

The Book of 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 1:6-12

Session 5: The Consolation and the Suffering

In the book of 2 Corinthians, we have phase 2 of the satanic attack from the policy of evil (PoE) against our apostle Paul. Last time we looked at three benefits to the sufferings of Christ (SoC): Validates us as true believers who are making an impact on Satan's realm, it prepares us to comfort others who are suffering, and it builds our fellowship with Christ and our dependency upon Christ.

At this point I want to make sure we are not confusing the issues. The battles of spiritual warfare (SW) are over sound doctrine and these battles take place in our minds. The attack in connection with that doctrinal battle (Spiritual Warfare) is against the message, against the doctrinal truths revealed to Paul concerning the dispensational change (DC), the mystery of Christ (MoC), the manifold wisdom of God (MWoG), and rightly dividing the word (RDW). There is no suffering, per se, in connection with the attack against the message. Always assume the attacks are dispensationally oriented.

The sufferings of Christ are the result of the policy of evil's phase 2 attack against the messenger, which is why Ephesians 6 calls this "the evil day." This does not change the nature of SW, as it is still a battle over doctrinal truth in our minds. Having failed to corrupt the message, Satan now turns his attention to phase 2, attack the messenger by bringing various pressures against us. Second Corinthians will show us exactly what these consist of, where they come from, and the doctrinal remedy for them. And just to complete the figure, phase 3, is discredit the messenger.

If you are getting what I am saying, the phase 2 and phase 3 attacks of the PoE are not, strictly speaking, part of spiritual warfare; they are meant to silence the proclamation of sound doctrine by intimidation tactics. Attacks against the messenger are not issues of SW, even though we are being attacked by the policy of evil. Instead, these fall into the category of the Sufferings of Christ (SoC).

These have to do with our ability to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, but the battle is not over the “hardness” or the “sufferings” we endure; the battle is always over doctrine. And while that battle may always be taking place to one degree or another, the real issue of the phase 2 attack is to silence the messenger. Now we take up the next verse.

2 Corinthians 1:6 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***.

The “affliction” and “comfort” are not mutually exclusive alternatives, but Paul sees these as successive events (bang-bang); first the afflictions and then the comfort/consolation. In other words, this is the way it is meant to work.

Seeing as Paul is our apostle and example, the afflictions he endured were for the benefit of the members of the body of Christ. Whether he was afflicted, or whether he was comforted; it was all for our consolation and salvation.

Did you get that? Both the sufferings of Paul and the consolation Paul received, both result in the consolation and salvation of those who witness them. How does seeing Paul suffer result in a consolation? By seeing that through suffering we are sharing in the fellowship of Christ’s suffering, and by knowing that the hopeful expectation is that the suffering is followed by the consolation.

So, what is the consolation?

Oxford English Dictionary (OED): consolation - **1. c1374**— The action of consoling, cheering, or comforting; the state of being consoled; alleviation of sorrow or mental distress.

Notice the consolation is not in the reversal of some outward circumstances, but the alleviation of mental distress. That means that the consolation is spiritual in that it takes place in our minds, not in our bodies.

Again, looking at verse 6, what is the “salvation” spoken of? As we have seen many times before, there is more than one meaning of the word “salvation.” This

time, Paul is not talking about being saved from the debt and penalty of sin. Neither is he talking about salvation in the sense of being delivered from our situation or circumstance of suffering, but rather he is talking about being delivered from the “effects” of the suffering.

What are the intended effects of the SoC? To silence us from proclaiming the truths concerning the mystery, to silence us from defending the truth in the face of Satan’s lie, and to make us quit our sonship life (depending on the doctrine to work in us).

The reason Paul was willing to suffer is because his suffering and consolation are our example for when we suffer. And that is a reason for which we suffer, that we might be able to help others endure the SoC just as we did. And when I say endure, I don’t mean with our fists clenched and jaw tightened, but to endure the sufferings of Christ with joy and thanksgiving, which are only available through grace.

2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore **I take pleasure** in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

As for the Corinthians, Paul is hopeful that just as they experience the sufferings, they shall also experience the consolation.

2 Corinthians 1:7 And our hope of you *is* stedfast, knowing, that **as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.**

The people to whom Paul is specifically addressing (in 2 Corinthians) are those who stand with Paul, acknowledge his apostleship, and believe his doctrine. They have been experiencing the same or similar afflictions, and are counting on the same consolation as their apostle received.

Two more things: 1) the sufferings and the consolation are marks of true Christianity, which should encourage us all, not discourage us, and 2) the sufferings and consolation are both subjects for “blessing God” just as Paul started the chapter with.

2 Corinthians 1:3 Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

Are we able to say good things about God for allowing the sufferings and also for providing the consolation? This is an area of our prayer life that needs to be considered.

2 Corinthians 1:8 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: ⁹ But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: ¹⁰ Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver *us*;

Upon reading the passage, we are struck with the graphic nature of Paul's suffering, but we are also surprised that Paul does not give us the details of what the exact nature of the trial was. But the point I want to make is that whatever Paul is referring to, it went beyond the normal dangers and sufferings that he seemed to face every day. For example the Jews who took a vow not to eat until they had killed Paul.

