



## First Baptist Church At The Villages

COMPANION STUDY TO MESSAGE: CONFIDENCE IN TROUBLES (4/19) •  
STUDY TITLE: COMFORT FOR THOSE WHO SUFFER • 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-7 •  
FOR USE 4/19/ THROUGH 4/25/2020

### MAIN POINT

God comforts us in our suffering so that we may be able to offer help to others who suffer.

### INTRODUCTION

As your study time begins, use this section to focus your mind and heart on the topic of this lesson.

**How difficult is life when it is marked by suffering? Do you know anyone whose life is lived with constant suffering? Perhaps you have had to live this way?**

**Has the COVID-19 virus brought suffering a little closer to home for you? Do you feel more vulnerable**

**How does suffering affect our faith? How does suffering touch every aspect of our lives? How does physical suffering affect our spiritual lives?**

**Do we have a guarantee that God will take our suffering away? If not, how does God comfort us in the midst of pain and suffering?**

Suffering is life-altering. When someone loses a loved one, when someone is injured and finds themselves in chronic pain, or when a sudden illness leaves someone debilitated, every single aspect of their lives is touched. When this happens to us, we find that everything is difficult, things we once took for granted are now exhausting. Things like sleep, buttoning our shirt, or just walking can become nearly (or actually) impossible. Certainly, even our relationships will suffer under such pain. It is no wonder that suffering and despair are woven together so closely. The sad news is that we all will suffer in this life in varying degrees. Paul wrote to Timothy, "In fact, all those who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:12). We will

suffer for the gospel, and we will suffer in the body from sickness or weakness if we live long enough. We will suffer the loss of loved ones. It sounds quite gloomy, but we have to face this reality if we want to have some level of preparedness when it comes our way.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

### | READ 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4.

**Why do you think that Paul mentions that God the Father is the “Father of all mercies”? What are some of the mercies that God the Father has shown toward us?**

It is fantastic news that God the Father is the Father of mercy and the God of all comfort. We know that He is these things because He is the “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jesus said, “The Son is not able to do anything on His own, but only what He sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, the Son also does these things in the same way” (John 5:19). Jesus healed the sick, and He sympathized with the plight of the people, and He did these things because He saw the Father doing them.

**What is the difference between comfort and mercy? How might they be related?**

God is merciful to us because we are in no position to help ourselves. Sometimes, we deserve judgment because we have sinned, but God shows us mercy when we repent. Sometimes, others take advantage of us and we need God’s mercy. Either way, our Father not only has mercy on us, but He also comforts us with His presence and the promises we have through Jesus Christ.

**How does personal suffering better prepare us for helping others?**

**How do the promises that God has given us bring us comfort in suffering? How many promises can you name?**

Experience is a wonderful teacher. It is far easier to be sympathetic to others when we ourselves have suffered in similar ways. We are able to put up with irritable attitudes and even harsh words when we understand that they are coming from a place of pain, especially if we have been in that place ourselves.

### | READ 2 CORINTHIANS 1:5-6.

**What does it mean that “the sufferings of Christ overflow to us”? How do we share in Christ’s sufferings?**

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, “My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings” (Phil. 3:10). We, as the church share in the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. Jesus said, “If they called the head of the house ‘Beelzebul,’ how much more the members of his household!” (Matt. 10:25). We can expect that if people treated Jesus in this way because He taught repentance and faith in Himself, then we will surely face the same treatment.

**How does Christ comfort us in our affliction? Is it the same as how the Father comforts us?**

**What are the sufferings that we all share in common? How do both affliction and comfort result in positive things?**

Jesus is able to comfort us in our sufferings because He Himself suffered. The writer of Hebrews teaches us that “we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tested in every way as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Jesus is sympathetic to our suffering, and He helps us by giving us the Holy Spirit, and by promising us forgiveness and resurrection. The promises of God in Christ are key to enduring suffering. We know that one day, we who believe will have immortal bodies that will no longer hurt (1 Cor. 15:52-57). We know that, one day, we will see our loved ones again (1 Thess. 4:16-18). We also know that one day the Lord will “wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will no longer exist; grief, crying, and pain will exist no longer, because the previous things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4). Remembering these promises are crucial to enduring the many afflictions we will encounter in this life.

| READ 2 CORINTHIANS 1:7.

