

**MEMORY VERSE:** “For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.” 1 Corinthians 2:4, NKJV

### LESSON STUDY INTRO

This week we examine 2 Corinthians 1 and 2 to understand the context and themes of this book of the Bible.

#### 1. Christ is with us even, or especially, when we suffer (Sab, Sun)

- Paul could sympathize with suffering.
  - The Greek noun or verb for comfort occurs 10 times in just 5 verses (see 2 Cor. 1:3-7).
  - Later in the book, Paul recounts multiple injuries and injustices he endured during his ministry (see 2 Cor. 11:24-28).
- This theme of comfort despite trials is a good introduction to the overall message of 2 Corinthians.
  - Like 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians deals with difficulties (including Paul’s discipline of them) very candidly.
  - Nevertheless, Paul could testify that “as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ... and our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation” (2 Cor. 1:5, 7).
- Trials are a blessing to build Godly character.
  - Even Christ built character through suffering (see Heb. 2:10).
    - “God uses afflictions to teach us to trust in Him. Hardships can lead us to spiritual maturity, at least to the extent that we allow them to draw us closer to God.” Q/tly, Sun, Par 4

#### 2. Good leaders risk being misunderstood (Mon, Tue)

- Paul had earlier written a “severe letter” that had troubled some of the Corinthian believers (2 Cor. 1:13; 2:3, 4; 7:8, 12).
  - “It seems Paul’s opponents misinterpreted his words, in previous written communications.” Q/tly, Mon, par 5
    - Part of Paul’s burden in 2 Corinthians is to clarify the intention and meaning of this other letter.

- Similarly, Paul’s decision not to now visit but instead to write the letter we now know as 2 Corinthians was also misunderstood as lack of decisiveness or even honesty.
  - Paul avoided visiting Corinth at that time because he thought he would not be well received then. (see 2 Cor. 1:15-2:4)
    - “The reason Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians instead of visiting them was his sincere love for them, not the opposite. Another visit right after the painful visit would bring them further pain, not the joy he intended to cause with his presence. How easily his good intentions were misinterpreted.” Qtly, Tue, par 6
- Righteous leaders are often misunderstood (i.e. Moses, Jesus).
  - Paul defended the sincerity of his ministry in apparent contrast with others (see 2 Cor. 1:12-14; 2:17).

### 3. Godly discipline is a redemptive process (Tue, Wed, Thu, Mon)

- The Corinth church had significant problems that required lovingly stern process to bring about a reformation:
  - Immorality and confusion about idolatry
  - Lack of unity, discernment, and discipline
  - Selfishness and misuse of spiritual gifts
  - Judgmental attitudes about Paul’s ministry (qualifications and even his personal character)
    - The very course of discipline he instructed them to apply to their erring members he is applying to them (see 2 Cor. 2:6-8).
- Through this process, Paul continued in evangelism ministry but kept watching for evidence of conversion.
  - He was anxious to hear from Titus (2 Cor. 2:12, 13)

Successful as were his efforts at Troas, he could not remain there long. “The care of all the churches,” and particularly of the church at Corinth, rested heavily on his heart... “I had no rest in my spirit,” he wrote concerning this experience, “because I found not Titus my brother.” AA 323 (Qtly, Thu, par 2)

- Furthermore, Paul was overjoyed when he finally reunited with Titus (2 Cor. 7:5-7).

## CONCLUSION

“Those who have borne the greatest sorrows are frequently the ones who carry the greatest comfort to others, bringing sunshine wherever they go. Such ones have been chastened and sweetened by their afflictions; they did not lose confidence in God when trouble assailed them, but clung closer to His protecting love. Such ones are living proof of the tender care of God. AG 122 (Qtly, Fri, par 1)