

**Men's Sunday Night**  
**The Book of 2 Corinthians**  
**"Finding Strength in Weakness"**  
**Lesson 1 – 2 Corinthians 1:1-11**  
**"Our Comforting God"**

One of the key words in this letter is comfort or encouragement. The Greek word means to encourage, strengthen, cheer, and to be called to one's side to help. It is the same word Jesus used in John 14:16 for the Spirit, the Comforter (Paraclete). What a joy it is to know that God stands at our side to help whenever we go through troubles. Each member of the Trinity is a comforter: the Father (2 Cor. 1:3), and the Son and Spirit (John 14:16). God is the God of all comfort, just as He is the God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10). There is comfort and grace for every situation! In spite of all the trials he experienced, Paul was able (by the grace of God) to write a letter saturated with encouragement.

What was Paul's secret of victory when he was experiencing pressures and trials? **His secret was God.** When you find yourself discouraged and ready to quit, get your attention off of yourself and focus it on God. Out of his own difficult experience, Paul tells us how we can find encouragement in God.

But this comfort that we receive from God is not simply for our personal relief; it is shared with us that we might be able to help others. Paul went through tribulations that he might be able to minister to others. God prepares us for what He is preparing for us. We cannot lead others where we have not been ourselves.

The mathematics of God's mercy is wonderful! As the trials abound, the comfort of God abounds as well! Where sin abounds, so does grace (See Rom. 5:20). Paul used this word "abound" often in 2 Corinthians. We as Christians ought to be willing to endure trials, since we know they bring spiritual good to us personally and blessings to others as we share God's comfort with them.

It takes a great soul to admit failure. Paul bares his heart here and shares with the believers the troubles he endured in Asia. He wrote this not to win their sympathy, but to teach them the lesson he learned to **trust God alone.** In 2 Cor. 7:5 he indicates that there were troubles without and within; so perhaps it was physical weakness and danger as well as spiritual concern for the infant church at Corinth. Paul is quick to acknowledge the helpful prayer



**Read 2 Corinthians 1:5-7. Pray and answer the following questions:**

God uses suffering to stir up other believers. A person who suffers often becomes self-centered and begins to feel sorry for himself. He sometimes begins to feel self-pity and apathy and wants special attention. He may even become bitter. A believer must never let this happen. This is what these two verses are all about. Note that both the affliction and the comfort are for the same purposes. God uses both suffering and comfort in a believer to stir four things in other believers: 1. God uses suffering to stir comfort in others who suffer. 2. God uses suffering to stir salvation. A person cannot trust God today and not trust Him tomorrow. When a believer sees another believer being comforted through some suffering, they are stirred to continue in the faith. They are stirred to continue on in the way of salvation no matter how great the suffering might be. 3. God uses suffering to stir endurance. When we suffer and allow God to comfort us, others are encouraged to endure through their sufferings. 4. God uses suffering to stir sharing among believers.

5. How can you help other Christians who are suffering?

6. In verse 7, the apostle wrote “*you share in suffering; you will also share God's comfort.*” Do you think Christians today can really share in one another’s suffering and comforts? If yes, how? If no, why not?

7. What is the connection between the suffering of Christ and the comfort of Christ? (See verses 5-6)

8. How have other Christians helped you through difficult circumstances?

**Read 2 Corinthians 1:8-11. Pray and answer the following questions:**

God uses suffering to teach prayer and thanksgiving. This is a great lesson on suffering and prayer: the prayers of believers “*help*” us. Paul definitely says that the prayers of others helped him. Prayer causes God to move in our behalf and to deliver us through our suffering. And when we are strengthened and delivered, everyone praises God. Intercessory prayer (prayer for others) works. God hears and answers prayer, and He hears and answers our prayers for others.

9. Some people respond to suffering by denying it or becoming so self-focused that they are isolated in their pain. What did Paul discover about the meaning of suffering in the Christian life?

10. How can you rely more on God instead of yourself in times of hardship?

11. Based on what you have learned in these first eleven verses, how can hardships draw you closer to God instead of driving you away from Him?

12. How do we know if a test or trial is from the Lord or from the enemy?

**Life Application**

Compare your notes and daily Scripture references. Take some time to pray and meditate on what God showed you in a practical way this week and how you can apply it to your Christian walk. Write your insights down for review and group discussion.