

## GOSPEL STRONG: The Source: Getting Through What You're Going Through | 2 Corinthians 1:1-11<sup>i</sup>

### WELCOME:

Good morning, Trinity! It is so good to see you this morning. And we want to welcome those of you that are our guests. We are thrilled you're here. Thank you for being a part of worship this morning.

We would love the opportunity to connect with you. You can let us know about your time with us today in a couple of different ways. You can text the keyword, TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to the number 94-000. And the way that works is when you send that keyword to that number, you'll be sent a link back. That link takes you to a short form. You can fill that out click submit. It then notifies us, and we get to follow up with you this week.

Or you can stop by Guest Connect located in the main lobby just outside the worship center. In fact, even if you text in, swing by there. We have a team of people that would love to meet you and give you a small gift to say thanks for being with us today. Again, we are thrilled to have you with us.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

Before we jump in this morning, I want to say a word of thanks to Pastor Jeff and my friend Pastor John Roach for preaching the last couple of weeks. Aren't you grateful for the word they brought?! While I am grateful for their ministry to our church, I'm excited to be back in the saddle and fired up for this morning.

### SERIES INTRODUCTION:

Well, today we are kicking off a new teaching series where we are going to spend the better part of this semester studying the book of 2 Corinthians. And we are going to tackle this book in four segments. We are calling this series "Gospel Strong." The first segment I'm calling "The Source."

You might be wondering, why study 2 Corinthians when we haven't studied 1 Corinthians. Well, while the two books certainly play off one another, the subject matter of 2 Corinthians is completely different from 1 Corinthians. 1 Corinthians deals with a lot of things that were really wrong in the church in Corinth. 2 Corinthians addresses some of those things, but really the theme of 2 Corinthians is about where we can draw strength from The Lord. And I don't

know about you, but I am often aware of my own weakness and in need of dependence on God's strength to navigate the things of life.

### **OPENING ILLUSTRATION: Farmer Strong**

Now, you guys know how excited I am to host Night to Shine again this year and that is coming up very quickly. And you know that is sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation. Tim Tebow is a fascinating and inspiring person to me. I first became familiar with Tim, of course, because of his play for the Florida Gators and leading them to 2 National Championships. But also because of his outspoken faith. So, when his first book, "Through My Eyes" came out, I read it. If you haven't read that book, it is worth the read.

But in that book, Tim tells his story. And part of his story was about growing up on a farm. And he talked about having the desire to lift weights even as a kid. But his dad wouldn't let him until he was older. So, his dad told him that he could work the farm and that there was no other strength compared to being farmer strong. Those of you that know farmers and ranchers, you know what farmer strong is.

My parents grew up on farms. My uncle continued farming and ranching in his adult years. And I can remember shaking my uncle's hand and talk about strong! And then to hear stories about his growing up years and that no one wanted to mess with my uncle.

Well, when it comes to 2 Corinthians, we learn about being Gospel Strong. And there is no other spiritual strength like being Gospel strong. And the focus of our teaching series is discovering how you and I can tap into that kind of strength. It's going to be a fun journey, and I hope that you will be a part of each of these messages.

As I mentioned before, the first segment of our Gospel Strong series is subtitled, "The Source." In the opening chapters of 2 Corinthians, we learn the source of supernatural strength. And that we have access to that source. Today's message is entitled, "Getting Through What You're Going Through." It is often the case in my life that I am in need of a supernatural strength to navigate what proves to be difficult moments. I want to invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to the New Testament to the book of 2 Corinthians.

### BACKGROUND:

As we jump in here, I want to make mention of some background information that serves as the setting of this incredible book and how we can better understand it. First is the author. Verse 1. *“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother.”* Couple of things of note.

