



SECOND CORINTHIANS

The Comfort of God FOR and THROUGH His People



Part 5 — “Hoping in the God Who Delivers His People” (2 Cor. 1:8-11) — 8 October 2023

Introduction: Finding Meaning Outside of Ourselves

The apostle Paul knew that God had acted decisively in history through Christ. This changed how he understood himself and his circumstances and allowed him to experience the comfort of God even in the midst of great affliction.

Main Point: _____ in the midst of the troubles of life is found in knowing the _____ power of God in Christ and in worshiping Him together with His people.

Paul's Troubles in Asia - 1:8-11

2 Cor. 1:8-11—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. 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.

- Paul gave the Corinthians insight into the _____ of what he suffered while in Asia. (1:8)

Observations:

1. Paul's benediction flowed from His own experience of suffering.
“affliction”—*θλίψις (thlipsis)*—trouble that inflicts distress, oppression, affliction, tribulation.

2. The suffering he and his companions experienced greatly affected them.
“burdened” “utterly...beyond our strength”

⇒ Paul admitted that things were so bad that they were brought to the point of _____.

3. It is difficult to identify the specific circumstances to which Paul is referring:

One or more of the sufferings he describes later in the letter? (2 Cor. 11:25-27)

A serious illness that he suffered? (2 Cor. 1:9a; 12:7)

Fighting wild beasts in Ephesus? (1 Cor. 15:32)

His troubles in Ephesus? (Acts 19:21-41)

⇒ Although the events described in this passage do not seem that severe, he was opposed there by both pagan gentiles and Jews (the Alexander mentioned there might be the same he mentions in 2 Tim. 4:14) and on his final journey to Jerusalem he felt it best to avoid the city (Acts 20:17-38).

“In the end, we cannot know precisely what affliction Paul had in mind because he does not tell us. He only describes its severity...It was something that left his life hanging by a thread. —David Garland

Key Point: The suffering that believers experience in a fallen world will at times feel _____.

“Paul does not pass himself off as some kind of superhero immune to all adversity. He is keenly aware of his defects and weaknesses and confesses that he bordered on absolute despair.”—David Garland

- Paul further explained how God had ultimately brought something _____ from this experience of suffering. (1:9-10)

Observations:

1. The severity of the suffering made him feel as though the time of his _____ had come.
“sentence” “we had received (in ourselves)”

2. There was a redemptive purpose to their suffering.
“to make us rely” *Not on _____!* →

BUT

On _____! →

⇒ Faced with the potential loss of his ministry and all that he still desired to do in service to the Lord, Paul looked away from himself and his circumstances and unto the God who raises the dead!

"His feelings must have been not unlike those of Abraham when faced with the offering of Isaac...But he learnt also to have faith similar to that of Abraham, who accounted 'that God could even raise the dead...' (Rom. 4:17; Heb. 11:19)"
—Colin Kruse

3. God showed Himself powerful to rescue Paul and his companions from the affliction they were experiencing.
"He delivered"

4. Because of _____ He was and _____ He had done, Paul was confident that God would act again on their behalf.
"we have set our hope"

Key Point: The suffering that believers experience is an opportunity for us to _____ God in a deeper way.

"The great lesson of this overwhelming affliction which had befallen him was that he (and all who are Christ's) should trust, not in self, but in God, 'the Raiser of the dead'. . . in the wake of this trying experience that was tantamount to death, there followed a further experience that was tantamount to resurrection."
—Murray J. Harris

- Paul then exhorted the Corinthians to join with him in looking to God for deliverance. (1:11)

Observations:

1. The Corinthians could participate in the work of God through their _____.
"you also must help us"
2. The result would be that God would answer them and that many would give Him _____.
"many (faces—prosōpōn) will give thanks"

"...it is possible that *prosōpōn* was used to give the idea of people's faces upturned in prayer to God. Then the text could be rendered: 'so that thanksgiving be made through many people for the blessing granted to us because of many faces upturned in prayer.'
—Colin Kruse

Key Point: The suffering that believers experience is an opportunity to bear one another's _____ and to _____ together in response to God's gracious work in our lives.

Concluding Thought

- Where is our _____ in times of suffering?

Job 42:2-6 (CSB)—¹ Then Job replied to the Lord: ² I know that you can do anything and no plan of yours can be thwarted. ³ You asked, "Who is this who conceals my counsel with ignorance?" Surely I spoke about things I did not understand, things too wondrous for me to know. ⁴ You said, "Listen now, and I will speak. When I question you, you will inform me." ⁵ I had heard reports about you, but now my eyes have seen you. ⁶ Therefore, I reject my words and am sorry for them; I am dust and ashes.

2 Cor. 3:4-5, 18—⁴ Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God ...¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.



