

The Book of 2 Corinthians **“In Defense of the Apostle’s Heart”**

Review and Contextual Analysis:

After sending a **“severe”** letter with Titus to the rebelling church in Corinth, Paul receives word that the majority in the church is behind him and will obey his exhortations. Due to this renewed joy, Paul was prompted to issue this second letter (actually fourth letter) in order to praise the repentant and to scold the remaining rebels.

- **2 Corinthians** was further correction and praise for the favorable response to the severe letter.

Order of Epistles:

1. Previous letter- 1 Corinthians 5:9 mentions this letter.
2. 1 Corinthians
3. Severe letter
4. 2 Corinthians- 2 Corinthians 2:4 mentions this letter.

Authorship: Paul

Date: About A.D. 55-57

Origin: Macedonia

Destination: Corinth

Recipients: Corinthians and Christians everywhere

Background: Paul had written 3 letters to the Corinthians (2 were lost). In 1 Corinthians Paul used forceful words to correct and teach. Most had responded; however, there were some who denied Paul's authority and questioned his motives.

Wiersbe- 2 Corinthians Introduction: I have placed the full passages here for you so as to make the context clearer.

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus, where he had been ministering for three years. He sent this letter to the church by Timothy (1 Cor 4:17), but problems in the church only grew worse.

1 Cor 4:17

17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

KJV

Perhaps it was young Timothy's timidity that made the believers at Corinth disobey Paul's words. At any rate, Paul then sent Titus to Corinth to make sure the church obeyed the apostolic orders Paul had given them (2 Cor 7:13-15).

2 Cor 7:13-15

13 Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all.

14 For if I have boasted anything to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth.

15 And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him.

KJV

Meanwhile, the riot discussed in Acts 19:23-41 forced Paul to leave Ephesus.

Acts 19:23-41

23 About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. 24 A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen. 25 He called them together, along with the workmen in related trades, and said: "Men, you know we receive a good income from this business. 26 And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all. 27 There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess

herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty."

28 When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" 29 Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and rushed as one man into the theater. 30 Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. 31 Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theater.

32 The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. 33 The Jews pushed Alexander to the front, and some of the crowd shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defense before the people. 34 But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

35 The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: "Men of Ephesus, doesn't all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? 36 Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to be quiet and not do anything rash. 37 You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess. 38 If, then, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges. 39 If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly. 40 As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of today's events. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it." 41 After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.

NIV

Paul had promised the Corinthians that he would visit them (1 Cor 16:3-7), but circumstances were such that he was delayed along the way.

1 Cor 16:3-9

3 Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. 4 If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.

5 After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you — for I will be going through Macedonia. 6 Perhaps I will stay with you awhile, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. 7 I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. 8 But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, 9 because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.

NIV

Paul had hoped to meet Titus at Troas (2 Cor 2:12-13), but this plan failed.

2 Cor 2:12-13

12 Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, 13 I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-by to them and went on to Macedonia.

NIV

As you read 2 Corinthians 1-2, you feel the burden and heartache of Paul, suffering both physically and emotionally. While at Troas, Paul did some preaching, then made his way to Macedonia. He and Titus finally met, probably at Philippi (2 Cor 7:5-6), and Titus gave Paul the good news that the majority at Corinth were behind him and would obey his word.

2 Cor 7:5-7

5 For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn — conflicts on the outside, fears within. 6 But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, 7 and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever.

NIV

It was this joy that prompted him to write this second letter to the Corinthians.

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Occasion: *This is an intensely personal and autobiographical letter where Paul bares his soul and heart.*

Purposes:

1. To plea for **reconciliation**: to explain why he had changed his plans, to commend the church for disciplining the rebels, and to encourage them to forgive and receive those who repented.
2. To plea for **cooperation**: to share in taking up a love offering for the church in Judea.
3. To plea for **appreciation**: to answer those who were questioning his apostolic authority and who were accusing him of

wrong motives; Paul affirms his ministry by defending his authority as an Apostle.

