

[ A Devotional Study *on* Having a Passion for God ]

LORD,  
Give Me  
a Heart  
for You



KAY ARTHUR

LORD,  
GIVE ME A HEART  
FOR YOU

A DEVOTIONAL STUDY

*on* HAVING *a* PASSION *for* GOD

K A Y

A R T H U R



WATERBROOK  
P R E S S

LORD, GIVE ME A HEART FOR YOU  
PUBLISHED BY WATERBROOK PRESS  
12265 Oracle Boulevard, Suite 200  
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80921

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*Italics* in Scripture quotations reflect the author's added emphasis.

ISBN 978-1-57856-420-0

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Published in the United States by WaterBrook Multnomah, an imprint of The Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House Inc., New York.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Arthur, Kay, 1933-

Lord, give me a heart for you : a devotional study on the heart of Paul from 2 Corinthians / by Kay Arthur.—1st. ed.

p. cm.

ISBN 1-57856-420-4

1. Bible, N.T. Corinthians, 2nd—Criticism, interpretation, etc. 2. Bible, N.T. Corinthians, 2nd—Devotional use. I. Title.

BS2675.2 .A78 2001

227'.306—dc21

2001026277

Printed in the United States of America

2009

10 9

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## INTRODUCTION

O h, to love God so very, very much, so much that every “whatever” in our lives would be for His sake and His alone—whatever pressure, whatever trial, whatever task. All would be leading us to have a heart for God—to be one whose sole passion is to please God.

I know, Beloved, that you probably picked up this book because that is your desire as well as mine.

For years I have longed to write a study—another “Lord” book or a Precept course—on the anatomy of a heart for God. What does a heart for God look like when lived out in flesh and blood in the daily circumstances of life? This is what I wanted to know, to study, to learn, and to live. And the perfect book from Scripture that seemed to demonstrate this was 2 Corinthians. Finally the day came, and I knew that God would have us study the subject in the form of another “Lord” book rather than a Precept course, for a “Lord” book allows more room for me to also pour out my heart, to share the things the Lord has taught, while at the same time helping you discover for yourself the wonderful truths of God’s Word.

This has been such an incredible spiritual journey for me. Now you have in your hands the tangible result of it, and I am thrilled. Thrilled and honored! Thrilled that you want to have a heart for God and honored that I would have the privilege of walking with you through 2 Corinthians, Acts, and other portions of Scripture that will help you understand what it’s like to have a heart like His.

I think this will be another revolutionary study in your life, precious one, for Paul reveals himself in this book of 2 Corinthians in a way that he does nowhere else. His vulnerability will touch your heart as you realize how much this great man of God is just like you in his battles, his fears, and his conflicts, as he deals with the inevitable pressures of seeking to serve God in a world opposed to God and among believers who don’t always exemplify Jesus Christ.

It is my passion that whether you study this on your own or in a

group, your heart will touch God's heart in such a way that it will beat in unison with His from this day forward. In 2 Chronicles 16:9, we learn that the eyes of God are looking for a man or a woman whose heart is fully His, that He might show Himself strong on that person's behalf. May His eyes fall on you! That is my prayer.

Now if there's a possibility that you are going to use this as a group study, you will want to read "Guidelines for Group Use" in the "Study Resources" section at the back of this book, where you'll find other valuable tools to enhance this study.

Also if you would like to develop your skills in handling the Word of God more accurately or in leading others in group studies designed to minister to people of all ages *at any level of commitment* while respecting the restraints on their time, Precept Ministries International can provide the training and materials. For more information, simply call our toll-free number (1-800-763-8280) and let one of our staff members help you. It would be their pleasure. We're known as "The Inductive Study People: everybody, everywhere, any time, any place, any language, any age. One message: the Bible. One method: inductive." We have numerous types of inductive studies, from forty-minute Bible studies that have no homework to others that average fifteen minutes of homework per day to others that require an hour of study per day. We have studies for children, teens, and adults. Please don't hesitate to call us. We exist to serve you.

Finally, let me share my vision—it's the possibility of a new avenue of ministry for you, Beloved of God...

*A new beginning—  
An avenue of ministry—  
A sense of doing something that has eternal value*

These are three things I think are so important for you and for me. There's so much to learn, to know, to experience, to do—and we never want to lose sight of that. To do so would be to miss what God has for us. To fall short of the tremendous potential of our lives—a potential that is ours because we are His, because we are children of the Creator of the

Universe, indwelt by His divine Spirit and given the mind of Christ. You and I, Beloved, are God's workmanship gifted by the Spirit of God and created in Christ Jesus unto good works that would absolutely stagger our minds if we were to see them before they ever happened.

And what has God put into your hands? What are you holding and reading right now? Is it an accident? A coincidence? No! You are holding a devotional study that first and foremost will be the beginning of a new depth of understanding about God and all that He is for you.

God is going to speak to you because, through this book, you're going to come face to face with the living Word of God—the Word that not only discerns the thoughts and intentions of your heart, but becomes the means of throwing His light on the direction your life is taking so you can know with absolute confidence where you are headed. If you listen to what He says—and by that I mean ordering your life accordingly—then there is, in a sense, a new beginning...of understanding, of purpose. A new level of Christlikeness is attained. You will be, as Paul would say, pressing on and attaining that for which Jesus Christ laid hold of you.

Which brings me to my next point—an avenue of ministry. What you have learned, God intends for you to share. I have a vision, and you, Beloved, are part of that vision. Our Lord's commission in Matthew 28 was that we make disciples of all men—that we teach them to observe all that He has commanded us. Acts 1 tells us that when we are saved and receive the Holy Spirit we become His witnesses—yet the question is often, "How?"

Here is the how. This "Lord" book contains truths every human being needs to know and to apply to his or her life. These are precepts for life; through them we will gain understanding and, as the psalmist says, "hate every false way" (Psalm 119:104). We hate it because it is false rather than true, and it is truth that sets us apart, sets us free.

