



**DOWN  
BUT NOT  
OUT!**



# DOWN - BUT NOT OUT PART 3

Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1  
(Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 629–632.



## 2 CORINTHIANS 1:4 – 8 (NKJV)

<sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

<sup>5</sup> For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.

<sup>6</sup> Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.



## 2 CORINTHIANS 1:4 – 8 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.

<sup>8</sup> For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.



# REMEMBER WHAT GOD DOES FOR YOU

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## 2 CORINTHIANS 1:4 (NKJV)

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# REMEMBER WHAT GOD DOES FOR YOU

## 2 CORINTHIANS 1:8 – 11 (NKJV)

<sup>8</sup> For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.

<sup>9</sup> Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead,

<sup>10</sup> who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us,

<sup>11</sup> you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many.



# GOD PERMITS THE TRIALS TO COME

- There are ten essential words for “suffering” in the Greek language, and Paul used five of them in this letter.
- The most frequently used word is “thlipsis”, which means “narrow, confined, under pressure”, and in this letter is translated “affliction” (2 Cor. 2:4; 4:17), “tribulation” (2 Cor. 1:4), and “trouble” (2 Cor. 1:4, 8).
- Paul felt hemmed in by difficult circumstances, and the only way he could look was up.





**WE MUST  
LOOK TO GOD,  
WHEN WE ARE  
SUFFERING**



## **PSALM 121:1 – 2 (NKJV)**

**<sup>1</sup> I will lift up my eyes to the hills—From whence comes my help?**

**<sup>2</sup> My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.**



In 2 Corinthians 1:5 – 6, Paul used the word “pathema” for “suffering” which was also used for the sufferings of our Savior.

<sup>5</sup> For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.

<sup>6</sup> Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.



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## 1 PETER 1:11 (NKJV)

searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.



In 2 Corinthians 1:5 – 6, Paul used the word “pathema” for “suffering” which was also used for the sufferings of our Savior.

## 1 PETER 5:1 (NKJV)

The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:

- We endure some sufferings simply because we are human and subject to pain, but other sufferings come because we are God’s people and want to serve Him.



**We must never think that  
trouble is an accident.**



# WE MUST NEVER THINK THAT TROUBLE IS<sup>13</sup> AN ACCIDENT

For the believer, everything is a divine appointment. There are only three possible outlooks a person can take when it comes to the trials of life:

1. If our trials are the products of “fate” or “chance”, then our only recourse is to give up. Nobody can control fate or chance.
2. If we have to control everything ourselves, the situation is equally hopeless.
3. If God is in control, and we trust Him, we can overcome circumstances with His help.

**God encourages us in all our tribulations by teaching us from His Word that it is He who permits trials to come.**



# GOD IS IN CONTROL OF TRIALS (V. 8)

## 2 CORINTHIANS 1:8b (NIV)

We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself.

- Paul was weighed down like a beast of burden with a load too heavy to bear. But God knew just how much Paul could take, and He kept the situation in control.



# GOD IS IN CONTROL OF TRIALS (V. 8)

- We do not know what the specific “trouble” was, but it was significant enough to make Paul think he would die.
- Whether it was peril from his many enemies (Acts 19:21ff; 1 Cor. 15:30–32), a serious illness, or a special satanic attack, we do not know; but we do know that God controlled the circumstances and protected His servant.

**When God puts His children into the furnace, He keeps His hand on the thermostat and His eye on the thermometer**



# GOD IS IN CONTROL OF TRIALS (V. 8)

## 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13 (NKJV)

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.





# GOD IS IN CONTROL OF TRIALS (V. 8)

## 1 PETER 1:6 – 7 (NKJV)

<sup>6</sup> In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,

<sup>7</sup> that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

Paul may have despaired of life, but God did not despair of Paul.



# GOD ENABLES US TO BEAR OUR TRIALS (V. 9)

The first thing God must do is show us how weak we are in ourselves. Paul was a gifted and experienced servant of God who had been through many different kinds of trials.

## 2 CORINTHIANS 11:23 (NKJV)

**Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.**



# GOD ENABLES US TO BEAR OUR TRIALS (V. 9)

- Surely all of these experiences would be sufficient for Paul to face new difficulties and overcome them.
- God wants us to trust *Him* — not our gifts or abilities, our experience, or our “spiritual reserves.” Just about the time we feel self-confident and meet the enemy, we fail miserably.



