

LESSON 3: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-11

The God of All Comfort

1. After his customary greeting, Paul breaks into praise (vv. 3-7). Why? What is the most repeated word in these verses? How are God (vv. 3-4), Christ (v. 5), the Corinthians (v. 6), and you (v. 7) brought into and connected to this great subject?
2. What then is the purpose of suffering? What is the purpose of suffering in your life? Do you agree with Paul?
3. Has anyone been comforted through your afflictions? Is it possible that the suffering in your life has a ministry to someone else? Have your sufferings equipped others? Like Paul, do you love God, at least in part, *because* of all that you have gone through?
4. What is suggested in verse 8 by “we despaired even of life”? What had Paul been delivered from?
5. What do you think Paul means in verse 9, when he writes that “in our hearts we felt the sentence of death”? What is he saying when he explains why “this happened”?
6. In verse 10, when does God deliver? Have you recognized his deliverance in your life? How well can you live for him, knowing that he will deliver you?
7. Is Paul, in verse 11, referring to past or future manifestations of God's blessing to him? How has God been gracious to you recently? Do you live in expectation of God's grace? If not, why not?

Joy in Sorrow

1. What is Paul's boast (v. 12), and is it appropriate that he should thus "boast" of this? What is so healthy about the testimony of a good conscience (v. 12)? Consider the directness with which Paul speaks!
2. Why do you think Paul writes what he does in verse 13? And, in verse 14, what is "the day of the Lord Jesus"? See 1 Corinthians 1:8; Philippians 1:6,10; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; and 2 Thessalonians 2:2. Why is this phrase important? How immediate is it to you? Should it be important in your life?
3. What reason does Paul give that the change in his travel plans was not a change in his love for the Corinthians (vv. 15-16)? What point is he making in verse 17?
4. Notice how Paul redirects their attention by focusing on Jesus Christ (vv. 18-22). Have you ever done this with your Christian brother or sister when you have misunderstood each other?
5. What aspects of Christian experience does Paul point to as evidence of God's "yes" in Jesus Christ? Can you do the same?
6. What further reason does Paul give for changing his travel plans (vv. 1:23-2:4)? What do you think is behind this problem (see 1 Corinthians 5:1)? What point is Paul making as he speaks of his grief, distress, and anguish, as also of his confidence and joy (see especially v. 2:4)? How would a delay in his plans make Paul's ultimate visit a joyous one? Has there been, or is there now, an occasion when you should have, or now need to wait, rather than act?
7. Notice Paul's approach to the problem of the excommunicated sinner (5-11). How would this approach most likely result in the offender hearing God's affirmation? Is there something to be said here about how we should deal with problems? Can you forgive and forget in the name of God? When? How? In what situations? With what exceptions? What are Satan's schemes to which Paul refers?