So what is my vision for you, my friend? It is that you go to the Lord in prayer and ask Him to direct you to at least one other person—but preferably at least ten—and that you, along with them, study this book together. You may not be a teacher, but you can be the group's facilitator. You can take the questions you'll find at the end of each chapter and use

them to stimulate a discussion among those whom the Lord has brought together in answer to your prayer. These are those who will be part of your crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. As you watch them learn and grow in the knowledge of God and of His Word, you will experience the humbling joy of knowing that you have been used of God. That what you have done has eternal value. That your life and God-given gifts have not been wasted. That your work will live on—that the grace of God poured out on you was not poured out in vain, for you have labored in the strength of His grace.

So as you facilitate a group using this book, you need to watch for and encourage others in your group to do as you have done—to take what they have learned and impart it to another as you did with them. Think of the multiplication that will happen! Do you realize, Beloved, that this is the way we can reach our neighborhoods, our communities, our nation, and beyond? Think of the transformation that will take place among all those people today who are so interested in “the spiritual” but won’t step inside a church. Think—just think!—what is going to happen!

The time is now. The hour is short, so stop and pray right now, Beloved, and ask God what He would have you to do. He will show you, because He is God and because such prayers are in accordance with His will. As you step out and begin, just know that if you will step out in faith, God will give you an avenue of ministry, person by person or group by group, that will not only stagger your mind but absolutely delight your soul.

I cannot wait to hear what God does in and through you, my friend.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kay". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, decorative flourish at the end.



# FINDING GOD'S COMFORT IN AFFLICTION

— D A Y O N E —

**H**ave you ever become weary...  
tired...  
discouraged...  
depressed...  
defeated...  
because—  
because you've been so afflicted that you actually despaired  
of life?<sup>1</sup>  
because people accused you of not keeping your word?<sup>2</sup>  
because your honesty caused sorrow and they missed the  
fact that you had to say what you said because love  
compelled you?<sup>3</sup>  
Have you felt a little overwhelmed by conflicts without and fears  
within<sup>4</sup>  
because you're concerned for the well-being of someone you  
dearly love—  
a parent, a child, a mate?<sup>5</sup>  
Or because of a tenuous relationship with another,  
and you don't know where you stand?  
Their once-warm heart has turned cold...  
the company they keep has changed...  
and deep down, gut-level, you believe these new  
associates have turned them against you...<sup>6</sup>

Or perhaps you've been criticized, torn down, demeaned,  
 due to some physical attribute that is less than perfect,  
 or because of some "lack" in your personality,<sup>7</sup>  
 or maybe because others have questioned your role, your  
 position, in respect to them,<sup>8</sup>  
 or because you've been accused of treating someone  
 improperly.<sup>9</sup>

Are you stressed out, Beloved,  
 because you fear that those whom you've loved, protected, cared  
 for, or ministered to

have been led astray in their thinking?<sup>10</sup>

Or because you have a "thorn in your flesh" that God hasn't  
 removed, though you've begged Him over and over to do so?<sup>11</sup>

Or because you know you may end up in a confrontation you  
 don't want...but probably must have?<sup>12</sup>

You're in good company, my friend, for all that you just read is exactly what was experienced by one of the greatest men of God, the apostle Paul. For Paul, it was not just one of the above, but all of the above.

It's all recorded for us in the most intimate and personal of all of Paul's letters—2 Corinthians, the letter we're going to study. In it, you and I will see what I'll call the anatomy of a heart for God.

Wouldn't you like to know, my friend, that after going through the kind of circumstances I've just queried you on, you could still be able to say at the end of your life, as Paul did, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His [Christ's] appearing?"<sup>13</sup>

Wouldn't you like to be assured that you could experience all the situations I've posed and still turn to others, as Paul did, and say in total sincerity and truth, without one drop of egotism: "Follow me. Be an imitator of me, even as I am of Christ Jesus. Look at the way I walk and know that if others do not walk this way, they aren't walking in a way pleasing to God."<sup>14</sup>

Can you imagine having such confidence? Confidence, not brashness. Confidence in the midst of cross fire. Confidence even if the government threatened to take your life for what you believed and lived. Confidence so sure that you could stand alone, even though others deserted you because they loved this present life more than the next.<sup>15</sup>

This is the heart I long for.

And what about you, Beloved? Surely, because you picked up this book with this title, we are kin—of a kindred heart.

On the day we see Jesus Christ face to face, to have missed having a heart like this will seem like the greatest of tragedies—especially when we see such a heart was indeed possible for the believing, for the learning, for the disciplined. God always hears the cry of His people, especially when they cry, “Lord, give me a heart for You—*give me a heart for You!*”

Why don't you close today by going back and reading through the questions and the “because” I posed at the beginning. (Each one of these, by the way, reflects real-life situations that Paul deals with in 2 Corinthians.) Put a star by each one that somehow pertains to you. Then, when you finish, take a few minutes to sit in the Lord's presence and talk to Him about your heart, just as countless others have done through the corridors of the centuries.

Then record below, for your own benefit, this prayer for your heart.

— D A Y T W O —

His conversion was glorious—yet hard for some to believe. One moment he was adamantly persecuting those who were followers of Jesus Christ, whom he despised with a vehemence. The next moment he was prostrate on the ground saying, “Who are You, Lord?” to the resurrected, ascended Jesus Christ.

The brilliance of his encounter with this One he believed to be an

enemy of God left him temporarily blind until a man by the name of Ananias came trembling into his presence.

