CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

2 Corinthians Chapter 1 — God of All Comfort and Faithfulness

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

2 Corinthians is Paul's most personal letter.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul corrected a troubled church.

In 2 Corinthians, he opens his heart.

Between the two letters, much had happened.

Paul had made a painful visit to Corinth.

He had written a sorrowful letter that cost him many tears.

He had suffered terrible danger in Asia.

And some in Corinth were questioning his character and his authority.

They said he was unreliable because he changed his travel plans.

They said he was weak and unimpressive.

So Paul writes to explain his heart, to defend his ministry, and to call the church back to faithfulness.

Chapter 1 begins with one of the most comforting passages in the Bible.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort."

Paul had been through suffering so heavy that he despaired of life.

But in the middle of it, he discovered God's comfort.

And he learned that God comforts us so that we can comfort others.

Then Paul answers the charge that he was fickle.

He had changed his plans, but not because he was unreliable.

He wanted to spare them another painful visit.

And he points to the One who is never unreliable.

Every promise of God is **"Yes"** in Jesus Christ.

God Himself makes believers stand firm, anoints them, seals them, and gives them His Spirit as a guarantee.

The chapter moves through seven movements:

- Greeting and Blessing (verses 1–2).

- The God of Comfort (verses 3–7).
- Deliverance from Despair (verses 8–11).
- Paul's Integrity and God's Faithfulness (verses 12–14).
- Paul's Change of Plans (verses 15–20).
- Sealed by the Spirit (verses 21–22).
- Paul's Pastoral Heart (verses 23–24).

The central truth of 2 Corinthians 1 is:

The God of all comfort carries His people through suffering so that they can comfort others, and the faithful God who keeps every promise in Christ seals His people with His Spirit and makes them stand firm.

I. PAUL AND TIMOTHY

2 Corinthians 1:1 — To the Church of God in Corinth

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God in Corinth, together with all the saints throughout Achaia:"

Paul opens the way he opened his first letter.

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God."

Some in Corinth were questioning Paul's authority.

So from the first line, Paul reminds them that his calling came from God.

"And Timothy our brother."

Timothy had visited Corinth and knew the church well.

"To the church of God in Corinth."

Even after all its problems, it was still **the church of God.**

"Together with all the saints throughout Achaia."

This letter was also for believers in the surrounding region.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 1:1

> Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes,

Acts 18:1

> After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

Romans 1:1

> Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called by God to be an apostle and set apart to share God's good news.

Spiritual Principle

God's call, not human approval, is the foundation of ministry.

Key Truth

A struggling church is still God's church.

II. GRACE AND PEACE

2 Corinthians 1:2 — From God Our Father

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul gives his familiar greeting.

Grace is God's undeserved favor.

Peace is the wholeness that comes when we are right with God.

Grace always comes first.

Peace flows from it.

This greeting was especially meaningful to a church where relationships had been strained.

Paul's first words to them are words of blessing.

Cross References

Romans 1:7

> May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Galatians 1:3

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Philippians 1:2

I pray that God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ will give you grace and peace.

Spiritual Principle

God's grace is the source of all true peace.

III. THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT

2 Corinthians 1:3 — The Father of Mercies

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.”

Paul begins with praise.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Even after terrible suffering, Paul's first instinct is to praise God.

Then he gives God two beautiful names.

“The Father of mercies.”

God is the source of all mercy.

Mercy flows from Him like water from a spring.

“The God of all comfort.”

The word **comfort** means to come alongside someone to strengthen and encourage them.

This word and its forms appear ten times in verses 3–7.

Paul cannot stop talking about God's comfort.

He had experienced it deeply.

Cross References

Ephesians 1:3

> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

1 Peter 1:3

> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Romans 15:5

> May God, who gives endurance and encouragement, help you live in harmony with one another as you follow Christ Jesus.

Spiritual Principle

God is the Father of mercies and the source of all true comfort.

Key Truth

Suffering did not make Paul stop praising God.

It taught him new reasons to praise.

