

Series: 2 Corinthians

“The Comfort of God in Times of Suffering”

(Sunday Morning September 6th, 2026)

Passage: 2 Corinthians 1:3-11

O.S. I Can't Think of Anyone Who Has Ever Had to Suffer More for the Cause of Christ Than the Apostle Paul

- > **And He Knew That Suffering Would be a Part of God's Plan for His Life Immediately After His Conversion**
- > **God Told Ananias to go and Find Paul at a Street Called “*Straight*” in Damascus; and Then, He Added This Very Interesting Statement; He Said, “*for I will show him how much he must suffer for my names's sake*” (Acts 9:16)**
- > **And Paul Did Indeed Suffer a Great Deal for the Cause of Christ, in Fact, He Described Some of It in This Very Epistle**
- > **In 2 Corinthians 11:23-27, Paul Mentioned Such Things as: Imprisonments, and Scourgings, and Being Stoned, and Being Shipwrecked, and Murder Plots, and Hunger, and Thirst, and Exposure**
- > **And He Followed All of That Up in 2 Cor 11:28 With This Statement; He Said,**
“Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches”
- > **This Means That Paul Knew What Suffering and Stress Were All About, and This Church in Corinth Was One of the Primary Causes of It**
- > **For You See, Almost Immediately After Paul Had Finished Writing the Book of 1 Corinthians, He Got Word That Some False Teachers Had Infiltrated the Church**
- > **He Reacted to This by Sending What is Known as “*The Severe Letter*” Which Was Not a Divinely Inspired Letter**
- > **And He Even Tells Us in 2 Cor 7:8 That He Regretted Sending It: Has Anything Like This Ever Happened to You? (E...Letter, Text, Facebook Post or an Email)**
- > **Well, This is What Paul Did, and He Began to Have Second Thought About It**

St = Paul Was so Stressed Out About This That He Had Trouble Doing His Work, and He Tells Us About This in 2 Cor 2:12-13; He Said, “12 Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord, 13 I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus...”

Q.n = So, Why Was Paul Looking for Titus?

Ans = Because Titus Had Delivered the Severe Letter

- > **Titus Eventually Came to Him in Macedonia, and Paul Was Greatly Relieved, Because the News Was All Good**
- > **The Corinthians Responded Well to His “Severe Letter”; They Repented, and the Majority of Them Rejected the False Teachers Who Were Trying to Lead Them Astray**
- > **But Unfortunately, the False Teachers Were Still Hanging Around, and There Was a Minority There That Was Being Influenced by Them**
- > **And These False Teachers, Which Paul Called “False Apostles” in 2 Cor 11:13 Were Doing Everything They Could to Discredit Him**
- > **They Were Doing This, Because They Knew That the Teacher of Truth Had to be Removed Before They Could Gain Control of the Church; And So...**

...They Accused Paul of Being Unspiritual (2 Cor 1:12)

...They Accused Paul of Mishandling the Word of God (2 Cor 4:2)

...They Accused Paul of Seeking Personal Glory (2 Cor 4:5)

...They Accused Paul of Exploiting People (2 Cor 7:2)

...They Accused Paul of Embezzling Money (2 Cor 7:2)

...They Accused Paul of Being a Coward (2 Cor 10:10)

...They Accused Paul of Being Ugly and Unable to Preach (2 Cor 10:10)

...And One of the Worst Things They Did Was to Draw Attention to His Suffering and to Suggest That This Was an Evidence of God’s Judgment Upon Him

T.S. I Believe This is Why Paul Begins This Epistle, Which is Divinely Inspired, by Pointing Out That the Suffering We Endure as Christians for the Cause of Christ Has Some Important Purposes

- > **And While God Does Not Exempt Any of Us From Suffering, He Does Promise to Provide Us With His Divine Comfort While We are Experiencing It**

I. Some Resources are Available to Us in Times of Suffering

1) We Have God's Son

- > I Want You to Notice That Paul Begins This Passage With an Expression of Praise
- > Paul Blesses God, and He Acknowledges That He is the Father of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
- > The Common Expression in the Jewish Synagogues of Paul's Day Was This One *"Blessed be the God and Father of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob"*
- > Paul Chose to Alter That in Order to Remind Us of the Fact That Jesus is God's Only Begotten Son and the Second Member of the Trinity
- > And Our Praise is Directed to God the Father, First of All Because He Has Provided Us With Salvation, and This Has Come Through Jesus Christ His Son
- > And Let Me Add That Our Praise Brings Glory to God, and It Brings Even More Glory to God When It Comes to Him in Our Times of Suffering
- > In the Midst of His Great Suffering, Job, for Example, Won a Decisive Victory Over the Devil in *Job 13:15* When He Said, *"Even though He slay me, yet, will I praise Him!"*

Q.n = That's When the Devil Lost, Did You Know That?

