

## 2 Corinthians Devotionals

### Read 2 Corinthians 1

**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 Cor 1:4**

November 1, 2000 is hard for me to forget. It was to be my first official day as a minister, and I had been looking forward to it for a while. Nikki had a pre-natal visit that day I had to miss because my car was getting serviced, and that's where I was when she called to tell me the doctor couldn't find a heartbeat. What I had thought was going to be a great day took a terrible turn. I wouldn't say I was mad at God, but for three days I neither prayed nor read my Bible. I was just numb at the loss of this person I had never even met, but already loved. Years later, a family in our church went through the loss of a miscarriage, and while so many people offered words without understanding, I remember telling them, "I've been where you are. I know what you're going through, and God brought me through it."

We need more genuine comfort. We look for the right card to send someone who's going through a tough medical or life situation.. Honestly, I'd trade a listening ear and a hug for any glittery card I've ever received. As we live the Christian life, there are going to be moments we don't want to remember. I'm not talking about moments of sin, but moments of extreme grief. Many pastors have told Christians that we shouldn't grieve, but that's not true. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 that we shouldn't grieve "...as do the rest who have no hope." **Realizing that suffering in your life may allow you to counsel someone in the future isn't the most comforting thought, but it helps us get away from "Why did you do this, God?" and instead leads us to ask, "What do you want me to learn from this, God?"** What situations from your past do you need to share with others? It may be hard to go through those memories again, but God wants to use you in bringing comfort to someone else who's going through the same ordeal you suffered through. We remember what it's like to suffer without few to none who really can offer more than empty words. Let's purpose in our hearts to be used by God to comfort the broken hearted. Who do you know today that is dealing with heartache that could use your testimony?

### Read 2 Corinthians 2

**But one whom you forgive anything, I *forgive* also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, *I did it* for your sakes in the presence of Christ, 2 Cor 2:10**

At a party one evening, I was butting into a conversation with my unpopular opinion on a particular tv show. A teen in our youth group finally destroyed me with the following quip: "This is a conversation between the taco and the burrito, nacho! (Get it...not yo...) Anyway, I thought it was funny, though it's just a spicier version of my Dad's favorite quip, "This is a conversation between A and B, so C your way out." Apparently my input wasn't as valuable as that between the two actual people in the conversation, which I would probably agree with in hindsight.

Now there is a lot here to get, and I admit I probably read this chapter three times. Essentially, Paul says there is, has, or will be someone in the church who causes the church body and himself sorrow over their actions. And of all the statements made, I think verse 10 is the most important

for us to get. He says that if the church forgives someone, so does Paul. Ultimately the wrong would be directed towards the church anyway, so Paul is just following the example of the party that was wronged in the first place. But have you seen times that people who aren't even involved in a situation have refused forgiveness? What about the spouse who cheats, and asks for forgiveness from their husband or wife? I've known of times that the cheater is forgiven and taken back, but while that husband or wife gave forgiveness, there are friends and family that are unwilling to do the same. All that really matters is that forgiveness has been given. **God forgives us even though He knows we're likely to fall right back into sins of pride, selfishness, and greed. If God is not selective with His forgiveness, why are we? We need to recognize there are some places our noses don't belong. And ultimately Paul says that he gave the forgiveness in the presence of Christ. For Paul, the presence of Jesus should be a constant reminder of forgiveness to the believer. Is there someone that most everyone has forgiven except you? What right do you have to hold onto contempt and unforgiveness if that person has sought it? Just like Jesus, we don't grant forgiveness based on worthiness. It's granted based on the request.**

### **Read 2 Corinthians 3**

**But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. 2 Cor 3:14**

This account of Moses is absolutely fascinating to me. When Moses was visiting regularly with God on Mt. Sinai, his face literally shone afterwards as a result of being in the presence of God. However, as time passed, the shine would dissipate (see Exodus 34:29-35). Moses came off the mountain, communicated God's messages and commandments to the people, then put a veil over his face until the next time. Now God did not command him to do this, and it appears he made the decision on his own. I'm completely speculating as to why, but I think as the shine wore off, so did the impact of God's message on the people. It's easy to remember that Moses was in the presence of God when he comes down brighter than the ball in Times Square. But as the shine faded, perhaps the people felt the importance of the commands faded as well.

