

One of the most frequently asked questions that Christians ponder is why God allows them to suffer trials and tribulations. While there are many reasons for God to allow trials and tribulations in our lives, Paul gives us two specific reasons in this first chapter of 2 Corinthians. Trials enable us to help others who are going through similar trials and God also uses them to help our faith to grow.

3 Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

“Blessed [praised] be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” – After his standard greeting to the Corinthians in vs. 1-2, Paul begins praising God for having certain attributes. Paul described God as being “our Father” in v. 2 and now he describes God as being the Father of Jesus Christ. God is our Father in the sense of being adopted but He is Christ’s Father in the sense that Jesus shares His Father’s nature of Deity.

“the Father of mercies [compassion; pity]” – God is also a Father that is full of mercy, which He demonstrates when He forgives us of our sins and adopts us as His children (Rom. 8:14-16; Gal. 4:4-7).

“and the God of all comfort [to call for help; to encourage]” – The Greek word for “comfort” is related to the word that Jesus used when He described the Holy Spirit as “the Comforter” (John 14:26). Not only is God the primary source of mercy (being the “Father” of it), He is also the God of “all comfort.” He wants us to look to Him as our ultimate source of help and encouragement for all the trials of life. He may use other people to supply help and encouragement in our time of need, but ultimately He is the source.

4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

“Who comforteth [encourage; strengthen] us in all our tribulation [pressure; metaph: distress; oppression]” – God provides us with His peace, encouragement and strength when we look to Him in faith when we encounter tribulations. **Phil. 4:6-7** “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

“that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” – God doesn’t give us His comfort only for our benefit. He gives it to us so that we can also encourage others with that same comfort. We can share scripture passages that have encouraged us so that others can be encouraged as well. We can share how that God has taken care of us through hard times so that others can be encouraged to know that He will take care of them as well.

5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

The Greek word for “abound” means “to overflow.” We can count on the consolation (comfort) from God to increase and overflow as our sufferings for Jesus Christ increase.

6 And whether we be afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation.

“And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation” – Paul and his ministry companions had suffered for the name of Christ and would continue to do so. Since the Corinthians and other Christians would also suffer for Christ, they benefited from the sufferings that Paul and his companions endured because 1) they realize that they are not alone; 2) they could be encouraged when they see how that God never abandoned Paul and his companions. This encouragement comforts believers and can lead unbelievers to salvation through faith.

“which is effectual [effective; to enable] in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer” – The afflictions that Paul suffered for Christ helps other Christians endure and persevere when they also suffer for Christ. They see the faith in God that Paul had and are encouraged to also trust God.

“or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation” – When God encouraged Paul, he could pass that encouragement on to the Corinthians and other Christians for their benefit.

7 And our hope of you *is* steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so *shall ye be* also of the consolation.

“And our hope [expectation] of you is steadfast [firm; stable; sure]” – Paul had a confident expectation concerning the Corinthians.

“knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation” – Paul was confident that if God allowed them to suffer for Christ, then He would also give them the comfort they needed to endure it. The same is true for all Christians.

8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:

“For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia” – Paul now uses himself and his companions as an example of suffering, revealing another reason that God allows His children to suffer. Paul wants the Corinthians to be aware, if they weren’t already, of the troubles that came to them while preaching the gospel in Asia (the region of modern day Turkey). Paul does not specify the particular incident, which may not even be recorded in Acts, but some commentators believe he may be referring to the riots in Ephesus instigated by Demetrius the silversmith (Acts 19:22-41).

“that we were pressed out of measure [beyond all measure]” – The troubles they encountered were “beyond all measure” (beyond their ability to measure or handle).

“above strength” – The situation required more strength to escape than what they had. They were powerless to rescue themselves.

“insomuch that we despaired even of life” – From a human standpoint (without the intervention of God), they believed that their situation was hopeless and that they were going to die. They could see no human solution to the problem that would save their lives.

9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

Paul and his companions had learned an important lesson from the experience. God had a purpose in allowing their situation to become severe enough for Paul and his companions to be confronted with certain death. Paul understood that God wanted them to learn to not trust in their own human strength or ingenuity. Instead, Paul and his companions learned that their lives were in the hands of God. Death is the ultimate problem that no human being has ever solved, and yet death is no problem for God, Who could raise them from the dead if He so desired. Therefore, they learned that God is in ultimate control and that no one could truly kill them unless He allowed it.

10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;

“Who delivered us from so great a death” – God had rescued them from certain death. Their faith was strengthened through the experience of facing a situation where only God could rescue them. Paul states that it was God Who rescued them from certain death in the past.

“and doth deliver” – Not only had God rescued them from death in the past, Paul acknowledges that He was still rescuing them in the present.

“in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us” – Paul trusted that God would continue to rescue them from death until they had completed God’s will for them. Paul’s confidence came from the fact that he had already faced a certain death that only God could have rescued him from and Paul could not have gained this confidence any other way. This is often how God deals with us, using troubles and trials to increase our faith in Him.

11 Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift *bestowed* upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

“Ye also helping together by prayer for us” – Paul acknowledges that the Corinthians also contributed toward the rescue from certain death that he and his companions experienced. He credits the fact that the Corinthians were praying for him and his companions as a factor that made a difference when they were facing death. This fact emphasizes the importance of prayer. We can motivate God to act when we pray in faith and in accordance with His will (**1 John 5:14-15** “*And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him*”).

“that for the gift *bestowed* upon us by the means of many persons” – Breaking the remainder of this verse down helps us understand what Paul is saying. The subject here is the prayers made by many persons for him and his companions. He describes these prayers as a gift that was bestowed upon them, an indication of how much he appreciated those prayers.

“thanks may be given by many on our behalf” – Many people could thank the Corinthians (and others) for the gift of their prayers for Paul. These “many” people included Paul and his companions but can also include other people who would benefit from the fact that Paul and his companions were still alive to minister and preach the gospel to them.

Verses 12-17: Paul discusses his plans to return to Corinth on his way to Judea so that he could minister to them once again. However, he had decided to postpone this visit because he didn’t want to rebuke them in person, which he would have found necessary.