the sad realities about churches is that sometimes Christians act in very un-Christ-like ways
- If you have read 1 Corinthians, you know that Paul has already had to deal with some weird stuff there
- People were arguing about who to follow; Paul, Barnabas, or Christ
- They were being selfish and disrespectful at the church fellowships, some even getting drunk
- There was even a guy in a relationship with his stepmother
- It has been a few years since 1 Corinthians and many people responded to Paul's words of correction, but now a new problem arises
- And it is one that we as Christians near the end of 2019 have to watch out for in our lives and church
- Paul's authority was being challenged
- But it wasn't a direct assault on his credentials or abilities
- Instead they were evaluating the things going on in his life as proof that Paul did not have God's authority
- In Paul's time, people were getting saved out of pagan religions where the false gods of those religions promised protection from bad things or provision of good things
- These new converts related to God in the same way – believing that if they were pleasing to God, He would protect them from all bad things and give them only good things
- It is not strange that people brought this same attitude into the church

- It takes time to change the attitudes that we spend a lifetime cultivating
- They were looking at Paul's trials, afflictions, and difficulties and saying; 'This guy can't be from God – his life is a mess!'
- They were operating under the false idea that if you were a good Christian God will make you happy, healthy, and wealthy
- They looked at Paul's life and didn't see worldly happiness, health, or wealth and presumed that meant he wasn't much of a Christian
- 2,000 years have not changed people's viewpoints
- The gods have changed – now they come from Wall Street, Fifth Avenue, and Silicon Valley
- Today, there are pastors preaching a gospel of happiness, health, and wealth and Christians in those churches are cheering them on because that is what they want to believe
- The message of 2 Corinthians is not a popular one
- God has not promised happiness, health, and wealth to Christians
- That doesn't mean He is going to deny you those things – they are just not promised to you or to any Christian
- God is God and He will do what He wants with whomever He wants
- The problem with the happiness, health, and wealth gospel is that it causes people to expect God to keep a promise He never made
- And then when they aren't happy, or they get sick or someone dies, or they are broke – they accuse God of being unfaithful – may even turn away from Him
- God is always faithful to keep His promises
- 2 Corinthians is going to help us to see how God chooses to operate in this world through His people to show Himself strong
- The question is, will He find anyone who will be faithful to Him

### **Chronicles 16:9**

**For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.**

- God is not looking for strong people to show Himself strong
- In fact, through this study we will see that the exact opposite is true
- Near the end of this letter, Paul shares something God told him

### **Corinthians 12:9**

**And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”**

- As far as we can tell, Paul was a very faithful Christian
- The weakness that was caused by the extremely difficult things that Paul endured were the catalyst for the Almighty Power of God to be manifested
- Today, we begin a study through what is labeled the 2<sup>nd</sup> Epistle to the Corinthians– **POWER IN WEAKNESS**
- It is my prayer that through this study we will better understand how the power of God works
- And that we will embrace our weakness to overcome this life and world, and will allow God’s power to move through us
- Let’s pray and then get into our text
- **Pray**

### **Teaching**

- **Comforted so that we can comfort!**
- Paul starts this letter like he does most of His letters
- **2 Corinthians 1:1**
- There is a challenge to Paul’s apostleship and so he starts the letter by reminding them that he didn’t volunteer to be an apostle
- In Acts 9, we see Paul’s calling by the Lord Jesus Himself on the road to Damascus
- Paul’s detractors are pointing to the afflictions of Paul’s life to say he is not a true apostle
- The opposite is actually true **Acts 9:15-16**  
**But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.”**
- Paul’s suffering was proof that he was right where God wanted him to be
- **2 Corinthians 1:2**
- Of the seventeen times grace and peace appear together like this they are always in this order – grace first and then peace
- The simple truth is that without the grace of God there can be no peace – either with God or with other people

