

## God's Purposes in our Pain

Speaker: Pastor Daniel Henderson

Paul's second letter to the Corinthians was written to win the hearts of the Corinthians back to Christ from the false teachers. To do this, Paul told about his own journey and his personal experiences as an apostle. From this testimony come some of the richest truths about the Christians life.

**1. God allows pain so we can comfort others** (v.4). Paul begins his letter with praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our good and merciful comforter. Paul acknowledges the abundance of the afflictions that are inevitable in our lives, but stresses the superabundance of God's good comfort to us all along the way. The "God of all comfort" is more than a comforting support. He strengthens us and makes us brave.

Sometimes we get so absorbed in the struggle and so perplexed by the pain that we miss God's purpose and the blessing he wants to give to us and to others through us.

**2. God allows pain to make us more like Jesus.** Our sufferings may be physical, emotional, financial or relational. They are different in the sense that they are tailored for each of us, but they are the same as Christ's sufferings in that God consistently accomplishes His purposes through the suffering, transforming us through them.

Patience enduring (v.6) is not passive, dreary acceptance. It is triumphing over pain and suffering to achieve the goal, which is to make us more effective ministers of Jesus. "Lord, use me!" is a dangerous prayer because it invites God to bring trials into our lives. Yet trials are often God's best tool to make us more able to bring consolation and salvation to others.

**3. God allows pain to make us more effective ministers of Jesus.** God wants to make us a thoroughfare of this comfort, not a cul-de-sac. He wants to sustain and strengthen us in order to use us in the lives of those we will meet along the way who have similar pain and problems. God never wastes our pain. Nor should we.

**4. God allows pain to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead** (v. 8-10). Even the great apostle Paul needed divine intervention to peel him away from the subtle but horrific danger of self-reliance. God enables us to look to Jesus, to share in his sufferings, to long for the power of his resurrection – **so that** we might know Him more deeply and show him more beautifully.

Paul made many references to **prayer** and often requested extraordinary **united prayer** from the churches to which he wrote. He knew that blessing in ministry was granted through the prayers of many people. We often think of the great things God did through Paul, but he credited all the people who prayed for him with much of his effectiveness in ministry. We pray for each other **so that** God will be honored, Christ will be exalted, and His mission be fulfilled.

*"You also must help us by prayer, **so that** many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many" (v.11).*

We give thanks BECAUSE of His goodness –

- As a merciful, purposeful Comforter (vv. 3-7)
- As a God who allows overwhelming, purposeful affliction (vv. 8-10)
- As our God who uses extraordinary, united prayer for the purpose of producing a fresh experience of his goodness and steadfast love (via thanksgiving)

1 Chronicles 16:34 - Oh **give thanks** to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!

# sermon study guide

## IN – PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. “The worst of times are really the best of times; they just don't feel like it at the time.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
2. Do you prefer praying in private or corporately? Why?

## UP – PURSUE GOD

3. Read 2 Cor 1:3-7. What is the connection between trouble/affliction/suffering and comfort? For what purposes does God allow suffering in our lives? What do these verses mean to you?
4. Read 2 Cor 1:8-11. What did Paul learn from his sufferings? What do these verses tell us about prayer and thanksgiving?

## OUT – PURSUE MISSION

5. How is adding the phrase “so that” (ESV 2 Cor 1:11) in our prayers helpful? Apply this in your small group prayer time.
6. How have your afflictions made you a more effective minister of Jesus?

### For Personal Reflection / Prayer:

- *Oswald Chambers said, "The root of all sin is the suspicion that God is not good." Discuss this quote with a trusted friend on how you can patiently endure, trust in the goodness of God, and thank Him for His faithfulness.*
- *Participate in corporate prayer by attending CSC's Day of Prayer (3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month).*

## THE WORD

### 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 (ESV)

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. <sup>5</sup> For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. <sup>6</sup> If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. <sup>7</sup> Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

<sup>8</sup> For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. <sup>9</sup> Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. <sup>10</sup> He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. <sup>11</sup> You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

### 1 Chronicles 16:34 (ESV)

Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
for his steadfast love endures forever!

### Jeremiah 17:5-8 (ESV)

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