IV. COMFORTED TO COMFORT

2 Corinthians 1:4 — In All Our Troubles

“He comforts us in all our troubles, so that we may be able to comfort those in any trouble with the same comfort we ourselves receive from God.”

This verse gives one of the great purposes of suffering.

“He comforts us in all our troubles.”

God does not always remove our troubles.

But He comforts us in them.

“So that we may be able to comfort those in any trouble.”

God's comfort is not meant to stop with us.

It is meant to flow through us to others.

“With the same comfort we ourselves receive from God.”

The comfort we pass on is the comfort we have received.

Those who have suffered and been comforted by God are uniquely able to comfort others.

Your pain can become someone else's help.

Cross References

Isaiah 51:12

> “I, yes I, am the One who comforts you. So why are you afraid of human beings, who die and are like grass?”

John 14:16

> And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper to be with you forever.

1 Thessalonians 4:18

> So encourage one another with these words.

Spiritual Principle

God comforts us so that we can comfort others.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Comfort received is comfort to be shared.

Application

Think of a hard time when God comforted you.

Who is going through something similar now that you could encourage?

V. SUFFERINGS AND COMFORT OVERFLOW

2 Corinthians 1:5 — Through Christ

“For just as the sufferings of Christ overflow into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort abounds.”

Paul explains the connection between suffering and comfort.

“The sufferings of Christ overflow into our lives.”

Believers share in the sufferings of Christ.

When we suffer for following Him, we are walking the path He walked.

The world that rejected Him rejects His people too.

“So also through Christ our comfort abounds.”

But the comfort is greater than the suffering.

Through Christ, comfort overflows.

The more we suffer for Him, the more we experience His comfort.

Cross References

Philippians 3:10

> I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection, to share in His sufferings, and to become like Him in His death,

Colossians 1:24

> Now I rejoice in what I suffer for you. In my body I am doing my part to share in Christ's sufferings for the sake of His body, the church.

Romans 8:17

> And if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ—if we share in His sufferings so that we may also share in His glory.

Spiritual Principle

Those who share in Christ's sufferings also share in His overflowing comfort.

VI. FOR YOUR COMFORT AND SALVATION

2 Corinthians 1:6 — Patient Endurance

“If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer.”

Paul shows that his experiences were not just about him.

“If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation.”

Paul's suffering helped bring the gospel to them.

“If we are comforted, it is for your comfort.”

When God comforted Paul, Paul could pass that comfort on to them.

“Which produces in you patient endurance.”

God's comfort does not make suffering disappear.

It gives the strength to endure it.

Whatever happened to Paul, God used it for the good of the church.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 4:15

> All this is for your good, so that as God's grace reaches more and more people, it will cause more thanksgiving and bring glory to God.

Colossians 1:24

> Now I rejoice in what I suffer for you. In my body I am doing my part to share in Christ's sufferings for the sake of His body, the church.

2 Timothy 2:10

> So I endure everything for the sake of God's chosen people, so that they too may receive the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

Spiritual Principle

God uses both our trials and our comfort to bless others.

VII. OUR HOPE FOR YOU IS FIRM

2 Corinthians 1:7 — Sharing Suffering and Comfort

“And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you will share in our comfort.”

Paul expresses confidence in the Corinthians.

“Our hope for you is firm.”

Despite all the trouble, Paul had not given up on them.

“Just as you share in our sufferings.”

The Corinthians also suffered for their faith.

“So also you will share in our comfort.”

Suffering and comfort go together.

Those who share one will share the other.

Cross References

Romans 8:17

> And if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ—if we share in His sufferings so that we may also share in His glory.

1 Peter 4:13

> But be glad that you share in Christ's sufferings, so that you will be full of joy when His glory is revealed.

Philippians 1:7

> It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, because I hold you in my heart. Whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the good news, all of you share with me in God's grace.

Spiritual Principle

Those who share in suffering for Christ will also share in His comfort.

Key Truth

You are never alone in your suffering.

Others share it, and God comforts in it.

VIII. BURDENED BEYOND OUR STRENGTH

2 Corinthians 1:8 — Despairing of Life

“Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be unaware of the troubles we faced in Asia. We were burdened beyond our strength, so that we even despaired of life.”

