

“The God Of All Comfort”

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

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Teaching Aim: To examine the spiritual climate and cultural setting as Paul wrote the Epistle of 2nd Corinthians. To understand Paul was uniquely called by God to be an “*apostle*” of Jesus Christ. To realize God is “*the God of all comfort*” and “*the Father of compassion*”, comforting us in our time of need and giving us strength so that we can comfort others with the comfort we ourselves received from God.

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (BIBLE STUDY)

Part I: Introduction to the Epistle of 2 Corinthians (2 Cor. 1:1-2)

1. As Paul wrote **2 Corinthians**, the validity of his apostolic ministry was under attack by a group of false apostles who had infiltrated the church at Corinth (**vs.1**). Why is there special significance in the wording to the people who received this letter (**vs. 1**)? Paul also mentions his young protégé Timothy in **verse 1**, Timothy was not the coauthor of this letter, but was with Paul when he wrote it. In light of **1 Cor. 16:10-11** (written early in A.D. 55), why do you think Paul mentioned Timothy in **verse 1** of **2 Corinthians**, a letter he wrote less than a year after writing **1 Corinthians**? Do you think Paul was taking the public stand of endorsing Timothy’s ministry to the Corinthians? Why?

2. According to **verse 1b**, who did Paul write this book to? The Romans had made Corinth the capital city of Achaia (located in the southern half of modern-day Greece). Corinth was an evil city with sin everywhere, including in the church. Who did Paul remind the church that they belong to in **verse 1b**? Is this a good reminder for us today as well? In the context of **verse 1**, what does it mean to be a “*saint*?” According to **verse 1b**, was this letter to stay at the church in Corinth or was it to be a circulatory letter (meaning a letter passed around to other churches in the area)?

3. In **verse 2** Paul gives his customary greeting, what is it? What is the meaning of the word “*grace*” (**vs. 2**)? What kind of “*peace*” was Paul referring to? (**See Rom. 5:1**)

Part II: The God of all comfort and the Father of compassion (2 Cor. 1:3-7)

1. Paul begins **verse 3** with a *“doxology”* (a statement of praise to God). What is Paul praising God for in **verses 3 & 4**? In the Jewish mindset, *“father”* means *“originator of”*. What was God the originator of according to **verse 3**? How do different Bible translations interpret **verse 3**? Why should **verses 3 & 4** be a comfort to every believer going through hard times?
2. *“Tribulation,”* according to Webster’s Dictionary means, *“That which occasions affliction or distress; severe affliction; distress; trouble; trial.”* What are some of the major tribulations you’ve had to face in your lifetime? According to **verse 3**, what will God do for you if you trust Him during these times? Why do you think hard times move some people away from God while it moves others towards Him? How have hard times affected your spiritual walk in the past?
3. God has a purpose in allowing us to undergo trials and tribulations, what is it (**vs. 4**)? Have you ever gone through a terrible experience in your life only to turn it around and use it to help other people? If so, how? How can we as believers help hurting people today? Have you?
4. *“The sufferings of Christ abound (or overflow) in us, so our consolation (comfort) abounds (or overflows) to others through Christ” (vs. 5).* Christ died on the cross for our sins, bringing forgiveness and new life to those who trust in Him. Hope in Christ is something that cannot be taken away from the born-again believer, no matter how desperate our situation may seem. The more grace we need, the more grace the Lord gives when we suffer in His name. What are some ways that you’ve suffered for Christ? What do you think Paul means in **Col. 1:24**?
5. The tide seems to be changing in our country today in a dangerous way for the church, what do you see happening? How is the media being used as the *“medium”* to change the tide of public opinion against the church and to paint those who are Christians as radicals? How should the church respond to this continual verbal assault and *“brainwashing”* of the public? (See **Matt. 5:44**)

6. How did Paul's affliction work toward the comfort and salvation of the Corinthian believers? How should it work to comfort and deliver us today (**vs. 6**)? (See **Acts 19:23-41; 2 Cor. 11:22-28**) Did the increasingly vicious attacks of the enemy stop Paul from sharing the gospel of Christ? Did Paul encourage others to come to faith by his personal example of pressing on, or did he back down at the pressure? Church father Tertullian said, "*The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.*" Do you agree with this statement? How does persecution serve to spread the gospel today?

7. Why did Paul have a steadfast hope for those who stood firm in Christ (**vs. 7**)? Why can Christians have a sure hope for persecuted believers around the world when they are steadfast for Christ? Are you willing to stand fast for Christ today, even if our own government begins persecuting the church (not only politically, but also financially)? How far are you willing to go before you compromise your faith?

Part III: In difficult times we learn to trust God (2 Cor. 1:8-11)

1. When Paul refers to "*Asia*" in **verse 8**, he is actually referring to "*Asia Minor*", or to a territory of the country that we call Turkey today. According to Paul, what happened to him while he was in this territory? The Greek word for "*despaired*" literally means, "*no passage*", or a "*total absence of an exit*". Although we don't know the facts surrounding this crisis, Paul may have been referring to one of the following incidents: **Acts 19:23-41; 1 Cor. 15:31-32; 2 Cor. 11:22-28**. What can the Christian who genuinely follows Christ expect? (See **John 15:20-21**) Why does God allow trials and tribulations to come into our lives? What does suffering do to people? (See **1 Pet. 1:6-7**)

2. How desperate was the situation that Paul referred to in **verse 8 (vs. 9)**? Have you ever been in a situation where you felt like there was no way out? If so, what was it? What did you learn by going through this experience? What did God do for Paul in this particularly situation (**vs. 10**)? How does God "*raise the dead*" in a figurative sense today? How does He raise them literally? Will God always save the believer from "*physical death*," or are there times when He will choose to "*ultimately deliver*" a believer through death? Is that a bad thing for a believer in Christ (See **Phil. 1:19-23**)

3. Paul was never ashamed to ask other Christians to pray for him, are you (**vs. 11**)? If so, why? (See **Rom. 15:30-32; Phil. 1:19; Col. 4:2-4; 2 Thess. 3:1; Phile. 22**) Why do you think people don't want others to pray for them? Is it privacy? Is it pride? Biblically, should we be praying for each other? (See **John 17:20-21; Eph. 6:18-19; 1 Thess. 5:25; Jam. 5:16**) How should we direct our prayers when people are persecuting us? (See **Luke 6:28**)

4. Why should answered prayer be shared with others who have been praying with you? What is the end result when our prayers are answered and shared according to **verse 11b**? Does prayer change things? "Yes!" Does prayer change God's mind? "No!" Explain. (Hint: Examine the incommunicable attributes of God)

5. **Charles Spurgeon wrote** ~ "...our prayers are in the predestination, and that God has as much ordained His people's prayers as anything else, and when we pray we are producing the links in the chain of ordained facts. Destiny decrees that I should pray – I pray; destiny decrees that I shall be answered, and the answer comes to me." According to Spurgeon, why should we not become discouraged and stop praying? (See **Matt. 7:7-8**)

6. Have you received Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord? If not, why not do so right now in the quietness of this moment through prayer?

MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!*

- Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ by "*the will of God*", not by his own will.
- Difficulties in life can either move us closer to God or further away from Him.
- When God comforts us, He comes alongside and helps by giving us grace and strength.
- God in His compassion brings comfort and strength to us in our time of need so that we can bring comfort and strength to others in their time of need.
- When it seems like there is no way out, trust in God who will open a way.
- When many people pray and the prayers of many are answered, God who is glorified.