

God Comforts Us in All Our Afflictions 2 Corinthians 1:1-11

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. Believers are afflicted so that they may experience and share God's comfort.
2. Believers are afflicted so that they may experience and pray for God's deliverance.

Practical Application

1. Let's pass it on.

Questions

1. How many letters did the Apostle Paul write to the church at Corinth?
2. When was the church at Corinth founded?
3. What problems had arisen in the Corinthian church?
4. What is the meaning of "comfort" in this passage?
5. What is the meaning of "affliction" in this passage?

Answers

1. Possibly four. We have the two inspired letters which are part of the Bible, but there may have been two other letters which were lost (See 1 Corinthians 5:9; 2 Corinthians 2:3).
2. During Paul's Second Missionary Journey, see Acts 18
3. Some at Corinth were questioning Paul's authority as an apostle and they were also allowing some false teaching to creep into the church.
4. The basic idea of "comfort" is encouragement or assistance. The word means to come alongside to give help in time of need. The Holy Spirit is called our Comforter in John 14-16.
5. An affliction is anything and everything that presses in upon us from outside; anything which burdens our spirits. It includes any trouble or distress such as pressure from circumstances or antagonism from people.

Discuss / Consider

1. Who is the source of all comfort? What afflictions is He there to comfort? Don't look for help in time of need to the world or to yourself—look to God. He is the Source of all comfort.

2. Discuss why God allows afflictions. It is so that we will experience God's comfort and also so that we will share God's comfort with others. Have you seen in your life how God can take your past afflictions and turn them into an opportunity to comfort others?

Challenge

1. Sometimes affliction forces us to turn to God for deliverance. This is a good reaction, turn and pray to God in your times of affliction.

The Lord Directs Paul to Change Plans
2 Corinthians 1:12-24

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. **Believers will be accused of vacillation by fellow believers.**

2. **Believers will be accused of oppression by fellow believers.**

Practical Application

1. **Don't call God a liar by questioning your eternal security.**

Questions

1. What charge does Paul address in this passage?
2. Did Paul break his word about visiting Corinth?
3. Who were Paul's accusers?
4. How did Paul defend himself?
5. What else was Paul accused of in this passage?

Answers

1. This letter, Second Corinthians, was written from Ephesus before Paul came to Corinth on his Third Missionary Journey. Most likely he made a quickly disciplinary visit to Corinth from Ephesus, which was his second visit there.
2. Verses 12-13 explain that Paul stayed for a while in Troas because the Lord opened a door for ministry there.
3. Titus had carried the sorrowful letter from Paul to the Corinthians. Paul was hoping Titus would meet him in Troas and bring news from Corinth. Titus later joined up with Paul in Macedonia. He brought news from Corinth, which prompted Paul to write this letter known as Second Corinthians.
4. Tough love involves sorrow on the part of those who have to exercise discipline. But they carry out the discipline because it is the right thing to do and will ultimately benefit the other person.
5. a. If discipline is not carried out when it should be, unjudged sin exists in the church.
b. If there is no attitude of forgiveness on the part of those who carry out the discipline, the healing process is limited.

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss "tough love." Have you ever had to show tough love to someone? What was the result? Does God sometimes show us tough love?

2. The intended result of church discipline is forgiveness and restoration. Discuss the importance of forgiveness once a sinner has shown repentance. What is the sad result if forgiveness is not shown? Is there a fellow believer you need to forgive?

Challenge

1. What is your motivation for sharing the Word of God? Don't peddle the Word of God.

The Old Covenant and the New Covenant Contrasted
2 Corinthians 3

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The reality of changed lives is evidence of the truth.

2. The glory of the New Covenant is evidence of the truth.

Practical Application

1. Let's experience the blessing of an unveiled face.

Questions

1. What are the two sides of the truth of the gospel?
2. How does Paul defend his ministry in this chapter?
3. Was Paul defending his ministry in order to bring glory to himself?
4. Why was it important to understand that the New Covenant far surpasses the glory of the Old?
5. Was their glory associated with the Old Covenant?

Answers

1. There is the good news of forgiveness of sins and eternal life as a gift for those who receive Christ as Savior. But for those who reject Christ there is the sad news of eternal separation from God.
2. He points to the conversion of the Corinthians themselves.
3. No. All of his sufficiency and competence were found in Christ.
4. The false teachers at Corinth were Judaizers, who were over-emphasizing the Law and mixing law with grace.
5. Yes. After all, the Law was given to Moses by the Lord himself. But the glory associated with the Law was a fading glory - not the eternal glory of the gospel.