Ananias had a right to tremble. Every follower of Jesus Christ trembled at the thought of encountering this banty rooster named Saul who was so cocksure of himself and his cause. No one wanted to be caught by this man of small stature who carried, so to speak, a very big stick—letters of permission from the chief priests in Jerusalem to imprison any of “those of the Way” and probably put them to death. Hadn’t Saul consented to the death of Stephen after Stephen testified before the Sanhedrin? Saul joined with others in deeming these people to be enemies of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (“Those of the Way” is what these followers of Christ were called. The nomenclature probably came because Jesus had claimed with His own mouth to be “the way, and the truth, and the life” and declared that none could come to God, the heavenly Father, except through Him.<sup>16</sup>)

Ananias went to see this murderer Saul, but only because he was convinced he had heard the Lord’s command to go. Ananias had explained to the Lord the reputation of this one to whom he was being sent—but to no avail.

Just as difficult for Ananias as going to Saul was the message he had to deliver. The Lord had said to Ananias, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.”<sup>17</sup>

After spending three sightless days, neither eating nor drinking, and seeing a vision of Ananias coming to him, Saul received his sight—and immediately he was out trying to convince others that Jesus of Nazareth was truly the Christ, the long awaited Messiah.

Years later, after beginning his first missionary journey, Saul became known as Paul. How this change came about we don’t know, but never again does even Paul himself use his former name except when sharing the story of his conversion before a Jewish mob in the temple and later before King Agrippa. Saul was his Jewish name, while Paul is of Latin origin and means “little.” I cannot help but wonder if Paul took on this Latin name

not only as a way of more closely identifying with the Gentiles to whom he was called to minister, but also because of its meaning. For Paul saw himself as “the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”<sup>18</sup>

Although Paul described himself this way, and as “one untimely born,”<sup>19</sup> he became probably the greatest of the apostles. Not only were most of the New Testament epistles written by him, but the greater portion of Acts is devoted to the account of this man’s three missionary journeys and closes with the account of his imprisonment and journey to Rome where, as a Roman citizen, he appealed to Caesar.

It was on Paul’s second missionary journey that he went to Corinth. Let’s take a look at how Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee and “a Hebrew of Hebrews,”<sup>20</sup> ended up in Corinth, Greece, a city unrivaled for its immorality. To do that we need to begin with Acts 15:40–16:12. As you read through this passage (printed out for you below), mark the references to geographical locations by double underlining them. If you have a green pen, do it in green.

The reason I’m asking you to do this, Beloved, is to introduce you to a way to mark your Bible with standard or consistent markings so that it will be easy to spot various truths quickly. If you start marking your Bible in a purposeful way, you’ll find yourself incorporating a learning skill that will help you better remember and retain what you learn. (See pages 265-268 in the Study Resources section for more information on marking your Bible.)\*

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\* I am giving you the text printed out because I’m afraid, my friend, if you have never studied with me before, you might be hesitant to mark in your Bible. So as we get to know and trust each other, let’s do it this way to begin with—then you’ll become convinced on your own. Just remember that, more than anything else, God wants you to know and obey His Word. He wants you to study it, to handle it accurately so that when you see Him face to face you will not be ashamed. The Word of God is your textbook for life. His words are our counselors—Divine therapy for all that ails us. And the more time you spend studying His precepts and applying them to your life, the healthier and stronger you are going to become as a human being. His words are spirit and life—and as we study together you’ll see how they’ll breathe new life into your inner man.

As you read this passage, remember that this is Paul's second missionary journey. What was his purpose on this journey? We find it in Acts 15:36, where Paul told Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." As you mark *where* Paul and Silas go, observe what happens in the churches they established on the first journey.

▶ ACTS 15:40–16:12

40 But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.

41 And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

16:1 Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek,

2 and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.

3 Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

4 Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe.

5 So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.

<sup>6</sup> They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia;

<sup>7</sup> and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;

<sup>8</sup> and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

<sup>9</sup> A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

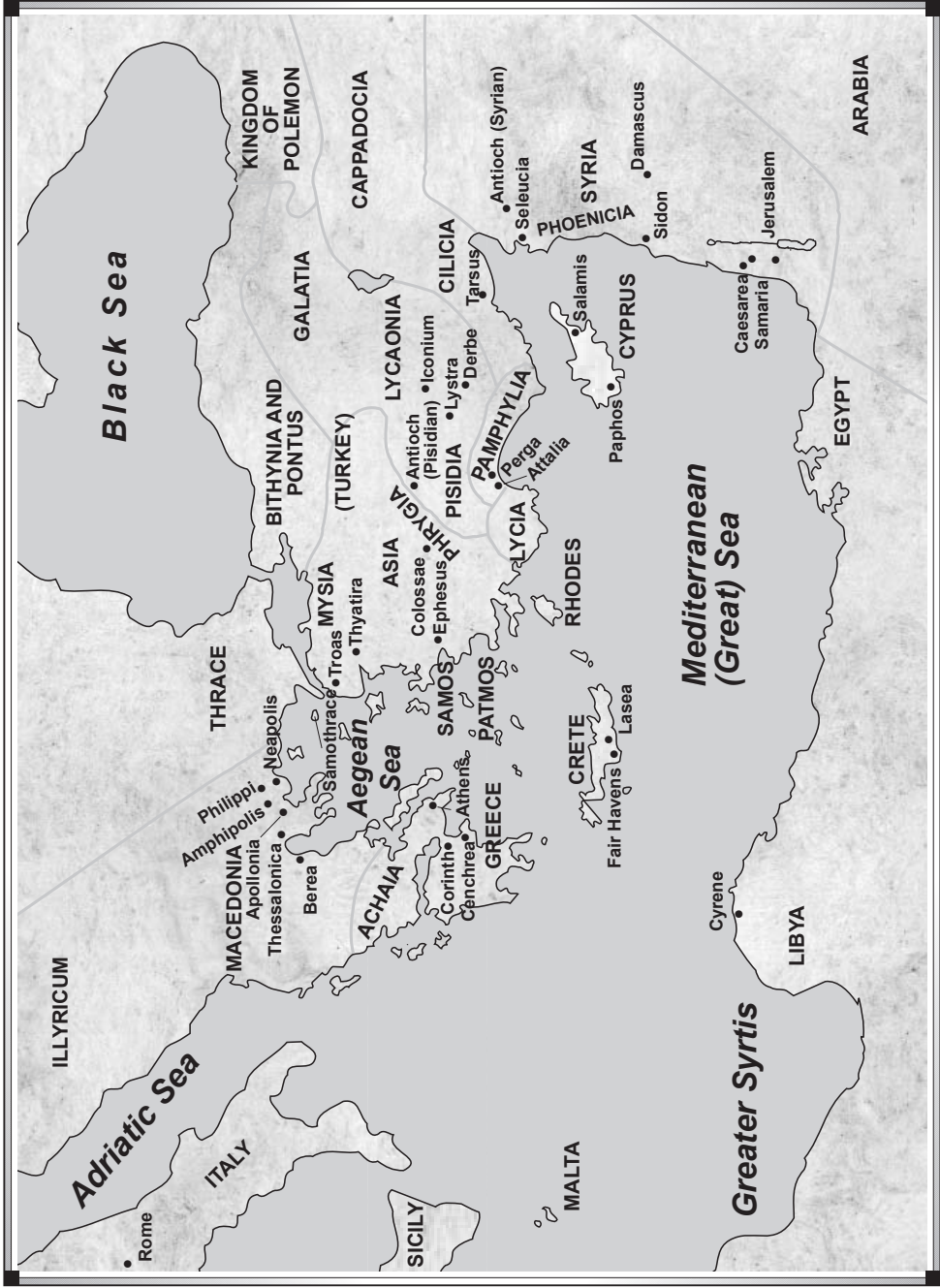
<sup>10</sup> When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

