

2 Corinthians 1.1-7

“Can My Pain have a Purpose?”

No church caused Apostle PAUL more PAIN than church in CORINTH

Church at Corinth was GIFTED, DYNAMIC, GROWING Church

Paul spent more 18 months in Corinth TEACHING & EQUIPPING the church

He made 3 visits and wrote them 4 Letters > probably 4<sup>th</sup> here: 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians

13 LETTERS of Paul that have DUAL Authorship > Inspired by SPIRIT > NT

Other Letters to church and individuals – No doubt full Apostolic Wisdom

Only these 13 NT Letters have been kept for almost 2000 yrs – Others LOST

But NOT for Whole Church, All Time/Places – so, NOT included in NT Canon

INSPIRED Not Mean Easy to Understand, or even Interesting!, God-breathed

This 257 Verse Letter is Passionate, Uneven, and EXPLOSIVE

Many things HARD to Understand > Very Clear see HEART of Paul the Leader

He wrote “out of much affliction and anguish of heart...with many tears”

2 Corinthians 2.4

Most AFFLICTION, ANGUISH, TEARS caused by CORINTHIAN CHURCH

Paul writes with DESIRE for RESTORATION & FORGIVENESS

For ME this Sermon Series has been 40 years in the Making

More than 40 years ago took Class on 2 Corinthians at Covenant College

Our text was the Commentary on 2 Corinthians by Philip Edgecumbe Hughes

After COVENANT entered Westminster Seminary – P.E. Hughes my Professor

Turned to 2 Cor many X's as Servant in Ministry, Comfort, Rebuke, Encourage

Thankful God in His Providence given me Chance to Share this Book with You

In 2 Corinthians Paul cajoles, congratulates, scolds, bares his heart, confides, reasons and plays the fool in attempt to get the church back on track and away from apostolic competitors who do not have the church's best interests at heart. The letter is a gold mine for pastors and churches alike, because in it we see a broad range of pastoral techniques applied to a diversity of theological and practical issues, including stewardship of finances, Christian suffering, church discipline, conflict management, interpersonal relationships, the nature of gospel ministry, interchurch competition, the transforming work of the Spirit, death and mortality, life and resurrection, idolatry, commercialism, and evangelistic strategies and methods.

Linda L. Belleville

May GOD teach us in ZGC ALL this and more as we Step into this Letter...

Step into INTRO Verses > Dominant THEME "Comfort" – 10 X's in 7 Verses

## 1. Confidence in Suffering

### a. Purpose of God

v. 1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

PAUL did NOT Appoint himself into MINISTRY > Compelled by Risen Jesus  
 Paul is NOT Apostle by CHOICE but by SOVEREIGN CALLING – God's Will  
 Christ SENDS Paul to be APOSTLE to Gentiles ACCORDING to WILL of God

HIGH AUTHORITY "apostle of Christ Jesus" – Sent DIRECTLY by Christ

"the one sent by a man is as the man himself" Rabbinic Proverb

Paul NOT just PRIVATE Person with STRONG OPINIONS

SPOKESMAN for GOD > Paul writes INSPIRED by H.S. > Letter from GOD

Paul FIRST Author of NT – Writes w/ OT Framework

APOSTLE > NT Equivalent of OT PROPHETS > Same word in Septuagint

2 QUALIFICATIONS 1. SEE Jesus and 2. SENT by Jesus >> So, NONE Today

Some modern scholars have attempted to broaden the definition of “apostle” in such a way (like ‘missionary’ or ‘church planter’) that Paul’s distinctive authority is dissipated...If Paul’s apostleship meant and means no more than that, then he had and continues to have little real authority in churches. Paul Barnett

Paul REMINDS Corinthians of CALLING because of their CRITICISM

Paul writes after PASSING Thru Season of GREAT AFFLICTION & Trouble

If Paul was for real, why was there so much suffering in his life? They asked. Also, why was his ministry so lackluster when compared with the ministry of others? Why was his preaching so dull? And why did he change his travel plans if God was actually directing his life? Moreover, what lay behind his refusal to accept payment for his services, as most preachers did? Was he really collecting money for the poor? Why didn’t Paul have letters of recommendation like the others? Why didn’t he regale them with stories about God’s power in his ministry? Was it because there were none? Kent Hughes

PRAISES Gracious God – his Deliverer – Father of mercies, God of all comfort

STILL HEALING from WOUNDS of his BATTLES

Yearns for COMFORT from Corinthians NOT CRITICISM & CENSURE

DIRECT Call from RISEN JESUS > SENT by Him w/ AUTHORITY

Saul calls himself Paul for no other reason than because he wished to show himself *little* – the very least of the apostles. Augustine

Paul must ESTABLISH TRUST Relationship with Corinthians at Beginning

Paul’s APPROACH here is to PERSUADE, NOT Command

He wants Corinthians to VOLUNTARILY Respond in Repentance/Restoration

Paul ACCUSED that Could NOT be REAL Apostle > he was SUFFERING!