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss how the reality of changed lives is evidence of the truth of the message we preach. Contrast this with the world's self-help programs that are only surface deep.

2. Discuss 2 Corinthians 3:14-16. How does this relate to Jewish people today? What happens when Jewish people do come to Christ?

Challenge

1. The Bible is the mirror where we behold the glory of the Lord. As we become more Christ-like, we not only reflect the glory of the Lord—we radiate it!

The Light and Life of Christ Within Us
2 Corinthians 4

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The Light of Christ is seen as believers live to serve.

2. The life of Christ is seen as believers die to self.

Practical Application

1. Let's weigh our afflictions on God's scale!

Questions

1. Whose minds has Satan blinded?

2. How can we be involved in the important ministry of veil-removal?

3. Explain the beautiful parallel between creation and salvation in verse 6.

4. Review the battering of the clay vessel in one hand, and the miraculous deliverance by the power of God on the other hand.

Answers

1. Review the battering of the clay vessel in one hand, and the miraculous deliverance by the power of God on the other hand
2. We must “renounce the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Corinthians 4:2).
3. As the Spirit of God moved in the darkness over the face of the deep and God said, “Let there be light,” so the Spirit of God has been at work to prepare our dark hearts for God to bring the Light of Christ into our lives.
4.
 - a. Hard-pressed—yet not crushed
 - b. Perplexed—but not in despair
 - c. Persecuted—but not forsaken
 - d. Struck down—but not destroyed

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss the great contrast in this passage between the message and the messengers. Discuss: “The Light of Christ is seen as believers live to serve.”

2. Have you been battered in your life? How has this allowed others to see the life of Christ within you?

Challenge

1. Weigh your burdens on God’s scale this week. How do your momentary, light afflictions compare to the exceeding and eternal weight of glory?

The Resurrection of the Body and the Judgment Seat of Christ
2 Corinthians 5:1-13

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. **Believers should live their lives in view of the resurrection of the body.**

2. **Believers should live their lives in view of the Judgment Seat of Christ.**

Practical Application

1. **Are we willing to be called fanatics.**

Questions

1. Where had Paul written to the Corinthians previously concerning death and resurrection?

2. What is the biblical view of a believer's body?

3. Related to this, what do believers have to look forward to?

4. Where does a believer go when he dies?

5. What was the Judgment Seat in Greek culture?

6. What is decided at the Judgment Seat of Christ?

Answers

1. 1 Corinthians 15 and 2 Corinthians 4:14
2. The believer's body is a tent—a temporary dwelling.
3. We look forward to our new, resurrected bodies which will be immortal and fit for our eternal live in heaven.
4. When believers die their bodies go into the grave awaiting resurrection. Their souls and spirits go immediately into the presence of the Lord.
5. The Judgment Seat, or Bema, was an outside raised platform with a bench or seat on which the judge would sit and review the cases of people gathered down below him. It also served as a reviewing stand for athletic races.
6. The Judgment Seat of Christ does not determine our eternal destiny. Rather it is a review of our lives as believer. There will be rewards for faithful service.

Discuss / Consider

1. What is your attitude toward your body? Does it line up with the biblical view? How do cultural views of the body affect people's priorities?

2. Have you ever studied the Judgment Seat of Christ? Look at this passage as well as Romans 14:10-12 and 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. This can be a very sobering and motivating truth.

Challenge

1. Are you embarrassed to stand out because of your Christian faith? Or, like Paul, are you willing to be called a fanatic?

Believers are New Creations in Christ; The Ministry of Reconciliation
2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. Believers are new creations in Christ.**

- 2. Believers have the ministry of reconciliation.**

Practical Application

- 1. Let's be good ambassadors for Christ.**

- 2. Don't determine your doctrine from biblical illustrations.**

Questions

1. When will Christians receive their resurrected bodies?

2. What is the love of Christ, which compels us?

3. What does this passage teach regarding "position"?

4. What does it mean to know Christ "according to the flesh" (verse 16)?

5. What is the meaning of "reconciliation"?

Answers

1. At the time of the Rapture, when believers who have died in Christ are resurrected and those who are living will meet Christ in the air.
2. It is most likely Christ's love for us. When we realize how much Christ loves us, we are motivated to be more faithful and committed to serving the Lord without shame.
3. All people are either "in Christ" (believers) or "outside of Christ" (unbelievers). There is no middle position.
4. Many people only know about Jesus, as a good man, but now as believers we know Christ as the Lord of glory.
5. Reconciliation means to restore to a state of friendship and harmony.