- > Because That is When It Became Clear That Job's Faith Could Withstand Anything and Everything That the Devil Could Throw at Him
- > We Should Especially Praise Him, Listen to Me Now, When We are Called Upon to Suffer for the Cause of Christ, Because We Know That We Will be Eternally Rewarded
- > This is Why the Apostles Rejoiced After They Were Scourged by the Sanhedrin for Preaching the Gospel Back in *Acts 5*
- > And This is Why Paul Said *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us"* in *Rom 8:18*

T.S. 1) We Have God's Son

2) We Have God's Sympathy

- > Now, This Phrase *"The Father of"* Refers to Being the Source of Something

- > Jesus, for Example, When Referring to the Devil in *John 8:44* Said, “... *Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies*”
- > That Literally Means That Satan is “*the Source of All Lies*”, and It Also Means That a Person is Never More Like the Devil Than When They Tell a Lie.
- > In This Verse, We are Being Told That Jesus is the Source of All Mercy, and We Should Not Overlook That Word “*All*”; All Mercy Comes From Him
- > This Word That is Translated Mercy is the Greek Word “*oiktirmon*”, and One Way to Remember It’s Meaning is That It Has the Word “*Tear*” in It
- > This is a Word That Refers to God’s Sympathy and Compassion, and It Reminds Us of the Fact That Our God is Not Ambivalent to Our Needs and Concerns
- > In *Psalms 34:18*, the Psalmist Said, “*The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*”

Q.n = Listen to Me, are You Listening?

- > Our God is Never Closer to Us Than When We Find Ourselves Experiencing Physical Suffering and Emotional Grief
 - > We do Not Have a God Who, as Some People Say, Wound This Universe Up Like a Clock, and Then, Walked Away From It
 - > Oh No, That is Not Biblical; on the Contrary, My Bible Says That God Knows the Very Number of Hairs Upon Our Head, and He Knows When Each and Every Sparrow Falls to the Ground (Matt 10:29-30)
 - > Moreover, This Word Not Only Refers to God’s Emotional Concern, It Also Refers to God’s Practical Intervention
 - > I Can’t Speak for You, But I Can Speak for Myself, and I Can Tell You That I Have Come to Agree More and More With This Phrase Over the Years “*Life is Hard But God is Good*” (Can I Get a Witness?)
 - > Life Has Been Tough for the Daily Family at Times, But God Has Always Looked Upon Us With Compassion and He Has Always Provided for Our Needs
- III: Most Christians, and Even Many Non-Christians, are Familiar With the 23rd Psalm
- > What They are Not Familiar With is the Context in Which It Was Written, Many

Bible Scholars Say That It Was Written After David Had Fled From His Son Absalom Who Was Seeking to Kill Him

- > **David Was in a Valley Surrounded by Absalom and His Troops, But He Had Learned to Trust God; and So, He Wrote “*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; ...*” (Ps 23:4)**
- > **David and His Troops Might Have Starved There, But God Intervened for Them**
- > **A Man Named Barzillai Risked His Life Along With Some of His Men, and He Brought Some Bountiful Provisions to David and His Men (It Was a Feast)**
- > **I’m Sure That God Became Very Real to David in That Moment; and So, He Was Inspired to Write “*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.*” (Ps 23:5)**
- > **And All of This Fueled David’s Faith and It Made Him Optimistic About His Future; and So, He Wrote “*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*” (NKJV)**
- > **Life Was Really Tough for David at This Time; His Own Son Absalom Was Trying to Kill Him, But God Was With David and Was Very Good to David**

App: And So, I Feel Compelled to Say It Again “*Life is Tough, But God is Good,*” and Our God is Sympathetic, and Compassionate, and He Helps Us in Practical Ways

**T.S. 1) We Have God’s Son
2) We Have God’s Sympathy**

3) We Have God’s Strength

- > **This Word “*Comfort*” is Obviously the Key Word in This Passage of Scripture, and I Say That Because It Appears Ten Times in *Verses 3-7***

-> In All, It Appears 29 Times in This Book; 18 Times as a Verb and 11 Times as a Noun; and So, We Could Say That It is One of the Themes of 2 Corinthians

-> The Word That is Translated as “Comfort” Here Comes From the Greek Word “Fortis” From Which We Get Words Like: “Fortitude” or “Fortress”, and It Literally Refers to “Strength”

-> And So, This is What Paul Came to Experience in His Own Life; When Times Got Really Tough for Him as He Pursued God’s Will for His Life, God Came Through by Providing Him With the Strength That He Needed to Endure It

-> This is Why, After Writing About Some of the Deprivation He Had Faced; He Exclaimed “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13)

Q.n = So, Why Does God do It This Way? Why Doesn’t God Just Cause Us to be Immune to Every Form of Hardship and Suffering?

