### 2 Corinthians 1

#### Notes:

2 Corinthians was written about three years after 1 Corinthians. Paul was in Ephesus

2 Corinthians is probably the fourth letter Paul wrote to this church.

Some people had come into the church and were challenging Paul's authority as an apostle. One of the attacks was, "If Paul is actually an apostle of Christ, why is there so much suffering in his life?"

"The motif that keeps emerging throughout this epistle is that weakness is the source of strength and that suffering is the vehicle for God's power and glory." (Hughes, 2006)

#### Key verse of the book:

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 - And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

"This theology of weakness and suffering was foolish in new Corinth with its worship of self-made wealth and power. Only believing hearts could understand it – and they embraced it. Today it is no different in California, Illinois, or New York. Such thinking is incomprehensible – nuts!" (Hughes, 2006) page 20

 $2\ Corinthians$  is a self-portrait of the Apostle Paul.

#### 2 Corinthians 1:1-11 -

Scriptures:

<sup>1</sup>Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of

652 – a special messenger of Jesus Christ

2307 – purpose, decision, intent

God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of

God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who

40 – holy ones –
'A person of God;
understood as a
person dedicated
to God (morally,
ritually, or by
devotion).

#### Motor

The church is God's alone. And when we understand it as we should, we also understand that our mutual God-ordained function is to be an assembly of God' people in God's presence to hear and obey God's Word." (Hughes, 2006) page 17

Because there were questions as to Paul's authority and apostleship, he opens this letter letting them know that his appointment was not from himself or from other men, but from God (Acts 9:1-16).

'the church of God which is at Corinth' = Las Vegas or San Francisco. Godly churches can exist in the most godless places on earth.

"There is no place where evil is so aggressive or persuasive that we won't find people whose lives have been changed by the touch of God." (Chafin, 1985) page 201

are in all Achaia:

Scriptures:

<sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and

Notes:

Peace always follows grace because without the grace of God there can be no peace with God or from God.

the Lord Jesus Christ.

Scriptures: Isaiah 40:1 - Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" says your God.

Isaiah 66:13 - As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

Luke 2:25 - And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

2 Corinthians 11:23b-28 in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned: three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness-28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

# <sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our

Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God

3628 compassion

### of all comfort,

3874 – encouragement, consolation

#### Notes:

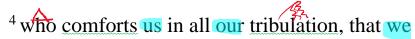
The noun and verb forms of the word 'comfort' occur ten times in verses 3 to 7. This is nearly 1/3 of all occurrences in the New Testament.

Isaiah 40 to 66 speak of the comfort of the Messiah. Some, at the time of Christ were 'waiting for the Consolation of Israel (=Messiah)' like Simeon and Anna(Luke 2:25).

'comfort' – "to stand by another and encourage him as he endures testing" (Hughes, 2006) page 23

'God of all comfort' "There is no enduring comfort apart from Him." (Hughes, 2006) page 23

Paul had experienced many things that resulted in God's comfort (2 Cor. 11:23b-28).



3870 – encourages, consoles

2347 – trouble, distress, oppression

## may be able to comfort those who are in any

3870 – encourages, consoles

trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves

2347 – trouble, distress, oppression

3874 – encouragement, consolation

are comforted by God.

3870 – encourages, consoles

Notes:

Notice that it doesn't say that God protects us from all tribulation or take us out of all tribulation, but He does comfort us in all our tribulation.

One of the results of experiencing God's comfort is that we are able to comfort others.

While Paul did not enjoy or relish his suffering, he would not waste it. Suffering costs us a lot – don't waste it by forgetting to use it to comfort others with the comfort we have been comforted with.

How did Paul comfort others?

- 1. By his example as he went through times of suffering.
- By his attitude during and after suffering.
- By his gentle words for those who were suffering.

Even the most devout Christian can become discouraged in their faith.

All our afflictions and troubled should not be evaluated based upon our views of health, wealth, and undisturbed happiness but upon Christ's life, afflictions, death, and resurrection.

Scriptures: Philippians 3:10-11 - ...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

# <sup>5</sup> For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so

3804 – misfortune - 'A state of great suffering and distress due to adversity.'