Now to the NT. Paul is relating the veil to those who choose religion over relationship. There were many Jews who had been waiting on a Messiah, but the message that Jesus delivered was tough for them to accept. While Jesus didn't just throw away the law, He did make it clear that He was the fulfillment of the law. Jesus desire was the people would no longer have to check tablets of stone to know what they should do, but that those commandments would be written by the Spirit on their hearts (verse 3). That's why Jesus summed up all the commandments (not just the 10 from Moses, but the 600+ the Pharisees had come up with too) in Matthew 22:37-40 as simply "Love God, Love People." **Is your life steering more towards religion or relationship? People may see you in church on Sunday, but do people see you in the Spirit during the other six days? We have a great freedom in Jesus, not to do whatever we feel like, but to serve God out of love and reverence. Don't read the Bible because you have to. Don't pray because you have to. Do these things because we get to! Purpose to pray today by simply talking with God with what's on your heart. That's a great start.**

### **Read 2 Corinthians 4**

**And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 2 Cor 4:3-4**

I've never claimed to be the sharpest knife in the drawer, but in my defense, it would help if people would explain things better. There was a solar eclipse occurring one day while I was on the dairy farm of a friend. I kept looking at the sun trying to see the moon in front of it, but it looked just as bright as ever and started to give me a headache. My friend finally gave me his welding helmet and when I looked up at the sun, sure enough I could see that dark spot where the moon was passing in front of it. The show was much better with the helmet on because I wasn't overwhelmed by the sun, but able to see the light and shadows more clearly.

In verses 3-4 we read of the "god of this world". This is a term used to describe Satan. We know that he claimed authority over the kingdoms of the world when he tempted Jesus (Matthew 4:8-9). And notice how Satan operates; he attempts to blind people. Being blinded by the sun is really an overloading of your visual senses. It gives you headaches and can even disorient you. Paul says that Satan "blinds" so that they cannot "see the light of the gospel." People need to understand the Gospel. You may think that many lost people don't care simply by the way they live their lives. The greater truth isn't that they don't care, but they have been blinded and disoriented by the world. That's why simply sharing the gospel through your actions isn't often effective, because people around you have been blinded. I've never had anyone come up to me and say, "I've watched you for a while, and I want to ask Jesus to be my Lord and Savior." That comes by words. That comes when I shield their eyes from the lies of Satan that have been blinding them and I show them the change God wants to make and can make in their lives. **Don't be frustrated when lost people act lost. We have an opportunity to help them cut through the lies. Pray that God would give you an appointment today to share the gospel with someone and be ready for it.**

### **Read 2 Corinthians 5**

**we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. 2 Cor 5:8**

If you ask someone a question about the Bible, make sure that they answer you from the Bible! This verse has always meant a lot to me because I became very confused about the rapture. I knew that one day Jesus was going to return and call the dead out of their graves, and so I asked my pastor if that meant our souls were unconscious until the moment of the rapture? He took his Bible and opened it up to 2 Corinthians 5:8 and read this verse to me. I never wondered or worried on the subject again. Not because my pastor gave me an answer out of his head, but out of his Bible.

There is no delay between life and death. An old African proverb shares the story of the spider and lion. The spider attempts to trap a lion in its web, only to realize that his web was no match for the lion. It probably got in his face and was a temporary annoyance, but that was it. This is a picture of death for the believer. Our last moment of mortality will be exchanged for our first moment of eternity. Our bodies will lay dormant, but our souls will not. We will begin to enjoy

eternity in Heaven and fellowship with Jesus without any delay. Do you feel guilty as a Christian because you worry about dying? Drop that guilt. I pray that God gives me a long life and allows me to be an influence on my children and their children for years to come. But if God chooses not to grant that prayer, I know that He has something better for me and that He will care of my children. **Why don't I doubt Heaven? Because I haven't waited to go there to get to know my God. Our walk with Him begins here. Heaven will simply be a change of address to a much better neighborhood, and I will not meet God as a stranger, but as a son. Confess your concerns to the Lord today regarding death and ask Him to give you a peace on it. And remember that if you woke up today, God had a reason. Don't waste it.**