**How do we know that if we share in Christ’s sufferings we will be comforted? What will our comfort be?**

**Do you suppose Paul’s confidence in the endurance of the Corinthian church was encouraging? How might your confidence in others, in their progress in the faith, be an encouragement in a difficult time? Has someone else ever encouraged you by believing in you?**

The Book of Revelation includes many promises for those who overcome the temptations and afflictions of this world. Jesus promised the one who overcomes will have “the right to sit with

Me on My throne, just as I also won the victory and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Rev. 3:21). He promises that the "victor will be dressed in white clothes, and I will never erase his name from the book of life but will acknowledge his name before My Father and before His angels" (Rev. 3:5). Jesus' words encourage us that no matter how bad things get here, one day He will restore our joy and our health. The Scriptures also encourage us by having confidence that we will endure to the end. Paul wrote, "I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6). Jesus will not abandon us. If Christ does not give up on us, then we should not give up on others either. We have great confidence that the same hope we have for our own souls extends by grace to others who call on Christ.

## CONTEMPLATION & APPLICATION

Identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to your life.

**How much benefit do you think it would be to memorize the promises that God gives us in Christ? How might this be of benefit in times of suffering?**

**Could you make it a point to reach out to someone who is suffering? Perhaps you might write them a note or give them a call to let them know that you believe in them, and remind them that they are greatly loved by Christ.**

**Due to the "stay at home order" many of your fellow church members, neighbors, and friends are unable or unwilling to get out, so they are feeling isolated and lonely.**

**Live-out this Scripture... verse 4 "...so THAT WE MAY BE ABLE to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."**

**\*\*Commit to call three people this week. Have your Bible opened to 2 Corinthians 1 and ask them if you can encourage them by reading verses 3-7 and sharing how The Comforter (another name for The Holy Spirit) has comforted your own heart with this Scripture.**

## PRAYER

Pray aloud, thanking God for salvation through Jesus Christ. Thank God the Father that He has shown us all mercy and comfort by sending Jesus to save us. Ask the Father to comfort those who are suffering by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Spend some time thanking the Lord for our church, and for brothers and sisters in Christ who are there to encourage and help us in times of suffering.

**COMMENTARY** (additional background and/or explanation of these verses to help in understanding the biblical texts)

## | 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-7

1:3-4. Paul began describing his hardships on a positive, exuberant note. The formula praise be to ... God derived from the Old Testament (Ps. 41:13), but Paul modified it to express distinctively Christian praise. Not only is God praised, but he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This modification demonstrates that Paul saw Christianity as one with Old Testament religion, but not precisely the same. Christ had become the center of true belief. New Testament believers relate to God as the one who sent Christ.

Paul added that the Father has compassion and all comfort. This praise also derives from the Old Testament (Isa. 51:12; 66:13). Compassion denotes God's mercy and his concern for the plight of those who suffer. Comfort is what God gives to those who suffer. These terms were appropriate because Paul was about to describe his own troubles in suffering for the gospel.

Paul suffered and was comforted partly so he could bring comfort to others in any trouble. His suffering in ministry was an act of service to the Corinthians. Having suffered and been comforted, Paul could comfort others with the comfort he had received from God. Paul's use of the first person suggests that he thought primarily about himself and his company in this passage, but the principle applies to all believers. God permits his servants to suffer, and then comforts them so they may in turn comfort others.

1:5. Paul explained how he knew this principle to be true. Christians are so intimately joined with Christ that experiences flow from Christ, to believers, through believers, and to others. The sufferings of Christ extend from Christ to his followers. Believers fill up ... Christ's afflictions because the church is his body (see Col. 1:24; cf. Phil. 3:10). This was plain enough from the hardships in Paul's own ministry. Yet, just as Christ received joy and glory in his resurrection, and sent the Holy Spirit of comfort, comfort also overflows to believers through Christ. In union with Christ, we face the hardships of sin and death, but we also receive compassionate encouragement from God.

1:6. Because the Corinthians benefited when the apostles were distressed, Paul's experiences had been the Corinthians' comfort. As he ministered at great personal cost, he brought comfort and salvation to those who heard his message. At the same time, when the apostles were

comforted by Christ, they received the encouragement they needed to bring the Corinthians comfort.

Further, the comfort believers received from Paul's suffering produce[d] ... patient endurance in the midst of their own sufferings. Christians must remain faithful to Christ, no matter how difficult circumstances become. Endurance (Gk. hypomone) describes how believers must continue in faithful service to the end. Yet, endurance will not last unless it is patient. Patience is the ability to wait for Christ to return and end all suffering. Comfort enables believers to find energy, which in turn makes them patient as they endure suffering.

1:7. The Corinthians faced trials, disappointments, and conflicts. But Paul believed they had saving faith in Christ and that they would endure. He hoped this because he knew the Corinthians share[d] in the apostles' comfort as well as their sufferings. So long as Christ comforted the Corinthians, they would be able to endure their suffering to the end.