

**“GETTING VALUE AND MEANING
IN SUFFERING”
2 Corinthians 1:1-11**

INTRODUCTION

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians had been delivered, but he wondered how it was received. Paul meets Titus, who gave him some bad news. There was a church member in sin, but Paul's letter was taken to heart. However, false teachers arrived saying that Paul was not really an apostle! There were many lies and false accusations against Paul. Unfortunately, some believed the lies. One of the biggest lies is that Paul was suffering because he was not an apostle. This new letter to the Corinthians is to 1) vindicate the purity of his life, 2) crush the lies and 3) encourage the church to stay the course! The letter is broken up into sections where Paul explains suffering (1-6), repentance (7), collection of offerings (8, 9) and answers critics (10-13).

WE EXPERIENCE GOD

Paul indicated that he is in fact an apostle. He was commissioned by God in **Acts 9**. God is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. Every religion has to explain the meaning of suffering. Each has its own view. Paul indicated that there is value in our suffering that the Lord has designed. There was tribulation, trouble, sufferings, affliction, despair, sentence of death, etc. In suffering, Christians actually have an interaction with God. After suffering, Paul could say, “*Blessed be God!*” It is the grace and mercies of the Father that sustains us. **Lamentations 3:22-23**.

COMFORT

God grants us comfort, which means He comes along side to relieve and support, give solace, strength and confidence. While we may experience tribulation or be crushed and weighed down, God comforts us so we can comfort others. He wants us to pass this experience on to others. At these times, rather than critiquing those that are suffering, we need to weep with those that weep and be good listeners. Remember, Jesus was a man of sorrows, well acquainted with grief. **Isaiah 53:3**. The Scriptures are a great comfort to us in tough times. **Psalms 119:50**.

TRUSTING HIM!

“We were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life”, v.8 NKJV. In other words, “This is too much, I can't take much more!” We need to trust God, not ourselves! **Proverbs 3:5**. This is the refiner's fire indicted in **1 Peter 1:7**. Suffering causes people to pray and intercede for others, as we bear one another's burdens. Prayer is a great gift! This is part of God's economy.

CONSIDER

There is value and meaning in suffering. Through it we can find God. We can comfort others. Whatever God gives to you, pass it on to others! Suffering also causes us to be intercessors more frequently. *Want an antidote for self-pity?* Pray for others!

PRAY

- * That we would have hearts that love the lost!
- * That the Lord would allow us to purchase the land behind the church for youth activities.
- * That God's Spirit would refresh the pastors at our East Coast Pastors' conference in September.