Paul now opens his heart.

“The troubles we faced in Asia.”

Paul does not tell us exactly what happened.

It may have been connected to the riot in Ephesus, a serious illness, or another deadly danger.

Whatever it was, it was crushing.

“We were burdened beyond our strength.”

More than he could carry.

“So that we even despaired of life.”

Paul thought he was going to die.

This is an honest confession from a great apostle.

Faithful believers can face times when they feel completely overwhelmed.

That is not a sign of weak faith.

It is part of living in a broken world.

Cross References

Acts 19:23

> About that time a great disturbance broke out about the Way.

1 Corinthians 15:32

> If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what did I gain? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

2 Corinthians 4:8

> We are pressed on every side, but not crushed. We are confused, but not in despair.

Spiritual Principle

Even faithful believers can face trials that feel beyond their strength.

Application

If you feel crushed right now, you are not alone.

Paul felt that way too, and God carried him through.

IX. THE SENTENCE OF DEATH

2 Corinthians 1:9 — Relying on God Who Raises the Dead

“Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead.”

Paul felt like a man condemned to die.

“We felt we had received the sentence of death.”

Then he tells us why God allowed it.

“But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves.”

Paul was strong, gifted, and experienced.

But God brought him to the end of himself.

“But on God who raises the dead.”

When there was no human hope left, Paul learned to trust the God who brings life out of death.

Sometimes God allows us to reach the end of our strength so that we will discover His.

Cross References

Romans 4:17

> He is the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that did not exist.

Deuteronomy 32:39

> See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me. I put to death and I bring to life. I wound and I heal, and no one can rescue anyone from My hand.

John 5:21

> For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son gives life to whomever He wants.

Spiritual Principle

God sometimes brings us to the end of ourselves so that we will rely on Him.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

When you reach the end of your strength, you are at the beginning of God's.

X. HE WILL DELIVER US AGAIN

2 Corinthians 1:10 — Past, Present, and Future

“He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He will deliver us again. On Him we have set our hope that He will continue to deliver us,”

Paul looks at God's deliverance in three directions.

The past.

“He has delivered us from such a deadly peril.”

God rescued Paul.

The future.

“He will deliver us again.”

God would rescue him again.

The ongoing present.

“He will continue to deliver us.”

Paul's hope was set on God.

What God has done in the past gives us confidence for what He will do in the future.

Cross References

Psalm 34:19

> The righteous person may have many troubles, but the LORD rescues him from them all.

Daniel 3:17

> If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and He will rescue us from your power, O king.

2 Timothy 4:18

> The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely into His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Spiritual Principle

God's past faithfulness gives us hope for the future.

Application

Remember a time God delivered you.

Let it give you hope for what you face now.

XI. THE PRAYERS OF MANY

2 Corinthians 1:11 — Helping by Prayer

“as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.”

Paul shows how the church can be part of God's deliverance.

“As you help us by your prayers.”

Prayer is real help.

The Corinthians could not travel with Paul.

But they could pray for him.

And their prayers made a difference.

“Then many will give thanks.”

When God answers the prayers of many, many give thanks.

Prayer unites the church.

And answered prayer multiplies praise to God.

Cross References

Philippians 1:19

> For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will lead to my rescue.

Romans 15:30

> I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love the Spirit gives, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.

Ephesians 6:18

> Pray in the Spirit at all times with every kind of prayer and request. Stay alert and keep praying for all of God's people.

Spiritual Principle

Prayer is a real way of helping others, and answered prayer brings thanksgiving.

Application

Who can you help this week through prayer?

XII. OUR BOAST

2 Corinthians 1:12 — Integrity and Godly Sincerity

"Now this is our boast: our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so not by worldly wisdom but by the grace of God."

Paul now begins to answer the charges against him.

"Our conscience testifies."

Paul's conscience was clear.

"We have conducted ourselves... with integrity and godly sincerity."

Integrity—being the same inside and out.

Sincerity—pure motives, with nothing hidden.

"Especially in our relations with you."

The Corinthians knew how Paul had lived among them.

"Not by worldly wisdom but by the grace of God."

