



COMFORT IN ALL OUR AFFLICTIONS

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

May 21, 2023

2 Corinthians Series: This was Paul's 3rd or 4th letter of instruction to the church at

Corinth (55-56 A.D.). Paul's defense of his apostolic ministry included:

1. **Strengthening** the faithful majority in Corinth,
2. **Encouraging** them to contribute to the financial needs of other believers, as an expression of their repentance by God's grace.
3. **Offering** the rebellious minority in Corinth another chance to repent before he returns to judge those still rejecting his ministry.

Series Theme: As we preach through these verses, our series will highlight the theme of the relationship between **human weakness** and the **power of the Gospel**.

Context: The church at Corinth was particularly troubled, being tempted by false apostles to believe that Paul's weakness and sufferings proved he was a **fake**. Ironically, Paul's weaknesses were his greatest credential and sovereign source of strength for his apostleship (12:10).

In this letter, the **logic of the gospel** is put forth as the reality in which the saints are to proceed in righteousness. That is, in full dependency upon God's power to use suffering as the means to reveal his glory. (e.g. 13:4 – [Christ] "crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God.")

Theme Verse: 2 Corinthians 12:9 "My grace is sufficient for you..."

Text Today: (1:1-11) Paul opened his letter by introducing himself as an apostle and then immediately reminded the Corinthians concerning the paradoxical nature of **suffering** and **comfort**. Those in Christ experience **comfort** not by avoiding, but by going through, **affliction**.

Thesis: HFC must learn to delight in our weaknesses and **patiently endure suffering** knowing that God's comfort is to be experienced and shared together as a testimony to God's **powerful** gospel of grace.

HOW DOES HUMAN WEAKNESS REVEAL GOD'S POWER?

I. WEAKNESS: AN APOSTLE "BY THE WILL OF GOD."

2 Corinthians 1:1–2 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God that is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- A. Paul did not claim **apostolic authority** based upon human credentials or constructs. He testified that "the will of God" had placed him in this relationship with Christ and His church.
- B. Paul's apostleship enabled **others** (Timothy) toward gospel ministry.
- C. Paul's pastoral **desire** was that God's grace and peace be received.

Questions: Why is **grace** the note on which Paul begins his letters? What does this remind us about concerning the Christian **faith**? (Eph 2)

II. WEAKNESS: A CONDITION TO RECEIVE GOD'S COMFORT.

3 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 affliction, **so that** we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 5 **For** as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. 6 If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. 7 Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

- A. Paul considers the **Father** a comforter, a Paraclete (paraklesis). We also know that the **Holy Spirit** is our Paraclete (John 14:16, 14:26, 15:26, 16:7) and that **Jesus** is our Paraclete (1 John 2:1, Hebrews 2:18, Luke 2:25). (Comfort: strengthen, encourage, urge, call near)
- B. "So that:" Comfort from God enables Christians to comfort others. Paul's sufferings brought **consolation** and **salvation** to others.
- C. Patient endurance: **not to escape** affliction, but to endure it.
- D. "Christ's sufferings:" the "**gospel**" is our source of comfort. How?

III. WEAKNESS: AN EXPERIENCE OF HOPE FOR DELIVERANCE.

8 For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. 9 Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. 10 He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.

- A. Paul was transparent about his own experiences with affliction, burdens, and even **despair** to the point of death. (Gospel suffering)
- B. God does not waste suffering. What does suffering accomplish?
 1. To cultivate **reliance** upon God (comfort)
 2. To bolster **faith** in the reality of the gospel's effectiveness.
 3. To fix one's **hope** on God's **deliverance** (present and future)..

Question: How would you know God's comfort, His faithfulness, His grace, and hope for deliverance if you did not experience suffering?

IV. WEAKNESS: A NECESSITY FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP.

11 You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

- A. Paul urged the Corinthians to participate with his endurance of afflictions through **prayer**. How? (Prayer as comfort and hope?)
- B. Prayer is a means by which human **weakness** conforms to the power of the gospel in: desire, obedience, and expectation. (ER)
- C. The prayers of many (the church) are effective in the receiving and sharing of **God's comfort** in times of **affliction**.
- D. **Human weakness** is the proving ground for the power of the gospel.