

2 Corinthians 1:1-11 The Comfort of God, Part 1

Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?

A) Why does God allow Christians to suffer?

B) That is a problem for a lot of Christians because a lot of Christians think like this:

C) If I have the right faith – really love God and am trying to do the right things – **then my life is going to be filled with blessings**

D) And usually they define blessings to mean: I am healthy, my life is void of any major problems

1) God takes care of my family – we are provided for and safe – life is void of suffering and pain.

E) **Many Christians think that way:** Recall Greg Laurie saying after his son was killed

1) Tons of letters expressing – Greg – **How could something like this happen to someone like you.**

F) These things are not supposed to happen to someone who really loves God and is being used by God.

Well the Life of Paul the apostle flies in the face of that mentality.

A) No one loved God more than Paul – No one had more faith than Paul – Wrote about it – modeled it

B) **And yet Paul suffered more than perhaps any Christian who has ever lived.**

C) His Christian life was marked by Sickness, Persecution, He was shipwrecked, beaten, jailed, stoned to death, maligned, stabbed in the back, forsaken, by those who should have stood by him.

D) You name it – Paul endured it!

Yet all the way thru – Paul was a righteous man a man of faith – who continued to Love God deeply.

A) That is what makes 2 Corinthians such an amazing book

B) Paul gets very personal in this book – maybe more so than all his other letters combined –

1) Paul also reveals how the suffering that he endured was used by God **to shape** him as a man.

2) and to make him **more effective** as a minister of Jesus Christ to others

C) After his opening introductory remarks – that is the subject Paul deals with in the opening verses

1) He will keep coming back to this theme as we make our way thru this letter.

D) Here Paul reveals that suffering though not enjoyable is actually a part of the blessing of God because of what it produces in us

E) **Great insight and comfort to those who are suffering. -**

1) Begin by looking at his opening remarks – set some background on the book

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.

Now We call this 2 Corinthians, but it should, perhaps, be called Fourth Corinthians, because it is the last of 4 letters that Paul wrote to this church

A) Two of these letters have not been preserved for us -- that is why we only have 1st & 2nd Corinth./ but they are not in the order that these titles suggest

B) Paul began the church in Corinth somewhere around 52 or 53 A. D.

1) He stayed there for about a year and a half; then he went to Ephesus, where he remained for 3 yrs

C) While he was at Ephesus, he wrote a letter to the church at Corinth which is lost to us.

1) But It is referred to in 1 Corinthians 5:9, where Paul says he wrote to warn them about following a worldly lifestyle.

D) In response to that letter, the Corinthians wrote back to him with many questions.

In reply to that letter, Paul wrote what we now call 1st Corinthians.

A) 1 Corinthians was written to answer questions that the Corinthians had about Paul's previous letter and to address problems in the Church there in Corinth.

B) That letter was not well received – so Paul made what he called in 2 Cor 2:1 a “painful or sorrowful” visit – to try and deal with this problem. Rebuke

C) He wasn't well received then either- which is why he called it a painful visit.

D) After that painful visit Paul wrote letter #3 – which we don't have.

1) That letter was delivered personally by the hand of Titus.

E) Paul waited anxiously for Titus to return – eventually meeting up with Titus in Macedonia

1) Titus brought a good report – the Corinthians had repented – taken care of problems – doing well

And in response to that, out of thanksgiving, Paul wrote what we now call 2nd Corinthians.

A) 2 Corinthians is Paul's response to the report of Titus – very personal letter – shares his heart

B) Very encouraging.

Now it is here that Paul begins to deal with the theme of Suffering.

A) Tribulation and trouble v.4 / sufferings in v.5 / afflicted in v.6

B) All words that speak of a pressing on the heart

1) Like the pressing of grapes in order to make wine

C) Or the idea of heavy weights being pressed on your Chest where it is hard to move.

I think that we all have felt that way at times – Pressing on our lives – can't move

A) So strong we feel like we are going to burst

B) Paul knew that feeling all too well. – In v.8 He says I didn't want you to be ignorant of our trouble that came to us in Asia – so great that **He despaired even of life itself.** – Hard to get out of bed.

C) Although he isn't specific here about what he was talking about – the afflictions of Paul were well known

D) Riots in Ephesus / Stoned and left for dead at Lystra – in fact Paul wrote about his struggles in 2 Corinthians 11 – turn there RD v24-28

E) Now I read that and feel like I have never known suffering at all. – Paul says in back in V.8 –

Like Job In one day Job 1:16-19

A) A servant comes and says "Sabeen raiders have come taking all your flocks and killing all your servants **I alone have escaped to tell you!**"

While he was still speaking, **another also came and said, "The fire fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"**

While he was still speaking, **another also came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"**

While he was still speaking, **another also came and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, 19 and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"**

Now that is a Bad day: If I ever complain about having a bad day – Slap me – You are not Job!