### **Read 2 Corinthians 6**

**Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 2 Cor 6:14**

Many of us have ridden a ski lift, but have you ever used a t-lift? It's the same type of cable as a regular lift, but the chair is replaced with a simple metal bar that two skiers hold onto and it pulls you up the mountain. The catch is you can't have two people on a t-lift who aren't close in size and weight. Matt and I were waiting for the t-lift at Winter Park to go to the top of the mountain, and he didn't want to go up with someone he didn't know. Matt probably outweighed me by 50 pounds, but we went ahead anyway and about halfway up the mountain, we couldn't hold on anymore and we both fell off and slide most of the way back down the mountain. Matt and I could ski together, but we couldn't ride that lift together.

This passage is often translated "do not be unequally yoked." The idea is that of two plow animals pulling together, but if one is stronger than the other, the plow won't go straight. In the same way, as Christians we never want to tie ourselves too tightly to unbelievers, or they may cause us to veer off of our path. Matt and I were friends, but that didn't mean we could do everything together when it came to skiing. In the same way, you have some friends that you can't do everything with when it comes to life. In your relationships with unbelievers, always make sure that you are pulling them off their course, instead of letting them pull you off of yours. **When we are being influenced more than we influence those friends, we must pull back. Friends and family may be hurt or offended that we have put the brakes on, but it's better to offend them than to offend our Lord. Who is in your life that tends to lead you where you don't want to go? It could be a friend or family member, and when you're with them, you're decision-making tends to deteriorate. Light and darkness don't go together. Remember the call to be in the world, but not of the world.**

### **Read 2 Corinthians 7**

**I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of* repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of* God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. 2 Cor 7:9**

In ten years of youth ministry, I've seen teenagers make some pretty bad choices. The worst choice they can make is to cover it up. One junior high boy came to tell me he had been using drugs. He admitted he had made a mistake, and he wanted me to come with him when he told his parents. It was tough because I knew how upset they would be, and I knew this young man had a

lot of sorrow for what he had done. While the conversation was really tough, I remember thinking how amazing it was this kid made the right choice despite knowing there would be consequences. He could have promised himself that he'd never do it again, and no one would have to know. But that wouldn't have brought a change in his life.

I also want to address one thing you may be noticing about Paul. Verse 8 can be confusing if you don't take your time as you read it. Some people look at this letter and wonder with all of his personality showing, "Was Paul writing the words of God?" Absolutely! Remember that Paul was writing to a specific audience that he knew in a specific way. God took that relationship, and who Paul was as an individual, to craft that letter to those believers. Paul is letting the readers know in verse 9 that writing his earlier letter was not easy for him. No one said dealing with sin would be easy. These Corinthian believers were in sorrow over their sin, but their sorrow was in accordance with the will of God. **Has your sin caused you sorrow? Are you upset with yourself over a stupid and sinful choice you made? Paul says the Corinthians were made sorrowful to the point of repentance, and that's God desire in your life as well. Have you been repentant, or are you just promising not to mess up again? What about the next time? Covering sin just leads to more sin, but repenting of sin leads us towards righteousness.**

### **Read 2 Corinthians 8**

**For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich. 2 Cor 8:9**

I used to be disheartened by preachers who claimed that God never wanted us to have struggles in our finances, health and relationships. They say that your struggles in one of these areas are a result of weak faith towards God. I heard a great response to this teaching, and I wish for the life of me I remember who taught it. The proper response is that Jesus had struggles in all three of these areas. He had to send Peter fishing to pay their taxes (Matthew 17:24-27). He certainly endured terrible pain and agony on His way to the cross. And His relationships weren't all sweet and easy (Matthew 12:46-49).