4. To **prepare them** for his planned visit.

Key Concept: In this very personal letter, Paul exposes his heart and shares his deepest joys and sufferings. This letter shows Paul as a loving pastor and reveals the passion that he has for the spiritual growth of the Corinthian church.

Key Verses:

~5:20 *“We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.” NIV*

~5:21 *“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. KJV (Maybe the most compact and succinct explanation of salvation in the entire NT).*

~12:9 *“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” KJV*

Key Word: Comfort or encouragement

Outline
2 Corinthians (Bro. Jerry)

Paul wants to praise the repentant and scold the unrepentant.

- Paul's itinerary as an apostle (1:1-7:16)
 - a. “The Great Digression” (2:14-7:4)

- Collection for the Saints in Jerusalem (8:1-9:15)
- Defense of Paul's Ministry (10:1-13:13)

Special Issues

- **Mood:** It was personal. This is the most revealing book of Paul. He says more about himself in this book than anywhere in scripture. There is a major break between chapters 9 and 10. Paul was warm and friendly up until Chapter 9. Beginning in Chapter 10:1 Paul's mood changes. Chapters 10-13 are cold, defensive, and harsh. Paul uses sarcasm and verbally lashes out. Chapters 1-9 are addressed to those who had repented. Chapters 10-13 are addressed to the minority who had not repented.
- **Some other suggestions concerning Chapter 10-13**
 1. Some say he might have received fresh news about them and decided to go to them again.
 2. Some say the severe letter was lost and Chapters 10-13 was tacked on to the end of the book. There are no manuscripts that show 2 Corinthians ending at chapter 9. This idea was only thought of in modern times. Usually called the *“unity problem of 2 Corinthians.”*
- **Intermediate State:** In the “Great Digression” (2 Corinthians 2:14-7:4) Paul deals with doctrine. He deals with many thoughts and doctrines about which we needed to know. The *Intermediate State* is only talked about in this book. This is the state between death and the giving of the new body. Paul came close to death and said that he may die before the time of Christ. He discusses what he knows about our status between death and the second coming.

Nature of the Believers Death

The image he used in 5:1 was one he was familiar with, the taking down of a tent compared to a departure from bodily existence. He says this is not the preferred state. Paul speaks sharply against Greek religion here. The Greeks wanted to escape bodily existence and go to nirvana. In 5:4, Paul says we do not want to stay unclothed but to be clothed at the second coming with a new body.

Consequences of Believers Death:

- In 5:8- We will be with the Lord. Note the use of the prepositions “in” and “with”.
- In 5:10- We will be before the Judgment Seat of Christ. We will be judged by deeds done in our body. Rewards are based on approval or disapproval. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 has more on Paul’s thoughts on the subject.

1 Cor 3:12-15

12 If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. 15 If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

NIV

- Ultimately we will have a new external and resurrected body at the rapture. The new body will be much better than the tent we live in now. The new body will be new in **quality** and **form** (**kainos**), a body that has never been seen before. This will be a body that cannot sin.

2 Cor 5:1-5

Now we know that if the earthly **tent** we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. 2 Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, 3 because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. 4 For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be

clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

NIV

Commentaries on 1 Corinthians

1. C K Barrett: Harpers Series 1968 English text not conservative.
2. F. F. Bruce 1971 New Century Bible Series 1 & 2 Corinthians
3. Gordon Fee 1987 Series NIV Text pastoral and technical
4. A Robertson and A Plummer ICC 1914

Commentaries on 2 Corinthians

1. C.K. Barrett Harper's 1973
Angus 10-13 lost letter
2. Murry-Harris EBC 1976 NIV Text
3. Ralph Martin WBC 1985
4. Plummer A. ICC on 2 Corinthians 1915, liberal but classic

“The Father of all Compassion”
2 Corinthians 1:1-11
Jerry Grey WBC 2024
Message 1

Introduction: Suffering! A topic that captures our attention immediately when we hear it. The question is always raised by unbelievers as to why there is suffering in the world and God is seen as unloving and unkind. The theological debate still rages on... if God is all powerful and benevolent, why evil, why suffering? There will be time for answering all these questions as we start this second book. I promise to never duck the questions and never give answers that I really don't have. Yet, scripture is quite clear as to why we suffer. The Word of God does have answers. And yes, God is benevolent, and yes, God is sovereign. God is all powerful and He does loves us with an everlasting love.