<sup>11</sup> So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis;

<sup>12</sup> and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days.

Good job. Now let's take a look at the map on the next page of Paul's second missionary journey and find out where these places are.<sup>21</sup> According to Acts 15:35, Paul and Silas left from the city of Antioch. This particular Antioch was in Syria (watch that, because a city of that name—known as Pisidian Antioch—is also mentioned in Acts). So beginning in Antioch of Syria, trace their journey on the map. Use a colored pen that will stand out so you can easily follow them.

On page 10 you'll see a chart showing the sequence of events in Paul's life after his conversion.<sup>22</sup> When you have time, you might want to scan this chart and notice the events in Paul's life that led up to his second missionary journey.



Black Sea

ILLYRICUM

Adriatic Sea

ITALY

Rome

MACEDONIA

Amphipolis  
Apollonia  
Thessalonica  
Berea

Philippi  
Neapolis

THRACE

Achaia

Corinth  
Cenchrea  
Athens

GREECE

ASIA

Colossae  
Ephesus

PHRYGIA

Antioch (Pisidian)  
Iconium  
Lystra  
Derbe

BITHYNIA AND PONTUS

LYCAONIA

Tarsus

GALATIA

CAPPADOCIA

CILICIA

Antioch (Syrian)  
Seleucia

PHOENICIA

Sidon

SYRIA

Damascus

CYPRUS

Salamis  
Paphos

Mediterranean (Great) Sea

EGYPT

LIBYA

Greater Syrtis

Cyrene

MALTA

CRETE

Fair Havens  
Lasea

RHODES

PAMPHYLIA

Perga  
Attalia

LYCIA

ARABIA

Caesarea  
Samarina  
Jerusalem



Well, Beloved, you've done a good day's work. Quite an accomplishment. As you read this portion from Acts, wasn't it interesting to see Paul's sensitivity to the leading of God? First Paul and Silas passed through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia because they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word of God in Asia. Then, when they arrived in Mysia and wanted to go into Bithynia, the Holy Spirit again checked them. They went instead to Troas, where Paul saw the vision of the man of Macedonia asking him to come over and help them. And what did they do? The Word tells us that they sought to go to Macedonia immediately. No delay, no hesitation.

When your heart belongs to God and you will to do His will, you can rest assured, Beloved, that God will lead you by His Spirit, step by step. Your responsibility is simply to commit your way unto Him, and He will bring it to pass.<sup>23</sup>

Then you can walk in confidence knowing that "the steps of a man are established by the LORD, And He delights in his way."<sup>24</sup>

— D A Y T H R E E —

From the beginning, God made it clear to Paul that he was destined to suffer. Remember the Lord's word to him through Ananias? "He is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for [note the "for"] I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."<sup>25</sup>

But suffering wasn't to be Paul's alone, precious one. When anyone unwraps the gift of salvation, he or she will find suffering tucked in with it. The two are inseparable. Paul would later write to the church he founded in Philippi, "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me" (Philippians 1:29-30).

At the very end of his life, as Paul prepared to die for his faith, he wrote his final letter to Timothy, his son in the faith (you remember Timothy, for you read yesterday in Acts 16 how he and Paul had met). Paul

# Sequence of Events in Paul's Life After His Conversion \*

\*There are differing opinions on these dates. For continuity's sake this chart will be the basis for dates pertaining to Paul's life.





