

II CORINTHIANS: MINISTERING TO BELIEVERS FACING FALSE TEACHERS

I. Paul's Relationship With The Church, 2 Corinthians 1-7

A. Focusing On God's Edifying Use Of Suffering (2 Corinthians 1:1-11)

I. Introduction

- A. False teachers, claiming to be apostles, had entered the Church at Corinth, and they tried to promote their own ideas while discrediting the person and message of the Apostle Paul. (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 552)
- B. This was a difficult situation for Paul: his readers were immature believers who had been saved out of corrupt backgrounds in a city known for its vice, so they were easy prey for false teachers, and Paul had to be careful how he handled the situation lest his readers think he was being unjustly defensive and thus discredit himself.
- C. Accordingly, the first seven chapters dealt with Paul's relationship with the church, and 2 Corinthians 1:1-11 focused on God's edifying use of suffering in the Church. We view the passage for insight and application:

II. Focusing On God's Edifying Use Of Suffering, 2 Corinthians 1:1-11.

- A. God uses believers' sufferings to equip them to edify other believers who suffer, 1 Corinthians 1:1-7:
 - 1. After giving his opening greetings in 2 Corinthians 1:1-2, Paul expressed praise to God for His merciful comfort in all of the tribulations that he and his ministry team faced, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4a.
 - 2. Paul acknowledged that the way God had comforted him and his ministry team in turn equipped them to comfort others who faced trouble with the comfort that God had provided for them, 2 Corinthians 1:4b-7.
- B. God uses believers' sufferings to teach them to trust God instead of themselves, 2 Corinthians 1:8-10a:
 - 1. Though Paul offered no details on what trouble he and his ministry team had faced in the Roman province of Asia, he admitted that it had been severe: they had been "so utterly burdened beyond" their "strength that" they had "despaired of life itself," 2 Corinthians 1:8 ESV.
 - 2. At the time, the suffering was so great that Paul and his ministry team actually "felt that" they "had received the sentence of death," that they were about to lose their physical lives, 2 Corinthians 1:9a ESV.
 - 3. However, the Lord had allowed that event to occur to make Paul and his ministry team not rely on themselves, but on God who raises the dead, 2 Corinthians 1:9b ESV.
 - 4. Wonderfully, the Lord had delivered them from the deadly peril they had faced, 2 Corinthians 1:10a.
- C. God uses believers' sufferings to prepare them to handle future sufferings by faith in Him, 2 Cor. 1:10b, c:
 - 1. God's deliverance of Paul and his ministry team from the life-threatening trial that they had faced in Asia caused them to trust that He would deliver them again were they to face another great trial, 2 Corinthians 1:10b. They reasoned that it must not have been God's time for them to die or He certainly could have allowed them to die with the intense level of danger that they had faced.
 - 2. For that reason, Paul and his team set their hope on God's future deliverance were a future, greater trial to occur as it was clearly God's desire to keep the team alive and ministering at the time, 2 Corinthians 1:10c.
- D. God uses believers' sufferings to unify and edify the Church, 2 Corinthians 1:11:
 - 1. Paul mentioned the need for his readers to help him and his ministry team fulfill God's will to stay alive and continue to minister by means of their intercessory prayer on their behalf, 2 Corinthians 1:11a.
 - 2. As a result, many believers would give thanks for God's gracious favor to Paul and his ministry team due to the intercessory prayers of many believers for them, 2 Corinthians 1:11b.
 - 3. The number of believers would include not only the believers at Corinth, but believers in all the local churches where Paul had ministered throughout the Roman Empire!

Lesson: Paul sought to edify his readers at Corinth by focusing them on God's use of the sufferings that he and his ministry team faced, and God's use of those sufferings equipped them to comfort other believers who suffered, to teach believers not to trust in themselves but to rely on God who raises the dead, to prepare believers to handle future severe sufferings by faith in God and to unify and edify the Church by moving believers to rally around those who suffered with intercessory prayer.

Application: (1) May we not become discouraged just because we face intense suffering but realize that God is allowing us to face this trial to equip us better to disciple others, or to build our faith in Him, or to prepare us to handle even greater trials in the future or to edify and unify the Church via a lot of intercessory prayer. (2) If we face a trial that is far beyond our capacity to understand how to handle it, may we simply relax and pay attention to the Lord's leading as He is obviously seeking our attention by the trial, that we then FOLLOW His guidance!