The existence of evil and suffering has caused many Saints, and infidels, to become shipwrecked in their faith. Many will go to a Devil's hell from pride and anger because they hate God for the existence of suffering. Theologians call unexplained and unreasonable suffering *surd evil*. It is absurd and appears to have no purpose or reason for its existence. “Surd” refers to things that are irrational and lacking sense (See Erickson: *Christian Theology*, p. 415). Basically, it's man's way of accusing God of not being sovereign. God doesn't exist until man determines to blame God for evil and suffering (See also the term *natural evil*).

Erickson- “The concept of surd evil needs a bit of exposition. There are intrinsic goods which are good in and of themselves. There are also *instrumental* goods, which may be the means too good, but which also may become *instrumental* evils.

Sometimes something is simultaneously both good and evil. The same train may carry a saintly person and a group of criminals to the same city, where they will do, respectively good and evil. It is thus, instrumentally, both good and evil. Much of what appears evil to us may become good under God's attention and activity.

But this is not true of surd evil. Surd evil is like a surd number in mathematics, which is a quantity not expressible in rational numbers. Similarly, a surd evil “is an evil” that is not expressible in terms of good, no matter what operations are performed on it. There is something, which in effect, places a limitation upon what God is able to do” (emphasis mine).

However, we, as Christians, understand that God is sovereign and nothing escapes His power or will. “Unlike theists (A person that believes in the existence of God and that specifically says God is the creative source of the universe) who say that God is not limited by the human free will, but that he consciously and voluntarily limited himself in choosing to give man free will. Brightman insists that God did not choose to give man free will. Rather, human free will is something simply which God finds he must work with.” (Erickson p. 415-416).

A pure theists finds this thought unacceptable. You cannot have it both ways. God is sovereign or He is not. Philippians 2:6-7 tells us that Jesus Christ limited Himself as he came into our world as a servant. That turned out pretty good I would say.

Phil 2:6-7

6 Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
7 but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

NIV

Brightman is quite critical of what he calls absolute theism, which entails the proposition that all apparent evil is actually good. He particularly objects to its effects on ethical and moral considerations. It tends to make good and evil indistinguishable. By arguing that, all that seems unredeemable evil is actually good, in effect absolute theism has opened the door for someone to argue that what seems to be good is actually evil.

In effect, Brightman would be correct without one thing that the scriptures teach us. God is love. Without the benevolence of God he would be correct. Yet, we know the scriptures teach us contrary to this thought. God loves us and does make all things work together for good. Adam and Eve were told that to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would be devastation, even death. We are reaping the knowledge of evil.

I believe that God is in control, and directs my trials, suffering, and circumstances so that all things work together for good. God puts purpose, love, and glory in our suffering.

Recently, Megan Rapinoe, the professional soccer player, said that her injury in her final game was proof that God doesn't exist. I would say that after all she has said about our God, she has disqualified herself from speaking about him from a realistic foundation. God never seems to exist until she needs to blaspheme Him. She is a sad, lost, and prideful individual that is quite pagan in all her responses. She has no idea who God is. She would unknowingly accept a *Dualistic* and *Finitists* view of God. She would say God doesn't exist because she didn't get her way. There is another (Evil) force in the universe that controls her life and God is not there to protect her.

Many of our own family members of the household of God say and do equally ignorant things about God when they are in the midst of suffering. Your theology concerning God will manifest

itself in trials, pain, and suffering- even if you don't know it's happening. ***We call this, "The Testing of our Faith."***

Christians are not exempt from suffering or evil. However, suffering, for the Christian, has purpose and glory attached to it. All things do work together for good for the righteous (Romans 8:28). Suffering grows us, changes us, and drives us to a new knowledge of God that allows His strength and righteousness to rest upon us for His glory.

