

2 Corinthians

The Power of Weakness

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2 Corinthians: The Power of Weakness
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2 Corinthians 1:1—2:11

The God of All Comfort

In these chapters, Paul vaguely alludes to events that have led to his strained relationship with the Corinthians, but he clearly addresses the great spiritual issues of affliction and comfort, punishment and forgiveness. Since confusing these issues can cause great distress, it is important to observe basic principles in the context of these chapters and apply them to our own situations.

KEY VERSES (See page 11)

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Read 2 Corinthians (on your own)

Try to read the entire letter through, in one sitting if possible, using a recent translation of the Bible. As you read, be aware of your impressions of the author of this letter, the people to whom he writes, and the emotional tone of the letter.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:1-11 (in the group)

1. On what does Paul base his authority to write this letter to the Corinthian church?

2. In what three ways does Paul describe God and his actions toward us (verses 3-4)?

What examples have you seen of those who have suffered a particular affliction being best able to help others in similar circumstances?

3. How does the description of God as ***the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort***, help you understand his willingness and his ability to comfort us?

*Note: **Comfort** means “to encourage, strengthen, cheer and console.”*

4. Paul recognizes the afflictions he faces are not the result of disobedience. (See the Lord’s prediction about Paul in Acts 9:15-16 and Paul’s words in Colossians 1:24-25.) How does our tendency to relate affliction to punishment hinder us from receiving God’s comfort?

5. What four principles does Paul give concerning suffering and comfort (verses 5-7)?

Although the Cross was the ultimate expression of the suffering Christ endured, what other mental and physical sufferings did he endure, which Paul and other Christians may experience as well?

6. The exact nature of the hardships Paul suffered in Asia is not known. What has Paul learned about himself and God through such pressure?

What perspective has he gained (verses 8-11)?

7. What part do the prayers of other Christians play in your ability to grow and learn through suffering?

Read 2 Corinthians 1:12—2:4

8. What complaints does Paul seem to be addressing in verses 12-14?

What does he want the Corinthians to understand about his motives, his actions, and his letters (verses 12-14, 23; 2:2-4)?

9. Paul's change of travel plans resulted in criticism from the Corinthians (verses 15-17). What can this say to us about the tendency to question the motives of fellow Christians?
10. What does Paul want them to understand about God, about his promises, and about what God does for Christian believers (verses 18-22)?

In what sense has Christ been the **“Yes”** of God's promises to you?

11. Both the Corinthian believers and Paul share God's gift of the Holy Spirit (verses 21b-22). How do his descriptions (***seal of ownership***, and ***a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come***) help you understand this gift?

Note: Since Corinth was a leading commercial center, Paul used business terms with which the people would be familiar.

Read 2 Corinthians 2:5-11

12. The first Corinthian letter (especially chapter 5) and subsequent discipline by the church have had the desired effect of leading the offender to repent of his behavior. How should the church now treat the offender and why?

What dangers does Paul see if the church fails to forgive and restore the man?

SUMMARY

1. Paul recognized that his sufferings and afflictions were not because he was being punished for sin but because he was serving Christ. How do these insights compare with Jesus' words about suffering in John 15:18-21 and 16:33?

PRAYER

Merciful Father, God of all comfort, we come to you, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for putting your Spirit in our hearts, marking us as your own possession and guaranteeing you will finish what you have started in us. As you strengthen and support us in our troubles, help us to share your comfort with others who are going through hard times. For Jesus' sake, amen.