

**BOOK OF 2 CORINTHIANS
COMFORT IN AFFLICTION
WHY DO GOD'S CHILDREN SUFFER?
2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-7**

Introduction

Some things that we will see as we move through this letter:

- 1) **2 Corinthians is different from Paul's other letters in that it reads more like a personal journal.** It chronicles Paul's personal life and struggles and reveals him to us more than any other of his letters!
- 2) **We'll see that great and godly people are not immune to difficult times!** Even though Paul was a great man with a great ministry, and even though the power of God was evident in his life, and even though he was centered in God's perfect will for his life—Life was difficult for him!
- 3) **Hard times can bring tensions in our flesh that can easily cause us to misinterpret what reality is in our lives.**
Flesh wants comfort, success, money, to look good, to make a good impression. However the real Christian life lived for God can sometimes cause us discomfort, make us look like failures in the eyes of the world, make us and our motives misunderstood, and otherwise cause us hardships!
- 4) **These things that come our way humble us and are needed reminders of our own weakness and need to draw upon God's power!**
- 5) **The true Christian life is a life of paradox!**
It is through our brokenness that we can find wholeness in the LORD!
It is through humility and meekness that we can find needed strength in the LORD!
It is through our weakness that the LORD's power is put on display!

With that being said let's move to Paul's salutation:

Paul reminds this Church of His true Apostleship! (Vs 1)

He writes this no doubt in answer to those who had doubted his authority!

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Paul gives his standard greeting of "grace" and "peace" ! (Vs 2)

Since so much of this letter focuses on pain, suffering, afflictions, and heartache, it's not surprising that Paul deals with some of the reasons behind these trials that come our way! **(Read Verses 3-7)**

Before we examine verses 3-7 in detail I want to deal with a question that has been asked since the dawn of civilization. In fact it is one of the mysteries of the ages for many folks! It is: **"Why do bad things happen to God's people?"**

In all of my years of ministry, **the answers to that question never seem to fully satisfy every need for an answer. The answers to the "why" question rarely bring the answers we want, and that is certainly true for our desire of an immediate answer. (e.g. Job)**

There are times when we simply don't have the answer folks are looking for! Even when we come up with what are some sound, Bible based answers, sometimes those answers are not satisfying and they are not what folks want to hear! What they want is for the suffering to stop!

As we begin to look at the meat of this book tonight, I want us to see that even without an adequate answer to the "why" question, **we can, nevertheless, find comfort in the midst of all the sorrow, affliction, tribulation, and suffering of this life IF WE WILL ACCEPT IT!**

In the Greek text that our English Bible was translated out of, several forms of the Word meaning **"comfort"** are used. In fact some form of the word meaning **"comfort"** is used ten times. (*Para* = "alongside" + *kaleo* = "to call") Comfort is given by someone called alongside to help!

This word is also used by Jesus in John 14:16 as another name for the Holy Spirit. *John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;*

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When we look at the life of the Apostle Paul, we can see how he understood first hand the need for "**comfort**." We have seen and will see from this book that he suffered greatly, but he also found great comfort!

So, let's first look at **WHY DO GOD'S CHILDREN SUFFER?**

I. SOMETIMES WE SUFFER BECAUSE OF LIVING IN THIS SIN CURSED WORLD!

Only when Adam and Eve chose to disobey God did it bring sin, sorrow, and suffering into the world!

Romans 8:20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,

Romans 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

Isaiah 24:5-6 5 The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. 6 Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

1 Corinthians 15:22 For as in Adam all die...

II. SOMETIMES WE SUFFER BECAUSE OF OUR OWN PERSONAL SIN!

The laws of sowing and reaping...

Galatians 6:7-8 7"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

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Proverbs 1:22-33

Proverbs 22:8 He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity:...

e.g. Cain — *Genesis 4:11-12 11 And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; 12 When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.*

e.g. Samson — *Judges 13-16*

e.g. David — *2 Samuel 11:10-14*

III. SOMETIMES WE SUFFER IN ORDER FOR THE LORD TO TEACH US! (Vs 4-7)

Sometimes the LORD allows us to go through suffering to help us understand what others are going through including what God the Father and the Son went through on our behalf.

1 Peter 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

Matthew 16:24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me.

Philippians 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

IV. SOMETIMES WE SUFFER IN ORDER FOR THE LORD TO DEVELOP AND PREPARE US! *Romans 5:1-5*

Suffering can help us grow in grace and reliance on the LORD!

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V. **SOMETIMES WE SUFFER BOTH TO BRING CHRIST
GLORY AND FOR OUR ETERNAL GLORY!**

Matthew 5:10-12 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11] Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. (12) Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

John 15:20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

*Acts 5:40-41 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. (41) And they departed from the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.***

*Romans 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; **if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.***

1 Peter 4:13-14 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. 14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of but on your part he is glorified.

VI. **SOMETIMES WE SUFFER BECAUSE OF THE OPEN
ATTACKS OF SATAN.** (e.g. The Story of Job — *Job 1-2*)

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VII. **SOMETIMES WE SUFFER SO THAT WE WILL REMAIN
HUMBLE AND DEPENDANT ON THE LORD!**

(2 Corinthians 12:6-7)

Conclusion

Trials are the true test of a man's character. The same trial that may cause some men to stumble, will become other men's stepping stones.

The real nature and heart of man is exposed when he walks through the fire of trials.

Anyone can shout while on the mountain top, but it is what we do in the valley that shows our true character!

How well we handle the trials of life will largely depend on our foundation. Stress has a way of revealing weakness.

Throughout the book of Second Corinthians we will find Paul speaking about his having to deal with trials. We will see him not simply as an apostle, a great preacher, a church planter, or missionary. We discover Paul, a member of the human race, who like you and me, faced roller coaster type experiences.

Paul was a real man who wrote to real people, and dealt with real issues!

When leaders lead, there will always be opposition and difficulties! Paul was a leader! And he had what we might think as more than his fair share of difficulties!

Next week, Lord willing, we'll come back and look at the comfort available that is ours and what Paul has to say about it!