"Suffering reminds us that all our hope doesn't rest in this life. Living for this life is not our goal. The eternal is the essence of real life, seek that. Whatever God brings to us that makes us relinquish this life has purpose and good in it." JRG

Paul's Teachings on Suffering

2 Cor 4:15-18

15 All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. 16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 **For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.** 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

NIV

2 Cor 4:14

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and **eternal weight of glory;**

KJV

The prophet Jeremiah understands the issue.

Lam 3:37-42

- 37 Who can speak and have it happen
if the Lord has not decreed it?
- 38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High
that both calamities and good things come?
- 39 Why should any living man complain
when punished for his sins?
- 40 Let us examine our ways and test them,
and let us return to the Lord.
- 41 Let us lift up our hearts and our hands
to God in heaven, and say:
- 42 "We have sinned and rebelled
and you have not forgiven.

NIV

This second letter to the Corinthians will reveal the heart of Paul the apostle. Paul will speak of his suffering and at times be quite sarcastic with his wayward sheep. Take heart suffering Saint, God the Father is the Father of all compassion. He is **sovereign** and He is **benevolent**.

We are not **Theistic Finitists**, nor are we believers in **Dualism**. There are not two sovereign entities in the universe fighting for power (**Dualism**). God is neither finite nor unloving. Our God is **infinite** and the scripture says that God is love. A Theistic Finitists would say there is something in the universe not created by God, and as a result of that, God finds it as an obstacle and not subject to His will as an instrument (Professor of Philosophy Boston University Edgar S. Brightman [Christian Theology, Erickson, p. 415]) . **We are often guilty of this same thinking.**

A simple matter of being born again and placing one's trust in the Lord Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection will solve your queries and questions about life's unknowns. These questions will never be answered by science. This is a faith matter. We live by faith, not sight. However, even living by faith is not without empirical evidence. God gave us the scriptures to guide us and teach us all we need to know. You are likewise filled with the Holy Spirit of God as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come. So, be gone doubt! No more wondering and wandering for us. We are believers and born again Saints that follow the teachings of Christ. The book of 2 Corinthians has so much material that Paul gave us that reveals his broken and bruised heart to us. Let's make full use of it. We believe the theology that I just shared with you about God's sovereignty and love, but many times we don't act like it when our suffering reaches its zenith.

Paul is giving us tools for survival in a world of suffering. This letter to the Corinthians is about survival. You may trust the great apostle to teach you suffering skills for he had a ministry of suffering like none other.

Acts 9:15-16

15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must **suffer (pascho)** for my name."

NIV

Pascho refers to the sufferings of Christ or the passion of Christ. This would be the sufferings inflicted at the hands of men and the Devil himself. The crucifixion is the type of suffering **pascho** describes. This brings to mind the **paschal** Lamb.

Some people in foreign lands are tortured when they have a strange disease or affliction. They are believed to have demons in

them. Pagans believe that suffering is all for punishment. Many times, in Africa and India, people are branded with hot irons to get the Devil out of them. Good and bad alike suffer the effects of the fall of Adam and the circumstances of life. Many good people often have to suffer as is shown in the fact that **Job was acknowledged as a perfect and upright man that feared God and turned away from evil.** Throughout the entire book it is revealed that Job and his friends were at a loss as to why Job was suffering and why God was allowing all the pain. Nonetheless, Job never forsook his God or cursed Him.

Job 1:1-2

In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was *blameless* and *upright*; he feared God and shunned evil.
NIV

We must know that our suffering has been given to us as a blessing from God and may not be fully explained until we reach the other shore.

Paul actually prayed to fellowship (*koinonia*) with God in suffering. Paul wanted to know Christ in the power of the resurrection and in the fellowship of His suffering. *Paul referred to the fellowship of suffering because Jesus is with us in all our pain.*

Phil 3:10-11

10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship (**Koinonia**) of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.
NIV

I think that as long as I know God is with me (Fellowship), and that I can sense His presence, I will always make it through the suffering.

I. The Facts about the Father of Compassion:

1. Fact 1- Verse 3: God loves us in all our suffering. Paul had endured suffering from every area of life and from many people that he encountered. If anyone were able to speak to this issue, it was the great apostle.

