

Triumph through Christ

Key Text:	2 Corinthians 1 & 2
Key Verse(s):	“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.” (2 Corinthians 1:4)

Background to the Study

The church in Corinth had been established only a few years before Paul wrote this deeply personal letter. Corinth was a busy Mediterranean port city where many pagan cultures flourished, and the believers there often faced pressure, suffering, and opposition. Paul reminded them that the Gospel not only calls us to holiness but also provides comfort and strength in hardship. While 1 Corinthians focuses on moral and practical issues, 2 Corinthians centres on Paul’s relationship with the church and the nature of his apostleship. He defended his integrity by pointing them back to the character of the Gospel itself.

The opening verses contain Paul’s greeting and prayer, followed by a reflection on God’s comfort in affliction (2 Corinthians 1:3-11). Paul and his companions had suffered greatly while serving the churches, even to the point of despairing of life, yet God delivered them. Their trials, Paul explained, were for the benefit of others, including the believers in Corinth.

Paul then addressed his change of travel plans. Some in Corinth questioned his sincerity because he had not visited when he first intended (2 Corinthians 1:15-17). Paul explained that he delayed his visit to spare them a difficult confrontation, not because he was unreliable. He reminded them that while human plans may change, God’s promises never fail (2 Corinthians 1:20). He also emphasised that he did not want to dominate their faith but to work with them for their joy.

In 2 Corinthians 2:1-4, Paul explained that he chose to write rather than visit because his heart was heavy over their earlier attitudes toward him. His previous letter had been written with tears, but it was necessary for their spiritual good. Many believe Paul was referring to the man involved in serious sin who had since repented. Paul urged the church to forgive and restore him so that sorrow would not overwhelm him. He warned that Satan can twist discipline meant for correction into something destructive if believers are not careful.

Paul also shared his concern for the Corinthians while he was in Troas. Even though God had opened a door for ministry there, he had no rest until he heard from Titus about the church’s response. When Titus finally brought good news, Paul rejoiced and gave glory to God, who “always causeth us to triumph in Christ” (2 Corinthians

2:14). The Corinthians would have understood this imagery. In Roman culture, a triumph was a grand procession celebrating victory, filling the city with fragrance from burning incense. To the victors it was a sweet smell, but to the captives it signalled defeat.

Paul used this picture to show that the Gospel spreads the knowledge of Christ like a fragrance. To those who receive it, it brings life. To those who reject it, it exposes their spiritual condition. Through the ministry of the apostles, God was making His truth known in Corinth and giving believers victory over the schemes of the enemy.

Testimony from Our Day

In the winter of 1998, after thirteen years working as a logger, I was suddenly taken off the job with a severe back injury. The pain was overwhelming. I spent a month lying on the living room floor before I could even begin to walk again. At only thirty-one years old, I found myself physically incapacitated and unsure of what the future held for me or my family. It was a difficult season physically, mentally, and spiritually.

During times of uncertainty, we learn to value not only God's care but also the comfort of those around us. Day after day, as I lay on the floor, friends, church family, and relatives would come and look down at me with words of encouragement. Their reassurance lifted my spirits. But when night came, and the house grew quiet, the weight of my situation returned. I would talk to God and seek His comfort. I discovered how easily the enemy tries to attack us when we are weak. Negative thoughts would fill my mind, and tears would come as I reached out to God for help.

In those long nights, my greatest earthly comfort came from my wife. Even after caring for me all day, she would leave her warm bed and lie beside me on the hard floor. When I groaned in pain, I would hear her whispering prayers or speaking gentle words of encouragement. Through her support, my thoughts would shift from despair back to hope. In time, thank God, my health improved.

As I look back with gratitude on those who encouraged me, I feel a renewed desire to do the same for others. There is real blessing in offering comfort. Today, let us ask God to give us spiritual awareness to see the needs around us. Whether at work, at home, or in everyday life, someone may need a word of support. Through a simple act of kindness, a person may be strengthened in their faith or even drawn to the Lord. God can use us as channels of His comfort.

A Closer Look

Question 1	In his opening greeting, what three titles did Paul use to describe God (2 Corinthians 1:3)? What was Paul's secret for victory in the midst of tribulations? (2 Corinthians 1:3-5) What truths are revealed about God in these verses?
Question 2	Why do you think God sometimes allows believers to experience difficult situations? What are some of the benefits of suffering with Christ, according to Paul's teaching (2 Corinthians 1:5-7; Romans 8:17)?
Question 3	How can our personal suffering help us minister to others? What are some practical ways we can offer comfort to others, following the pattern Paul describes (2 Corinthians 1:4; Galatians 6:2)?
Question 4	In 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, Paul began to address the specific problems that were troubling the Corinthian church. Seemingly, an individual in the assembly had undergone discipline by the Church for his sinful actions, and had subsequently repented. How did Paul instruct the Corinthians to treat this individual, and what godly principle is brought out through Paul's instructions?
Question 5	What are some of Satan's "devices" that believers should be aware of, so that he does not gain an advantage over us (2 Corinthians 2:11; 1 Peter 5:8)? Why did Paul go to Troas, and what does this reveal about his heart for ministry (2 Corinthians 2:12-13)?
Question 6	What do you think Paul meant by "triumph in Christ"? List at least three ways Christians can live triumphantly, as Paul describes in his imagery of triumph in Christ (2 Corinthians 2:14-17; Ephesians 6:10-18).

Take Home

In the dark valleys of life, words of comfort lift our spirits and give hope that a better day is ahead. Each of us can look for opportunities to encourage those around us. Through Jesus Christ, we are able to live triumphantly in this present world. As we allow the "savour" of Christ to flow from our lives (2 Corinthians 2:14), others can be drawn to the knowledge of Him through our example.