## **2 CORINTHIANS 12:10 (NKJV)**

**“For when I am weak, then am I strong”**

**When you and I die to self, then God’s  
resurrection power can go to work.**

When Abraham and Sarah were as good as dead physically,<sup>21</sup> God's resurrection power enabled them to have the promised son. (Romans 4:16 – 25)

- However, “dying to self” does not mean idle complacency, doing nothing, and expecting God to do everything. You can be sure that Paul prayed, searched the Scriptures, consulted with his associates, and trusted God to work.
- **The God who raises the dead is sufficient for any difficulty of life! He is able, but we must be available.**



# Paul did not deny how he felt, nor does God want us to deny our emotions.

- “We were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears” (2 Cor. 7:5).
- The phrase “sentence of death” in 2 Corinthians 1:9 could refer to an official verdict, perhaps an order for Paul’s arrest and execution.
- The unbelieving Jews pushed Paul’s trial and wanted to eliminate him (Acts 20:19).



**“Perils by my own countrymen” must not be overlooked in the list of dangers.**

## **2 CORINTHIANS 11:25 – 26 (NKJV)**

**<sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;**

**<sup>26</sup> in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;**



# GOD DELIVERS US FROM OUR TRIALS (V. 10)

- “Paul saw God’s hand of deliverance whether he looked **back, around,** or **ahead**. The word Paul used means “to help out of distress, to save and protect”.
- **God does not always deliver us immediately, nor in the same way.** James was beheaded, yet Peter was delivered from prison (Acts 12). *Both* were delivered but in different ways.
- Sometimes God delivers us *from* our trials, and at other times He delivers us *in* our trials.





God's deliverance was in response to the faith of Paul<sup>25</sup> and those in Corinth that were praying for him.

2 Corinthians 1:11 (NKJV)

you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many.

Psalms 34:6 (NKJV)

This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, And saved him out of all his troubles.



# GOD IS GLORIFIED THROUGH OUR TRIALS (V. 11)

- When Paul reported what God had done for him, a great chorus of praise and thanksgiving went up from the saints to the throne of God.
- The highest service you and I can render on earth is to bring glory to God, and sometimes that service involves suffering.
- “The gift granted” refers to Paul’s deliverance from death, a wonderful gift indeed!



# Paul was never ashamed to ask Christians to pray for him.

In at least seven of his letters, he mentioned his great need for prayer support.

- Romans 15:30 – 32
- Ephesians 6:18 – 19
- Philippians 1:19
- Colossians 4:3
- 1 Thessalonians 5:25
- 2 Thessalonians 3:1
- Philemon 22

Paul and the believers in Corinth were helping each other (2 Cor. 1:11, 24).



## ROMANS 8:26 (NKJV)

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.



## ROMANS 8:26 (NKJV)

- The word “*sunupourgeo*” translated “helping together,” is used only here in the Greek New Testament and is composed of three words: “with, under, work”.
- It is a picture of laborers under the burden, working together to accomplish the job.
- It is encouraging to know that the Holy Spirit also assists us in our praying and helps to carry the load.



# GOD'S PURPOSES IN TRIALS

God works out His purposes in the trials of life, if we yield to Him, trust Him, and obey what He tells us to do.

- Difficulties can **increase our faith** and **strengthen our prayer lives**. Difficulties can **draw us closer to other Christians** as they share our burdens.
- Difficulties can be used to **glorify God**.

**So, when you find yourself in the trials of life remember what God is to you and what God does for you.**



# HOMework



# REMEMBER WHAT GOD DOES THROUGH YOU

## (2 COR. 1:4b – 7)

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- In times of suffering, most of us are prone to think only of ourselves and forget others.
- We become cisterns instead of channels. Yet one reason for trials is that you and I might learn to be channels of blessing to comfort and encourage others.
- **Because God has encouraged us, we can encourage them.**





- However, Paul made it clear that **we do not need to experience the same trials to share God's encouragement.** 33
- **If we have experienced God's comfort, then we can “comfort them which are in any trouble” (2 Cor. 1:4b).**
- Of course, if we have experienced similar tribulations, they can help us better identify with others and understand how they feel.
- Still, our experiences cannot alter the **comfort of God.** That remains **sufficient and efficient** no matter what our own experiences may have been.