Let it be known that Paul actually **“praised”** God in his suffering.

Greek: εὐλογητος– eulogetos, This is a **good word**. To speak a good word. This is our English word eulogy. Paul is acknowledging God as the source of all blessings. Paul does not say God doesn't exist because of His pain, like Rapinoe, the soccer player. Paul praises his God for His glorious fellowship in his suffering. That's what a **eulogy** is. Someone that knows the deceased person gets up and speaks a **good word** over them (**eulogetos**). Paul speaks a good word about his suffering. Translated here as **praise**.

Paul actually praises God and gives Him a good word because God is –

Greek: Merciful, οἰκτιρμος (oiktirmos). This is the term for mercies or pity. This is God's love in action. This is a cry of lament, compassion, or sorrow from pity. There is understanding in the pity. God has pity for us in our suffering.

Greek: The God of all comfort- πασης παρακλησις (pases paraklesis). Comfort, consolation, exhortation. This is our word for Holy Spirit, or *“another comforter,”* in John 16, the same word is used there about the comforter, or counselor that was to come.

John 16:7

7 But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the **Counselor (parakletos)** will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

NIV

Para means beside, and **kaleo** means to call. Our word in this text says that God will come and stand beside you in your suffering. This is an advocate, e.g., a lawyer or counselor. God has given us a Holy Counselor or Holy Legal assistant in our suffering. In severe testing, God stands with you to assist you in the pain.

Bro Jerry's Translation of Verse 3: *"Paul has a word of praise and acknowledgement about God as the God of all blessings who feels and hurts with Paul as he sorrows. He also knows his God will stand next to him in his trials if he doesn't deliver him from those trials. God loves us, shows pity to us, and stands with us in suffering- that is fact #1.*

2. Fact 2-Verse 4: God comforts us so that we can comfort others.

The power to stand in affliction is a learned process. Some people are naturally born with a bulldog in them. Most of us grow up on a different scale. No matter how tough you are, God can humble you down and bring you to your knees in trials. The word here for affliction and troubles is **θλιψις (thlipsis)**.

Greek: θλιψις (thlipsis)– Anguish, burden, or persecution. This is tribulation and trouble. That about covers it I would say. This can be a crushing pressure, or affliction. A few examples:

Rev 7:14

And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great **tribulation**; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

NIV

Mark 4:17

17 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When **trouble** or **persecution** comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.

NIV

2 Thess 1:5-10

5 All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. 6 God is just: He will pay back **trouble** to those who **trouble** you 7 and give relief to you who are **troubled**, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

NIV

He comforts us, or stands with us, in our times of crushing so as to enable us, or for the purpose of, allowing us to comfort others. The word **εἰς (eis)** is used in this last phrase. **Eis** followed by an accusative (Direct Object) means **for the purpose of** or **“so that,”** we can comfort others. This is a “purpose construction,” in other words. God comforts us so that we can learn how to comfort others. The grammar teaches there is purpose in the suffering.

Quote: John Henry Jowett said this... *“God does not comfort us to make us comfortable; He comforts us to make us comforters.”*

I understand the quote and agree with it, JHJ is correct, but I still think that on occasion, Jesus and the Holy Spirit comfort us to make us comfortable. There’s nothing wrong with being content and comfortable. You get the idea. Even Jesus sought comfort many times. When given a choice, Jesus chose a cushion over no cushion.

Mark 4:37-38

A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. 38 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a **cushion**. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

NIV

Verse 5: Kistemaker says there is a connection between suffering and consolation. I agree. Notice that the sufferings are called *“the sufferings of Christ.”* These sufferings are not random events happening to us daily. These are calculated points of spiritual growth sent by our Lord to bring growth and glory. Suffering identifies us with Jesus.

When the sufferings of Christ come into our lives, likewise, His comfort will also come with it, and His comfort will overflow from our lives, too.

The same is true when people work against Christ. If we persecute the Lord we are kicking against the goads. When you work against the process, you get the results of that as well.