4052 - abundance

### our consolation also abounds through Christ.

3874 – encouragement, consolation

4052 - abundance

Notes: What are the 'sufferings of Christ' that Paul is referring to?

There have always been people who assume that suffering and tribulation is a sign of sin in someone's life (i.e. Job's friends). They assume that if they were right with God that they would be happy, wealthy, and healthy. Paul points to Christ as an example of someone who was in perfect alignment with God the Father and yet He experienced tribulation, betrayal, poverty, persecution, and suffering.

As Christ's people, it is not alien that we would experience the same kinds of suffering that He did, but we can rest in the knowledge that we will be comforted by Him as we go through the testing.

Most of the suffering that Paul endured was directly related to serving Christ. There is a cost of suffering to anyone who will faithfully follow Christ.

"They are Christ's sufferings because He is in His people." (Hughes, 2006) page 25

Jesus didn't save us so that we wouldn't suffer, but so that our suffering meant something.

"The Son f God suffered unto death, not that men might not suffer, but that their sufferings might be like His." George MacDonald (Hughes, 2006) page 25

"...God's comfort always exceeds our afflictions." (Hughes, 2006) page

Paul wants them to understand that their suffering may be related to Christ's suffering.

As Christians, we know we are called to live a like similar to Christ's. What we sometimes fail to accept is that if we do live that life that we are likely to get a similar kind of response from the world around us. Our problem is that we often interpret the negative results as wrong or bad.

Scriptures: Psalm 119:71 - It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.

1 Peter 2:20b-21 - But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. 21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:



2346 – cause trouble to, suffer hardship

3874 – encouragement, consolation

and salvation, which is effective for enduring the

4991 deliverance 5281 – perseverance, patience

same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are

846 - 3804 – misfortune – 'A state of great suffering and

suffering and distress due to adversity.' 3958 -

comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

3870 – encourages, consoles 3874 – encouragement, consolation

4991 deliverance Notes:

It sounds like Paul is saying that whatever happens to us will be used to encourage and comfort them. Paul could relate to them and minister to them because of the things he had experienced and because of how the Lord had ministered to him.

Paul is making the radical statement that is good that we go through suffering – that we are afflicted (Psa. 119:71). It teaches us how to help others endure their suffering.

As a pastor, I know that the suffering I have endured in my life is being used by God to equip me to minister to others. I would not have been the pastor I am without the lessons learned through suffering.

"Paul views both his experience of affliction and his experience of comfort as contributing to the Corinthians' comfort." (Hughes, 2006) page 26

This should remind us that everything about a Christian's life is important and valuable to God. God doesn't waste the good or bad things of our life – He plans to use them for His glory, for the blessing of others, and for the growing of faith.

"Paul did not bolt from his circumstances or curse God for tem but patiently endured them and thus found God energizing his comfort." (Hughes, 2006) page 26 Scriptures: 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. 16 For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

### <sup>7</sup> And our hope for you is steadfast, because we

1680 – a looking forward to in confident expectation 949 – certain, sure,

## know that as you are partakers of the sufferings,

2844 – partners, associates

3804 – misfortune - 'A state of great suffering and distress due to adversity.'

so also you will partake of the consolation.

3874 – encouragement, consolation

#### Notes:

Because of Paul's experience with the Lord, he was confident that the Lord would be there for the Corinthians just as He had been there for Paul.

Paul is saying that his hope for them is found in the reality that they are in fellowship with Christ through His sufferings and therefore in fellowship with one another.

The primary application of verses 1 to 7 are for the Apostle Paul himself. As an apostle of Christ, he was allotted an extraordinary amount of suffering, as was prophesied over him (Acts 9:15-16).

It also applies to those who are doing apostle-like ministry – taking the gospel into hostile environments. Also, to church leaders seeking to keep the church pure and focused on its mission. And then, to anyone who is being faithful to the calling of Christ in their life.

"To the noncommitted believer, who goes with the flow of culture, who risks nothing for Christ (and therefore does not share in Christ's sufferings) there is no application and no comfort offered here." (Hughes, 2006) page 30

If your primary goal in life is an easy life, then this text is not for you. If your aim is to avoid the excesses of sin, but also not to discomfort yourself with sharing the gospel or inconvenience yourself with caring for the needs of others, especially the church, there is no comfort to be found here

"The comforts of this passage are for the committed." (Hughes, 2006) page

We must not make the mistake of assuming that afflictions are guaranteed for following hard after Christ. Afflictions, just like grace, are sovereignly bestowed from God's loving hand as He wills and sees fit. Affliction is not a measure of how well we are serving God.