Paul is the author of 2 Corinthians. Now, this is actually at least the third letter Paul wrote to the Corinthians that we know of. In 1 Corinthians, Paul alludes to a previous letter. For whatever reason, that first letter was not preserved. So, there was that letter, then 1 Corinthians, which is the second letter, and then 2 Corinthians being the third letter.<sup>ii</sup>

And we see that Paul identifies himself as an apostle. What is an apostle? Well, the New Testament makes use of this word in a couple ways. First is in reference to the 12 apostles. This refers to the original 12, minus Judas and adding Matthias (Peter, James, John, etc). The second use of the word apostle refers to a specific office held by those establishing The Church.<sup>iii</sup>

Prior to the written Canon of Scripture, The Bible, the office of apostle was important. It communicated the divine authority given by God to launch His Church. As a result, the apostles communication carried a special weight. Now, my understanding falls in line with scholars that because of the completion of the Canon, the office of apostle is no longer in operation. Another reason for that being that one of the requirements to be considered an apostle was to have been a witness of the resurrected Jesus.<sup>iv</sup> That distinction fits Paul, not because he was at the tomb on Easter, but because in Acts Chapter 9, Jesus revealed Himself to Paul in a very tangible way on the road to Damascus. So, in that way, in Paul's words, he is an apostle by the will of God.

He also names, *“Timothy, our brother”* in his introduction. Most scholars agree that this does not mean that Timothy is a co-author of the letter but rather a supporter of Paul and one that often delivered his letters.<sup>v</sup> The mentioning of Timothy also adds to Paul's apostolic authority as if the content of the letter comes with additional support.

So, the letter opens in much the typical way of ancient writing standards. Ancient letters began by naming the sender, their title, then the recipients, followed by a greeting.<sup>vi</sup> So, Paul writes, *“To the church of God that is at Corinth, with all the saints [believers] who are in the whole of Achaia: <sup>2</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Now, a little bit about Corinth. The city of Corinth was a melting pot of people. And as I read about the demographics of Corinth, it reminded me a lot of many cities in the United States. The city is situated in a place that controlled trade movement. It was also a strategic military location. As a result, it was a very wealthy city. And all kinds of cultures and backgrounds merged in Corinth. With that came different philosophies, lifestyles, and religions.

It was Roman by law, held Latin as its official language, celebrated Greek traditions, as well as Egyptian influence. Entertainment and sports were important to the Corinthian culture. In Paul's day, The Corinthian Theater seated 14-18,000 people. It had concert halls of 3,000 in capacity. Street philosophers stood on the corners. And because there was a constant flow of travelers and tourists, human trafficking was a problem. And its affluence led the people to value individualism and self-sufficiency. And there was a constant display of one's possessions as a sign of great success and accolades.<sup>vii</sup>

And Paul, seeing the great need for the gospel in this kind of place, established a church there on his second missionary journey. And the gospel took root, and all these people with different backgrounds responded to the gospel. But that came with challenges in disciplining a new way of following Jesus.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul dealt with a variety of specific issues the Corinthian church faced. But in 2 Corinthians, he took a different approach. Paul talks about his suffering and painful life experiences and how in the midst of his evident weakness, God's power is displayed. He talks about how in adversity, he can endure by relying on supernatural strength. His suffering meant God's revealing.<sup>viii</sup> And actually, self-reliance is weakness, and depending on The Lord is where true strength is found. It was a counter culture message.

And Paul opens his letter with a personal example of how he came to understand the power of Gospel strength. He shares about a very challenging trial that led to a season of darkness.

### **MESSAGE:**

Now, I am no prophet from the standpoint that I cannot predict the future. But I do know that at some point in the next 12 months, sometime during 2025, you and I will see tough days. And I know that because it is part of the human experience in a broken world. Right? We all experience troubles, pressures and stressors. And perhaps you're here today and you would say, well, I'm in the

middle of something painful right now. Add to that Jesus' word in John 16 that in this world we will have trouble. James builds on that and says that when we face trials of many kinds.

But the overwhelming message of Scripture is that even though that is true, we can take heart because Jesus has overcome the world. And as Paul is going to share his personal experience, and that The Lord makes Himself available as a source of strength. You can I can get through what we are going through by accessing the Gospel strength made available to us.

One of the most challenging questions to navigate pertains to this very idea. Many people get tripped up on faith because they can't understand that a loving God would allow terrible things to happen to good people. Have you ever heard that question? Maybe you've even asked that question or are currently pondering that. It's a very real and challenging question.

And while I am certainly not the sharpest tool in the shed, I'd love to go to coffee and talk through that sometime. But regardless of the cause, the real question is how. How do we get through the things we often go through? Because we all know it is not a matter of avoiding them. But how do we get through them? Paul answers that question in chapter 1, verses 3 through 11. We are going to see the Person, the purpose, and the promise of comfort. Paul, the greatest Christian in the world experienced painful things. And he shares his experience that we might come to know the same strength to endure.

Let's jump in. The first thing Paul says about how to get through is to know...