Do you think that as a believer you should lack any of the struggles Jesus endured? Jesus struggled despite never falling to sin and always obeying the will of the Father. And let's not forget that Jesus didn't just come to earth for us, but He left the riches of Heaven to accept poverty on our behalf. Because of that sacrifice we have become rich. We may not be kickin' it on Wall Street, but we have eternal riches that will never fade. In this chapter, these believers recognized that giving back is a picture of Jesus. He was a giver, not a taker. **Which are you? Do you give your life to Jesus daily, or are you content just to take the forgiveness that He offers? Do you look for opportunities to bless the people around you as a giver? Jesus' desire was to bless people, and by doing so He gained their attention. It's like the old adage professors used to tell us in seminary, "They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." Let us look at what we can give today instead of what we can get...be aware of opportunities today!**

### **Read 2 Corinthians 9**

**For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. 2 Cor 9:12**

Winston Churchill was a great motivator of people. During World War II, England needed to increase its coal production. Churchill called the labor leaders and supervisors to his office to gain their support for increasing production, and ultimately the workload on their men. He asked them to imagine a parade that would be held after the war. At the front would be the brave sailors who held open the sea lanes. Next would be the infantry who fought the Nazis on the ground, and the pilots who won the battles in the air. And finally, a long line of men in sweat-soaked miners caps would come through. Someone in the crowd would cry, "Where were you during the critical days of our struggle." And ten thousand throats would reply, "We were deep in the earth with our faces to the coal."

2 Corinthians 9:12 is one of my favorite verses, and in it we see a real call to service for the Christian. I have often been troubled by the offering time in our churches. They fail to reflect the true nature of why we pass the plates. Paul writes that the "service you perform", namely giving, is not just for supplying the needs of God's people. It doesn't just keep the lights on, pay the staff, and purchase discipleship supplies. Our offerings are an overflowing of thanks to our God. What if we gave that way? Was the sacrifice of the miners any less than others in the war effort? Not to Churchill, and God views our sacrifices and gifts in the same way, when we give as verse 7 instructs us. We don't give out of compulsion, but out of thanksgiving. **As you prepare to give your offerings on Sunday, try a few things first. Set aside your gift now. Don't wait until the moment the plates are passed. Take that check or money and just pray over it. Thank God for what He has done, and ask that His wisdom would be imparted to those who are entrusted to minister through your gifts. Let's treat our time of giving as a time of worshipping.**

### **Read 2 Corinthians 10**

***We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor 10:5***

John David Brown is one of the most notorious murderers in Missouri history. In 1987, soon after being arrested for one of his crimes, he escaped from a correctional facility in Southern Missouri. For 3 months, my parents always kept the door locked, even during the day as the manhunt went on with no luck. Eventually, police located Brown who had escaped to Oklahoma and brought him back to prison. Now let's imagine that in John David Brown's prison there were 100 murderers. If Brown were the only one to escape, that means that only 1% of all those murderers were now free. That's not very many, so why were the police so adamant in catching him? Obviously because he had proven that his intentions were for harm towards anyone who got in his way.

While we would never allow a murderer to run free from his prison, we allow sin to do so all too often. Paul says that we are to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Sin wants to captivate our thoughts. Sin wants us to hold onto that money that doesn't belong to us. Sin wants us to share the gossip we just heard. Sin wants us to turn a glance into a lingering stare. That's what happens when sin captivates our thoughts. It's like allowing a murderer to run free in your mind, because sin leads to death (James 1:15). **So how do we take our thoughts captive? Number one, we start our day right. We wake up ready to declare that our day belongs to the Lord. You can't decide around 2:30pm to live your day for Jesus. By then, too many**

**thoughts have run through, and been held captive by sin. We must be ready to take captive the words on their way to our mouths, and the actions on their way to our hands and feet. Are you taking your thoughts captive, or are you letting sin do the job? Challenge yourself to examine how your thoughts negatively influenced you yesterday, and how you could have honored Jesus by taking many of those thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ.**

### **Read 2 Corinthians 11**

**No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 2 Cor 11:14**

George Barna has given us some interesting research into the mind of the average Christian. In 2009, Barna interviewed over 1,000 people that identified themselves as “born-again Christians”. When asked about the existence of Satan, 6 out of 10 Christians said they believe Satan is not a living being, but merely a symbol of evil. 15 years ago, it was only 4 out of 10 (still too high), which makes me think as a minister that maybe I need to address that rascal more often than I do. I don’t want people blaming Satan for every sin they commit, because we would be surprised at the number of times we choose sin and Satan wasn’t even in our zip code.