Scripture	Year A.D.	Event
Acts 9:1-25	33-34	Conversion, time in Damascus
Gal. 1:17	35-47	Some silent years, except we know that Paul: 1. Spent time in Arabia and Damascus <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 5px;">3</span> years 2. Made first visit to Jerusalem
Acts 9:26; Gal. 1:18		3. Went to Tarsus, Syria-Cilicia area
Acts 9:30-11:26; Gal. 1:21		4. Was with Barnabas in Antioch
Acts 11:26		5. With Barnabas took relief to brethren in Judea, and Paul's second visit to Jerusalem
Acts 11:30		Herod Agrippa dies
Acts 12:23	44	6. Returned to Antioch; was sent out with Barnabas by church at Antioch
Acts 12:25		<b>First missionary journey: Galatians written(?)</b>
Acts 13:4-14:26	47-48	Proconsul Sergius Paulus on Paphos is datable
Acts 15:1-35; Gal. 2:1	49	Apostolic Council at Jerusalem—Paul visits Jerusalem (compare Acts 15 with Galatians 2:1)
Acts 15:36-18:22	49-51	<b>Second missionary journey: 1 and 2 Thessalonians written—1½ years in Corinth, Acts 18:11</b>
Acts 18:23-21:17	51-52	Gallio known to be proconsul in Corinth
Acts 21:18-23	52-56	<b>Third missionary journey: 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans written—probably from Ephesus</b>
Acts 24-26	56	Paul goes to Jerusalem and is arrested; held in Caesarea
Acts 27-28:15	57-59	Appearance before Felix and Drusilla; before Festus, appeals to Caesar; before Agrippa—datable
Acts 28:16-31	59-60	Went from Caesarea to Rome
	60-62	First Roman imprisonment: <i>Ephesians, Philemon, Colossians, and Philippians written—2 years in prison</i>
	62	Paul's release; possible trip to Spain
	62	Paul in Macedonia: <i>1 Timothy written</i>
	62	Paul goes to Crete: <i>Titus written</i>
	63-64	Paul taken to Rome and imprisoned: <i>2 Timothy written</i>
	64	Paul is absent from the body and present with the Lord ( <i>Others put Paul's conversion about A.D. 35, his death at A.D. 68.</i> )

14 years, Gal. 2:1

reminded Timothy that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12). Those who desire to live godly in Christ are those who have a heart for God. This, Beloved, is something you and I need to understand and remember as we pray, “Lord, give me a heart for You.”

Strange as it seems, suffering is a precious gift when viewed from an eternal perspective, because suffering not only proves our faith but is used of God to make us more like Jesus. And believe me, when we stand someday at the judgment seat of Christ, that’s all that will matter.

Let’s return to Acts and watch what transpires once Paul and Silas arrive in Philippi. As you read the following text from Acts, do the following:

- Double underline all geographical locations, as you did before.
- Mark every reference to the Jews with a blue star of David like this:  (Remember that Paul was sent not only to the Gentiles, but also to the sons of Israel; we don’t want to miss anything that has to do with getting the gospel to the Jews.)
- Color every reference to the synagogue blue or mark it with a symbol like this: 
- Mark any reference to suffering of any kind with a red line over the appropriate words like this: 
- Mark every reference to the Scriptures (such as *the word* or *the word of God*) like this: 

(For a useful bookmark that you can use throughout this week’s study, take a three-by-five card or a piece of paper, fold it into a long strip, and list on it these key words or things mentioned above that you want to mark and show how you’re marking them.)

You’re in for a fairly long read now, but I believe it will be so fascinating that it won’t be difficult. Since our quest is to gain a heart for God, and this is the major way it comes—by spending attentive time in your Father’s Word—it should only inspire us to live more consecrated lives. Remember, Beloved, these words are pure truth, and God will use them to sanctify you—to make you holy even as He is holy. There’s nothing better you could be doing.

As you begin, may I suggest that you pray and ask God to speak to your heart. These were real people living in real places, just like you.

▶ ACTS 16:13–17:34

<sup>13</sup> And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.

<sup>14</sup> A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.

<sup>15</sup> And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.

<sup>16</sup> It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling.

<sup>17</sup> Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, “These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.”

<sup>18</sup> She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!” And it came out at that very moment.

<sup>19</sup> But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they

seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities,

20 and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews,

21 and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans."

22 The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods.

23 When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely;

24 and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;

26 and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened.

27 When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

28 But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!"

29 And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas,

30 and after he brought them out, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

31 They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.

33 And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.

34 And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

35 Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, “Release those men.”

36 And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, “The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace.”

37 But Paul said to them, “They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out.”

38 The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans,

39 and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city.

<sup>40</sup> They went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

<sup>17:1</sup> Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

<sup>2</sup> And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,

<sup>3</sup> explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."

<sup>4</sup> And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.

<sup>5</sup> But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people.

<sup>6</sup> When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also;

<sup>7</sup> and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."

<sup>8</sup> They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things.

<sup>9</sup> And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.

<sup>10</sup> The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

<sup>11</sup> Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.

<sup>13</sup> But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds.

<sup>14</sup> Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there.

<sup>15</sup> Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.

<sup>16</sup> Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols.

<sup>17</sup> So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present.



18 And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming?"

20 "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean."

21 (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)

22 So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects.

23 "For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.

24 "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;

25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;

26 and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'

29 "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.

30 "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent,

31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this."

33 So Paul went out of their midst.

34 But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

As you marked every reference to the Jews, synagogues, and the Word of God, did you notice that Paul had a strategy—an m.o. (method of operation)? He spells it out rather clearly in his letter to the church at Rome when he writes, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

Paul's strategy was first to find his own people, the Jews. In Philippi we know there were less than ten Jewish men, for it took a *minyán* (ten men) before a synagogue could be formed, and there was apparently no synagogue there. So Paul went instead to the Jewish place of prayer where he found those who were of the seed of Abraham. His strategy here as elsewhere was to begin to reason with them from the Scriptures, "explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ [Messiah]'" (Acts 17:3).

In every city on this journey, Paul suffered persecution in one form or another. And yet did you notice that he never deemed himself a failure, nor did he play the role of a coward and go home? He stood firm. You know, Beloved, it's easy to stand firm when you're absolutely convinced that you're right—and right where God wants you.

Think about it...then tomorrow we'll look at Paul's arrival in Corinth. You're going to see that everything you've studied these past few days is so foundational for your understanding of 2 Corinthians.

— D A Y F O U R —

It has been an awesome experience for my husband, Jack, and me and the Precept Ministries International teaching team to travel each year to Philippi in Greece and teach the book of Philippians onsite to our brothers and sisters traveling with us. We then journey to Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth, teaching Paul's epistles on location as we pray together and examine our lives in the light of these truths. Boarding a cruise ship, we sail across the Aegean to Ephesus and there do the same. It's an experience none of us forget—nor do we ever come home and read these scriptures again without seeing these places in our mind's eye. Now that's a vacation with a purpose! Then to top it all off, as we sail the Aegean Sea, we dock at the island of Patmos, where John had his vision recorded for us in the book of Revelation, and we teach that book in such a visual way that suddenly the events in Revelation fall into place and you begin to get a mental image. Unforgettable!

