

# 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

Notes:

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's people in God's presence to hear and obey God's Word." (Hughes, 2006) page 17

God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of

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](#)).

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).

'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](#)).

Scriptures:

<sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we

3870 –  
encourages,  
consoles

2347 – trouble,  
distress,  
oppression

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.
2. By his attitude during and after suffering.
3. 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.

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consoles

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distress,  
oppression

3874 –  
encouragement,  
consolation

are comforted by God.

3870 –  
encourages,  
consoles

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 of 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  
27

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 life 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:

<sup>6</sup> Now if **we** are afflicted, *it is* for **your** consolation

2346 – cause trouble to, suffer hardship

3874 – encouragement, consolation

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.

and **salvation**, which is effective for enduring the

4991 - deliverance

5281 – perseverance, patience

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.

same sufferings which **we** also suffer. Or if **we** are

846 - 3804 – misfortune – ‘A state of great suffering and distress due to adversity.’

3958 -

“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.

comforted, *it is* for **your** consolation and **salvation**.

3870 – encourages, consoles

3874 – encouragement, consolation

4991 - deliverance

“Paul did not bolt from his circumstances or curse God for them 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,

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.

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

2844 – partners, associates

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

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.

so also *you will partake* of the consolation.

3874 – encouragement, consolation

"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 30

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)

Scriptures:

<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 its 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.



Scriptures:  
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 - verdict

2288 -

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.

that we should not trust in ourselves but in God

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

'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!

who raises the dead,

1453 - to resurrect, to cause to stand up

3498 -

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 in the life of a committed believer: affliction - death - resurrection. Jesus told us 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 be 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.

Scriptures:

<sup>10</sup> who delivered us from so great a death, and

4506 - rescued

5082 -

2288 -

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.

does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still

4506 - rescued

1679 – hope for,  
an attitude of  
looking forward  
to

"God by nature is the Deliverer, Redeemer, and Savior who raises the dead." (Hughes, 2006)

deliver us,

4506 - rescued

Scriptures:

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

4943 – join in  
helping, to  
collaborate

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.

thanks may be given by many persons on **our**

2168 – be  
thankful

"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

behalf for the gift *granted* to **us** through many.

5486 – a gracious  
gift