Paul did not use clever tricks or manipulation.

He relied on God's grace.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 2:4

> My message and my preaching did not depend on wise and persuasive words, but on a display of the Spirit's power.

Acts 24:16

> So I always work hard to keep a clear conscience before God and before people.

2 Corinthians 4:2

> Instead, we have refused to use secret and shameful methods. We do not use tricks, and we do not twist God's word. Instead, by plainly telling the truth, we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

Spiritual Principle

A clear conscience comes from living with integrity and relying on God's grace.

Key Truth

The best defense against false accusation is a life of integrity.

XIII. NOTHING HIDDEN

2 Corinthians 1:13 — What You Can Read and Understand

“For we write nothing to you beyond what you can read and understand. And I trust that you will understand fully,”

Some may have accused Paul of saying one thing in his letters and meaning another.

Paul says no.

“We write nothing to you beyond what you can read and understand.”

There were no hidden meanings.

No secret agendas.

What he wrote is what he meant.

“And I trust that you will understand fully.”

Paul hoped they would see his heart clearly.

Cross References

Ephesians 3:4

> When you read this, you will be able to understand my insight into the secret truth about Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:2

> You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone.

1 John 5:13

> I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Spiritual Principle

Honest communication has no hidden meanings.

XIV. IN THE DAY OF THE LORD JESUS

2 Corinthians 1:14 — Boasting in One Another

“as you have already understood in part, that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

Paul looks ahead to the day Christ returns.

“As you have already understood in part.”

Some of the Corinthians already understood Paul's heart.

“That you can boast of us just as we will boast of you.”

Paul wanted a relationship of mutual joy.

He would be proud of them.

They could be proud of him.

“In the day of the Lord Jesus.”

On that day, everything will be clear.

Faithful servants and faithful churches will rejoice together.

Cross References

Philippians 2:16

> as you hold firmly to the word of life. Then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or work for nothing.

1 Thessalonians 2:19

> For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown we will boast about before our Lord Jesus when He comes? Isn't it you?

2 Corinthians 5:12

> We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again. Instead, we are giving you a reason to be proud of us, so that you can answer those who take pride in outward appearance rather than in what is in the heart.

Spiritual Principle

Relationships in the church should be lived in light of Christ's return.

XV. A DOUBLE BLESSING

2 Corinthians 1:15 — Paul's Original Plan

“Because of this confidence, I planned to visit you first, so that you might benefit twice:”

Paul now explains his change of plans.

“Because of this confidence.”

Paul was confident in his relationship with them.

“I planned to visit you first.”

His original plan was to come to Corinth before going anywhere else.

“So that you might benefit twice.”

He wanted to visit them two times.

He wanted to bless them, not avoid them.

Cross References

Romans 1:11

> I long to see you so that I can share some spiritual gift with you to make you strong.

Romans 15:29

> I know that when I come to you, I will come with the full blessing of Christ.

1 Corinthians 16:5

> I will come to you after I go through Macedonia, because I plan to travel through Macedonia.

Spiritual Principle

A loving leader plans with the good of others in mind.

XVI. TO MACEDONIA AND BACK

2 Corinthians 1:16 — On to Judea

"once on my way to Macedonia and then again on my return from Macedonia, so you could send me on my way to Judea."

Paul describes his plan.

First visit: Stop in Corinth on the way north to Macedonia.

Second visit: Stop again on the way back.

Then: Have the Corinthians help send him on to Judea with the collection for the poor.

It was a good plan.

But it did not happen as he hoped.

Cross References

Acts 19:21

> After all this happened, Paul decided, led by the Spirit, to travel through Macedonia and Achaia and then go to Jerusalem. "After I have been there," he said, "I must also visit Rome."

1 Corinthians 16:5

> I will come to you after I go through Macedonia, because I plan to travel through Macedonia.

Romans 15:25

> But now I am on my way to Jerusalem to serve God's people there.

Spiritual Principle

Good plans sometimes change, and that is not always a sign of failure.

