

Summit Woods Baptist Church  
First Corinthians Sermon Study Equipping Class

A Christ-Centered Perspective of Suffering from 2 Corinthians 1:3-11

Next Sunday, guest preacher Mike Summers will speak to us about having a Christ-centered perspective of suffering from 2 Corinthians 1:3-11.

❖ Day 1

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-11.

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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.

1. Paul begins these verses with a benediction, calling his readers to bless (literally, 'to speak well of' or 'to praise') God. What attributes of God does Paul name in verse 3 as the basis for this praise?
2. Note that in English, we generally use the word 'comfort' to refer to ease or relief, but the Greek words translated as 'comfort' speaks of help, strength, and encouragement. Verse 4 says that God "comforts us *in* all our afflictions" (emphasis added). What is the significance of God's comfort coming *in* our afflictions and not apart from them?
3. Read Romans 5:1-5, 1 Peter 1:3-9, and James 1:2-4. What good purposes do trials and afflictions accomplish for believers?

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4. God's comfort *does* come to us for our own benefit, but what purpose does Paul focus on in verse 4b?
5. We tend to want relief to come quickly so that we do not have to endure sufferings, but according to verse 6, when is comfort experienced?
6. Read verse 5a. Who shares in whose sufferings and comfort?
7. Read verse 7b. Who shares in whose sufferings and comfort?

❖ Day 2

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 again.

8. Verse 5 could more literally be translated, "For just as Christ's sufferings overflow into our lives, so also through Christ the comfort we receive is overflowing."<sup>1</sup> To whom is the comfort that Paul received overflowing?
9. Look at verse 7. Why is Paul's hope for them unshaken? What is the basis of his hope? (Note that he says "hope *for* you" and not "hope *in* you".)

In verse 8, Paul specifically mentions "the affliction we experienced in Asia." Read 2 Corinthians 11:24-28 to get a sense of the various afflictions he faced throughout his ministry.

10. In verses 9-10, what were the final effects of Paul's afflictions on himself?

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<sup>1</sup> Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Milton Keynes, UK: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.; Paternoster Press, 2005), 145.

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11. Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-10. How did the comfort Paul received impact his perspective?
12. It can be tempting to think of Paul as a super-Christian whose heart was always bold and confident, but Paul says that he was “burdened beyond [his] strength” to the point of “despair[ing] of life itself.” How does this correct picture of Paul add weight to his words in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10?
13. How do you think Paul wants his recounting of his afflictions to affect the Corinthians and us?
14. Where else in Paul’s letters does he talk about or demonstrate relying on God rather than on himself?

❖ Day 3

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 again.

15. In addition to relying on God and setting his hope on God, where else does Paul look for encouragement during afflictions in verse 11?
16. What ultimate effect does Paul want their prayers for him to have?

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- a. How does this tie back to verse 3?
17. We often speak of praying for each other as “the least” we can do. How does Paul’s phrasing in verse 11a demonstrate the value he places on their prayers for him?
18. When we are in distress, it can be tempting to isolate ourselves, but the Scriptures tell us that believers are connected to each other through Christ. How can a conscious awareness of your interconnectedness encourage you to patiently endure your afflictions with grace?
19. How can viewing afflictions as an opportunity to actively and practically obey all of the “one another” commands in the Scriptures encourage you to both give and receive comfort? (Read 2 Corinthians 7:5-7 for another description of God’s comfort coming through fellow believers.)
20. In our study of 1 Corinthians over the past year, we have seen Paul’s continual emphasis in that letter of challenging the Corinthians to be more others-focused and less self-focused. How do you see Paul setting a similar example in this second letter to the Corinthians?

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21. Paul began this section by focusing on God's attributes of being merciful and being our comforter. What attributes of God do you regularly dwell on for strength and comfort when you are facing various afflictions?

22. The Greek word for "mercies" in verse 3 speaks of God's compassion and kindness. Based on all that Paul has said in this passage, summarize how it is merciful for God to allow us to be afflicted and then to comfort us in that affliction rather than to keep us from any affliction.

In preparation for Sunday, pray that we would have a biblical and Christ-centered perspective of suffering. Pray that, as Paul puts it in Romans 12:12, we would "rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, [and] be constant in prayer."