

## 2 Corinthians 1:1-11 Comfort in Suffering

### Tonight we are picking up our through the Bible study in the book of 2 Corinthians

A) Let me give you some background concerning Corinth and the church there

Aa) Classical Corinth had been destroyed in 146 B.C. by the Romans and had remained uninhabited for a hundred years, until 44 B.C. when Julius Caesar rebuilt it.

B) So when Paul visited Corinth in A.D. 49–50, it was just over eighty years old with a population of 80k people

C) Yet, during its short history Corinth had become the third most important city of the Roman Empire, behind Alexandria and Rome itself.

D) **Corinth was a growing metropolis – the new hot spot** Situated on the isthmus river of Greece, it was called the “master of harbors.”

**Corinth became a favorite place for retired Roman soldiers to settle down seeking a better life for their families.**

A) Corinth was also a place of *ethnic diversity* it was sort of a melting pot – people from all over the Asia wanted to settle there. Much Like So Cal –

B) Title: Fasted growing city in Asia.

**C) Corinth was a sports and entertainment center**

1) Caesar had reinstated the Isthmian games in Corinth (which were second only to the Olympics).

D) The city’s theater held up to 18,000 and the concert hall some 3,000.

1) Travel, tourism, sex, and religious Diversity were woven together in Corinth’s new culture.

**So Corinth was the happening place at the time of Paul’s writings**

A) The church benefited from this opulent lifestyle as well.

B) The self-made-man ethos, the “I-did-it-my-way” pride and individualism, -was prevalent in Corinth.

1) That mindset was also in the church too.

C) Often people living in that kind of environment where things are going well,

1) can have a tendency to look on others who are going thru times of suffering –

D) And THINK - something must be wrong w/ them.

**E) That is what some people in the Corinthian Church were doing to Paul.**

1) Their thinking went something like this: If Paul is really an apostle, if he is really God’s man – then why does he go thru so much suffering?

**Then there were those in Corinth who resented Paul’s previous letters**

A) Where he called them on the carpet for some of their sinful practices

B) And then there were even those who were questioning Paul’s integrity

1) Because he had promised to come and see them again but hadn’t made it back there yet.

C) So as Paul begins this letter he is addressing some of those issues

**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.**

**Paul begins with his apostleship**

A) I am what I am by the will of God!

B) He didn’t chose this - God chose him – very dramatically – Acts 9 road to Damascus

C) Who are you and what do you want me to do?

Paul has great insight here for them as well.

A) They are the church of God – Paul started the church in Corinth – God’s church –

**B) His Church – His ministry – OPEN HAND**

C) To the saints – they are the ones who have been called out by God

1) Saints – Set apart from the world –

## 2) Set apart to God

### D) Saints are the ones the light shines through

#### After his intro – he addressing the issue of suffering

<sup>3</sup> Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. <sup>5</sup> For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. <sup>6</sup> Now if we are afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation. <sup>7</sup> And our hope for you *is* steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also *you will partake* of the consolation. <sup>8</sup> For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. <sup>9</sup> Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, <sup>10</sup> who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver *us*, <sup>11</sup> you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift *granted* to us through many.

#### Ever heard this question - 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.

1) You name it – Paul endured it!

### 2 Corinthians 11 – turn there RD v24-28

<sup>24</sup> From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one. <sup>25</sup> 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; <sup>26</sup> 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;* <sup>27</sup> in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—<sup>28</sup> besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches

C) I read that – I think I have not suffered a day in my life

D) Turn back to Chapter 1 – Notice what Paul said in V.8 – So bad he despaired even of life

1) In other words there were days where I just wanted to die

E) That is bad! Right –

#### But this is one of the reasons why I like the book of 2 Corinthians so much

A) Paul gets very real and raw in this book maybe more so than all his other letters combined –

#### B) He lets us in to see at times what was going on in his heart

C) But he also reveals how he came out the other side a better man – a better Christ follower

1) And a better minister for Jesus

There are three things Paul wants us to see about how God uses our suffering in the verses we are looking at Tonight

#1 Our times of suffering and Pressing: #1 Allows us to experience something of the Comfort of God.

“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**”

A) Author and Pastor John Piper called suffering a Beautiful hermeneutic

B) Hermeneutics is the proper explanation of scripture.

1) suffering has a way of making the scriptures come alive!

C) What Paul discovered is God meets us in our suffering and reveals himself to us in a greater way.

D) Like - His power is made perfect in weakness – but we would never learn that –

1) if there weren't times when we are weak.

#2 Suffering makes us more usable for God

<sup>3</sup> Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. <sup>5</sup> For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ <sup>6</sup> Now if we are afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation.

<sup>7</sup> And our hope for you *is* steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also *you will partake* of the consolation.

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

A) That becomes a part of our testimony – that becomes a part of our experience with God

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

1) Opens doors for further ministry.