XVII. WAS I FICKLE?

2 Corinthians 1:17 — Yes, Yes and No, No

“Was I fickle when I intended to do this? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner, so that in the same breath I say “Yes, yes” and “No, no”?”

Paul now faces the accusation.

“Was I fickle?”

Some said Paul could not be trusted.

He said he would come, and then he did not.

“Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner?”

Did Paul make plans selfishly, changing them whenever it suited him?

“So that in the same breath I say ‘Yes, yes’ and ‘No, no’?”

Was his word worthless?

Paul's answer will be **no.**

His plans changed, but his heart did not.

Cross References

James 1:8

> Such a person is double-minded and unstable in everything he does.

Matthew 5:37

> Simply let your “Yes” mean yes, and your “No” mean no. Anything more than this comes from the evil one.

James 4:13

> Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, do business, and make money.”

Spiritual Principle

Believers should be people whose word can be trusted.

Application

When you say yes, do you mean it?

Can people depend on your word?

XVIII. AS SURELY AS GOD IS FAITHFUL

2 Corinthians 1:18 — Not Yes and No

“But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not “Yes” and “No.””

Paul appeals to God's own character.

“As surely as God is faithful.”

God never breaks His word.

“Our message to you is not ‘Yes’ and ‘No.’”

Paul's message about Christ was not uncertain or changing.

If they doubted his travel plans, they should not doubt his message.

The gospel he preached was as reliable as God Himself.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 1:9

> God is faithful. He has called you into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Thessalonians 5:24

> The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.

Numbers 23:19

> God is not a man, that He should lie, or a human being, that He should change His mind. Does He speak and then not act? Does He promise and not keep His promise?

Spiritual Principle

God's faithfulness is the foundation of a trustworthy message.

XIX. IN HIM IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN YES

2 Corinthians 1:19 — The Son of God

“For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me, Silvanus, and Timothy, was not “Yes” and “No,” but in Him it has always been “Yes.””

Paul points to Jesus.

“The Son of God, Jesus Christ.”

This was the One Paul preached.

“Who was preached among you by me, Silvanus, and Timothy.”

Silvanus is another name for Silas, who traveled with Paul.

These three brought the gospel to Corinth.

“Was not ‘Yes’ and ‘No,’ but in Him it has always been ‘Yes.’”

Jesus is completely reliable.

He never changes.

He never breaks His word.

In Him, God's answer is always **yes.**

Cross References

Hebrews 13:8

> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Revelation 3:14

> Write to the angel of the church in Laodicea: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the ruler of God's creation.

Galatians 1:8

> But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a good news different from the one we preached to you, let that person be under God's curse!

Spiritual Principle

Jesus Christ is completely faithful and never changes.

XX. ALL GOD'S PROMISES ARE YES

2 Corinthians 1:20 — And Through Him the Amen

“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through Him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.”

This is one of the greatest verses in the Bible.

“No matter how many promises God has made.”

The Bible is full of God's promises.

Forgiveness.

Eternal life.

His presence.

His provision.

A new heaven and a new earth.

“They are ‘Yes’ in Christ.”

Every one of them is confirmed and fulfilled in Jesus.

He is the guarantee that God will keep every promise.

“And so through Him the ‘Amen’ is spoken by us.”

Amen means **“It is true! So be it!”**

When we hear God's promises in Christ, we answer, **“Amen!”**

“To the glory of God.”

God is glorified when His people trust His promises.

Cross References

Romans 15:8

> For I tell you that Christ became a servant of the Jewish people to show that God is truthful, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs.

Revelation 3:14

> Write to the angel of the church in Laodicea: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the ruler of God's creation.

2 Peter 1:4

> Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may share in God's nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Spiritual Principle

Every promise of God finds its “Yes” in Jesus Christ.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God says “Yes” in Christ; we say “Amen” in faith.

Application

What promise of God do you need to say “Amen” to today?

XXI. GOD MAKES US STAND FIRM

2 Corinthians 1:21 — He Anointed Us

“Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us,”

Paul now describes what God does for every believer.

“It is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ.”

Our stability does not come from ourselves.

God establishes us.

He makes us firm.

Notice **“both us and you.”**

Paul and the Corinthians were held by the same God.