- Notice also that grace and peace are from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ
- Without Jesus there can be no grace or peace
- **2 Corinthians 1:3-4**
- One of the things we ought to do as we are reading or studying the Bible is to look for repeating words
- One word appeared 5 times in those two verses – comfort
- In fact, it appears 10 times in verses 3 to 7, a third of all the times in the New Testament – tells us that the theme of this section is comfort
- R. Kent Hughes defined:  
**Comfort: to stand by another and encourage him as he endures testing.**
- Let's be real, sometimes life is hard – bad things happen
- They happen to good people and bad people – they happen to Christians and unbelievers – they happen to good Christians and lukewarm believers
- One of the things that helps us through hard things is the comfort of those who come alongside us during our afflictions
- Verse three tells us where all comfort comes from – God and Jesus
- Verse 4 tells us that comfort also comes from another source
- Most of you know that my mother had a stroke in August and then went to be with the Lord in September
- I am mature enough in my faith that I felt the Lord's comfort directly from Him
- But I am not so mature in my faith that I didn't need more than that
- I am so thankful for the people that God placed around, mainly within the body of this church, for the comfort of God they showed me and my family
- I am especially thankful because many of them were able to comfort me because they had already been comforted by God through something similar
- I can't say that I am thankful for the pain they had to suffer so that they could comfort me, but I am thankful that they were willing to share God's comfort with me

- And because I have experienced God's comfort and His comfort through His people, I am better equipped to give comfort to others  
**Romans 8:28**

**And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.**

- Paul goes on to say that very thing
- **2 Corinthians 1:5-7**
- Paul is saying that everything that he has gone through benefits them
- This should remind us that everything that happens in our life is important and valuable to God
- The good, the bad, the easy, the hard – all of it is used by God to reveal His glory, to bless others and to grow faith
- Anyone that tells you Christians shouldn't go through suffering hasn't read their Bible
- There are many reasons why bad things happen, even to good people
- Paul already told us one – so that we can comfort others
- they also teach us about God **Psalm 119:71**

**It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.**

- We also go through those things because that is the example that was set for us **1 Peter 2:20-21**

**...when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps...**

- The gospel of happiness, health, and wealth is false
- But so is the gospel of all Christians must suffer
- Paul was called to a pathway that included a lot trouble
- In fact, history seems to show that people who are called to do great things for God have to endure great things to serve Him
- Paul is a great example of that – most people would check out after just a few of the things he went through to serve God
- He gives us a glimpse of what that was like for him
- **2 Corinthians 1:8-10**
- The Bible doesn't tell us what was happening, but it was so bad that they (Paul & companions) despaired even of life – they might have died
- Verse 9 is very important – especially for mature believers
- Paul was about as mature a Christian as there could be on earth

- Paul says one of the reasons they were afflicted so severely was ‘that we should not trust in ourselves but in God’
  - Did Paul trust in God? Yes! But not perfectly! So, God allowed this severe affliction to teach Paul to trust God more **Matthew 22:36-37** “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “ ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’”
  - God is not done with you until He has all of you!
  - And affliction is one of the tools He uses
  - God only leaves us in difficult things as long as we need to be there to learn to trust Him more
  - Verse 9 ends with a reminder that God has the power to deliver us from the hard things in life – ‘God who raises the dead’
  - If God can raise the dead, He can solve your problems too
  - God, by his nature, is a Deliverer and verse ten tells us that He has done it in the past, He is doing it right now, and He will do it in the future
  - The next verse is a reminder of our duty to one another
  - **2 Corinthians 1:11**
  - There is something mysterious about prayer
  - God knows everything, including what He is going to do in every circumstance
  - But then He invites us to pray – to talk to Him about our circumstances and about those of others
  - And those prayers unleash the power of God into our circumstances
  - **James 5:16**
- The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.**
- The NLT translation: **The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.**
  - Praying for each other is vital to your faith
  - On Thursday we will celebrate Thanksgiving
  - I can’t say that I am thankful for everything that has happened over the last few months
  - But I am thankful for the comfort that was given to me by those who experienced God’s comfort themselves

- I am thankful for the ways God has revealed Himself to me and taught me to trust Him more
- I am thankful that God raises the dead and I will see my mother again someday
- I am thankful for the prayers of righteous men and women who love me, and my family more than I deserve
- I am thankful to be a part of the church of God in French Valley
- Even though this has been a season of affliction – I have much to be thankful for
- Let's go to the Lord in prayer with thankful hearts
- **Pray!**