Ans = Well, There are Several Reasons, and We are Going to Look at Those in Just a Moment

-> But I Can Start by Saying That God Does It Because He Wants All of Us to Live by Faith

III: The Late D. James Kennedy Who Pastored the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Ft Lauderdale, Florida Understood This; So, He Gave Us This Quote

“What kind of world would it be if Christians never got sick? If they never fell? They never got burned? Never got into automobile accidents? How long would it take for insurance companies to figure out what was going on?”

“How long would it take other people to catch on? Before long, we would have a religion of instant gratification obvious to everyone. Christians would never go bankrupt. Their kids would never use drugs or run away from home. Their Loved ones would never suffer. Do you know what would happen? You would destroy faith. You would destroy character. Religion would become a commercial venture”

St = No Listen, the Reason God Does Not Exempt Us From Suffering and Requires Us to go Through It is Because This Reveals and Strengthens Our Faith

-> You See, Contrary to What All of the Word of Faith Preachers are Saying, God Does Not Cause Us to be Immuned to Hardship and Suffering

- > But He Does do This for Us, He Gives Us His Son, and He Gives Us His Sympathy, and He Gives Us His Strength and This Includes Meeting Our Practical Needs
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III: The Missionary Dr. David Livingstone, for Example, Had Gone Deep Into the Heart of Africa Into What is Known Today as Tanzania

- > And Then, He Ran Out of Provisions; and So, He and His Companions Began to Eat Grain Almost Exclusively
 - > And as a Result of This, His Teeth Began to Rot; and Then, He Ran Out of His Medicine; and After That Happened, He Thought That He Would Surely Die
 - > And It Was Right Then When He Heard Those Now Famous Words “*Dr Livingstone I Presume*”
 - > They Were Spoken by Henry Morton Stanley Who Was a Journalist Who Had Been Hired by the New York Herald to Find Livingstone and to Write an Article About Him
 - > It Was a Providential Meeting for Livingstone; Because if It Had Not Occurred at That Time, He Might Have Died Much Sooner Than He Ultimately Did
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- > And So, I am Sure That Dr. David Livingstone Could Relate to What the Apostle Paul Said Here in Verse 8 When He Said, “...*we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life*”
 - > That is a Graphic Word That Was Used to Describe a Horse or a Camel That Had Collapsed Under a Heavy Load
 - > “*When We Could No Longer Bear the Weight*”, Paul Said, in Essence, That “*This is When God Came Through and Rescued Us*”
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T.S. I. Some Resources are Available to Us in Times of Suffering

II. Some Reasons are Explained to Us for Times of Suffering

- > We All Have to Grapple With the “*Why?*” Question When It Comes to Suffering, and Some Say That There are No Answers
- > But That Really is Not the Case, for You See, the Bible Does Give Us Some Answers to the “*Why?*” Question Regarding Suffering, and We Find Three of Them in This Passage

-> And Listen, They are Fairly Easy to Find, Because They are All Prefaced by the Phrase “*So That*”

1) So That We Will Serve Others

Verse 4 (Read) – I Hope You Noticed That Phrase “So That...”

-> When We go Through an Occasion of Suffering, Whatever It May be, It Equips Us in a Unique Way to Relate to Those Who Face Similar Experiences

-> We Have an Example of This From the Life of Simon Peter Who Was Crushed by His Spiritual Failure and His Denial of His Lord

-> But Jesus Prayed for Peter, Before This Ever Happened to Him, and This Was His Prayer; Jesus Said to Peter *“but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers”* (Luke 22:32)

-> BTW, I Can Never Resist Saying This When I Read That Verse *“A Failure That Makes You Humble is Better Than a Success That Makes You Proud”* (DYKT)

-> God Was Able to Use Peter’s Failure to Enable Him to Minister to His Brothers in Christ Who Had Also Forsaken Jesus in His Darkest Hour

III: Willam Carey the Great Missionary to India Said That His Mother Lost a Child and That This is Where She Got Her “Soft Eyes” From