We are also not to live as if any moment affliction is going to be dropped on us like a bag of bricks.

"For Paul, suffering is not intrinsically good, nor is it a Christian virtue. Rather, suffering is a page in the textbook used in God's school of faith." (Hughes, 2006)

## <sup>8</sup> For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren,

Notes:

Paul and his companions were having a tough time. 'despaired even of life' = thought they were going to die.

We don't have a record of the specific attack that Paul and his companions were experiencing at that time.

'burdened beyond measure' = like a pack animal collapsing under the excessive weight of it load.

'despaired even of life' = they could see no way out.

This is an amazing thing that Paul is saying. After all the things he had experienced, this event was the most terrifying to him.

## of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that

2347 – trouble, distress, oppression

### we were burdened beyond measure, above

916 – be troubled, be under pressure, be weighed down, 5236 -

strength, so that we despaired even of life.

1411 - power

1820 – to fall apart – to lose one's emotional an mental composure.

2 Corinthians 4:7 - But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

# <sup>9</sup> Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves,

610 - verdica

2288

### that we should not trust in ourselves but in God

3982 – 'to have a strong confidence or reliance upon someone or something.



1453 – to resurrect, to cause to stand up 3498 -

#### Notes:

Their difficulties in Asia were teaching them to more fully trust in God rather than in themselves

If God can raise the dead, we can trust Him with our lives, because even death is not a barrier for God.

One of the purposes of the affliction that Paul was experiencing was to teach him not to rely upon his own strength to do the works of God. Instead, he was to put all his trust in God.

'raises the dead' – the resurrection of Christ is the reason we can trust in God when we are 'despairing even of life' because even if the worst happens, God 'raises the dead'. And if God can raise the dead, then there is nothing he can't do to rescue us from our affliction or keep us through it.

Notice – 'raises' is in the present tense. God still raises the dead!

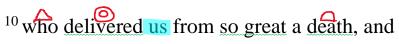
It is the resurrection power of God that will get His children through whatever affliction they are enduring.

Whenever you find yourself 'despairing even of life' remind yourself that 'God raises the dead'. Your impossible circumstances are not impossible for God.

There is a cycle n the life f a committed believer: affliction – death – resurrection. Jesus told s to take up our cross and to put our flesh to death. It is the resurrection power of God that causes us to grow stronger in faith and to e more committed to Christ.

"Nothing that has not died will be resurrected." CS Lewis (Hughes, 2006) page 32

Paul, who had experienced so much in service to Christ, still needed to be taught not to rely upon himself to serve God. He was still learning how to live in utter dependence upon God. That should speak to us of our need to learn how to depend upon God and therefore the need to experience the afflictions that teach us that lesson.



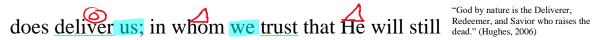
4506 - rescued

Notes:

Notes: Even though they had 'despaired even of life' they had experienced God's deliverance and they trusted God would deliver them again.

'delivered' = past tense - 'does deliver us' = present tense - 'will still deliver us' = future tense.

"God by nature is the Deliverer,



4506 - rescued

1679 - hope for, an attitude of looking forward



4506 - rescued

# <sup>11</sup>you also helping together in prayer for us, that

4943 – join in helping, to collaborate

thanks may be given by many persons on our

2168 – be thankful

behalf for the gift granted to us through many.

5486 – a gracious gift

Notes: What is the 'gift' that Paul is referring to?

Paul imagined that the Corinthians were praying for him and his companions and knew that once God delivered them that those who had prayed for him would praise God in thanksgiving.

"Prayer is indeed a mystery, but it is stressed over and over again in the New Testament as a vital prerequisite for the release of God's power.' Philip Hughes (Hughes, 2006) page 34

"Thus the duty of prayer is not a modification of God's power, but a glorification of it." Philip Hughes (Hughes, 2006) page 34