

Sunday School Lesson  
**II Corinthians 1-3: Things Are Looking Up** (December 8, 2024)

**Introduction:**

- Scholars believe this to actually be the fourth in Paul's series of letters to the church in Corinth.
- Probably written from Macedonia (2:12, 7:5) in fall of 55 AD (since many believe 1Corinthians was written in Spring of 55).
- Apparently Corinthians found Apollos more eloquent, Peter more traditional, and Paul was always under arrest or being beaten up.<sup>1</sup>
- Largely about Paul's ministry and authority, apparently responding to accusations.
- "Judaizers" believed that Gentile converts must become Jews first, and follow Jewish traditions, before they could become Christians. Paul opposed them.
- This letter has 3 primary divisions<sup>2</sup>:
  - Chapters 1-7: Paul defines his ministry
  - Chapters 8-9 he promotes an offering for the impoverished Christians in Jerusalem
  - Chapters 10-13: he strongly defends his apostolic authority (some scholars believe these chapters were the contents of the "severe letter," #3 from Paul)

**Affliction and Suffering**

Why is Paul writing? From 2Corinthians 7:6-7:

- Apparently many Corinthians accepted and responded to Paul's guidance
- Some questioned his authority
- Some questioned his motives<sup>3</sup>
- "Apostle" means a *messenger from God*. It applied to the twelve, plus some others, including Paul.
- Paul refers to Timothy as a "brother;" not as an "apostle."

Now, read **2Corinthians 1:1b-5**.

- v. 3 describes divine comfort, the experience of which allows us to comfort others.

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<sup>1</sup> Rudolph, Day 331.

<sup>2</sup> Chafin, p. 198.

<sup>3</sup> Chafin, p. 204

Have YOU experienced divine comfort? Perhaps a time when others prayed for you – and it worked!

- V. 6-7 Paul is trying to relate our sufferings to Christ's, and then our various comforts to His divine comfort.
- Paul uses *paraklētos* ("paraclete"), "one who stands alongside and helps."

### ***Picking at Paul***

Read **1Corinthians 16:5-9** for Paul's travel plans.

- Some assumed Paul was coming to Corinth *first*.

Now, read **2Corinthians: 1:15-19**.

- They accused Paul of being insincere and not committed in his decisions.
- Paul had qualified with "if the Lord permits."
- Paul has no hidden agenda and is firm as Christ permits.
- Paul did NOT come directly to Corinth because he felt his presence was painful to them. Read **2 Corinthians 1:23 – 2:2**.

How often have you felt your guidance was unappreciated, and may have been perceived as painful? Here Paul presents a model of restraint.

### ***Forgiveness***

Someone has caused grief in the congregation (the man who committed incest with his father's wife?). What to do? From 2Corinthians 2:5-11:

- If he is out of line, then confront him – no "silent treatment"
- If he repents, forgive & comfort him.
- Restore him to fellowship.

### ***Credentials***

- Letters of introduction and recommendation have always been very important.
- Apparently someone came to Corinth with an impressive introductory letter from someone in Jerusalem.
- Person was accepted by the Corinth congregation, then began disparaging Paul.
- Paul responded that he had planted that church and the very members were his credentials. From 2Corinthians 3:1-6:
- Paul spent his early life enforcing the written code (orthodoxy), but his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus showed him that the Spirit is the true source of life.

- Again, no hidden agenda; it is the Holy Spirit that provides life and future.

### ***Lifting the Veil***

- Moses started wearing a veil in public in Exodus 34.
- Paul explains that the Old Testament and Christ, both, are covenants from God. But, the Old is veiled on their hearts, while Christ is a face-to-face revelation. From 2Corinthians 3:13-18:
- Knowing the Lord, we are being changed, little by little, to be more like Him.

### ***Summary:***

“In the Kingdom of God, success is not measured by comfort, but by strength to do God’s will and the ability to endure hardship with grace and peace.”<sup>4</sup>

Paul presented a model for group leadership:<sup>5</sup>

- Don’t take criticism or opposition personally.
- Discipline the contrary person for correction; not vengeance
- Remember that God has constructive/positive plans for everyone
- Restore/reaffirm, as soon as possible, with comfort and encouragement.

For a great uplift about God’s deliverance, read Psalm 107.

*Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,  
and he saved them from their distress.  
He brought them... He sent them... He rescued them... He healed them...*

### ***References:***

1. Asbury Bible Commentary (on line), <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search>
2. Chafin, Kenneth L., Mastering The New Testament: 1, 2 Corinthians, Lloyd Ogilvie, General Editor, Word Publishing, Dallas, TX, 1985, pp. 197-225.
3. Harper Study Bible, Revised Standard Version, Zondervan Bible Publishers, Grand Rapids, MI, 1985.
4. NRSV Bible on-line: <http://www.devotions.net/bible/00bible.htm>
5. Rudolph, Rev. Kevin, The Bible Tour Guide, Rich Publishing Co, Houston, TX, Day 331.
6. Free on-line commentaries:  
[http://www.freebiblecommentary.org/old\\_testament\\_studies/old\\_testament\\_studies.htm](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org/old_testament_studies/old_testament_studies.htm)

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<sup>4</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Chafin, p. 215.