

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
2 Corinthians: God's Pattern For Victory Over Severe Ministry Opposition
Part I: God's Use Of Suffering To Prepare One To Face Severe Ministry Opposition
(2 Corinthians 1:1-11)

I. Introduction

- A. When God calls a believer to serve Him as He called the Apostle Paul in Acts 9:3-6, he calls him into spiritual conflict where he will face severe spiritual opposition to God's assignments (cf. Acts 9:15-16).
- B. However, if God assigns a believer to do His will, He always provides the spiritual equipping he needs to succeed there, and 2 Corinthians is a great epistle on displaying the ways God does that.
- C. We first note how God used intense suffering to prepare Paul to handle great ministry opposition:

II. God's Use Of Suffering To Prepare One To Face Severe Ministry Opposition, 2 Corinthians 1:1-11.

- A. 2 Corinthians was written to "defend the authenticity" of both Paul's "apostleship and his message" to the Corinthian believers who were being influenced by false teachers to question both of these issues, Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 552.
- B. As such, Paul used this epistle to expose his heart and soul to his Corinthian readers to counter the severe opposition he faced in the false teachers who worked to influence his readers to cease heeding him, *Ibid*.
- C. Of great import to us is the fact that Paul noted in 2 Corinthians 1:1-11 how God used great suffering he faced in his life to prepare him to face such severe ministry opposition, and we view it for our edification:
 - 1. In 2 Corinthians 1:8-9a, Paul admitted that, before writing this epistle, he and his ministry team had faced a humanly overwhelming trial in the Roman province of Asia:
 - a. Paul reported that his whole ministry team had been "utterly burdened beyond our [human] strength" to the point that they all, himself included, had "despaired of life itself," 2 Cor. 1:8 ESV!
 - b. In 2 Corinthians 1:9a ESV, he added that the trial had been so severe, "we felt that we had received the sentence of death," believing God may have been involved, getting Paul's team ready for death!
 - 2. However, that trial was only a preparation of Paul's team for future ministry, not the least of which was his work of facing severe ministry opposition in the false teachers at Corinth, 2 Cor. 1:1-7, 9b-11:
 - a. Following the introduction to his epistle in 2 Corinthians 1:1-2, Paul revealed God had comforted him in all his affliction that he might be able to comfort other believers who faced affliction with the comfort God had given him from his affliction, 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. God then used great suffering in Paul's life followed by His great comfort from such suffering that Paul's FAITH in GOD'S GOODNESS might GROW, that he might be able to COMFORT OTHER BELIEVERS **THOUGH HE FACED SEVERE MINISTRY FOES!** This would equip Paul to stay POSITIVE and AFFIRMATIVE in LATER FACING FOES, a NECESSITY if he would stay EFFECTIVE in DISCIPLING WEAKER BRETHREN as he faced such opponents!
 - b. The second way God used Paul's suffering to prepare him to face formidable ministry foes is explained in 2 Corinthians 1:9b-10: God used overwhelming suffering to lead Paul's team no longer to trust in their own human powers, but in God Who raised the helplessly dead to life. **Thus, God used great suffering in Paul's life to WEAN him from TRUSTING in HIS OWN HUMAN STRENGTH that he might lean on GOD to handle FUTURE SEVERE OPPOSITION! In so doing, Paul would THRIVE in such trials due to GOD'S power, cf. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10!**
 - c. The third way God used Paul's suffering to prepare him to face formidable foes is described in 2 Corinthians 1:11: God used great suffering in Paul's life to show him how God used it to produce intercessory prayer for him in the Church. **Thus, God used great suffering in Paul's life to LEAD HIM to SEE GOD'S work in the CHURCH, that PAUL might TRUST GOD'S WORK in His PEOPLE REGARDLESS what Paul's FOES did to TRY TO LEAD THEM to OPPOSE HIM!**

Lesson: *To prepare Paul to face severe opposition, God let him face other huge trials to (1) enhance Paul's faith in God's goodness by comforting him from those trials, that he might stay positive and effective in discipling others though facing foes, (2) that he might trust in God and not himself for success and (3) that he might trust God's work in other regardless what his foes did to influence them!*

Application: *If we face great suffering, may we learn what Paul did in them to face future foes well!*