When you have gone thru something that someone else is going thru – You sense their pain.

A) Woman with long Labor – Special bond ! –

B) Suffering brings understanding: - but comfort is more than just having sympathy or empathy

C) That is good but the word comfort is derived from two Latin words – Com = with and fortus 1) which means to make strong or fortified.

D) Comfort is the idea of coming alongside someone and strengthening and fortifying them 1) Through the insight that you have gain from being comforted – strengthened and fortified by God

The person who has been through a similar thing as someone else- knows how to use the right truth from God in that moment

A) Example: Someone loses a loved one – suddenly

B) Well meaning Christians – PTL in heaven

C) All things work together for Good..... purpose 1) Both of those statements are true

D) But it might not be the right time for that person to hear that

E) My son Aaron 8yrs old on hospital call – Jerry – Handsome man –

1) Aaron can get away w/ that at 8

The person who has gone through a similar situation knows how to discern the right response

A) Sometimes the right response is no response – you just be there – presence says everything

B) I love verse 5 - <sup>5</sup> For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ

1) the word Abounds – pictures river overflowing

C) So as our suffering abounds – but 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) **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;”

**C) Because we have suffered in that same way experienced God's comfort**

1) We get to be dispensers of that fortifying comfort of God.

**Now at this point Paul begins to get personal about his own sufferings.**

8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves

A) The exact nature of what befell Paul in Asia remains a mystery.

B) Some believe that it happened during the famous riots in Ephesus

1) during the intense confrontation between Paul and a lynch mob under the sway of Demetrius the silversmith

C) But we really are not sure what the event was – but whatever it was it left Paul very discouraged

**When he says we were burdened beyond measure and above our strength**

A) The idea in that language is that of ship that is so weighed down by its cargo – it could sink

B) He was so down that he says we despaired even of life – we just felt like we wanted to die

C) **We had the sentence of death in ourselves – 1) whatever it was he felt like he had just been given a death sentence.**

D) but in the darkness he shares this glimmer of hope

9 Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, 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,

**Insightful phrase in V.9 the sentence of death was given so that we should not trust in ourselves**

A) Isn't that so often our main problem – we are so prone to trust in ourselves for things

B) Our first reaction is usually – I can I fix this or get myself out of this –

C) But God is constantly seeking to move us away from that tendency toward self sufficiency

D) #3 Suffering reminds us of where our strength lies

**I mean he is in fact the God who raises the dead**

A) The God who does the impossible

B) And sometimes it takes us getting to the lowest low before we realize – I can't do this

1) I have to trust 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,**

I love this. God has delivered us **in the past**:  
He does deliver us **in the present**;  
and He will STILL deliver us in the future.

C) God has you covered! – Never leave you nor forsake you – we can confidently say - I will not fear..

**God helps us and we can help each other**

#4 Suffering reminds us of how much we need each other

11 you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many.

NLT - <sup>11</sup> And you are helping us by praying for us. Then many people will give thanks because God has graciously answered so many prayers for our safety.

**When you have a difficulty or a trial, there can be a tendency to want to isolate yourself – wrong!**

A) That is another manifestation of that tendency toward self-sufficiency { **Handle it on my own**

B) God wants to purge us of that – that is why you need to share it with others so that they can pray with you, Pray for you.

C) Prayer chain line should be ringing off the hook

**Sometimes I feel bad when all I can do for someone is pray for them. – I want to fix their problem**

A) In reality – Praying for them is the best thing I can do for them – Because God can fix the Problem

B) Paul fully understood the role that the prayers of others played in his ministry.

“[Pray] also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel” (Ephesians 6:19).

“For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance” (Philippians 1:19).

“Pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ” (Colossians 4:3).

“Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored” (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

**Praying for someone is one of the best ways to minister the comfort of God – we are calling on God to meet that person in their moment of weakness**

A) Meet them with His strength and Resurrection power

B) So #1 in our suffering we are reminded of the comfort of God

C) #2 Suffering makes us more usable for God

D) #3 Our suffering reminds us of where our strength lies – not us but God.

E) #4 Our suffering reminds us of how much we need the body of Christ

**After addressing the issue of Suffering, Paul is going to deal with the issue of his integrity –**

A) Why he was delayed - NEXT WEEK - Finished chapter 1 and get into chapter 2

**One of the things that we are going to see in Paul's responses that is so wise.**

A) In his answer he deflects the focus from himself to God

B) Tonight – Our suffering is really for God's glory and purpose

C) Next week – Paul will essentially say – I am doing everything I possibly can to keep my promise to you

D) But God is the ultimate promise keeper!

**I love that Paul does that – because he is reminding us of this important truth – Not about us**

A) The idea that we looked at on Sunday

B) We exist for the glory of another

C) My life – your platform – be glorified – Jesus

Amen!