Acts 23:12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

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Session 6: The Sufferings of Christ and Prayer

What were these dangers which went beyond the normal to which Paul refers in 2 Corinthians 1:8-9? The scholars offer three possibilities:

- 1) The great duress of Paul's strained relationship with the church at Corinth, and his regret at being so harsh with them. This does little to explain God's deliverance in verses 8-10.
- 2) A potentially fatal illness in which Paul "despaired of life" and could only trust in God "which raiseth the dead," (though it is difficult to see how an illness would be included in the SoC), or
- 3) Some severe and violent persecution, that is either known about but not fully appreciated, or something that is not recorded in Acts or Paul's epistles. I tend to think Paul's troubles in Asia are some sort of violent persecution.

No matter what it was, Paul wants us to know about the "trouble" which he experienced in Asia; why? Not so he can complain or tell us how hard he has had it. Paul has another reason for not wanting us to miss it.

Paul says he was "pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that he despaired of life." All of this is to say, it was more than Paul could handle on his own. It was above his strength to endure these things. And why did God allow this to happen to Paul? The answer is in the verse, and this is the fourth thing that the sufferings of Christ produce in us.

2 Corinthians 1:9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that **we should not trust in ourselves, but in God** which raiseth the dead:

Look at verse 9. God allowed Paul to be under threat of death so that he would not trust in himself, but he would trust in God.

Almost all of the commentators want to make the deliverance about his physical life, but there is something going on here more important than physical life. Satan wants to intimidate Paul so badly that he will stop the message of the Mystery. And by the way, Paul is scared. Take a look at when he first visited Corinth.

1 Corinthians 2:3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

Why was Paul in fear and trembling? Because it was dangerous, so much so that God had to tell Paul not to be afraid.

Acts 18:1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; ⁴ And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. ⁵ And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus was Christ.* ⁶ And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook *his* raiment, and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I *am* clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. ⁷ And he departed thence, and entered into a certain *man's* house, named Justus, *one* that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. ⁸ And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized. ⁹ **Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:** ¹⁰ **For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.**

Once Paul learns the doctrine, then things change for him and he writes things like, "For me to live is Christ, but to die is gain." But until Paul learns the doctrine and it effectually works in him, he is fearful just like anyone would be. And that fear had a quieting effect on him, so God says, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace..." Why would God say that to Paul unless he was holding his peace? He wouldn't.

For most of Paul's ministry, Paul faced great threats, but they were not all like this one referred to in 2 Corinthians 1:8-10. This one was more. But it is good to know that when we are pressed out of measure and above our ability to handle things,

just like with Paul, the consolation and salvation comes from the Lord, and not from ourselves.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:9 that he thought that if he continued to discharge his apostleship and message, he would surely die (he had a death sentence). That threat of death worked to silence Paul. But then Paul discovered that he could not trust in himself, but if he was going to remain faithful to his calling, he would have to trust in God.

Instead of allowing your suffering to cause you to shut down your proclamation of the mystery of Christ, let your suffering move you to trust God for the strength to remain faithful.

2 Corinthians 1:9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that **we should not trust in ourselves, but in God** which raiseth the dead: ¹⁰ **Who delivered us** from so great a death, and **doth deliver**: in whom we trust that **he will yet deliver us**;

If the deliverance was from physical death, then what do we say when Paul got his head cut off in Rome; God didn't deliver him? No, I believe the deliverance is from the intended effects of the sufferings. In that sense, God did deliver Paul, and he continued to deliver Paul, even up to the time when Paul was executed.

This is not a physical deliverance, but a spiritual deliverance. This is why Paul can say, “I have run the race, I have kept the faith.” That is the issue. The issue here is not living or dying, the issue is faithfulness, the ability to continue in the face of opposition.

When Paul says that God delivered him, does deliver him, and will yet deliver him, it is not from the physical threats or death, it is a deliverance from the satanic attack against him in that Paul does not stop proclaiming the Mystery, and he is not intimidated into quitting. That is the deliverance!

Paul patiently endured the sufferings of Christ (SoC), with joy and thanksgiving, so that he was not overwhelmed in his mind by his circumstances of suffering, in fact, just the opposite.

Next, in verse 11, Paul gives us a fifth thing that suffering does for us.

2 Corinthians 1:11 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.

When we see others who are experiencing the sufferings of Christ (SoC), that suffering produces a concern for them, which is demonstrated in two ways; first, by prayer.

Notice what Paul said in verse 11.

2 Corinthians 1:11 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.

Paul was helped by their prayers for him. Since Paul wasn't at Corinth when this was happening to him, how would he know they were praying for him unless that was manifested in some way? We have learned that when we pray for others, one of the things we do is to tell them we are praying for them, but also, we tell them what we are praying.

It is fine to say to someone who is going through a difficult time, "I am praying for you," but don't leave it there. Tell them exactly what you have been praying.