Paul is actually talking about false teachers in this chapter. The early churches didn’t have Bibles lying all over the place, and so when Sunday rolled around, traveling preachers would come in and share a message. The problem was that the congregations weren’t very discerning and accepted anyone who knew to say “Jesus” every once in a while. This is how Satan likes to operate. He may sprinkle some truth in amongst the lies, but his intention is always for harm. In fact the name Satan is more of a description than a given name. Satan means “enemy”. The Jewish rabbis taught that Satan isn’t an enemy of God as much as he’s an enemy of man. What enemy can stand up to God? None, but instead Satan can turn his attention towards the weaker opponent...us. **He masquerades as an angel of light, because he is an angel. But he is one hundred percent darkness. He’ll never come in the form of a red man with a pitchfork. He tries to paint sin with a fresh coat of lies. (It won’t hurt us. No one will know. It’s just this one time.) Satan is real. In fact one of his greatest successes is leading believers to think he is a harmless symbol of evil. He is our enemy, and he is constantly prowling around to see who he can bring down (1 Peter 5:8). Are you on guard today against the enemy of man?**

### **Read 2 Corinthians 12**

**Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults , with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Cor 12:10**

The former football coach at my alma mater once said he’d like to have Michael Jordan as his quarterback. While Jordan was a great basketball player, he never showed a skill level to succeed on the baseball diamond, let alone the football field. Coach went on to say that in Jordan’s 15-year career, he never believed he had played his absolute best game, certain there was always something he could have done a little better somewhere on the floor. Our coach wanted a quarterback who knew he had room for improvement. As soon as a player begins to think he’s unbeatable, he usually gets beaten. A good player must know his weaknesses.

The Christian life is full of oxymorons. You'd think you should try to be the best Christian you can be, but then you realize it's not accomplished through human efforts alone. Paul had some sort of "thorn in his flesh". I don't think it was physical, especially as you read in this chapter some of the charges that certain members of the Corinthian church leveled at him. Paul was content with these difficulties, because he knew they kept him grounded. When he was strong, then he was weak because he was relying on his strength alone. But when we are weak, we are truly strong. **We must recognize our lone inability to deal in a godly way with insults, distress and difficulties. Only when we recognize that we don't have much to offer, can God step in and empower us. God wants us to be a part of his work, but He doesn't want us doing the work without Him. Otherwise, service becomes pride. Are you weak today? Are you emptying yourself in order to be filled and empowered by God? Not if you don't pray. God's strength is sufficient for your weakness. If the challenges in your life are not being removed by prayer, know that God has a purpose in it (2 Corinthians 7:9)**

### **Read 2 Corinthians 13**

**Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? 2 Cor 13:5**

Charles Taze Russell was the founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses and experienced a lot of early resistance. A pastor named J.J. Ross responded with a book called, "Some Facts About the Self-Styled 'Pastor' Charles T. Russell." Russell was so upset he sued Ross for libel and Ross used the trial to put Russell's teachings on display. Russell claimed to have produced his own translation of the Bible from his personal study of the original Hebrew and Greek writings. During the trial, Russell was handed a sheet of paper and asked to identify what was on it. When he was unable to do so, the lawyer informed him that the paper contained the Greek alphabet, of which Russell was unable to identify even one letter.

It's pretty easy to test and see someone's knowledge on a particular subject, but testing the genuineness of a person's faith is much harder. Paul actually says there is a way to test whether we are a Christian, which is by self-examination. How do we examine ourselves? A woman who had been a member of a previous church for 50 years asked me this question and I shared Romans 8:16 with her, that the Holy Spirit testifies to us if we belong to Him. After praying for an answer on her salvation, she was confident that she did not belong to God. **If someone were to ask you today what proof there is that you are a Christian, what would you say? I've heard, "I go to church as often as I can", or "I try to pray as often as I can" as two of the more common explanations. Only we can know if we truly belong to Him. The evidence is that Jesus Christ is in our lives, and we are changed by Him. Do you know that you are a Christian, or are you just accepting someone else's word for it? If your faith is sure, thank Him that He gives us such assurance (Romans 10:13). But if you have doubts, there may be a good reason for them. If you are unsure of your salvation, make that your one and only prayer today as you seek an answer from God.**