One of the tour's highlights to me is definitely Corinth. No city that we visit more typifies our culture today than that of biblical Corinth. The introduction to the book of 1 Corinthians in the *New Inductive Study Bible* tells us more:


Sin abounded in the cosmopolitan city of Corinth, the chief city of Greece. Corinth overlooked the narrow isthmus that connected the Greek mainland with Peloponnesus and received ships in its two harbors. The Corinthians were intrigued by Greek philosophy and captivated by the disciplined training and athletic events held at the Isthmus. At one time the city was home to at least twelve heathen temples. The people, then, desperately needed to hear the good news of Jesus Christ, the One crucified for sinners.

The worship ceremonies carried out by a thousand temple prostitutes connected with the temple of Aphrodite (the goddess of love) bred blatant immorality throughout Corinth—so much so that the Greek verb translated “to Corinthianize” meant to practice sexual immorality.

Prostitutes openly plied their wares, and meat markets thrived on sales from the sacrifices offered in the temples. The Corinthians ate well, satisfied their sexual urges without condemnation, flirted with the wisdom of men, and did all they could to keep their bodies as beautiful as those of the Greek gods. They loved to listen to great orators. For the 250,000 citizens there were almost two slaves per person. What more did Corinth need? Freedom. Freedom from sin and death. God met that need by blocking Paul at every hand on his second missionary journey until he received the Macedonian call, “Come and help us.”<sup>26</sup>

Let's read our final portion of the account in Acts of Paul's second missionary journey and find out what happened in Corinth when Paul arrived with the good news that would set men, women, and children free from the shackles of sin.

As you read, follow the same marking instructions as you did yesterday. Use the bookmark you made. However, you need to add to it two

more things. The first is the symbol for marking references to time. I use a clock like this:  I draw it in green ink over every reference in time. Do this as you do your assignment for today. Also, when you come to any reference to the judgment seat, underline it in red.

When you observe the Word of God, you want to learn to examine the text by asking the five *Ws* and an *H*: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How. So watch *what* happens to *whom* in Corinth, *when* it happens, *where* it happens, *why* it happens, and *how* it happens.

▶ ACTS 18:1-22

<sup>1</sup> After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth.

<sup>2</sup> And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them,

<sup>3</sup> and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers.

<sup>4</sup> And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

<sup>5</sup> But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

<sup>6</sup> But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

<sup>7</sup> Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue.

8 Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized.

9 And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, “Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent;

10 for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.”

11 And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

12 But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat,

13 saying, “This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.”

14 But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you;

15 but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters.”

16 And he drove them away from the judgment seat.

17 And they all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and began beating him in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.

18 Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren

and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila. In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow.

<sup>19</sup> They came to Ephesus, and he left them there. Now he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

<sup>20</sup> When they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent,

<sup>21</sup> but taking leave of them and saying, "I will return to you again if God wills," he set sail from Ephesus.

<sup>22</sup> When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and went down to Antioch.

Now before you read further, go back and reflect on what you've seen and marked. Use the following questions to help you do this. If you have time and want to write out the answers to these questions in a separate notebook, do so; otherwise just answer them in your mind:

- Who are the main characters in Acts 18:1-18?
- What happens to them?
- How is Paul received?
- What emotions does he have to deal with during this time?
- What do you learn from marking the time phrases?
- What do you learn about the judgment seat?

On our annual teaching tour of Paul's ministry locations, while we're in Corinth we visit the site of the judgment seat where Paul stood before Gallio, the procounsul of Achaia. Those of the group who wish to then move single file, one by one, past this place of judgment.

It's a sobering experience—a living reminder of a certain day to come, as you'll see with greater clarity when we come to 2 Corinthians 5.

I wonder what was going through Paul's mind when he stood before Gallio? Was he, too, thinking of the time to come when he would stand before Another, before the judgment seat of Christ? Did he whisper a

prayer, as I and so many others have done as we stood there in Corinth, that we each would stand before Christ's judgment seat without shame and be able to say, even as Paul did to Timothy, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith"?<sup>27</sup>

Paul went through many trials and afflictions to get to Corinth, and his journey was not yet complete—but he knew that he knew he was in the will of God. Nothing, Beloved—absolutely nothing—brings greater peace in the midst of suffering than to know that you're where God would have you to be.

I love God's words to Paul in Acts 18:9-10: "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city."

Paul was afraid—the tense of the verb "do not be afraid" is present, which means he was in a state of fear. Have you ever thought of the great apostle Paul being fearful? No, probably not. We forget, don't we, that the heroes of the faith are people just like us, people who must battle the same emotions and deal with the same fears. The fear of man. The fear of shame. The fear of suffering. The fear of rejection. The fear of \_\_\_\_\_; you fill in the blank. What are you fearful of?

Paul was afraid! Thus he was given the Lord's imperative, His command: *Do not be afraid*. The Lord was telling Paul, "Stop being afraid—it's all right. Go on speaking. Don't let fear silence you. I am with you."

That's all Paul had to hear. Listen to the next words: "And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them."

Just to know that you're in His will brings peace—and the ability to continue to do what He has called you to do. Without that knowledge there's either a confusion that can immobilize you or a harried scurrying about as you try to do more than God ever intended for you to do. I know, precious one, I know—after thirty-five years of walking with Christ, I know. There is nothing more valuable than knowing, "This is the way, walk in it."<sup>28</sup> It gives you the strength and confidence to settle in and persevere.



## — D A Y F I V E —

Has the pressure ever been so great that you thought you were going to die—or so stressful that you wish you would?

