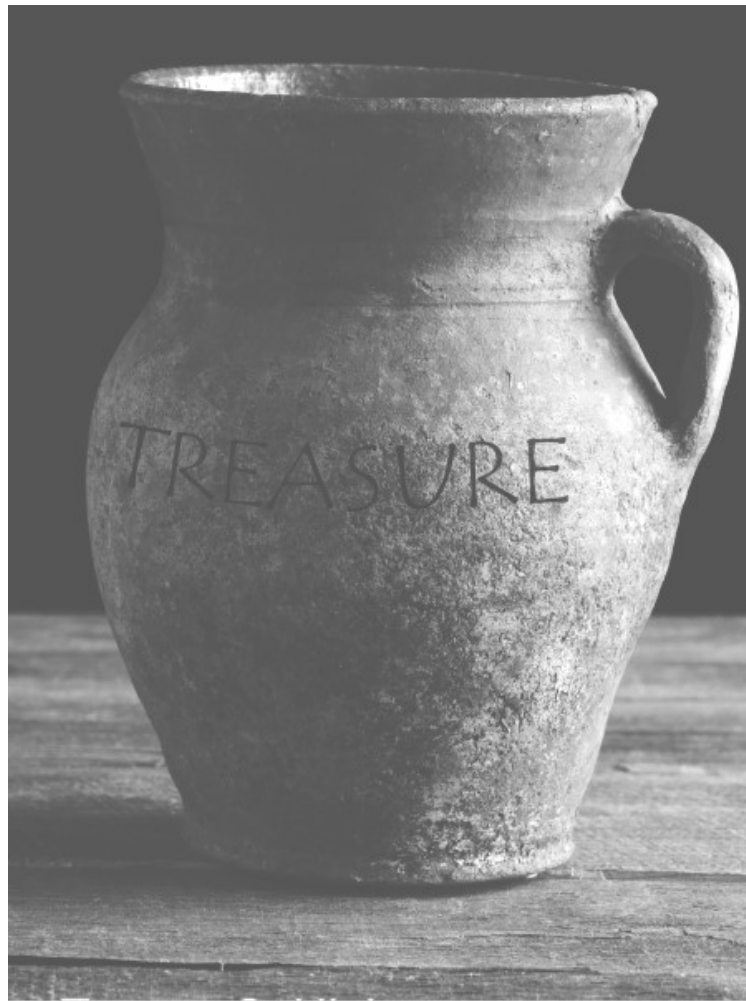


Journey Through

2 Corinthians



Tommy C. Higle

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Journey Through Second Corinthians (ESV® Edition)

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PREFACE

One reason I love the book of *2 Corinthians* is because it contains some of the most famous verses in the Bible. Since there are so many themes in this epistle, I could not decide on a title for this “Journey.” So, I simply entitled it *Journey Through 2 Corinthians*.

As always, I am indebted to and thankful for my wife Virginia, a former English teacher and now administrator and editor-in-chief of *The Journey Series*[®], for spending many hours correcting my grammatical errors and vague sentences. Special thanks also goes to the efficient staff (and my wonderful friends) at the Journey House: Martha Greenwood, Carolyn Gordon, Patti Donaldson, Paula Chaney, and Ashly Martin, who do the proofreading, binding, packaging, order processing, shipping, and hundreds of other things.

A special thanks goes to Gerald Stone, an architect and artist, for the original drawings used in our studies. Thanks also to my son, Jeremy Higle, for the cover layout, and to my daughter, Holly Buxton, for proofreading.

Most of all, I want to thank the Lord for giving me, His unworthy servant, the wonderful privilege of teaching and preaching His inspired, written Word.

*Tommy Higle
Marietta, Oklahoma*

POSTSCRIPT

Tommy began writing this “Journey” in 2017 and continued working on it during his battle with pancreatic cancer in 2018. He was determined to get it finished and wrote until two days before he entered his heavenly home. As you use this Bible study, some of the lessons will take on new meaning, knowing Tommy wrote them as he battled a terminal illness.

One of Tommy’s favorite verses is the last verse of this epistle: *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all* (2 Corinthians 13:14).

This is our prayer as you study this amazing epistle.

*Virginia Higle and the Journey House team
Marietta, OK
January 2019*

SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR JOURNEY

I. HELPFUL MATERIALS

1. A good study Bible and reliable Bible dictionary (Ask your pastor or teacher for help in this area.)
2. A lead pencil. Don't use ink because you may want to change your answers.

II. HINTS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

1. Pray for God's guidance before each session, that your mind and heart will be receptive to God's message for you.
2. Don't worry about scriptures you do not understand. Simply concentrate on what God reveals to you in His Word for now, and trust Him to make the vague things clearer as you continue to study.
3. Mark the Bible verses that really speak to you.
4. Read each lesson at least three times each week.

III. HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR CLASS TIME

1. Attend every class period.
2. Arrive at least 10 minutes early to look over the lesson, so you will have an idea of what will be covered during that session.
3. Write down things you want to remember, or you will probably forget them. You increase your retention by 300% if you take notes.
4. Pray for your teacher every day.

IV. HOW TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN THE LESSONS

1. Look up the scripture reference in your Bible. Usually the answer is very simple and clear in that reference. However, sometimes there are questions that require thought, so you must meditate over the verse or passage to find its meaning. Answering the questions will become easier as the Bible comes to life to you during the study.
2. Don't simply quote the scripture. Write it in your own words as briefly as possible.
3. Whenever possible, personalize the scripture by using pronouns such as "I," "me," "my," "mine," etc.

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SPIRITUAL PREPARATION FOR YOUR JOURNEY

To get the most from this “journey,” you must be spiritually prepared. The basic preparation is knowing Jesus Christ as Lord (boss) and Savior, so He can be your spiritual Guide on the journey. If you have never received Him, or if you are not sure, there are four things you must understand . . .

1. God loves you and wants you to have eternal life.

The Bible says, *For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life* (John 3:16*). The Bible also says, *But God commendeth [proved] his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us* (Romans 5:8*).

2. You are sinful, and your sin separates you from God.

The Bible says, *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23*). Sin separates us from God, for the Bible says, *But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you . . .* (Isaiah 59:2*).

3. Only in Jesus Christ can forgiveness of sin and salvation be yours.

Jesus said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me* (John 14:6*). You must believe God loved us so much He sent His Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross to provide the way of salvation and that on the third day, God raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 10:9)

Right now you may be thinking, “I already believe these things.” Well, the Bible teaches it is not a matter of just believing, for *the devils also believe, and tremble* (James 2:19b*). Simply believing Adolf Hitler lived and died doesn’t make you a Nazi, and believing Jesus Christ lived and died doesn’t make you a Christian. You must act upon what you believe.

4. You must repent and receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

It is not enough to agree that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who died on the cross for your sins and rose again. You must repent of your sins. Jesus said to be saved you must *repent* and *believe the gospel* (Mark 1:15*). *Repent* means to turn away from your selfishness and sin and turn control of your life over to Jesus Christ. If you sense your need to repent of your sins and be saved, that is the Holy Spirit drawing you to Christ. Jesus said no one can come to Him unless the Father draws him (John 6:44*).

If you will pray the following prayer right now, or pray in your own words, telling God you are repenting of your sins and inviting Jesus Christ into your heart, you can receive Him today as your Lord and Savior. The words are not as important as what you mean in your heart. Jesus said a man at the temple simply prayed, *God be merciful to me a sinner* and went to his house *justified*, or saved (Luke 18:13-14*).

Dear Lord,

I know I have sinned. Right now, I repent of my sins and ask for Your forgiveness. I ask Jesus to be my Lord, to control my life, and to help me become the person You want me to be. Thank You, Jesus, for dying on the cross so I could be forgiven. Amen.

Now, share your decision with your pastor or teacher.

*Scriptures from KJV

LESSON 1 . . . Why God Allows Us To Have Serious Problems (2 Corinthians 1:1-7)

NOTES

I love this epistle because it is filled with some of the most famous verses in the Bible. Also, it is a very personal letter in which Paul shares some of the most difficult, discouraging experiences in his life.

Paul founded the church at Corinth around A.D. 50 on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-18). Corinth was located in *Achaia*, which was roughly the southern half of Greece.

Paul writes this letter to the Corinthians while he is in Macedonia (Northern Greece) around A.D. 56, a few months after his first epistle to the Corinthian church. This epistle begins by introducing its author: *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God* (1:1a). *An apostle* is one sent forth with a message. Paul was sent as a messenger of *Christ Jesus by the will of God* to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:18-20).

He states the letter is also sent by *Timothy our brother* (1:1b). Timothy joined Paul and Silas on the second missionary journey and became Paul's traveling assistant (Acts 16:1-5). They established churches all over the Mediterranean world. What does Paul write about Timothy in Philippians 2:22?

Paul is writing to the church *at Corinth* and *all the saints*, or believers, in *Achaia* (1:1c-d). He begins with his usual greeting: *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ* (1:2). *Grace* (CHARIS, kar'-is) refers to God's undeserved acceptance and love. The result of *grace* is *peace* (EIRĒNĒ, i-ray'-nay), which translates the Greek word from which we get the names "Irene" and "Irena." It refers to a state of inner tranquility, but can also refer to an absence of conflict among people. As Christians, one of our primary responsibilities is reducing conflict in all our relationships. That's why God gives us what command in Romans 12:18?

In verses 3-7, Paul explains **why God allows us to have serious problems**, which the Bible calls "tribulations." First is . . .