Acts 9:4

4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

NIV

Acts 22:6-7

6 "About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. 7 I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?'

NIV

Acts 26:13

14 We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, '

Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

NIV

Are you characteristic in life of a comforter or a Jesus persecutor? Are you hurting the kingdom or building it. Are you a Paul or a Saul.

Matt 12:30

30 "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.

NIV

The “persecuting Saul” became the greatest comforter of all time, Jesus excluded. Verse 5 has the word **perisseuo** in it. This is the word for “**over flows.**” This is better than having enough. This is the word superfluous or extra. This means having more than enough or having extra to a ridiculous amount. Jesus uses this word in John 10:10. Notice the words, “**Have it to the full or in abundance.**” That’s our word **perisseuo**. Jesus came so that your life would be an example of a ridiculously overflowing life of abundance of grace, mercy, and comfort.

John 10:10

10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and **have it to the full.**

NIV

Verse 5 may be called the spiritual scales of trials vs. comfort. Spurgeon puts it all this way. It's a bit long but important. It will be worth the read.

CHS, Morning and Evening 2-12.

There is a blessed proportion. The Ruler of Providence bears a pair of scales—in this side He puts His people's trials, and in that He puts their consolations. When the scale of trial is nearly empty, you will always find the scale of consolation in nearly the same condition; and when the scale of trials is full, you will find the scale of consolation just as heavy. When the black clouds gather most, the light is the more brightly revealed to us. When the night lowers and the tempest is coming on, the Heavenly Captain is always closest to His crew. It is a blessed thing, that when we are most cast down, then it is that we are most lifted up by the consolations of the Spirit. One reason is, because *trials make more room for consolation*. Great hearts can only be made by great troubles. The spade of trouble digs the reservoir of comfort deeper, and makes more room for consolation. God comes into our heart—He finds it full—He begins to break our comforts and to make it empty; then there is more room for grace. The humbler a man lies, the more comfort he will always have, because he will be more fitted to receive it. Another reason why we are often most happy in our troubles, is this—*then we have the closest dealings with God*. When the barn is full, man can live without God: when the purse is bursting with gold, we try to do without so much prayer. But once take our *gourds* away, and we want our *God*; once cleanse the idols out of the house, then we are compelled to honour Jehovah. "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord." There is no cry so good as that which comes from the bottom of the mountains; no prayer half so hearty as that which comes up from the depths of the soul, through deep trials and afflictions. Hence they bring us to God, and we are happier; for nearness to

God is happiness. Come, troubled believer, fret not over your heavy troubles, for they are the heralds of weighty mercies.

3. Fact 3- Verse 6: Paul does not claim suffering saves the sinner. Suffering advances the gospel.

We are saved by grace and that is the only way a person can be saved. Luther, and many others, have tried this road to salvation, but they all found the bridge out. One may see our sufferings and wonder how we are able to withstand the suffering and then receive Christ by grace through faith, but suffering itself does not save. Suffering advances the gospel.

Suffering identifies us with Jesus. Suffering never saves; suffering tells us who is saved.

1 Peter 4:12-17

12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.

13 But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 If you suffer, it

should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. 16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

NIV

Rev 1:9-10

9 I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

NIV

Paul is saying that our suffering is all under God's control and all things work together for good. After Paul speaks to the Corinthians about being fragile jars of clay he says this:

2 Cor 4:13-15

13 It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, 14 because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence. 15 All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

NIV

Again, everything that happens is for the advancement of the gospel:

Phil 1:12-14

12 Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. 13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 14 Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.

NIV

Recap:

1. God loves us in our suffering. He is sovereign and benevolent.
2. God comforts us so that we may become comforters.
3. Suffering does not save the sinner. Suffering advances the gospel and grows the Christian.

Fact 4- Verse 7: God's comfort is efficacious (Sufficient).

Verse 7: Paul's hope was steadfast in that he was certain that God would help the Corinthians. He was certain they would make it until the end. *Perseverance of the Saints*... v. 6 comfort allows for patient endurance. The expected hope is that when we share in the sufferings of Christ, we will also share in the comfort.