“He anointed us.”

In the Old Testament, kings, priests, and prophets were anointed with oil to set them apart for God's service.

Every believer has been anointed with the Holy Spirit.

We are set apart for God.

Cross References

1 John 2:20

> But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.

1 John 2:27

> As for you, the anointing you received from Him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. His anointing teaches you about everything, and it is true, not a lie. So just as it has taught you, remain in Him.

Ephesians 1:13

> And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the good news of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.

Spiritual Principle

God Himself makes His people stand firm and sets them apart by His Spirit.

XXII. SEALED AND GUARANTEED

2 Corinthians 1:22 — The Spirit in Our Hearts

“set His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee of what is to come.”

Paul continues the list of what God has done.

“Set His seal of ownership on us.”

In the ancient world, a seal marked something as belonging to its owner.

It also protected it.

God has marked every believer as His own.

“And put His Spirit in our hearts.”

The Holy Spirit lives in every believer.

“As a guarantee of what is to come.”

The word Paul uses was used for a down payment.

It was the first installment that guaranteed the rest would be paid.

The Spirit in us now is God's promise that the full inheritance is coming.

Notice the Trinity in verses 21–22.

God establishes us **in Christ** and gives us **the Spirit.**

Cross References

Ephesians 1:13

> And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the good news of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 4:30

> Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Romans 8:16

> The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Spiritual Principle

The Holy Spirit is God's seal of ownership and His guarantee of our future.

Key Truth

If you belong to Christ, you are marked as God's own, and your future is secure.

XXIII. TO SPARE YOU

2 Corinthians 1:23 — God as My Witness

“I call God as my witness—and I stake my life on it—that it was to spare you that I did not return to Corinth.”

Paul gives the real reason he changed his plans.

“I call God as my witness.”

This is a solemn statement.

Paul is speaking before God.

“It was to spare you that I did not return to Corinth.”

Paul did not stay away because he was fickle.

He stayed away out of love.

His last visit had been painful.

If he had come again too soon, he would have had to correct them harshly.

He gave them time to repent instead.

Cross References

Romans 1:9

> God, whom I serve with my whole heart by preaching the good news about His Son, is my witness that I always remember you in my prayers.

Galatians 1:20

> I assure you before God that what I am writing to you is not a lie.

Philippians 1:8

> God is my witness how much I long for all of you with the deep love of Christ Jesus.

Spiritual Principle

Sometimes love chooses to wait rather than to confront too soon.

XXIV. WORKERS FOR YOUR JOY

2 Corinthians 1:24 — Not Lording It Over Your Faith

“Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith that you stand firm.”

Paul explains the kind of leader he is.

“Not that we lord it over your faith.”

Paul did not want to control them.

He was not a dictator.

“But we work with you for your joy.”

He saw himself as a fellow worker.

His goal was their joy.

“Because it is by faith that you stand firm.”

Their faith rested on God, not on Paul.

A true spiritual leader does not make people dependent on himself.

He helps them stand firm in their own faith in Christ.

Cross References

1 Peter 5:3

> Do not act like rulers over those in your care, but be examples to the flock.

Philippians 1:25

> Since I am sure of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith.

Romans 15:13

> May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual Principle

Godly leaders serve the joy and faith of others; they do not control them.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A true shepherd works for the joy of the flock, not for power over it.

XXV. SIX GREAT LESSONS FROM 2 CORINTHIANS 1

1. God Is the Source of All Comfort

“The Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.”

Principle:

His mercy enables us to endure trials and equips us to comfort others.

2. Trials Drive Us to Rely on God

“That we might not rely on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead.”

Principle:

Paul's despair taught him to trust the One who raises the dead.

3. Prayer Unites the Church

“As you help us by your prayers.”

Principle:

The intercession of many brings thanksgiving for God's deliverance.

4. Christ Is the Fulfillment of God's Promises

“No matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ.”

Principle:

Every promise of God finds its “Yes” in Jesus.

5. The Holy Spirit Is Our Guarantee

“Put His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”

Principle:

God has sealed us, marking us as His own and securing our eternal hope.