# PAUL AND THE GRACE OF GOD

- Later in 2 Corinthians 12, Paul will give us an example of this principle. He was given a thorn in the flesh — some physical suffering that constantly buffeted him. **We do not know what this “thorn in the flesh” was, nor do we need to know.**
- We know that Paul experienced the grace of God and then shared that encouragement with us. No matter what your trial may be, **“My grace is sufficient for thee” (2 Cor. 12:9) is a promise you can claim. We would not have that promise if Paul did not suffer.**



# HUMAN SUFFERING

- The subject of human suffering is not easy to understand, for there are mysteries to the working of God that we will never grasp until we get to heaven. Sometimes we suffer because of our **sin and rebellion**, as did Jonah.
- Sometimes we suffer to **keep us from sinning**, as was the case with Paul (2 Cor. 12:7). Suffering can **perfect our character** (Rom. 5:1–5) and **help us to share the character of God** (Heb. 12:1–11).

# HUMAN SUFFERING

- Suffering can also **help us to minister to others**. In every church, there are mature saints of God who have suffered and experienced God's grace, and they are the great "encouragers" in the congregation.
- Paul experienced trouble, not as punishment for something he had done, but **as preparation for something he was yet *going to do*** — minister to others in need.

**GOD HAS TO WORK *IN* US BEFORE HE CAN  
WORK *THROUGH* US.**



# GOD WORKS IN US BEFORE WORKING THROUGH US

- Second Corinthians 1:7 makes it clear that there was always the possibility that the situation might be reversed: the Corinthian believers might go through trials and receive God's grace so that they might encourage others.
- God sometimes calls a church family to experience special trials in order that He might bestow on them special abundant grace.



God's gracious encouragement helps us *if we learn to endure*.<sup>39</sup>

“Patient endurance” is an evidence of faith. If we become bitter or critical of God, if we rebel instead of submit, then our trials will work *against* us instead of *for* us. The ability to endure difficulties patiently, without giving up, is a mark of spiritual maturity. (Heb. 12:1 – 7)



# WE MUST GROW IN GRACE

- It is much easier for us to grow in knowledge than to grow in grace (2 Peter 3:18). Learning God's truth and getting it into our heads is one thing, but living God's truth and getting it into our character is quite something else.
- God put young Joseph through thirteen years of tribulation before He made him second ruler of Egypt, and what a great man Joseph turned out to be! **God always prepares us for what He is preparing for us, and a part of that preparation is suffering.**





# THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS

- 2 Corinthians 1:5 is essential in this light: even our Lord Jesus Christ had to suffer! When we suffer in the will of God, we are sharing the sufferings of the Savior.
- This does not refer to His “vicarious sufferings” on the cross, for only He could die as a sinless substitute for us (1 Peter 2:21–25).
- Paul referred here to “the fellowship of His sufferings” (Phil. 3:10), the trials that we endure because, like Christ, we are faithfully doing the Father’s will. This is suffering “for righteousness’ sake” (Matt. 5:10–12).



# GRACE FOR SUFFERING

- But as the sufferings increase, so does the supply of God's grace. The word *abound* suggests the picture of a river overflowing. "But He giveth more grace" (James 4:6).
- This is an important principle to grasp: **God has ample grace for our every need, *but He will not bestow it in advance.***
- We come by faith to the throne of grace "that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). **The Greek word means "help when you need it, timely help".**



# TIMELY GRACE

- I read about a devoted believer who was arrested for his faith and condemned to be burned at the stake. The night before the execution, he wondered if he would have enough grace to become a human torch, so he tested his courage by putting his finger into the flame of the candle.
- Of course, it burned him, and he pulled his hand back in pain. He was confident that he would never face martyrdom without failing.
- **But the next day, God gave him the grace he needed, and he had a joyful and triumphant witness before his enemies.**



# TIMELY GRACE

- Now we can better understand 2 Corinthians 1:9; for, **if we could store up God's grace for emergency use, we would be prone to trust ourselves and not "the God of all grace"** (1 Peter 5:10). All the resources God gives us may be kept for future use—money, food, knowledge, etc.—but the grace of God cannot be stored away.
- Rather, as we experience the grace of God in our daily lives, it is *invested into our lives as godly character* (see Rom. 5:1–5). This investment pays dividends when new troubles come our way, for **godly character enables us to endure tribulation to the glory of God.**



# DRAWS US CLOSER TO GOD AND OTHERS

- There is a “companionship” to suffering: it can draw us closer to Christ and His people. But if we start to wallow in self-pity, suffering will create isolation instead of involvement; then we find that we are building walls and not bridges.
- **The important thing is to focus on God and not on yourself. Remember *what God is to you*—“the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort” (2 Cor. 1:3).**



# REMEMBER GOD

Remember *what God does for you* — that He can handle your trials and make them work out for your good and His glory.

Finally, remember *what God does through you* — and let Him use you to be an encouragement to others.