Actually SUFFERING is the MARK of his APOSTLESHIP

While the source of Paul's authority was Christ, his authority was not attested by marvels or mysteries but in the pattern of death and resurrection stamped upon his own life and work...they remain for us, indispensable evidence of genuineness as Christian believers. Paul Barnett

In Christ WE TOO become SUFFERING SERVANTS for the Glory of GOD  
Paul's Letters have NOT Lost their Authority > NOT Advice > AUTHORITY  
BY the Will of God – to REJECT him is to Reject God's Messenger

b. Person of God v. 3 Blessed be the God...

FOLLOWS Pattern of JEWISH Blessing spoken in the SYNAGOGUE

Were 18 Benedictions were SPOKEN in 1<sup>st</sup> C SYNAGOGUE Service

v. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

RESHAPES Synagogue Prayer to ONE God NOW Revealed: Father, Son, Spirit

Paul reveals Xtian Understanding of God > REVEALED in SON sent to World

DEITY of Jesus – ONE with God, EQUAL with God, SON of God

LORD: Greek word for YAHWEH or JEHOVAH in SEPTUAGINT – Greek OT

Amazing that Devout MONOtheistic Pharisee – call Contemporary Man > God

v. 3 the Father of mercies and God of all comfort

Synagogue Prayer of Paul's Day... GOD "the Father of Mercies"

Paul adds "God of all Comfort"

ATHEIST Converted to Christianity asked "What is biggest difference in life?"

NOW I have Someone to THANK!

ISAIAH repeatedly Speaks of CONSOLATION of MESSIANIC Age

“Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.” Isaiah 40.1

FATHERLY Tenderness of God >As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. Psalm 103.13

MOTHERLY Tenderness of God > As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. Isaiah 66.13

vs. 3,4 the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 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.

DECLARES WHO God IS And WHAT God DOES

UNCHANGING Character of God is basis of HOPE and CONFIDENCE

PRESENT Tense = God COMFORTS Constantly & UNFAILINGLY

## 2. Comfort for Sharing

### a. Called Out for God

“the church of God” – FROM Him & FOR Him Across EARTH – thru AGES

NOT a BUILDING or a Denomination > Everyday word for ASSEMBLY

Assembled BY God & FOR God to BRING the WORLD TO God for His Glory

“To the church of God that is at Corinth” – EMBASSY of HEAVEN on Earth

- PEOPLE called OUT of World and INTO the Family of God

“with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia”

ACHIA – ROMAN Province that covers MOST of what we call GREECE Today

Church BOTH Local & Global – TO Ends of the Earth, UNTIL End of the Age

WE here are PART of that Church

by Holy Spirit this Letter is Message from JESUS to US

NOT Paul's Church or ELDERS Church or Denomination > GOD's Church  
Assembly > God's People in God's Presence to hear God's WORD

v. 1 "and Timothy our brother"

Timothy is an ASSOCIATE > Not AUTHOR or an APOSTLE > son and brother

FIRST words PAUL the Born-Again Christian heard from Another Christian  
Spoken by Hesitant, Frightened man named ANANIAS – Laid hands, prayed...

"Brother Saul"

Acts 9.17

If GOD in Christ is OUR Father – We Now Bros/Sis from Different Mothers

v. 1 "the saints" WRITTEN with Some IRONY

Recent BEHAVIOR NOT very Saintly > Challenging PAUL'S AUTHORITY!

SAINTS Not by GOOD CONDUCT but GREAT CHRIST > they are IN HIM!

because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God,  
righteousness and sanctification and redemption 1 Corinthians 1.30

Basis of Paul's CONFIDENCE for Church NOT in THEM but in CHRIST

90 X's Paul writes 2 Eternally Significant words IN CHRIST – place Wanna BE!

He is our SHELTER from Storm – ARK of Refuge – STONE Never be Shaken

What ground did Paul have for recognizing the Church of Corinth? Just this, that he discerned among them the doctrine of the Gospel, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, the tokens by which the Church ought to be judged... Although some faults had crept in... they retained fundamental doctrine, since the one God was adored among them and invoked in the name of Christ, and since they placed their confidence of their salvation in Christ and had a ministry that was not altogether corrupted, the Church still continued to exist there. John Calvin

CHURCH has MUSTARD Seed of FAITH – Flickering Light of God’s Presence  
 God’s WORD, God’s SPIRIT are the PROMISES of God’s PRESENCE

Just with FRIENDS in USA – Church ON-LINE

When TIRED, or LATE NIGHT, go ON-LINE to WATCH Church

Great for ELDERLY and SHUT-INS! – but Not UNI Students!

Really want to Grow in Christ > DO LIFE with Fellow Christians > BLURB

ZGC Opportunity to do so Across Cultures and Generations

Small Groups – Meals – Sharing – Having Fun Together – Do Mission – Travel

Balanced SPIRITUAL Growth is to be BIG MEETING AND Small Group Mtg.