Discuss / Consider

1. Could you categorize the people you know as either "in Christ" or "outside of Christ"? Would thinking about them in this way, rather than according to other categorizations, affect your efforts in evangelism?

2. Discuss the wonderful truth taught in 2 Corinthians 5:21. God now sees us as righteous because the righteousness of Christ has been transferred to us, just as our sin was transferred to Him.

Challenge

1. Good ambassadors represent their home country properly. As Christians we are ambassadors for the kingdom of God. Our official message? "Be reconciled to God."

Answers

1. It is a good possibility that 6:1-2 are still part of the message of reconciliation that began in 5:20. This exhortation would be part of our ministry of reconciliation as we preach to unbelievers.
2. The afflictions and hardships described in verses 4-5.
3. Because we have an important message to share and because we have truth on our side (verses 6-7).
4. No, all ministries will have ups and downs, mountain tops and valleys (verses 8-10).
5. The two realms of Christ and Satan are opposed to one another and there is no middle ground between them.

Discuss / Consider

1. In communicating the wonderful message of reconciliation to the world we are not to bring discredit on the ministry by offending unbelievers. Discuss how this would look when practically lived out in your life.

2. We most often hear 2 Corinthians 6:14 in reference to marriage between a believer and unbeliever. But it applies to any close relationship where you make personal commitments that would require you to compromise in your faith. Can you think of other examples of this?

Challenge

1. Do you have broken fellowship with another believer? Do all that you can to settle any differences between you. Then the ball is in their court.

Paul's Letters of Rebuke
2 Corinthians 7

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. A proper rebuke should produce godly sorrow.

2. Godly sorrow will produce spiritual growth.

Practical Application

1. Don't take advantage in the ministry.

Questions

1. How does 1 Corinthians 7:1 fit into the context?

2. Are the O.T. promises at the end of ch. 6 being fulfilled in the Church rather than with the nation of Israel?

3. What should be our attitude in response to the promises at the end of chapter 6?

4. Review the story of Titus and the sorrowful letter mentioned here.

5. What is the difference between remorse and repentance?

Answers

1. This verse properly goes with the end of chapter 6; it is a celebration of the wonderful promises quoted.
2. No, these promises that were made to Israel will be fulfilled with Israel when Israel returns to the Lord in the future. In the meantime, the blessings of some of these promises have been extended to the Church.
3. We should be motivated to practice godly living. See 2 Corinthians 7:1.
4. Paul wrote a sorrowful letter to the Corinthians, which Titus carried to them. Paul was very concerned about how the Corinthians would react to Titus and this letter of rebuke. Paul was restless until he heard a report back from Titus. The rebukes had resulted in godly sorrow.
5. Remorse or regret can come when someone regrets the consequences of their actions, but not necessarily the actions themselves. Repentance is the godly response, which should lead to our restoration and salvation from the problem. See 2 Corinthians 7:10.

Discuss / Consider

1. Has a fellow believer ever rebuked you out of love? What was your response? It is never pleasant to be rebuked, but a proper rebuke should produce godly sorrow and repentance.

2. How does godly sorrow produce spiritual growth? What else produces spiritual growth.

Challenge

1. If you are involved in ministry, don't take advantage in the ministry.

Biblical Principles of Christian Giving **2 Corinthians 8**

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. **1. Believers should follow the biblical principles of giving.**
 - **Give yourself first.**

 - **Give to the point of sacrifice.**

 - **Give after the example of Christ.**

 - **Give towards equality.**

 - **Give willingly.**

 - **Give what you have.**

 - **Give according to plan.**

Practical Application

1. **Be a well-rounded Christian.**

Questions

1. What is the subject of 2 Corinthians 8-9?

2. What principle can churches and ministries learn from Titus and the two fellow believers charged with collecting the funds for the saints in Jerusalem?