Maybe you're there right now. Or perhaps it's not as bad as that. Maybe it's just an unrelenting, incessant pressure that won't seem to go away. In fact, you're thinking that you're almost beyond your limit of endurance.

How are you going to make it, Beloved?

Although I am full of questions today, let me ask one more. Do you know anyone else who's been where you are—and *made it*? I'm talking about getting through it victoriously...someone who "made it" in such a way that it created a sense of awe when you heard about it or watched it?

Do you know *why* this person made it? *How* he or she made it? Why not ask?

Second Corinthians begins in an unusual way for one of Paul's epistles, for usually he seems reluctant to talk about his trials and difficulties. If you read his writings as a whole, you'll see that he states his emotions but never dwells on them. Yet he never begins any of his other letters the way he begins what we call the second epistle to the Corinthians. Take a few minutes and read through 2 Corinthians 1:1-11 so you can see what I am talking about. (The full text of 2 Corinthians is in the back of this book, beginning on page 235.)

As you read through the first eleven verses of this epistle, you'll find it most insightful if you'll mark three repeated key words. (And at this point, may I suggest that you begin a new bookmark of key words for 2 Corinthians.) Here are the key words:

- First, mark any reference to *affliction* or *suffering* (with a red overline, as you learned in Day Three).
- Second, mark every reference to *comfort*.
- Third, mark every reference to *death*. I usually draw a black tombstone and color it brown.

As you do this, ask the Lord to open the eyes of your understanding,

as Scripture says, so you can behold wonderful things from His Word.<sup>29</sup> It's a good habit of dependence to develop whenever you read the Bible.

Now stop and look over the key words you marked in 2 Corinthians 1:1-11. Do you notice that when we undergo pressure, its purpose is the comfort and salvation of others? In other words, when others in similar situations of pressure can see that we can make it, that we're going to survive, it helps them. If we made it, so can they. And we make it, Beloved, because of what? That's right! We make it, because when we belong to God, whatever touches us also touches Him—and He is there as our Father God to comfort us. He's the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.

I'll never forget when I sat down at a table opposite Ruth Graham and we talked about our prodigal sons, who now blessedly are no longer prodigals but bring joy to our hearts. But at the time of our conversation, there was nothing but pain associated with my beloved Tommy. Ruth had just finished writing *Prodigals and Those Who Love Them*. And although the book wasn't yet published, I knew it would be out soon. However, what was even better than the book was being able to share “mother to mother” with Ruth, to find the commonality of not only our horrendous burden but also how God enabled us to endure it, the way He comforted us.

Naturally I grieved that Ruth or any parent would have to go through such pain, but I couldn't help telling her how much it comforted me to know that she, too, had been there, that she understood, that she had endured. I wept with gratitude for my fellow sufferer who could comfort me with the comfort she had received from our precious Lord.

Paul wrote that the affliction he and his companions endured in Asia burdened them “excessively, beyond our strength” (2 Corinthians 1:8). It's one thing to endure something yourself as a leader, but when those who are with you also suffer, it makes it even harder.

What it was that Paul had to endure we don't know. We can try to guess, to surmise—but why? If we needed the specifics, God would have spelled them out.

I think it's best this way, because the word that Paul uses for “affliction,” *thlipsis*, in the Greek means a pressure, a pressing; anything that

burdens the spirit. Anything! If Paul had told us what it was, then we might have missed the point. The point is that whatever brings pressure, whatever burdens you—or to put it in modern-day terminology, whatever stresses you out—God is there with adequate comfort.

The text says in verse 4 that He comforts us in “all” our affliction. And the more intense the suffering, the more abundant the comfort. In other words, He assures us, precious one, that we can never “out-suffer” His comfort.

And what about those who shared in Paul’s sufferings? They, too, shared in God’s comfort. In other words, sharing suffering isn’t bad, because without it you would miss the awesomeness of His comfort.

“That’s all right,” you may feel like saying; “I’ll do without the suffering.” It would be a natural response, wouldn’t it? But also an uneducated one, a biblically illiterate one. Especially if you want a heart for God. Who is comforting you? God, of course! Has He suffered? Does God know pain? Oh yes, He knows.

In Genesis we read how “the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Then we read his response: “The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.”<sup>30</sup> Only one man—Noah—had remained righteous out of the whole lot. And God was grieved. Maybe you can relate, maybe those who are family or fellow workers are all living in ways that literally eat at your heart.

Later in the Old Testament we read these words that God spoke about His “wife,” Israel: “How I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts which turned away from Me, and by their eyes which played the harlot after their idols.”<sup>31</sup> Maybe your mate has committed adultery—maybe he or she lives in habitual immorality. *God understands.*

God watched His Son die the death of all deaths—have you lost a child to death? Or perhaps you’re losing a child to death even now. *God understands.*

Have you thought your heart would break—burst wide open because of sin? Jesus’ heart burst. This was proved by the blood and the water that

gushed out when the Roman soldiers pierced his side to see if he was dead.<sup>32</sup> Jesus, God in the flesh, died of a heart broken by sin.

Without first experiencing the pressure, you would miss the comfort that God alone can give. The Greek word translated as “comfort” in this text is an interesting one: *parakaleo*. It means “to call near, or alongside,” and it’s the verb form of the same word Jesus used for the Holy Spirit as our Comforter<sup>33</sup>—the One whom He promised would indwell us after He ascended to the Father.

When you and I suffer affliction, the Lord draws near and He comforts us.

The second reason you wouldn’t want to miss affliction is given in 2 Corinthians 1:4,6. It’s a reason I’ve mentioned already, but it bears mentioning again so we don’t forget it: *Our suffering always benefits others*. Think with me of just two worldwide ministries that have been born out of suffering, ministries that have brought untold comfort to many who might otherwise not have known it—the prison ministry of Chuck Colson and the ministry to those with disabilities by Joni Eareckson Tada. If Chuck Colson hadn’t gone from the White House to prison, would he ever have understood what it’s like to live behind bars? Would there have ever been a Prison Fellowship? And if my dear friend Joni had never become paralyzed as she dove from a raft one sunny afternoon, would she have even thought of the handicapped, let alone become a source of hope, encouragement, and practical help to them through Joni and Friends?