If you are in a tough spot right now just look for the consolation. I often worry about my sheep when they are in a difficult place spiritually. Trials and temptations mount up and I am concerned they will not make it. God has a word for us both.

Paul says **“we know”** that we will share in the comfort. The Holy Spirit is our sustainer. The words used here refer to confidence. *Bebaios* and *elpis* are **basis**, or **foot**, and **confident** hope. Biblical hope is not wishful thinking but confident expectation based on what God has said. In other words, the translation of verse 7 could read like this, ***“We have a biblical foundation and basis for our confident hope and expectation that God will comfort you congruently (equally) for your suffering.”***

Rom 5:3-5

3 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

NIV

Ps 138:2

8 The Lord will fulfill [his purpose] for me;
your love, O Lord, endures forever —
do not abandon the works of your hands.

NIV

Phil 1:6

6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

NIV

Isa 43:1-3

But now, this is what the Lord says —
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.
2 When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.
3 For I am the Lord, your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
I give Egypt for your ransom,
Cush and Seba in your stead.

NIV

II. Truthfulness in the Reality of Trials:

1. Many trials are unbearable, v.8.

Many will tell you that God will not put more on you than you can stand. That's not true. The **1 Corinthian** passage is about temptation in its context, not suffering (**c.f., 1 Cor. 10:13**). God will put way more on you than you can bear so that He can sustain you with His powerful hand.

1 Cor 10:13

13 No **temptation** has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

NIV

You and I cannot do anything without Christ. That's our problem now, we think we can live without Jesus. Jesus is your example.

John 15:5

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

NIV

John 5:30

30 By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

NIV

It is not unspiritual or unscriptural to be devastated by trials. In verse 8 Paul is opening his heart to us. This is the distinctive of this entire epistle. Paul is telling us of his personal Christian experience. Note 1 Cor 15:32. Paul fought beasts in Ephesus. See also Acts 19.

Paul did not want his people ignorant of the truths and realities of suffering. Many of the false prophets, like Osteen, will tell you that trials are not real. Live like they don't exist. Just be positive and it's all okay. Well, that's neither life, nor is it scripture. Paul is pouring out his heart in this book.

Look at what Paul says in this passage.

Paul uses words like afflictions, overwhelmed, beyond our strength, despaired of life.

~**Afflictions- thlipsis**: trouble, trials, tribulation, anguish.

~**Overwhelmed- kata huperbole**: according to what is out of measure. Out of reach. Beyond my strength.

~**Beyond our strength- huper dunamis**: above strength

~**heavy pressed- bareo**: To press hard past exasperation. To weigh down or burden.

~**desperation- exaporemiai**: Exasperation, to be at an utter loss or despond.

~ **death or even of life, zao**: life.

Paul says that without the help of God, they would have died.

2. Trials are to teach us to rely or trust God, no matter what.

In verse 9 Paul claims to have had a death sentence placed on their lives so as to teach them to trust God who can raise the dead. God could raise them from the dead in that life or the next. That's a confident hope in the sovereign Lord our God.

When Abraham offered the son of promise on the alter, the son who held the lineage of the Messiah in his blood, he knew that if God had Isaac die that he was capable of raising him from the dead. ***Faith that is not tested is not faith. Don't trust yourselves.***

Prov 3:5-6

5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

KJV

Paul felt like Peter walking on the water. If I die trying to walk on the water, Jesus will raise me from the dead. Trials teach us to not be reliant upon ourselves.

3. God does deliver, vv. 10-11.

2 Cor 4:16-18

16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

KJV

My past experiences tell me God will deliver again. My future hope says He will do it again. God has a great track record. Paul says God has delivered, and He will do it again. We all have past experiences upon which to rest. God will deliver you from it or take you through it.

Ps 22:20-21

Deliver my life from the sword,
my precious life from the power of the dogs.

21 Rescue me from the mouth of the lions;
save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

NIV

Ps 31:1-5

In you, O Lord, I have taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame;
deliver me in your righteousness.

