

Better Together

HOME CHURCH

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. Have you had your authority or knowledge of a certain situation or thing undermined? Can you share an example, and how did you respond?
2. Did the other party come to acknowledge or reconcile that you knew what you were talking about?
3. If so, or if not, how did it affect your relationship with that person?
4. In Vv. 1-2, Paul talks about being a leader by God's will. What would it take for someone to believe a person who invokes God as their primary reference and credibility? What clues do we have in the first part of Chapter 1?
5. Paul uses common letter openings here and "Jesusfies" them. What does this tell us about living as bi-cultural people (or more!) with our Kingdom of God status involved?
6. 3-7 "Comfort" is a big theme here. What has been comforting to you in hard times or circumstances? Who has been comforting to you and what form did that take?
7. Paul tells us that there is comfort in Jesus. What do you think it means to receive comfort from Jesus?
8. He suffered both for them and with them. They are a persecuted minority and have divisions within their church. The faithful are suffering on two fronts. Does this happen today?
9. 8-11 "God rescued us from death..." Lots of death and rescue language here. What do you think about this? He had experienced persecution (physical and mental attacks/torture) for telling the story of Jesus.



CONNECT WITH US ANYTIME!

- Sign-up for our weekly e-newsletter
- Sign-up for a Home Church
- Prayer requests
- Get information, make comments, ask questions, share thoughts

Suffering & Comfort

This week, we begin a verse-by-verse series through 2 Corinthians with some introductory teaching and a look into chapter 1.

Paul is writing for the fourth time (at least that we know of) to this church in Corinth. It has been under attack from within by those wishing to draw them away from a Jesus-centred faith. We learned in 1 Corinthians that they were drawn towards prideful performance, had a critical view of Paul's outward presentation, and were drawn into high rhetoric and spiritual experiences. Now they add money to that mix.

THE TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-11 *Common English Bible*

Greeting

¹ From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and Timothy our brother.

To God's church that is in Corinth, along with all of God's people throughout Achaia.

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

God's comfort in trouble

³ May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be blessed! He is the compassionate Father and God of all comfort. ⁴ He's the one who comforts us in all our trouble so that we can comfort other people who are in every kind of trouble. We offer the same comfort that we ourselves received from God. ⁵ That is because we receive so much comfort through Christ in the same way that we share so many of Christ's sufferings. ⁶ So if we have trouble, it is to bring you comfort and salvation. If we are comforted, it is to bring you comfort from the experience of endurance while you go through the same sufferings that we also suffer. ⁷ Our hope for you is certain, because we know that as you are partners in suffering, so also you are partners in comfort.

⁸ Brothers and sisters, we don't want you to be unaware of the troubles that we went through in Asia. We were weighed down with a load of suffering that was so far beyond our strength that we were afraid we might not survive. ⁹ It certainly seemed to us as if we had gotten the death penalty. This was so that we would have confidence in God, who raises the dead, instead of ourselves. ¹⁰ God rescued us from a terrible death, and he will rescue us. We have set our hope on him that he will rescue us again, ¹¹ since you are helping with your prayer for us. Then many people can thank God on our behalf for the gift that was given to us through the prayers of many people.

OPENING

THE BOOK

- Background and Foreground of the Letter
 - **Setting, Literary History, Rhetorical Structure**
 - **Goal of Letter** Paul writes to reconcile with his converts, whereas in 1 Corinthians, reconciliation is between/among Corinthian converts.
 - **Partition Theories** Many theories about this being multiple letters but, “there is not a shred of textual evidence to support the view that any part of the letter as we have it did not originally belong where it now is” (BW3, Cor., 329).
 - Partition theories do not take into account ancient rhetorical conventions.
 - We do know that Paul wrote four letters to the Corinthians (BW3, Cor, 330).
 - Letter One (Corinthians A) referenced in 1 Corinthians 5:9, lost to us
 - Letter Two (Corinthians B), 1 Corinthians ~ AD 53 or 54
 - Letter Three (Corinthians C) referenced in 2 Corinthians 2:3,4,9., letter of anguish/painful letter, 2 Corinthians 7:6, 8; 12:18, lost to us
 - Letter Four (Corinthians D), 2 Corinthians, all after Corinthians C
 - 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1, pre-Pauline, or earlier Paul, he adopted and used for his purposes
 - Sum—all debates about being multiple letters are solved most easily when analyzed from a rhetorical point of view.
 - **Forensic Rhetoric and the Structure of the Letter**
- **Need for Reconciliation**
- **Temple Feasts, Travel, Patronage**
 - *2 Corinthians 1:8-9* Paul did not accept patronage from them, yet he did from those in Philippi. 11:9. How is this different in Corinth? He would not be put in their debt.
- **Opponents**

OUTLINE: NIV App Commentary

- I. Letter Opening: The Identity of Paul and His Church (1:1-2)
- II. Prologue (1:3-11)
 - A. Paul's Prayer of Praise for the Comfort of God (1:3-7)
 - B. Paul's "Sentence to Death" As the Pattern of His Suffering (1:8-11)

VERSE-BY-VERSE

EPISTOLARY PRESCRIPT *2 Corinthians 1:1-2*

He had just heard from Titus about...[severe letter]. He knows now that they respond to pathos and ethos best.

Paul is on the defensive in much of this letter. NOTE: Sometimes we are told not to be defensive, yet there are times for a defense.

EPISTOLARY THANKSGIVING AND EXORDIUM *2 Corinthians 1:3-7*

Not on the attack in chapters 1-9 to the same level he will be in 10-13

Exordium—addressed the judge, not jury or audience. Paul is first concerned about the Lord as his judge, not any human court.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5 Blessing section

2 Corinthians 1:6 The Corinthians themselves have come in for suffering

2 Corinthians 1:7

Similar style to 1 Thessalonians 1-3 to 2 Corinthians 1-9 with side digressions to prevent misunderstandings.

NARRATIO *2 Corinthians 1:8-2:16 <8-11>*

2 Corinthians 1:9 apokrima

2 Corinthians 1:8-10

2 Corinthians 1:11

REVIEW/APPLICATION

FINAL WORD

Sources: Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ben Witherington; NIV Application Commentary; The Letters of the Corinthians, William Barclay; Second Epistle to the Corinthians: New International Commentary on the New Testament (NICNT), Paul Barnett; Others.