A) It is all relative isn't it – you or I haven't experienced what Job did – haven't gone through a ¼ of what Paul endured

B) But we have felt that pressing:

In these verses Paul reveals 4 purposes for suffering that we endure. Help us remember:

A) Give you 4 words

#1 Discovery: We discover God in those times in a deeper way.

#2 Ministry: Expands our ability to minister to others in need.

#3 Centrality: Helps put things in focus having the right object of our trust.

#4 Family: We discover that we are not alone but we are a part of a bigger family. The family of God.

1 Discovery: Rd V3-4a

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation”

Our times of suffering Pressing: Reveal for us something of the Comfort of God.

A)The comfort of God is an interesting concept

B)The Comfort of God is not just sympathy:

1)Jesus is a High Priest who sympathizes

C))Not simply consolation:

The English word comfort is derived from two Latin words – Com = with and fortus which means to make strong or fortified.

A)In the greek it is the word ParaKaleo – Para = to be by one’s side. Kaleo = to call

B)Called to your side to strengthen and to fortify

C)That is what the comfort of God is all about!

1) Strengthen you! -

D)That is why the **HS is called to Comforter** – called to your aide to help to empower to strengthen!

It is that which is meant to help you keep going – move forward.

A)He Meets us in our weakness and enables us to do what we previously thought was impossible.

B)In those times we discover something of the mercy grace and sufficiency of God.

C)V.5 Makes it very clear { **As the suffering abounds –Abounds – pictures river overflowing**

1)So as our suffering abounds – the consolation or comfort also abounds – thru Christ

D)The Significance of that is this: **The Strengthening that we encounter is greater than the pressure that we face** {Seen that in many lives here: hospital

AS the sufferings increase so does the supply of God’s grace – James declared *He gives MORE grace*

A)Thomas Manton Grace is nothing but an introduction of the virtues of God into the soul"

B)Talking: God's power, love, kindness, strength, wisdom, might, patience, gentleness being made known to the believer:

C)And there is always be enough grace, regardless of your situation or need...ALWAYS!

Author John Blanchard, “For daily need there is daily grace; For sudden need there is sudden grace; For overwhelming need there is overwhelming grace;”

So the 1st lesson we learn here about why we encounter times of affliction is so that we discover what God can do! We discover more of God

A) We discover what it is like to have your life come under the strengthening hand of God

B) That is why we need to make sure that when the affliction comes that we don't try to run away from it like the world does

Right now today: Stocks are up: Smirnoff Vodka

A) Hershey's Chocolate / Entertainment

B) That is where a lot of people are turning at this time: Alcohol / Chocolate / Entertainment

1) Help me forget the pain

C) Christians turn to Jesus - Be strengthened - allow the Lord to reveal himself to you at this time.

Now the 2nd Purpose is really the by-product of the first. - Our 2nd word here is Ministry. RD v.4-7

A) Paul is saying - When we suffer - God meets us in that time with His comfort and strength.

B) That becomes a part of our testimony - that becomes a part of our experience with God

C) That equips us then to have an impact in the lives of others who are suffering through similar things

1) Opens doors for further ministry.

There is a saying in the middle east: "All sunshine makes a desert."

A) That's true: Usually the person who has never suffered at all is a shallow individual.

B) If everything has gone perfectly for him, there isn't a lot of depth.

C) Full of ideals and pat answers

D) Doesn't know how to relate to those who have suffered and gone through things

1) Part of the purpose that God has for us in our suffering is it opens doors for ministry.

E) Agents of His Grace and mercy

When you have gone through something that someone else is going through - You sense their pain.

A) Labor - Special bond! -

B) Having girlfriends in the labor room along with husbands - Denise get out of my face

The suffering brings understanding:

A) But again I want to remind you that the comfort of God is about more than - sympathy, empathy or consolation

B) All of those have their place - But remember - the idea is called to one side to strengthen fortify

C) When you have been **through a similar experience** and have been strengthened by God

1) You often know what is needed to bring them back

To strengthen them.

You know what to say: What not to say:

A) Often times Christians – with good intentions will say the dumbest things –

B) Aaron 8yrs old – Jerry – Handsome man –
Aaron can get away w/ that at 8

C) This one: Someone dies – “He is in heaven”- True but that is not what you really want to hear at that time.

Greg Laurie: His Son died – Someone said Greg we know how you feel our dog died recently –

A) When you have gone thru it – you know what not to say: -

B) You know there is time involved – Why are we so quick to get pp to move on.

1) **Weep with those who weep** – rejoice with those who rejoice – We don’t want to weep very long

C) Your suffering puts you in a whole new realm of ministry – relate and come alongside.

1) You can take the strength you received from God – the comfort – to help strengthen and comfort them

D) **Being Lost** – always touches a nerve {Been Lost
Sears clothes rack

E) I am going to go to great lengths – to help that Child – been there – My mom was paged at sears

#3 Centrality : that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, 10 who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us,

Not trust ourselves: Eyes off of us – on to God

A) Jesus comfort – Don’t weep, believe

B) God of Rez – God who is faithful – delivered
Does deliver and will deliver.