

Comfort in Trouble

2 Corinthians is Paul's defense of his apostleship. It appears that one of the assaults on his virtue was that he was suffering all the time because of sin. This part of 2 Corinthians is Paul's answer to that assertion. God is coming to Him, not to chasten or punish, but to comfort. To do this, Paul speaks very personally of something he faced that brought him to the brink of death. How did he get through?

I. The Power of Comfort

- A. 2 Corinthians 1:8 *We don't want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of our **affliction** that took place in Asia. We were completely overwhelmed—beyond our strength—so that we even despaired of life itself.*
 - 1. His experience was completely overwhelming and **beyond** our strength.
 - 2. His spirit was crushed ... *we even despaired of **life** itself...*
- B. 2 Corinthians 1:9: *we felt that we had received the **sentence** of death,*
 - 1. It was all for a purpose: *so that we would not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.*
 - 2. 2 Corinthians 1:10: *He has **delivered** us from such a terrible death, and he will deliver us.*

II. The Continuance of Comfort

- A. 2 Corinthians 1:10: *He will deliver us. We have put our hope in him that he will deliver us again.*
 - 1. God is always faithful.
 - 2. 2 Timothy 4:18: *The Lord will rescue me from every evil work and will bring me **safely** into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever! Amen.*
 - 3. 2 Peter 2:9: *The Lord knows how to **rescue** the godly from trials and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,*

III. The Participation of Comfort

- A. 2 Corinthians 1:11: *while you join in helping us by your **prayers**. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gift that came to us through the prayers of many.*
 - 1. James 5:16b: *The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect.*

IV. Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?

- A. To test the validity of our faith.
 - 1. Hezekiah: *God left him to test him and discover what was in his heart, 2 Chronicles 32:31.*
 - 2. Job: *I had heard reports about you, but now my eyes have **seen** you, Job 42:5*
- B. To wean us from the world.
 - 1. Paul: *But I consider my life of no value to myself; my purpose is to finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of God's grace, Acts 20:24.*
 - 2. Trials are designed to help us leave our worldly attachments and perspectives behind.
- C. To heighten our heavenly hope.
 - 1. Romans 5:3–4: *We also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces **hope**.*
 - 2. 2 Corinthians 4:18: *So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*
- D. To reveal God's compassion in our misery.
 - 1. Psalm 63:3: *My lips will glorify you because your faithful love is better than life.*
 - 2. The most difficult times are when we experience the deepest closeness with God.
- E. To develop spiritual strength for greater spiritual usefulness.
 - 1. James 1:2: *Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials.*

V. As We Close...

- A. God will comfort us to the extremity, whatever it may be.
- B. He will bring alongside us mutual sufferers who can share the same comfort and the same strength no matter how severe the trial might be, even if we despair of life. Do you trust God?