3. What does it mean to “give yourself first”?

4. Is the principle of giving towards equality indirectly promoting communism?

5. Why is it important to give according to plan?

Answers

1. The collection that Paul was making for the needy saints in Jerusalem
2. Having several brethren handle the ministry funds safeguards against the wrong use of the Lord's money and is the honorable thing to do in the sight of God and man (verses 20-21).
3. The Lord calls us to be personally involved in Christian ministry. We need to be available to give our time and our skills to ministry, not just our money.
4. No, communism aims for equality in that everyone has the same amount of material possession. Christian giving aims for equality on the basis of meeting needs. See 2 Corinthians 8:14 and Exodus 16:16-18.
5. Unless we have a deliberate plan for how we will give, too often our giving will stop at a good intention.

Discuss / Consider

1. How much did the Lord Jesus give? He gave all, so that "we through His poverty might become rich" 2 Corinthians 8:9. What does it mean for you to give all in your life? Where is the balance for you between this and giving towards equality?

2. Give what you have. What do you have to give? What are you holding back?

Challenge

1. Perhaps you love the Lord and His people and are always willing to lend a helping hand. To be a well-rounded Christian, you also need to be willing to give money to the work of the Lord.

Rewards for Christian Giving **2 Corinthians 9**

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. Believers will receive rewards for Christian giving.**
 - You will receive unlimited blessings.
 - Your needs will be met.
 - You will always have resources for giving.
 - Your record of giving will endure forever.
 - Your returns will be according to the natural law of multiplication.
 - You are given credit for contributing to the glory of God.
 - You will be prayed for by other believers.

Practical Application

- 1. Get the most for your dollar.**

Questions

1. What is the context of 2 Corinthians 9?
2. What does 2 Corinthians 8-9 teach about Christian giving?
3. How does Christian giving provide unlimited blessings?
4. How can you ensure a legacy that lasts forever?
5. Why are the rewards of Christian giving possible?

Answers

1. In his previous letter to the Corinthians, Paul mentioned the collection that he was making for the poor and needy saints of the Jerusalem church. The Corinthians had made a good start, but had not finished the project. Here Paul is urging the Corinthians to finish the job.
2. Chapter 8 contained 7 principles for Christian giving. Chapter 9 contains 7 rewards for Christian giving.
3. The amount of blessing that we reap is limited only by the manner of our sowing. The more you give purposefully, willingly, and cheerfully, the more you will be blessed!
4. Be generous in your ministry of Christian giving.
5. Because God gave Himself for us. 2 Corinthians 9:15

Discuss / Consider

1. One of the rewards for Christian giving is a promise that our needs will be met. God is willing and able to supply us with everything necessary to meet our personal needs, as well as the needs of our ministry of giving. What do you need?

2. What a wonderful truth that our Christian giving contributes to the glory of God! Discuss how this works. Has the study of this chapter affected your attitude on giving?

Challenge

1. How do you get the most for your dollar? Give it to the Lord!

Paul Vindicates Himself to the False Teachers
2 Corinthians 10

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. Believers should not fight with weapons of the flesh.**

- 2. Believers should not take credit for the work of another.**

Practical Application

- 1. Don't let any thought escape!**

Questions

1. What is the subject of 2 Corinthians 10?

2. Who were these false teachers? Were they believers?

3. What accusations did the false teachers make against Paul?

4. What weapons of the flesh did the false teachers find important?

5. How does 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 relate to this passage?

Answers

1. Some false teachers had infiltrated the Corinthian church and they were questioning and undermining Paul's authority. Here Paul resumes his response to their attacks.
2. They were probably Judaizers from Jerusalem preaching the importance of keeping the Law of Moses. There were probably some believers and some unbelievers in the group.
3. In chapter 1 they accused Paul of vacillating in his plans. In chapter 3 they said Paul did not have the proper letters of commendation. Here they said that while Paul wrote powerful letters, he did not back them up with power and he did not have an impressive personal presence befitting an apostle.
4. Eloquence, looks, and impressive credentials
5. 1 Corinthians 12 teaches that there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, different ministries where these gifts are used, and different effects that God gives. 2 Corinthians 10 adds that there are also different spheres of service that God gives.

Discuss / Consider

1. Paul saw his conflict with the false teachers as spiritual warfare. This perspective allowed him to approach the conflict with the right weapons. What are the weapons of spiritual warfare? Refer to Ephesians 6:12-18.