-> And He Said That Women Who Had Lost a Child Were Often Encouraged to Come to Her so That They Could Find Spiritual and Emotional Help

-> This is One of the Purposes of Our Suffering; Our Suffering Equips Us to be Able to Encourage Others When They Face Similar Trials

III: Even Our Secular World Has Recognized the Benefit That Comes From People Who Have Experienced a Specific Type of Suffering Being Able to Minister to Others Who are Dealing With the Same Problems

-> We Call These Support Groups, and We Have Over 500,000 of Them in Our Country Today With Over 10 Million People Attending Them

-> Alcoholics Anonymous is the Largest One With Over Two Million Members

-> There are Support Groups for Those Experiencing Grief, and Depression, and Anxiety, and Compulsive Gamblers, and Compulsive Shoppers

- > There is Even a Support Group Called “*Tricotillomania*”; This Refers to People Who Have a Habit of Pulling Their Hair Out
 - > I Mentioned This to Our Senior Adults Thursday, and as Quick as a Whip, James Collins Said “*Is That What Happened to You?*” (Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha)
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App: The Application of This is Very Obvious; Paul is Saying to You Mr Christian and to You Mrs Christian or Miss Christian “*Don’t Waste Your Suffering*”

- > For You See, No One Can Relate to Someone Who Has Been Diagnosed With Breast Cancer Like Someone Who is a Breast Cancer Survivor
 - > And No One Can Relate Better to an Alcoholic or a Drug Addict Better Than Someone Who Has Been Delivered From One of Those Addictions
 - > And No One Can Relate to Others That Struggle With an Eating Disorder Like Someone Who Has Overcome an Eating Disorder
 - > And No One Can Relate to Someone Going Thru a Divorce Like Someone Else Who Has Gone Through That
 - > Whatever It is, You Might Discover That God Has Opened Up a Great Door for Ministry and Evangelism for You in This Area, and That He Can Even Use Your Failures for His Glory (E...Chuck Colson)
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T.S. 1) So That We Will Serve Others

2) So That We Will Seek God

Verse 8-9 (Read) – Again I Hope You Noticed the Phrase “*So That*”

- > This Word That is Translated as “*Despair*” is a Greek Word That Literally Means “*No Escape*” or “*No Exit*”
 - > This Tells Us That God Often Puts Us in These Types of Experiences so That We Will Turn to Him in Faith and Witness His Great Power and Deliverance
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III: Think of Those Israelites, for Example, Who Were Backed Up Against the Red Sea in *Exodus 14*

- . To the South, There Was the Desert
- . To the North, There Were *“the Migdoi”* the Fortresses of Egypt
- . To the West Was the Land of Goshen and Pharaoh’s Army
- . To the East Was the Red Sea, Which is Called Today *“The Gulf of Suez”*

-> And Listen, God Had Them Right Where He Wanted Them, Because He Wanted Them to Witness His Great Deliverance

Verse 10 (Read)

- > This is an Interesting Verse to Me, Because It Refers to God’s Deliverance in the Past, the Present and the Future: Did You Notice That?
 - > God Might Deliver Us From a Fiery Furnace the Way He Did Shadrach, Meshach and Abenego (Dan 3)
 - > Or God Might Deliver Us From Prison the Way That He Delivered Peter From Prison in *Acts 12*
 - > Or God Might Deliver Us by Taking Us Home to Heaven But Even That Will Ultimately Result in Our Deliverance
 - > In *2 Tim 4:18*, Paul Said, *“The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever Amen”*
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- T.S. 1) So That We Will Serve Others
- 2) So That We Will Seek God
- 3) So That We Will Share Victories

Verse 11 (Read) = Again, I Hope You Noticed the Phrase *“So That”*

- > It Has Become Very Clear to Me as I Have Studied My Bible Intensely for Over Fifty Years, That God Chooses to Act in Response to the Prayers of His People

Exodus 17:8-13 (Turn and Read)

- > If You Have Ever Doubted the Power of Prayer, You Need to Stop Doing That Right Now, and Those Verses Should Help You to Understand Why, Because That is a Picture of the Power of Prayer (E...as Long as His Arms Were...)
- > God Answers Prayer, and in *James 5:16*, the Half Brother of Our Lord Said, *“...the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much”*

-> And Listen, When We Pray for One Another, We Not Only Share Our Burdens With One Another, We Also Get to Share Our Victories With One Another

III: Many Years Ago When I Was Pastoring My First Church, We Had a Deacon Named Jerrell Who Began Experiencing Some Persecution at His Work Place