### 1) The Person of Comfort.

Look at verse 3. ***3Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.*** The person of comfort, or one might say, the source of comfort, is God, and He is the God of all comfort.

The word translated, "comfort," carries the idea of coming alongside someone and holding them up when they go through a trial.<sup>ix</sup> Paul says that God is worthy of praise, "Blessed be God," even in the midst of pain and suffering. Why? Because He comes alongside His people. He is the God of all comfort.

Now, it is interesting here that Paul refers to God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>x</sup> Why the delineation between the persons of the Trinity?

Because the mystery of the Trinity teaches that God exists as one God in triune form. So, why would Paul point out The Father in this verse?

Well, I think the point that Paul is making here is that in the fullness of God is the source of comfort. God the Father is a source of comfort, Jesus is acquainted with our suffering, and the Holy Spirit is called The Comforter. So, Paul is saying that the true source of strength and comfort in getting through the things we are going through is supremely found in God and not found in other sources.

See, we tend to turn to other sources to find solace. When calamity hits, often the first place we turn is our family, or friends, or those around us. And hear me, I am not saying that God does not use others to comfort us, because He does. But true comfort, supernatural strength, cannot be found in other sources of human strength. It is divine and therefore found in God.

Here's why it's important to seek God, the person of comfort. Because even the presence of those closest to us, surrounding us in our time of need, while beneficial, is at best limited. There is a limitation to what others can offer us. But in God the Father there is no limitation of comfort.

Let me show you what I mean. Look at end of verse 3 and the first part of verse 4. [The] ***God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup>who comforts us in all our affliction.*** Notice the repetition of the word "all." All comfort for all affliction. **God is the source of all the comfort needed to meet all the affliction we could experience.** All other sources are limited, but God's supply of comfort is limitless and sufficient.

How do we get through what we are going through? Go to the Person of comfort, the God of all comfort. Secondly, Paul tells us about...

### 2) The Purpose of Comfort.

One of the things that helps me get through difficulties and challenges is a mindset knowing that The Lord often uses them for a purpose. And that is exactly what Paul says here. Look at verses 4 through 7.

***<sup>4</sup>who comforts us in all our affliction, so that*** [that's a purpose clause. We experience (blank) and the purpose is 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.*

It could be that your hurt, your pain, is the very vehicle in which God reveals His purpose for your life. It is often the painful experiences of our past, and God's activity in the midst of that pain, that then gives us a passion for others going through challenges. That's purpose.

Paul says that when we receive comfort, we can extend comfort. And perhaps the very thing we go through is meant for someone else. See, God trains us and uses trials to strengthen us. And our short-sighted view can be that we just want relief for ourselves, but in the goodness of God, the source of all comfort, has enough comfort for you that overflows to others.<sup>xi</sup>

What better training do we gain in helping others than to go through that hurt ourselves? Who better to help someone in financial crisis than someone who has come out on the other end of financial crisis? Who better to help someone living in a messed-up marriage than someone who has walked through a messed-up marriage? Who better to help someone reeling from the pain of loss than someone who has lost? Who better to walk someone through addiction than someone who has struggled through an addiction? The list can go on!

And hear me. Only God do that. Only God can redeem the broken and suffering in our lives and then utilize it as a blessing in someone else's life!

Now, I think it is important to realize the depth of the trial that Paul is talking about here in this passage. Because I think we tend to detach our circumstances from Biblical scenarios. To say, well the Bible doesn't address my particular issue, so all this talk of spiritual strength gets lost on us. We tend to think that what we go through is much worse than what is presented in the Biblical text. We tend to intensify what is ours in comparison to others. But I promise you that's not the case.

Look at verses 8 and 9 as it shows us the severity of Paul's trial. *<sup>8</sup>For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. [In other words, I want to describe how we felt.] 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. [Ever been there? Even in that case, there's a purpose. Paul says...] *But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.* Sometimes the purpose of the trial is to help us realize we cannot rely on ourselves, but we must rely on The Lord.*

You know one of the most common misinterpretations of the Bible is when people say, "God won't give you more than you can handle." That's not Biblical. The verse people are referencing when they say that is a verse that means that you won't be tempted beyond your ability to overcome. God will provide a way out. God often gives us more than we can handle, so that we learn to lean on and rely on Him.