2 Turn your ear to me,
come quickly to my rescue;

be my rock of refuge,
a strong fortress to save me.
3 Since you are my rock and my fortress,
for the sake of your name lead and guide me.
4 Free me from the trap that is set for me,
for you are my refuge.
5 Into your hands I commit my spirit;
redeem me, O Lord, the God of truth.

NIV

Illustration: Kay Saures brush with an armed robber in a store. God does deliver.

Revised 11-27-23: It was December, in the mid-nineties, and I was Christmas shopping in a local drug store. I was looking for a specific Christmas present for my dad. This drug store had a long counter with the cash register at the end - nearest the door - and the pharmacy in the front. I asked the clerk about the location of the item that I was looking for (a weather radio). She knew me, so she directed me to look behind the same long counter as the cash register. Since she was busy checking out a customer, she told me to look for the item and she would be right with me. I located the radios on the bottom shelf, so I kneeled behind the counter to search for what I wanted. Just at that moment, two armed men entered the store. They were wearing ski masks to hide their identity. One of the men went to the back of the store and demanded that all the customers go to the front of the store and lie face down on the floor in front of the pharmacy area. The other man came in behind him and began to demand wallets, purses, and any jewelry (particularly watches). Customers and staff were terrorized - one of the customers even suffered a heart attack. The pharmacist was crying & begging that she not be hurt because she was pregnant. It appeared that neither of the men saw me kneeling behind the counter, so I did not move (quietly stuffing my money behind the weather radios). After robbing the pharmacy and the customers on the floor, the second man turned toward the cash register. I was directly in his path. He paused and I was sure he was going to demand my purse and/or order me to get on the floor with the others. I even opened my wallet, showed it to him and said, "I don't have any money." However, he ignored me and proceeded to step over and around me to get to the cash register. After taking the cash out of the register, he returned, stepped over and around me again and ran out of the store. Immediately I felt a "presence" around me

and realized that he neither saw me nor heard me. I have no idea what he saw or didn't see (my guess is an angel - or angels). I only know that I was surrounded by a "hedge of protection" - and I knew it!

4. Finally- Verse 11: God draws the family of God together through trials and furthers the gospel through suffering.

The sufferings of Paul drew the people together through prayer. They were able to give thanks because of the gifts that came through prayer. The entire body grew because of what Paul went through.

As God strengthened Paul, He strengthened the church. Our witness in suffering can encourage others. When we see God deliver a Saint through an unbearable situation, it build us all up.

When your pastor suffers, God's grace and power rests upon him. That makes the preaching better. "God cannot use a man greatly until he crushes him thoroughly."

Spurgeon: *"Thou shalt never find a bundle of affliction which is not bound up in the midst of it sufficient grace."*

1247: Willing to suffer for Christ-

Paul was told in advance of the sufferings he must undergo for Christ, but it did not deter him. Later he tells how he glories in the privilege of suffering for Christ. So it has been with countless others whose love for the Master has caused them to feel a sense of privilege in suffering and martyrdom. When Francis Xavier was about to leave Rome on his great missionary work, he was overheard exclaiming in his sleep, "yet more, oh Lord, yet more." Later he told his friends he had a dream that

night that the Lord had showed him all he must suffer- the weary journeys, dangers, deep rivers to cross, savage lands to explore, sickness, tortures, death; but at the same time he was shown the lands that he was going to bring to Christ and the vast numbers that would be saved. His soul was so aroused he cried for more- more suffering, if it meant more souls.

Anonymous poem:

When God wants to drill a man,
And thrill a man,
And skill a man,
When God wants to mold a man
To play the noblest part;
When He yearns with all His heart
To create so great and bold a man
That all the world shall be amazed,
Watch His methods, watch His ways!

How He ruthlessly perfects
Whom He royally elects!
How He hammers him and hurts him,
And with mighty blows converts him
Into trial shapes of clay which
Only God understands;
While his tortured heart is crying
And he lifts beseeching hands!

How He bends but never breaks
When his good He undertakes;
How He uses whom He chooses,
And with every purpose fuses him;
By every act induces him
To try His splendour out—
God knows what He's about.