

Parson to Person
2 Corinthians 1 (Part 1)

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.

Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. 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 Corinthians 1:1–7).

Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians that preceded what we call 1 Corinthians. Therefore, 1 Corinthians was the second letter—written to answer many questions the Corinthians had asked following the first. It also appears that there was a third letter that preceded what we call 2 Corinthians. Therefore, it is best to note that 2 Corinthians may be the fourth. Either way, we have 1st and 2nd Corinthians— for the Lord saw fit to retain these as part of the collection of letters contained in our Bible.

The fact that the first and third letters were not retained does not suggest that there were communication errors within the pages. It simply shows that the two we have were God-breathed—and therefore significant to the whole of that which was intended in the Scriptures.

This letter was written from Macedonia somewhere about 55-57 A.D. Paul had intended to pay another visit to Corinth, but His travel plans were readjusted by the Lord. Therefore, he wrote this letter to bring a defense for his adjusted schedule, open his heart to the Corinthians while seeking an openness in them, personally defend his calling, mission and ministry, provide continuing instruction to the needy church, and comfort the Church Age saints in Corinth, in all of Achaia, and all over the world.

We will benefit by the reading their mail...

Paul began his letter with a mention of sufferings: his, those working and traveling with him, and that of the Corinthians. Indeed, all who serve in ministry will suffer—as will all ministry recipients.

This world is the present playground of the Devil. He loves to kill, steal, and destroy (see John 10:10). It seems that nothing motivates Satan more than serving as the adversary to God.

We know that Lucifer was created perfect and beautiful, was in Eden (the garden of God), and was gifted with free moral agency (see Ezekiel 28:11–19). Tragically, his “majesty,” “beauty,” and “freedom” inspired his rebellions against the Lord. His act of self-exaltation demonstrated his self-centered desire for admiration. This is a lesson we should all learn from. His pride and self-worship manifested with and before God’s greatest creation: man, wherein he desired to be worshipped by man and thus unseat God as the focus of man’s call to worship the Lord—only the Lord.

Satan (meaning adversary) successfully deceived Eve into bowing before him in rebellion toward the Lord. This act put Satan in the lead role (*as superior to God*) rather than the one to whom Eve was called to obey. Moreover, Adam, her husband, rebelled too. His actions made Eve *his* “lord.” Therefore, rebelliously disobeying

God, and submitting to his wife, Adam put Satan in the position of God and thus accomplished Satan's goal—to be like God.

Since that time, as the result of the disciplinary curse, and continually active in sin, mankind (in Adam) has suffered loss, disease, pain, and death. Tragically, this suffering will never come to an end. The sufferings of the righteous are present—in the present. The sufferings of the unredeemed will go on into eternity. The sufferings of the righteous are limited—not to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us (see Romans 8:18). The sufferings of the wicked shall be endured throughout eternity—in the lake of fire.

Sufferings are used by the Lord to cause us to desire relief, redemption, and deliverance. Sadly, those who don't see and understand this very real fact miss the opportunity afforded by the revelation—salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Jesus' sufferings on our behalf is the only relief for the sufferings of man. Moreover, those who understand that while sufferings are occurring in the present world—salvific and empowering/equipping grace will continue. However, when the sufferings of this present world come to an end, there will be no further extension of grace.

Allow me to explain.

While suffering is in the present world, salvific and empowering/equipping grace is extended. However, there will come a day when God will create a New Heaven and New Earth—wherein there will be no more pain, no more sorrow, and no more death—no more suffering.

In the New Heaven and New Earth, we who have trusted Christ for Salvation will experience no sufferings—for we have been redeemed through the sufferings of Jesus. However, those who have

rejected the grace of God found only in Jesus will forever suffer having been cast into the lake of fire. To these there will be no further offer of grace—only eternal torment.

Therefore, we should rejoice in the sufferings of this present time—for as long as sufferings are in the world, grace is extended (grace that leads to repentance from unbelief and faith in Jesus). Suffering is used by the Lord to call us to Him—away from the consequences of our sins. Suffering was caused by us—not the Lord. Relief from suffering is provided only in the sufferings of the Lord; He is our relief, he is our refuge, He is our deliverer.

With this in mind, may I point out a few important insights into suffering.

- 1) Suffering is our fault (see Genesis 3).
- 2) We all suffer. *“In this world you shall have tribulation”* (John 16:33).
- 3) God uses sufferings to create a desire for deliverance and the salvation He alone provides.
- 4) God’s saving grace is also His sustaining grace: *“My grace is sufficient for you”* (2 Corinthians 12:9).
- 5) We can endure—and we will overcome—in Jesus (see Romans 8:28–39).
- 6) When suffering, an eternal perspective proves essential (see Romans 8:18–27).
- 7) The way we suffer is a testimony to others—who will be watching (see Philippians 1:12–14).
- 8) As long as suffering is in the world—mankind is offered redemption.

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let

patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:2–4).

I love you all,
Pastor Paul