

Learning and Living the Bible Together

Lessons from 2 Corinthians

2 Cor. 1:1-11

Ever been discouraged? Ever felt like life was almost too overwhelming? Paul faced struggles, pressure, and despair but also experienced victory. Others experience difficulties:

"I am the subject of depression so fearful that I hope none of you ever get to such extremes of wretchedness as I go to."— Spurgeon

How can we deal with issues and have victory? Let's look at today's passage and remember 4 words.....

1. Reality (v. 4)

- struggles, adversity, trials, and pressure are certain and will occur in our life. (2 Cor. 12:10; Rom. 5:3; 1 Peter 5:10; James 1:2)
- some of our trials may be severe. (v.8) Paul faced a real crisis at some point in his life that he references here. But we all face issues — relationship issues, fear, death of a loved one, battles with depression or anxiety, etc. At some point, our trials seem so severe that we feel we cannot go forward.

—> Yet, in light of this reality, we see comfort mentioned all through this passage. (vv. 3,4,5,6,7) How should we respond to the realities of life?

2. Praise (v.3)

Note peace and grace mentioned in v.2. Paul always pointed to our victory in Christ. Important in achieving victory in our life. See Heb. 13:15-16; Psalm 42. Remember Acts 16 when Paul sings praises when in jail.

- Remember you are His. Do not forget His past work in you and His love for you.
- Praise God who has saved us and brought us into His family. (Gal. 3:26; 4:6; Eph. 1:3-6; Col. 1:13-14)
- Praise God for His mercy. (Lam. 3:22-23; Eph. 2:4-5) We were condemned to hell but were rescued by Him and given an eternal home, an eternal relationship with Him.
- Praise God for His comfort. (Ps. 23, 121:1-2; John 14:16,26; 16:7) Comfort is mentioned 10 times in these first 11 verses. God offers us comfort. Remember John 14-16. We have the Holy Spirit, our Comforter, in us.

How do we live a life of praise? Make it a part of our daily life. Take time to start your day with praise to Him. Begin to develop a life that regularly focuses on all He has done for you and praise Him.

3. Trust (vv. 8-10)

- trust that His ways are best. He permits trials. He permits severe situations. He knows what is best. See Psalm 119:67-75.

"The furnace of affliction is a good place for you, Christian; it benefits you; it helps you to become more like Christ, and it is fitting you for heaven." — Spurgeon

- realize that you are not able to deliver yourself
- trust that He is able to deliver you and He is with you
- trust in His purpose for you

4. Ministry (vv. 4-7, 11)

- we are to look outward and invest in lives of others. (vv. 4-7)

*we have trials in our life so we can minister to others in their trials
(note v. 4 — any affliction. We are to minister to others in any affliction they face)

*we are to suffer so others can come to know Christ and grow in Christ
(also see 2 Tim. 3:12)

- we are to pray for one another when others are in difficulties. (v.11) (This means we must let others know of our difficulties so we can pray for one another. Sometimes our pride keeps us from letting fellow brothers and sisters know of our need for prayer.)

*our prayers allow us to partner with others in ministry

- we are to yield to the Lord's sovereignty and let Him shape us for His glory

*we must look to Him when in adversity and see our life as an instrument for His use

—> We want to live for His glory and cannot stay focused on our problems.

Note the rest of the quote from Spurgeon. We mentioned part of this at the beginning:

I am the subject of depression so fearful that I hope none of you ever get to such extremes of wretchedness as I go to. But I always get back again by this-I know that I trust Christ. I have no reliance but in Him, and if He falls, I shall fall with Him. But if He does not, I shall not. Because He lives, I shall live also, and I spring to my legs again and fight with my depressions of spirit and get the victory through it. And so may you do, and so you must, for there is no other way of escaping from it. — Spurgeon