2. What sphere of service has God given you for ministry? How has He specially equipped you to fill this niche?

Challenge

1. Did you know God knows your inner thoughts? Strive this week to work on making your thought life pleasing to Him.

Christian Conduct and Suffering for the Sake of Christ
2 Corinthians 11

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. There is a time and place to defend your Christian conduct.**

- 2. There is a time and place to share your Christian experience.**

Practical Application

- 1. Be a skeptic about the so-called “Being of Light.”**

Questions

1. What was one of Paul’s purposes for writing 2 Corinthians?
2. Where in this chapter do we learn a bit of theology about Satan?
3. Why was it necessary for Paul to defend his Christian conduct?
4. How did Paul contrast himself with the false apostle?
5. What prompted Paul to share his Christian experience?

Answers

1. To defend his apostolic authority
2. Verses 14-15 teach that Satan can disguise himself as “an angel of light.” He can appear to serve righteousness, but it is a mask to hide deceit and false teaching.
3. Because the false apostles were slandering his conduct, and Paul was afraid the Corinthian believers would be deceived and led astray.
4. a. Paul was not as skilled in speech as they were, but he surpassed them in knowledge
b. They exalted themselves; Paul humbled himself
c. They charged for their services; Paul supported himself and the work at Corinth through gifts from other churches
5. The false apostles were boasting about their credentials, and the Corinthians were impressed with their foolish approach. Paul, with much irony and sarcasm, decided to do a little boasting himself to show that these false apostles didn't come close to the apostle Paul when it came to credentials.

Discuss / Consider

1. Your personal Christian conduct can have a positive or negative effect on your work for the Lord. Do you practice what you preach? Do you walk what you talk? Give an example of this important principle from your life.

2. When you share your Christian testimony, be certain you are bringing glory to God and not glory to yourself. With that in mind, do you have something to share?

Challenge

1. Paul's testimony here certainly defeats the “health and wealth” preaching. Paul says that his suffering showed that he was identifying with Christ. To suffer for the sake of Christ is the norm for Christian experience.

Answers

1. The false teachers at Corinth were undermining Paul's credibility as an apostle. Here he continues to defend his apostleship.
2. Normally he would not have shared his spiritual experiences and qualifications as an apostle, because he would have needed to. Because of the Corinthians' doubts he must.
3. They should have commended him because: a. He had lead them to Christ and was their spiritual father. He had founded the Church at Corinth. Chapters 10-11. b. He had done signs, wonders, and miracles in their midst as God confirmed his words as an apostle. 2 Corinthians 12:12
4. We don't know. Many suggestions have been made, including eye problems, headaches, a speech impediment, etc.
5. a. It kept Paul humble.
b. The Lord said that His grace was sufficient for Paul.
c. The Lord's power is perfected in weakness.

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss Paul's spiritual experience described in 2 Corinthians 12. What can we learn from this about "third heaven experiences"? Do you need to seek such an experience?

2. Do you have a "thorn in the flesh"? If God has chosen not to remove it, what good has come because of it? Be comforted by the promise: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Challenge

1. Many people are uncomfortable with the thought of Paul using irony in his writing (see verses 13 and 16.) Irony is a valid and effective literary style. Let God's Word say what it says.

Answers

1. On Paul's first visit to Corinth he founded the Corinthian Church (Acts 18). His second visit was the "painful visit" (2 Corinthians 2:1). Now he proposes a third visit, which he did make, as recorded in Acts 20.
2. Yes, according to Romans 15 it appears he succeeded in collecting for the poor saints in Jerusalem and dealing with the false teachers in Corinth.
3. If the Corinthians did not deal with the problem of the false teaching and false apostles, then Paul would have to exercise discipline when he came.
4. If they passed the test, it would not only prove they were saved and doing the right thing, but it would prove that Paul was a true apostle because he had led them to Christ. However, if they failed the test, it would prove that they were not walking in the faith and maybe not even saved.

Discuss / Consider

1. "It is not inconsistent for believers to exhibit both power and weakness in their walk of faith." Discuss how the Lord Jesus demonstrated this principle in his life. How did the Apostle Paul demonstrate it? How do you exhibit both power and weakness in your walk of faith?

2. What is the benefit of asking questions about the Christian faith? What is the benefit of examining yourself and your faith?

Challenge

1. In Paul's conclusion to this letter, we see that he was very concerned that the Corinthian believers come to peace and unity and grow in truth and love. The same is true of God's will for churches today. How will your group of believers grow from this study of 2 Corinthians?