6. Leaders Are Servants, Not Rulers

“Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy.”

Principle:

Paul came not to dominate but to help the church stand firm in faith.

XXVI. THE BACKGROUND OF 2 CORINTHIANS

Understanding what happened between Paul's two letters helps us read 2 Corinthians.

Paul Wrote 1 Corinthians

He wrote from Ephesus to correct many problems in the church.

A Painful Visit

Paul later made a short, painful visit to Corinth.

It seems someone in the church opposed him openly.

A Sorrowful Letter

Paul then wrote a severe letter with many tears, calling the church to repentance.

Danger in Asia

Paul faced a deadly crisis in Asia.

Waiting for News

Paul waited anxiously to hear how the Corinthians had responded.

Titus finally brought good news: many had repented.

2 Corinthians Is Written

Paul wrote this letter to express his joy, explain his heart, and prepare for another visit.

He also warned against false teachers who were attacking his ministry.

Key Truth

2 Corinthians is the letter of a pastor's heart, written through tears, trials, and hope.

XXVII. THE CIRCLE OF COMFORT

Verses 3–7 describe how God's comfort works.

God Comforts Us

He is the God of all comfort.

In All Our Troubles

No trouble is too great or too small for His comfort.

So We Can Comfort Others

The comfort we receive is meant to be passed on.

With the Same Comfort

We share what God has given us.

Which Produces Endurance

God's comfort gives strength to keep going.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God's comfort is meant to flow in a circle: from God, to us, through us, to others, and back to God in praise.

XXVIII. WHAT GOD DOES FOR EVERY BELIEVER

Verses 21–22 describe four things God has done for every believer.

He Makes Us Stand Firm

“It is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ.”

He Anointed Us

We are set apart for His service.

He Sealed Us

We are marked as His own and protected.

He Gave Us His Spirit as a Guarantee

The Spirit is the down payment on our future inheritance.

Key Truth

Your security does not rest on your strength, but on what God has done for you in Christ.

XXIX. WHAT 2 CORINTHIANS 1 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

The Son of God

“The Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you.”

The One Whose Sufferings We Share

“The sufferings of Christ overflow into our lives.”

The One Through Whom Comfort Abounds

“Through Christ our comfort abounds.”

The Faithful One

“In Him it has always been ‘Yes.’”

The Fulfillment of Every Promise

“No matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Jesus is God's “Yes” to every promise He has ever made.

XXX. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

What had happened between 1 and 2 Corinthians?

Paul made a painful visit, wrote a sorrowful letter, faced deadly danger in Asia, and then received good news that many in Corinth had repented.

Question 2

What does it mean that God is “the God of all comfort”?

God is the source of every kind of comfort.

He comes alongside His people to strengthen and encourage them in their troubles.

Question 3

Why does God comfort us?

So that we can comfort others with the same comfort we have received.

Question 4

What does it mean to share in “the sufferings of Christ”?

When believers suffer for following Christ, they walk the path He walked.

And through Christ, their comfort also overflows.

Question 5

What happened to Paul in Asia?

He faced a crisis so severe that he despaired of life.

Paul does not tell us exactly what it was.

Question 6

Why did God allow Paul to face such a terrible trial?

So that Paul would not rely on himself, but on God who raises the dead.

Question 7

How did the Corinthians help Paul?

By their prayers.

Prayer is real help, and answered prayer brings thanksgiving from many.

Question 8

Why did some say Paul was fickle?

He had changed his travel plans.

They said his word could not be trusted.

Question 9

Why did Paul really change his plans?

To spare them another painful visit.

He gave them time to repent.

Question 10

What does it mean that God's promises are “Yes” in Christ?

Every promise God has made is confirmed and fulfilled in Jesus.

He is the guarantee that God will keep His word.

Question 11

What does it mean that the Spirit is a “guarantee”?

The Spirit is like a down payment.

He is God's promise that the full inheritance is coming.

Question 12

What should 2 Corinthians 1 change about the way Christians live today?