How do you get through what you're going through? Go to the Person of comfort and realize the purpose of comfort. Thirdly, finally, Paul says we get through what we are going through by knowing...

### 3) The Promise of Comfort.

Look with me at verse 10. *<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.*

Notice the tenses by which Paul speaks. God delivered us, that is in reference to the past. He will deliver us, in reference to the present. And He will deliver us again in reference to the future. Past, present, or future, God will always be faithful to provide His comfort and strength. That's the promise Paul held onto.

You know, sometimes the only thing that gives me a sense of peace when I am facing a challenging time is knowing that God will be faithful. In fact, God cannot be unfaithful, that's outside His character of being God. And the best way to come to that realization is to have experienced the faithfulness of God.

In verses 10 and 11, Paul gets very practical. He gives practical advice on navigating trials. Look at it with me.

The first thing Paul does is **focus on truth**. Verse 3, as I mentioned earlier, is full of doctrine. It's like he is preaching to himself the truths of who God is. Blessed be God. He is worthy of our praise no matter the circumstances. Why? Because He is the God and Father of Jesus Christ, the author of our salvation, and the God of all comfort, providing His presence in the Holy Spirit who is the Comforter. Do you see the rich theology that served as a foundation for Paul to

face what he faced? When in the midst of an unbearable trial, we must remain in a posture of worshipping God. Why? Because He is worthy of it. And reminding our hearts and minds of who He is causes Him to become bigger than our trials. For to not do so is to allow our trials to become bigger than our God.

The second thing I see Paul doing in navigating his painful experience is to **remember God's faithfulness**. In verse 10 it is like we get a peek into Paul's diary where he is counting God's blessings. "He has delivered us. Let's remember that. Therefore, He's going to deliver us, and He will deliver us again!" In addition to worshipping in the pain, recall the times God has shown up. That will enthuse your worship and help you remember God's faithfulness.

The third thing Paul did was **invite others to lift him up**. He didn't endure his trials alone. Look at verse 11. *"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."* Paul leaned on his support system in The Church that often lifted him up in their prayers. The same is true for us. Don't go through trials alone. Walk in the confidence of the support system of God's Church.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Listen, I don't know where you are this morning. I don't know all the difficulties you are struggling with right now. But, I want you to realize where Paul's source of hope came from. Verse 10. *"On **him** we have **set our hope**."* Paul set his hope on Jesus. Not on a 401k. Not on a job. Not on a marriage. Not on a friend. Not on a circumstance. He set his hope on Jesus! And that served as the basis for which he navigated his trials.

What about you? Have you set your hope in Jesus Christ? In order to be able to go to the source of supernatural spiritual strength, it begins and ends with a relationship with Jesus Christ.

### **[GOSPEL]**

If you are here and you need to begin a relationship with Jesus, our elders will be here at the end of the service, and we would love to visit with you about what it means to give your life to Christ.

Maybe you are here today and you are walking through a difficult time, come pray with us. How is The Lord stirring in your heart? Let's be obedient to that prompting this morning.

### **[PRAY]**

## ENDNOTES:

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<sup>i</sup> Works consulted in preparation for this message: David E. Garland, *The New American Commentary: 2 Corinthians*, B&H Publishing: Nashville, 1999; Scott J. Hafemann, *The NIV Application Commentary: 2 Corinthians*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2000; John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 2 Corinthians*, Moody Publishers: Chicago, 2003; Eric Mason, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus In 2 Corinthians*, Holman: Nashville, 2024; John MacArthur, "Comfort in Trouble," sermon published by Grace to You, published by Grace to You, November 28, 1993, accessed online: <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/47-4/comfort-in-trouble>; Skip Heitzig, "2 Corinthians 1:1-11," message taught at Calvary Albuquerque, July 18, 2001, accessed online: <https://connectwithskip.com/teachings/#!/series/116/sermon/1600>.

<sup>ii</sup> Heitzig.

<sup>iii</sup> Got Questions, "What Is An Apostle," article published by GotQuestions.org, accessed online: <https://www.gotquestions.org/what-is-an-apostle.html>.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> Garland, page 49-50.

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid, page 47.

<sup>vii</sup> Hafemann, pages 22-24.

<sup>viii</sup> Ibid, pages 34-35.

<sup>ix</sup> Mason, page 7.

<sup>x</sup> MacArthur, page 19.

<sup>xi</sup> Adapted from Mason, page 8.