- > He Worked for DELL Computers, and His Manager Began Insisting That Everyone Work on Every Sunday Which Should Not Have Been Mandatory
- > Jerrell Didn't Want to do That, Because He Taught a Sunday School Class and He Didn't Want to Give That Up
- > So, He Tried to Work Out a Compromise, But His Manager Refused; and Then, His Manager Started Trying to Get Him Fired
- > He Had Discovered That His Manager Had Even Gone to the Human Resources Department and Had Tried to Get Him Fired
- > He Asked Us to Pray for Him, and We Did; We All Did; I Prayed for Him; Our Deacons Prayed for Him; Our Church Family Prayed for Him
- > And the Day Came When He Told Us That Our Prayers Had Been Answered, His Manager, in Fact, Got Fired, and He Got Promoted
- > And Since We Had All Been Praying for Him, We All Got to Share the Victory

St = Now, I Want You to Know That These Three Reasons for Our Suffering do Not Represent a Comprehensive List; So, I Just Want to Mention a Few More

a. God Calls on Us to Suffer so That We Will Become More Like Our Lord

- > In *Heb 12:10*, We Read *"For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness."*
- > God Disciplines Us and Chastises Us When We Sin, and Yes This Does Cause Us to Suffer, But He Does It for a Purpose; He Does It to Make Us Holy

b. God Calls Upon Us to Suffer so That We Will Place Our Focus on Heaven

- > In *2 Cor 4:17-18*, Paul Said, *"17 For momentary, light affliction (& BTW...Paul Experienced Anything But "light affliction") is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 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.”

-> Let Me Remind You of Something Just in Case You Have Forgotten, This Earth is Not Our Home; We're Just Passing Through

-> And So, if We Have to Suffer, We Need to Remember That the Reality of Heaven Will Eventually Overshadow Anything That We are Called on to Endure

c. God Calls Upon Us to Suffer so That We Will Desire Eternal Salvation

-> This Has Been God's Primary Purpose for Suffering From the Beginning; in Fact, God Expressed Great Emotion When He Considered the Possibility on Men and Women Living on Physically Without Him

-> In Gen 3:22, We Read *“Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’—*

-> That is a Very Rare Incomplete Sentence in the Hebrew, and It Tells Us That God Was Getting Choked Up; This Thought Was More Than He Could Handle

-> For You See, if Men and Women Could Live on Physically Without Him, This Would Mean That They Would Remain Spiritually Dead

-> This Would Have Been the Equivalent of Hell; and So, God Had Felt the Need to do Something About This; and So, He Created Suffering and Temporal Death Invitation:

-> I Want to Provide You With One More Illustration; and Then, I Will Bring This Message to a Close

-> And This is It: It Has Been Said That, in Order to Save a Drowning Man, You Have to Time Things Very Carefully

-> If You Respond Too Quickly, the Drowning Man Will Try to Climb on Top of You to Get Air, and He Will Put You in a Death Grip, and You Will Both Drown

-> Instead, It Has Been Said That It is Best to Wait Until the Drowning Man is Completely Exhausted

-> And When He Has No Strength Left in Himself, This is the Right Time to Take Hold of Him and to Begin the Process of Bringing Safely to the Shore

-> Now Listen, This is True as It Relates to God Delivering Us in Our Times of Suffering; This is Part of What Paul is Teaching Us Here (E....Lesson)

- > **And Now Listen Again, This is Also True as It Relates to a Person Accepting God's Offer of Salvation**
- > **As Long as a Person is Trying to Save Himself Spiritually by Doing Good Works, or by and Trying to Turn Over a New Leaf in Life or Whatever Else, There is Absolutely No Hope for Them**
- > **It is Not Until a Person Comes to the Realization That They are Spiritually Bankrupt, and That There is Nothing They Have to Offer God; It is Not Until Then That They Can Become a Recipient for God's Grace and Forgiveness**
- > **In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Called This Being "*Poor in Spirit*", and This is the First of the Beattitudes, Because This is the Door to the Kingdom of God (Matt 5:3)**
- > **That Phrase "*Poor in Spirit*" Refers to Humility; and Listen, No One Gets Into the Kingdom Without Humility**
- > **In Fact, to Begin With, You Have to be Humble Enough to Admit That You are a Sinner in Need of a Savior**
- > **Or to Put It Another Way, No One Can be Too Bad to Get Into Heaven, But Someone Can be Too Good to Get Into Heaven (E...They Think They're Good)**