

Sharing in Suffering & Sharing in Comfort

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

By Marianne Castillo



The Apostle Paul was intimately acquainted with suffering. He experienced trials and persecution

all throughout his ministry. In Corinth, false teachers were accusing him of being arrogant and assaulting his character. Paul had the suffering of confronting sinful men and churches. In addition, Paul was imprisoned and whipped. He was chased out of towns and suffered journeys and while at sea. Yet, as Paul knew great suffering, he also knew great comfort because he knew the ultimate Comforter. He shared the comfort he received from God with others. We are called to do the same!

Now in 2 Corinthians 1:1-11 the church in Corinth was suffering due to persecution, they were suffering for righteousness. Paul, knowing exactly what that feels like went back to the Corinth Church to share in suffering and share in comfort and encourage the church to suffer well.

Discussion Questions:

Have you suffered for righteousness? Are you suffering in ministry?

Can you relate to Paul?

Even if you are suffering for other reasons you can learn from Paul and take biblical truths that are encouraging, comforting, and apply to your lives as you suffer. Now let's dive in and unpack each verse!

VS. 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: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

These verses are a greeting to the recipients. Paul is writing to the Church of Corinth. He explains he is a messenger sent by Christ. The words he is about to share are not for his own personal gain, but for Christ and the people. He also explains that Timothy is with him, his life partner in ministry. In every letter Paul begins with his greeting of "grace to you and peace from our God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ". He is giving praise to God and acknowledging that God the Father and Son are to be lifted up. We see here that Paul understands who his Lord is and who he submits to.

VS.3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort

In verse 3 we see a characteristic of God. He is **merciful!** He holds back what we deserve. He is a God of loving kindness, and he is tenderhearted. He is also a God of **comfort!** There is an emphasis here that God is a God of "all" comfort. This means in everything and anything God will always comfort! John MacArthur says, "it is God who is the ultimate source of every true act of comfort". "Comfort" in the Greek means to come alongside and help. God was coming alongside Paul comforting him by providing him with strength and courage in his suffering.

Therefore, people who fear the Lord have God to strengthen them in the midst of suffering. The one true God who is all powerful and gives us strength to endure suffering.

Take a couple minutes to sit in silence and chew on that!

Before we move on to verse 4, let us define "affliction". According to the Blue Letter Bible, some other words to define affliction would be, anguish, pressure, burdened, tribulation, and troubled. One definition even says, crushing pressure.

Discussion questions:

Do you feel crushed right now?

Are you in anguish or troubled?

What burden are you carrying around right now? Do you have a close friend in tribulation?

VS. 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.

The God of ALL comfort, WILL comfort, strengthen, encourage, and exhort, us in our anguish. When it feels like the walls are caving in, HE promises to comfort his children! We have a compassionate, gracious, good God!

This might be surprising to hear, but there is a purpose to our suffering! Not only is there comfort from God for ourselves, but there is comfort for those around us. As believers we are called to comfort others who are in tribulation with the same comfort we have received by God. We are not made to suffer alone! Suffering is an opportunity to serve one another and be in sweet fellowship with one another. After Paul received divine strength from God in his suffering, God then used him to comfort and strengthen the Church in Corinth.

Discussion Questions:

As you are suffering, who are you comforting?

Who are you ministering to in the midst of suffering? Who are you sharing burdens with?

Who are you allowing to comfort you?

Or are you isolating yourself? Are you suffering alone?

VS. 5 For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.

We suffer because Christ suffered. We are not promised a life without suffering. But we are promised comfort and reward as we suffer righteously.

Discussion questions?

Are you suffering righteously?

Are you suffering in a way that pleases God and brings his glory, honor and praise?

1 Peter 4:12-14 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

When we are suffering due to persecution and do what is pleasing to God, we share in Christ suffering. This is the most intimate suffering we as believers will experience. We are able to rejoice in our suffering, because of Christ.

Romans 8:18

“and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him”.

VS. 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.

The body of Christ will be afflicted as a whole, but Paul is encouraging us to comfort and encourage one another, together growing in patience and endurance.

We need to be careful not to have a pity party and isolate ourselves in the midst of suffering. Bring it out in the open and allow others to encourage you and you encourage others. This could be a reason why Paul is emphasizing so much that we are to share our suffering with others.

Discussion questions:

Have you had a pity party?

Are you in one right now?

Let us humbly lay our burdens at his feet and let God and others comfort us with God's Word, as well as comfort others in the midst of your suffering.

VS. 7 Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

Some people in the Corinth Church were also suffering from righteousness, like Paul, and he took the opportunity to encourage them, even though this Church caused him much pain in the past.

Through verse 7 we see the compassion and care Paul has for the people suffering and we see Paul's humility through his willingness to help the people who were easily convinced to believe false accusations against him.

Discussion questions:

Would you be willing to do the same?

Would you be willing to comfort and encourage others who at one point caused you hurt? It would take much humility and it would be difficult, BUT with Christ you are able to!

VS. 8-9 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. 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.

Paul is explaining the suffering he and Timothy went through in Asia. He is beginning to share his suffering. In this he is setting an example of being open in his suffering, being humble, and expressing his weaknesses. Paul and Timothy were having much trouble

in Asia to a point where they thought they were going to die. We are not given details, but it was so discouraging and immense that they thought their ministry and life was going to come to a close. There is something significant to point out in verse 9. There is another purpose to suffering! "So that" they would depend on God. So that we turn and trust in God, who raises the dead, the God who delivers us. God does not ever promise a life without suffering. And there will be times in our life when God brings us to the end ourselves. However, that does not mean that he has forgotten about us or cares for us any less. It is because he loves us and cares for us that he allows suffering in our lives. It is for our good and his glory and to make us more like his son, to sanctify us, and make us holy. That is loving!!

Paul chose to remind himself that God is ALL powerful by saying he is the God who raises the dead.

Discussion questions:

In the midst of your suffering are you meditating on the character of God?

What attributes are you clinging to?

How are you praising God in your suffering?

Are you waiting for it to be over? Or are you enduring the anguish through worship?

VS. 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.

Paul renews his mind and encourages the Church that God has delivered us from eternal damnation. And he will deliver us again from a world of suffering in Christ's second coming. We can rest that our hope is in Christ!

VS.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.

In the last verse of this section Paul ends asking the Corinthians for prayer. Paul understood the power of prayer and the importance of the body of Christ praying for one another. Paul trusted in the sovereignty and power of God. He understood that God's will would be accomplished, however believers are called to lift one another in prayer, expressing their dependence on the Lord.

Discussion questions:

Have you asked people to pray for you as you endure suffering? Are you praying for others as they suffer?

Are you praying with one another in person?

I am so thankful to our Great God for using Paul as an example of what it looks like to suffer well. God was the ultimate comforter back then and he STILL is the ultimate comforter now! God yearns for his children to draw near to his throne in suffering. He wants you to lay your burdens as his Holy feet and trust in him completely. God wants you to share your suffering that he has allowed in your life with the Body of Christ. As well as share the comfort that he provides with the body of Christ. You are not made to suffer alone! Endure the tribulation and suffer well in Christ!