2 Corinthians 1 should cause believers to live:

- Praising God even in hard times.
- Looking to God for comfort.
- Comforting others with the comfort they have received.
- Relying on God rather than themselves.
- Praying for one another.
- Keeping their word.
- Saying “Amen” to God's promises in Christ.
- Secure in God's seal and Spirit.

XXXI. PERSONAL APPLICATION

2 Corinthians 1 asks several important questions.

Do I Praise God in Hard Times?

Or does suffering silence my praise?

Where Do I Look for Comfort?

Do I go first to the God of all comfort?

Am I Passing Comfort On?

Who could I encourage with the comfort God has given me?

Am I Relying on Myself or on God?

What is God teaching me through my weakness?

Am I Praying for Others?

Who needs my prayers today?

Can People Trust My Word?

Does my “yes” mean yes?

Am I Trusting God's Promises?

What promise do I need to say “Amen” to?

Do I Know I Am Sealed by God?

Am I resting in the security God has given me?

XXXII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Comfort Flows Through Broken People”

Paul was not writing from a place of comfort.

He was writing from a place of pain.

He had despaired of life.

He had felt the sentence of death.

He had been misunderstood and criticized.

But in the middle of it all, he found the God of all comfort.

And he discovered something beautiful.

God's comfort does not stop with us.

It flows through us.

The person who has walked through grief can comfort the grieving.

The person who has known fear can comfort the fearful.

The person who has been rescued can give hope to those who need rescue.

Our wounds, healed by God, become channels of His comfort to others.

This creates a powerful principle.

God does not waste our pain.

Principle:

God comforts us in our troubles so that our healed wounds can bring His comfort to others.

XXXIII. FINAL APPLICATION

2 Corinthians Chapter 1 opens a letter written from a heart that had been through deep suffering.

Paul had been crushed.

He had been criticized.

He had been misunderstood.

But he had found three great truths.

God comforts.

He is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.

God delivers.

He raises the dead and rescues His people.

God keeps His promises.

Every promise is “Yes” in Christ.

2 Corinthians 1 therefore reminds us:

Never stop praising God, even in pain.

Never waste the comfort God gives you.

Never rely only on yourself.

Never stop praying for others.

Never doubt the promises of God.

The church does not need people who have never suffered.

It needs:

People comforted by God.

People who comfort others.

People who pray for one another.

And people who say "Amen" to every promise of God in Christ.

The same God still comforts:

Tell people that God is the Father of mercies.

Tell people that He raises the dead.

Tell people that every promise is "Yes" in Jesus.

Tell people that He seals His own with His Spirit.

And in every trouble:

Look to the God of all comfort.

Rely on Him who raises the dead.

Pass His comfort on.

Say "Amen" to His promises.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Blessed be Your name, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank You that You are the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.

Thank You that You comfort us in all our troubles.

Thank You that You do not waste our pain, but use it to help us comfort others.

Thank You that when we reach the end of our strength, You are the God who raises the dead.

Thank You that You have delivered us, You will deliver us, and You will continue to deliver us.

Thank You for the prayers of Your people.

Thank You that every promise You have made is "Yes" in Jesus Christ.

Thank You that You make us stand firm, that You have anointed us, sealed us, and given us Your Spirit as a guarantee.

Forgive us when we have relied on ourselves instead of You.

Forgive us when we have kept Your comfort to ourselves.

Forgive us when our word has not been trustworthy.

Comfort those who are suffering today.

Help those who feel crushed beyond their strength.

Make us comforters of others.

Teach us to pray for one another.

Make us people whose "yes" means yes.

And help us say "Amen" to every promise You have given us in Christ.

"For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ."

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

"He comforts us in all our troubles, so that we may be able to comfort those in any trouble with the same comfort we ourselves receive from God." — 2 Corinthians 1:4

Central Truth

The God of all comfort carries His people through suffering so that they can comfort others, and the faithful God who keeps every promise in Christ seals His people with His Spirit and makes them stand firm.

2 Corinthians 1 in One Sentence

Paul praises the God of all comfort who comforted him in deadly trouble so that he could comfort others, explains that his change of plans came from love rather than fickleness, and points to the faithful God whose every promise is "Yes" in Christ and who seals His people with the Spirit.