Suppose we were living back in AD 55, and we were aware of the things Paul was suffering, the constant danger he was in. Suppose you know Paul was often pressed out of measure, above strength. You know the policy of evil is attacking him, making him fearful to speak the truth of the Mystery. Also suppose you wanted to pray for him. What would be your prayer for Paul?

Write your prayer out on Fig. 3 on the Notetaker.

Now, ask yourself, "How might it help Paul to know of your prayer for him?" In this case, you might not be able to physically help Paul during his sufferings, but you might encourage him by reminding him of the doctrine, or by telling him how much you thank God for his "example" ministry. And that brings us to the second thing produced by the suffering of another; thanksgiving.

I think the “gift” of verse 11 is not Paul’s physical deliverance, but it is the gift of grace which strengthens Paul to continue teaching the truth, even if it kills him. The idea is not about not dying, but to be faithful unto death.

What is the last part of verse 11 talking about?

2 Corinthians 1:11 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.**

Paul is saying that when those who prayed for him to have the strength to continue, to endure those sufferings and threats, when they hear that their prayer was answered in that Paul did not quit, that would lead them to thank God and praise Him for answering their prayers. This provides a great opportunity to end this session talking about intercessory prayer; intercession.

So, I want to make this point, we can pray for a certain outcome, not as though we are expecting God to make it happen magically just because we prayed for it, but because we are committed to be involved in the answer.

We are talking about intercessory prayer. To intercede is to interpose on behalf of another or others. To “interpose” means to “come between.”

Since prayer is talking to God about what He has said in His word, what He is doing, or what is His revealed will, our prayers for others need to be in line with the doctrine for this dispensation of grace.

If we run all of the forms of the word intercession through the New Testament, we find that it is mentioned only six times. In Paul’s epistles it is mentioned five of those six times.

The word “intercession” can refer to an action, or it can refer to a particular kind of prayer. Take a look at the Oxford English Dictionary definition for “intercession.”

OED: intercession - **The action of interceding** or pleading on behalf of (rarely against) another; entreaty, solicitation, **or prayer for another;** mediation.

If we are making intercession for another person, it is true that we may be making a request, but in this instance, I think it is different from supplication in that intercession (the prayer kind) is us getting between the person (we are praying for), and some kind of evil that is working to injure them in some way. We don't usually insert ourselves between others and elements of their circumstances unless we observe some kind of evil, or adverse effect on them. Supplications do not require us to "stand in gap" on their behalf.

But that is not the only difference. I can see two more aspects which differentiate between supplications and intercessions.

The second aspect is that what makes a prayer intercessory is our mindset toward the situation we are praying about. In other words, a prayer is intercessory when we sense an active danger of some kind to another person.

The third aspect of intercessory prayer has to do with us inserting ourselves between the one we pray for and the bad we think may come upon them. Therefore, our interceding is for one of two purposes, 1) the alleviation of any present suffering, or 2) the avoidance of any future suffering.

Under this definition, I would say that most of the things we pray for others about are supplications. For example, praying for someone to know some things which will benefit them spiritually is a supplication prayer.

But, when we see someone coming under some kind of attack (mental, emotional, physical, etc.), which will have a detrimental effect on them; then our prayer for them becomes an intercession. For example, you know someone who suffered the loss of a child and they are being devastated by their grief. Your prayer would stand between them and their grief to keep them from being destroyed and help them recover.

Another example might be, praying for someone who is thinking about suicide. The prayers we pray to come between them and such an action would be intercessory.

Another example might be when we pray for someone who is enduring the sufferings of Christ, just as Paul is talking about here in 2 Corinthians 1:12. As they are engaged in that suffering, our prayers would be intercessions.

But let's change the scenario. Let's say a saint has suffered the death of a parent. They have known for a while this was coming and they are not being overwhelmed by their loss. They know they will see their loved one again, and they are rejoicing in that fact. Yes, they were saddened to not have them here any longer, but they are at peace about the whole thing, especially that their loved one is no longer suffering.

Should we still pray for them even though they are utilizing the doctrine to patiently endure this situation? Yes, we should. But the nature of our prayer would change from being intercessory to that of thanks, praise, or supplication; for example: 1) **thanking God** for their steadfast faith in the doctrine, 2) **making a request** for their faith to be an inspiration to others, 3) **praising God** for the doctrine which gives them such peace, 4) **making a request** to God that they would continue to trust the doctrine to sustain them, or 5) **thanking God** for an example of Jesus living His life in them.

There are many ways to pray about this situation, but the lack of an effective attack, or, if I can say it this way, the lack of spiritual emergency, means that we either fall into the prayer category, the giving of thanks category, or the supplication category.

At this stage in my own education, I have given you the best I understand about supplication versus the intercession issue. I am sure there is more to it than this, but for now, this is how I understand it. I can say that intercession is always when we pray for others, but not all our prayers for others are intercessions.

Next week we will cover 2 Corinthians 1: 12-28, so keep reading!

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