#### b. Comfort for Sharing

Just back from USA yesterday > Many Identifies themselves by SUFFERINGS

Many Claim be VICTIM – OPPRESSED – Playing BLAME Game - COMPLEX

Our society has embraced identity politics...the only thing that matters, especially in politics, is the experience of oppression shared by all those who share some identifying marker—like race, gender, sexual orientation/gender identity, etc. In the identity politics way of keeping score of cultural grievances, everyone’s experience of “oppression” is deemed equally valid and horrific...added to identity politics today is “intersectionality” – piling identities and oppressive experiences on top of one another. Someone with multiple identity markers can claim degrees of intersectionality and therefore their own special kinds of oppression: For instance, a person might be an Afro-Latina lesbian female. Or a Filipino trans. The fuzzy math at work here makes the possibility of conflict almost unlimited, an especially acute possibility in the growing acronym of LGBT. The only thing members of this coalition have in common is that they are not heterosexual.

John Stonestreet

Paul NOT Talking about SELF- IDENTIFIED Suffering > Christian Affliction

LETTER Written by APOSTLE of JESUS to the CHURCH of JESUS

v. 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.  
 Conventional Practice in ANCIENT Letters to wish them Health & Well-Being

Paul has HIGHER HOPES – GRACE & PEACE! - SALVATION & SHALOM!

“grace and peace, the favor of God and its fruits, comprehend all the benefits of redemption”  
 Charles Hodge

Some teach if REALLY have FAITH or are FILLED with SPIRIT Not Have  
 -- Common STRUGGLES and SUFFERINGS of LIFE

Paul USES words to Describe EVERY RANGE of SUFFERING in LIFE

Many AFFLICTIONS are Described by Paul in this Letter

Physical Hardships – Dangers – Persecutions – Anxieties – Gospel Opposition

COMFORT is Sometimes DELIVERANCE FROM Troubles

MORE OFTEN Comforting Presence of God IN & THROUGH the Troubles

v. 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.

We KNOW God WILL Comfort OTHERS because he HAS Comforted US!

REASON God Comforts US is so we can COMFORT Others Too

NOT supposed to KEEP Our COMFORT > GIVE away to Other Hurting People

In Christ ABUNDANT Suffering is Balanced with Abundant COMFORT

Not ONLY are we BOUND TO Christ we are Bound IN X to ALL Believers



Christian NOT an ISOLATED Individual – INTEGRAL Member of Body

If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

1 Corinthians 12.26

How deeply they should have felt their Apostle's sufferings to be their sufferings! How zealously they should have emulated his selflessness in propagating at all costs this same message of salvation! Philip E. Hughes

We are UNITED with Christ AND with ONE ANOTHER

The comfort we seek to give to others that we have received from God in our own personal times of trouble has a uniquely genuine ring. Derek Prime

### 3. Confirmation of Salvation

#### a. Path of Jesus

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

GOD is the SOURCE of our COMFORT > CHRIST is the CHANNEL

Overflow of Christ's Sufferings into OUR Lives > flows into Lives of OTHERS

Paul, Corinthians, We NOT ADDING to Once for All SAVING Work of Christ

JESUS Paid it All – Announced from CROSS “It is FINISHED!”

Salvation is ACCOMPLISHED – More Suffering to ANNOUNCE & APPLY

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church  
Colossians 1.24

NOTHING Lacking in PURCHASE --- More to be Done in PROCLAMATION

Jesus Life – SUFFERING was PRELUDE to GLORY > Same for CHURCH

Rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.  
1 Peter 4.13

ULTIMATE Aim NOT just to HELP Christians but to HONOR Christ

if (*we are*) 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.

Romans 8.17

If we are called to fellowship in the sufferings of the Christ of humiliation, it is the Christ of glory who mediates an abundance of comfort to us – one and the same Christ.

Philip E. Hughes

#### b. Power of Jesus

GOSPEL is Not SPLASH & FLASH but Meekness and Weakness

When it BOASTS it Boasts in LORD who DIED & ROSE Again!

NOT Reference to GENERAL Sufferings – ALL People go thru Sufferings

ALL: Back Aches – Mother in Laws – In-Grown Toe Nails – TAXES

Christian Suffering is FOR Christ and FROM Christ > GOSPEL Suffering

Christian Suffering – Troubles & Affliction in MAKING Christ Known

Things NOT Happen if were NOT SERVING / SHARING Christ

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

NO Matter the PROBLEMS in the Church in CORINTH – Paul has HOPE

Paul is confident they would share the spiritual fruit of his DISTRESS

Lit. 'THE' Suffering / 'THE' Comfort >> FROM Jesus HIMSELF

Paul says his hope for his readers is unshaken because he knows that they are sharing *the* sufferings, they are sharing *the* comfort also. Colin Kruse

In the service of Christ there may be disappointments, but there cannot be despair there may be conflicts, but never doubt; there may be afflictions, but never without comfort. Our epistle is pervaded by this spirit of a faith which abides serene and steadfast no matter how much the outward circumstances of life may tempt to the shadow of distrust. Philip E. Hughes

Our PAIN can have a PURPOSE to MAKE Us MORE LIKE Jesus

Receive HIS Comfort which we can GIVE AWAY to Others

REMIND us of our SAVIOR who SUFFERED, DIED and Entered GLORY

FOLLOW Him in His SUFFERINGS, COMFORT, and GLORY!

2 Corinthians 1.<sup>1</sup>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: <sup>2</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <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.