So we can listen to others more compassionately (1:3a-b)

Paul writes: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies* (1:3a-b). The word translated *mercies* refers to having “compassion” or “pity” for the problems of others. God is *the Father of mercies*, which means all compassion and pity originate with Him. Mercy begins with a willingness to listen to the hurts of others. What is the result of God being merciful, according to Psalm 145:18?

God is eternally merciful; therefore, He is always willing to hear our prayers. He wants us to share our hurts, frustrations, and fears with Him. However, we must do so *in truth*, which means according to the teaching of Scripture (Jn 17:17). This consists of obeying all the commands in the Bible, including what command in Luke 6:36?

If we are merciful, we will always have time to listen compassionately to the hurts and fears of others. I am not referring to the “chronic crybabies” who whine every day, but those who are really going through tough, heart-breaking tribulation. I often need to remember the following quote I first heard at a pastor’s conference: “I used to get upset at the interruptions to my work until I realized the interruptions **are** my work.”

God allows us to have serious problems, **so we can listen to others more compassionately** and . . .

So we can comfort others more effectively (1:3c, 4, 6)

God is also the *God of all comfort* (1:3c). The word translated *comfort* (PARAKLĒSIS, para-klay'-sis) means coming to one’s side to console or help. Jesus uses the same Greek word (PARACLETE) to describe the Holy Spirit in John 14:16. Write it below:



God wants us to be good stewards of our pain and hurts. Therefore, Paul writes, God *comforts us in all our affliction* (1:4a). The verb *comforts* is

present tense, which means God *comforts* us constantly and unfailingly. The word translated *affliction*, or “tribulation” (THLIPSIS, th-lip’-sis), literally means to be under pressure, or distressed. It refers to the tremendous stress life often puts upon us.

God *comforts* us in all *affliction*, so *we may be able to comfort* others in any *affliction*, with the *comfort* with which we ourselves are comforted by God (1:4b-c). God does not intend His *comfort* to end with us. He wants us to be a pipeline of His *comfort* to others.

Everything we receive from God is to be passed on to others. We receive God’s *comfort* as a sacred trust to be shared with others. God doesn’t want us to be selfish with His *comfort*. Also, He will not give us what we refuse to give to others. How does Jesus express this principle in Matthew 6:15?

God is always consistent, so Jesus could say the same thing about *comfort*. If you refuse to share or offer *comfort*, don’t expect God to *comfort* you in your tribulations.

Paul writes he and his associates are *afflicted* for the *comfort and salvation* of the Corinthians (1:6a). They have suffered much to bring them the Gospel, so they can receive *salvation* (Acts 18). Paul explains since he and Timothy *are comforted*, they can extend the same *comfort* to the Corinthians. Therefore, they can *patiently endure the same sufferings* (1:6b).

Probably no other church caused Paul more grief and pain than the church at Corinth, even though he invested eighteen months of his life ministering there (Acts 18:11). The principle is: we don’t *comfort* others because they deserve it, but because God has comforted us. Therefore, what does Paul write in 1 Thessalonians 5:15?

Sometimes God allows us to have *affliction* to equip us to *comfort* others, even those who haven’t been very nice to us.

God allows us to have serious problems **so we can listen to others more compassionately, so we can comfort others more effectively**, and . . .

So we will cherish God's comfort more dearly (1:5, 7)

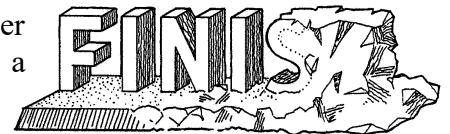
In verse five, Paul specifies the suffering as *Christ's sufferings*. Therefore, we are to comfort those living for Christ in a hostile world. During persecution, we receive abundant comfort, and through Christ that comfort overflows to others (1:5). God uses three sources of comfort when consoling us: the promises of the Bible, the presence of other believers, and the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

What is your favorite Bible verse? It is probably your favorite because it has been a great source of comfort during times of adversity. Because I have a lifelong fear of public speaking, my favorite verse is 2 Timothy 1:7 from the KJV. Write **your** favorite verse below:

Who is your most cherished brother or sister in Christ? Why? Probably because he or she has been a source of comfort to you. However, who actually uses a Bible verse or a believer to comfort you? The Holy Spirit!

Paul concludes this section, *Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort* (1:7). Many believers in the church at Corinth were a disappointment to Paul and to the Lord. We learn in Paul's first epistle to this church that some were guilty of drunkenness, some of spreading horrible gossip about Paul, some of immorality, others of misusing their spiritual gifts, etc.

People in your church will disappoint you. Whenever another believer disappoints you, or when you are disappointed in yourself, there is a great verse of comfort for such situations. It is Philippians 1:6b. Personalize it below:



God will bring every true believer to fruition at the return of Christ. That truth is why Paul's hope in the Corinthian believers was *unshaken*, or "steadfast" (1:7).

God allows us to have serious problems for at least three reasons: **so we can listen to others more compassionately, so we can comfort others more effectively, and so we will cherish God's comfort more dearly.**