And what about that person you’ve been able to comfort, strengthen, and support because you understand, because you’ve been in a situation where you knew God in a way you had not known Him before you suffered? Others saw your example of endurance, and they endured.

What greater joy could there be, Beloved, than knowing that whatever trial or tragedy you experienced under the hand of your sovereign God was not wasted but used? This is what has brought such solace to the hearts of Bob and Diane Vereen, ambassadors at-large for Precept Ministries International. The tragic, seemingly unnecessary death of their twenty-three-year-old son in a careless traffic incident—and the way they dealt with it—has helped so many.

Bob and Diane endured what was beyond their strength to endure, which brings us to the third insight we can gain on affliction from this passage: God carries us beyond what we would otherwise be able to endure. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:9, “We had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves,” and that’s because of verse 8: “We were burdened excessively, beyond our strength.” When we go beyond our limit, then we experience the supernatural intervention of God and we know that we know that it’s God. And we’ll never forget it. It will be a genuine experience that will always remind us of the total sufficiency of His grace—grace perfected, brought to completion in our weakness.

Severe affliction like this is a good reminder of our utter impotence without Him. That can be a very humbling experience—but whatever humbles us is worthy of embracing, for God draws near to the humble, but resists the proud.<sup>34</sup>

The fourth and final thing we want to notice that affliction like this produces is corporate prayer. One of the things I like to do as I read through my *New Inductive Study Bible* is mark every reference to prayer. I use the suggested marking and color the word pink. Then I sometimes write *Prayer* in the wide margin so that it really stands out. It’s a wonderful way to get a biblical perspective on prayer. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 1:10-11 that God “delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many.”

Oh, the importance and power of prayer! Just from this verse alone we learn that we help others through our prayers. God is sovereign. He rules supremely over all. Yet we help others through prayer! His favor is actually bestowed upon people because of the prayers of others. How many stories I have heard of how people were suddenly led to pray for someone, sometimes across oceans and continents, without knowing that the person for whom they were praying was at that moment in great danger or need. The burden was there and they couldn’t stop until the pressure to pray was

gone. Later—sometimes hours later, other times days or months later—they would hear how the person’s life had been sustained or preserved at the very hour they had been called to prayer by the Spirit of God.

This is grace—grace that, when appropriated, brings peace. Isn’t that the greeting, or should I say blessing, that Paul pronounced as he began his letter? Won’t you join me in asking our God to reveal this truth to our hearts?

*O Father, make us ever mindful of Your grace—grace that brings to Your children all the comfort they’ll ever need in any affliction. And may we realize that when we appropriate this lavish, extravagant grace You have poured out on us, our hearts will be at peace...for we have residing within the Prince of Peace.*

Be still, our souls—rest. The Father of all mercies and the God of all comfort is near.

## MEMORY VERSES

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

## SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As we begin our study from 2 Corinthians, we watch Paul move from city to city, taking along Silas and Timothy. Why did Paul make this second missionary journey? And how did he know which churches to visit?

2. How would you describe Paul's heart for the church?
3. What was Paul's method of operation when he arrived in a city? What did he do in the synagogues?
4. How did the people respond to Paul's ministry? What emotions does he experience?
5. What forms of suffering and persecution do we see in believers' lives today?
6. What is God's purpose in our suffering and persecution? What do we learn about this from 2 Corinthians 1:3-5?

APPLICATION:

7. How can you be sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit and listen with your heart for His guidance?
8. Look at what the Lord told Paul in Acts 18:10. What can most help you not to be afraid to speak the truth or preach the gospel?
9. If you desire to live a godly life, and are faithful to proclaim the gospel where you are, and your prayer is, "Lord give me a heart like Yours"—what can you expect in how you are treated by other people?
10. How can you stand firm and persevere in the midst of persecution and affliction?
11. Where do you find comfort? Do you seek it from others, or do you run to the Father of mercies and God of all comfort?
12. Are you an encouraging example to others in how you look to God for comfort and in how you endure?
13. Spend time in prayer for one another, and for those who are suffering. Ask God to comfort them with His comfort and to take away every fear.

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1. 2 Corinthians 1:8.
  2. 2 Corinthians 1:15-18.
  3. 2 Corinthians 2:4; 7:8.
  4. 2 Corinthians 7:5.

5. 2 Corinthians 2:13. Here we see Paul without peace because of concern for someone he loved—in this case, his coworker Titus.
6. 2 Corinthians 6:11-14; 7:2; 11:13-14.
7. 2 Corinthians 10:7-10.
8. 2 Corinthians 11:5-6; 12:11-12.
9. 2 Corinthians 12:13.
10. 2 Corinthians 11:3-4.
11. 2 Corinthians 12:7-9.
12. 2 Corinthians 12:20-13:2.
13. 2 Timothy 4:7-8.
14. 1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17-19, paraphrased.
15. 2 Timothy 4:6-18.
16. John 14:6.
17. Acts 9:15-16.
18. 1 Corinthians 15:9.
19. 1 Corinthians 15:8.
20. Philippians 3:5.
21. From *The New Inductive Study Bible* (Eugene, Oreg.: Harvest House, 2000), 1794.
22. From *The New Inductive Study Bible*, 1779.
23. Proverbs 3:5-6.
24. Psalm 37:23.
25. Acts 9:15-16.
26. *The New Inductive Study Bible*, 1848.
27. 2 Timothy 4:7.
28. Isaiah 30:21.
29. Psalm 119:18.
30. Genesis 6:5-6.
31. Ezekiel 6:9.
32. John 19:34.
33. John 14:16, KJV.
34. James 4:6.