

2 CORINTHIANS

LIFE-TRANSFORMING GRACE

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Designed by Diane Warnes

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10Publishing, a division of 10ofthose.com

Unit C, Tomlinson Road, Leyland, PR25 2DY, England

Email: info@10ofthose.com

Website: www.10ofthose.com





Neil Todman

**27 UNDATED DEVOTIONS THROUGH
THE BOOK OF 2 CORINTHIANS**

No church gave the Apostle Paul more problems than the one he planted in Corinth. Yet Paul loved the believers in that corrupt city passionately and wanted the very best for them in Christ. He was like a concerned father who can see his teenage son repeatedly going off the rails and does everything in his power to show him a better way.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians at least four times and visited them on several occasions. His first and third letters are lost to us, but we know his second and fourth as 1 and 2 Corinthians.

The final letter, 2 Corinthians, was written after the relationship between Paul and the church in Corinth had almost completely broken down. Timothy had delivered 1 Corinthians, but the church rejected him and Paul's message. So the Apostle had gone in person to Corinth, but that was a painful visit (2:1) and was followed up with a further letter written out of the anguish of Paul's heart (2:3–4). Paul decided not to return to Corinth until their attitude towards him as an Apostle had changed. Instead, he sent his trouble-shooter, Titus. When Paul and Titus rendezvoused months later in Macedonia, there was finally some good news. Titus was able to encourage Paul

that the majority of the Corinthians had repented of their hostility towards him and were ready to obey Christ (7:5–7). 2 Corinthians 1–9 were written on the back of this positive report, before Paul probably received more bad news from Corinth, which may well explain the abrupt change of tone in chapters 10 to 13.

Because of God's grace towards them, neither Paul nor Timothy had given up on the church in Corinth. God's undeserved gifts of love through the cross of Jesus Christ bring us not only peace with our Father God but the basis for reconciliation with others in his family. May grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ transform our lives daily.

REFLECTION

Give thanks for those who first explained the gospel to you and those who have stood by you at times when you have struggled in your Christian walk.

If we live long enough, we will suffer. Being a follower of Christ doesn't give us a deflector shield so that times of trouble will bounce off us, but it does give us something even better: the guarantee that, no matter how tough life gets, God himself will comfort us through his Spirit and his people.

In these verses, Paul doesn't minimise the distress he felt. He repeatedly uses the words for affliction (vv. 4, 6, 8) and suffering (vv. 5, 6, 7). Verses 8 and 9 are heart-breaking. Paul has reached the end of himself. He doesn't know if he can carry on. His life feels like a ship sinking because it is weighed down with too much cargo. Paul's burdens feel too much to bear. Death would be a relief.

I wonder if you have ever felt that way? At points in my life I have, especially when my first wife, Elaine, died aged forty-two following a twenty-month battle with bowel cancer. What can help us when we go through the worst of times?

Paul tells us the answer here in the opening verses of this letter. The most repeated word isn't affliction or suffering but comfort. He uses it ten times, in the original Greek, in verses 4

to 7. We come to the God of all comfort, the Father who shows mercy to us in all our weakest moments (vv. 3–4). We come to Jesus Christ, his Son, the suffering King, who went through the worst of sufferings before being raised from death to life (vv. 3, 5, 9). When we suffer, his death and resurrection give us hope. Even suffering which ends in death will not have the final word (vv. 9–10). And we come to God the Spirit, whom Jesus called 'the Comforter' (John 16:7, *KJV*), who teaches us to depend upon God and his Word. Father, Son and Holy Spirit give us powerful grace to grow closer to our God through the worst of times.

REFLECTION

*During times when
you have suffered,
which promises from
God's Word has his Spirit
made precious to you?*