SECOND CORINTHIANS

The Comfort of God FOR and THROUGH His People



Part 5 — “Hoping in the God Who Delivers His People” (2 Cor. 1:8-11) — 8 October 2023

Introduction: Finding Meaning Outside of Ourselves

The apostle Paul knew that God had acted decisively in history through Christ. This changed how he understood himself and his circumstances and allowed him to experience the comfort of God even in the midst of great affliction.

Main Point: Hope in the midst of the troubles of life is found in knowing the resurrection power of God in Christ and in worshipping Him together with His people.

Paul's Troubles in Asia - 1:8-11

2 Cor. 1:8-11—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. 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.

- Paul gave the Corinthians insight into the severity of what he suffered while in Asia. (1:8)

Observations:

1. Paul's benediction flowed from His own experience of suffering.
“affliction”—*θλίψις (thlipsis)*—trouble that inflicts distress, oppression, affliction, tribulation.

2. The suffering he and his companions experienced greatly affected them.
“burdened” “utterly...beyond our strength”

⇒ Paul admitted that things were so bad that they were brought to the point of despair.

3. It is difficult to identify the specific circumstances to which Paul is referring:

One or more of the sufferings he describes later in the letter? (2 Cor. 11:25-27)

A serious illness that he suffered? (2 Cor. 1:9a; 12:7)

Fighting wild beasts in Ephesus? (1 Cor. 15:32)

His troubles in Ephesus? (Acts 19:21-41)

⇒ Although the events described in this passage do not seem that severe, he was opposed there by both pagan gentiles and Jews (the Alexander mentioned there might be the same he mentions in 2 Tim. 4:14) and on his final journey to Jerusalem he felt it best to avoid the city (Acts 20:17-38).

“In the end, we cannot know precisely what affliction Paul had in mind because he does not tell us. He only describes its severity...It was something that left his life hanging by a thread. —David Garland

Key Point: The suffering that believers experience in a fallen world will at times feel overwhelming.

“Paul does not pass himself off as some kind of superhero immune to all adversity. He is keenly aware of his defects and weaknesses and confesses that he bordered on absolute despair.”—David Garland

- Paul further explained how God had ultimately brought something good from this experience of suffering. (1:9-10)

Observations:

1. The severity of the suffering made him feel as though the time of his death had come.
“sentence” “we had received (in ourselves)”

2. There was a redemptive purpose to their suffering.
“to make us rely” Not on ourselves!

→

BUT

On God! →

⇒ Faced with the potential loss of his ministry and all that he still desired to do in service to the Lord, Paul looked away from himself and his circumstances and unto the God who raises the dead!

"His feelings must have been not unlike those of Abraham when faced with the offering of Isaac...But he learnt also to have faith similar to that of Abraham, who accounted 'that God could even raise the dead...' (Rom. 4:17; Heb. 11:19)"
—Colin Kruse

3. God showed Himself powerful to rescue Paul and his companions from the affliction they were experiencing.
"He delivered"

4. Because of who He was and what He had done, Paul was confident that God would act again on their behalf.
"we have set our hope"

Key Point: The suffering that believers experience is an opportunity for us to know God in a deeper way.

"The great lesson of this overwhelming affliction which had befallen him was that he (and all who are Christ's) should trust, not in self, but in God, 'the Raiser of the dead'. . . in the wake of this trying experience that was tantamount to death, there followed a further experience that was tantamount to resurrection."
—Murray J. Harris

- Paul then exhorted the Corinthians to join with him in looking to God for deliverance. (1:11)

Observations:

1. The Corinthians could participate in the work of God through their prayers.
"you also must help us"

2. The result would be that God would answer them and that many would give Him praise.
"many (faces—prosōpōn) will give thanks"

"...it is possible that *prosōpōn* was used to give the idea of people's faces upturned in prayer to God. Then the text could be rendered: 'so that thanksgiving be made through many people for the blessing granted to us because of many faces upturned in prayer.'
—Colin Kruse

Key Point: The suffering that believers experience is an opportunity to bear one another's burdens and to worship together in response to God's gracious work in our lives.

Concluding Thought

- Where is our focus in times of suffering?

Job 42:2-6 (CSB)—¹ Then Job replied to the Lord: ² I know that you can do anything and no plan of yours can be thwarted. ³ You asked, "Who is this who conceals my counsel with ignorance?" Surely I spoke about things I did not understand, things too wondrous for me to know. ⁴ You said, "Listen now, and I will speak. When I question you, you will inform me." ⁵ I had heard reports about you, but now my eyes have seen you. ⁶ Therefore, I reject my words and am sorry for them; I am dust and ashes.

2 Cor. 3:4-5, 18—⁴ Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God ...¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.