

GOD OF ALL COMFORT

2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-11

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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 tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.

For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us, you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many.

His rampage started a little past midnight on Sunday, December 9, 2007. Twenty-four year old, Matthew Murray, showed up at the Youth With A Mission training center in Arvada, Colorado, and asked to stay the night.

When he was told *“no,”* Murray pulled a pistol and opened fire, killing two people and wounding two more...

Later that day, Murray paid a visit to New Life Church in Colorado Springs, where again he spread his terror, fatally shooting two people and wounding three others.

He was finally stopped by a member of the New Life security team. The former police officer was thankfully carrying a concealed weapon that morning...

Matthew Murray had suffered for years with severe mental problems. He'd exhibited strange behaviors, claimed to hear voices, and resisted help. He blamed his problems on Christianity, and felt God had let him down.

After the shootings a letter to God was found in the backseat of Murray's car. In his depression he'd asked God, *“Why didn't any changes occur or any love or help come when I accepted You as Lord and Savior?”*

Obviously, Murray had many problems, but he had certainly fallen victim to a mistake many folks make regarding Christianity - *they think becoming a Christian guarantees them a happy life, a trouble-free life...*

Immediately, *the storms clear, the sun shines, the bills get paid, worries vanish, food just appears on the table.*

Here's an assumption as old as our text. For that was the mistake made by the church at Corinth. **They assumed a servant of God would see only blessing.**

Surely, an all-mighty God would give birth to an always-happy people... Wouldn't you think, that God intends to make His people healthy and wealthy - that a *powerful God* would have *prosperous kids*? That's what Matthew Murray thought, and he became violently angry when his assumptions proved not to be true, after all.

When Jesus enters a person's life He does bring love and help and change, but that transformation doesn't always translate into more pleasant circumstances.

Yes, change takes place spiritually - in a believer's heart - *but their cancer might remain... the repentant prisoner isn't guaranteed a suspended sentence... your estranged wife and kids may or may not come home... it could still take a while to get the job you really need...*

Paul was an amazing Christian. No one in the history of the Church had a bolder, more daring, more courageous, more loving faith than the Apostle Paul.

Yet his life was riddled with hardships. In fact, when God first called Paul, He said of him, **"I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."**

And this is what caused the Corinthians to doubt the legitimacy of Paul's ministry. Here's what they assumed, ***"Since God always blesses His kids, and Paul is always in hot water, then how can Paul truly be of God?"***

Paul's life and ministry stood as a contradiction to the misconceptions of the Corinthians. They figured if you were a church leader who followed God you would be strong, and sophisticated, and a celebrity, and rich - yet Paul was weak... willing to appear foolish... he was humble and unassuming... he even had financial needs.

The Corinthians wanted leaders with swag. They wanted to follow the high and mighty - *the hip pastor*.

Yet Paul gloried in His weakness. He preached the foolishness of the cross. As a vessel of God, rather than think of himself as a ornate glass vase, he was a simple clay jar. The reason he states later in 4:7, "That the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us."

All glory belongs to God - and Paul's goal was to focus people's attention on the contents of the vessel, not on the vessel itself - *on the message, not the messenger!*

2 Corinthians is a tutorial on authentic Christianity - *not the happy hype many modern-day preachers extol*.

In this letter, Paul examines Christianity where the rubber meets the road. He challenges us to correct our expectations, and trust God for what He really promises.

The letter begins, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God..." As we'll see, because Paul didn't act and look like how the Corinthians thought an apostle should act and look, some of the folks in the Corinthian church had doubted Paul's apostleship.

This is why he states it from the outset. He was an apostle - with all its authority - *"by the will of God."*

His leadership position in the church wasn't granted by other men - it certainly wasn't self-assumed - Paul was called by God. It was God's will he be a leader.

Paul writes along with his protege, **“Timothy our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia...”** **Corinth was the city - Achaia the region.** This letter was to be read by the Corinthians; then passed to neighboring churches.

And of course, this wasn't Paul's first *letter to, or experience with* the Corinthians. He knew them well...

Acts 18 describes Paul's initial visit to Corinth in 52 AD. He launched a thriving church in this seaport city.

Athens and Sparta were the traditional centers of Greek finance and culture - Corinth was the upstart.

The city was a frontier town, full of opportunity. Corinth attracted immigrants from all over the empire.

And like most boom towns it had a wild side. Away from home, and flush with cash, the working-class crowd in Corinth looked for ways to spend their time and ease their loneliness. Corinth became a sports capitol, and a raucous party town. Prostitution and vice were rampant in Corinth. Every night was Mardi Gras.

Paul's church planting had lasted 18 months, before he left Corinth and sailed to his home church in Syria.

Later, on his third missionary journey, Paul came to Ephesus in Asia... *and that's where he heard of trouble in the church at Corinth.* Rather than be the Church in the world - a

light and witness - the world had gotten into the church. Blatant sin and bad attitudes among the believers in Corinth was a blemish on Christianity.

And Paul corrected their carnality by writing them a letter. From Ephesus, he penned 1 Corinthians. It was a call to repent - an attempt to set the church in order.

It was sent to Corinth via Paul's coworker, Titus.

I'm sure you've heard the old saying, "[Absence makes the heart grow fonder.](#)" Well apparently, that adage didn't exactly apply to Paul's relationship with the Corinthians. Their reaction to his letter was mixed.

Some of the Corinthians *repented*. They showed a godly sorrow that led to change... But others *resented*. "[How dare Paul rebuke us! Who does he think he is!](#)"

Critics in Corinth began to question Paul's authority.

They cast doubt on his integrity, his honesty, even his courage. It was one thing to disagree with Paul, but the Corinthians resorted to mudslinging and slander. [Absence doesn't always make the heart grow fonder!](#)

News of the church's reaction to 1 Corinthians came to Paul while he was in Macedonia. And it was there he penned another letter to the Corinthians... *And guess what we now call it?...* How about "[2 Corinthians.](#)"

In this letter, Paul will defend himself and his ministry. In places, he grows bold. He even confronts his accusers. 2 Corinthians is an emotionally-charged letter. Paul is writing from his heart - out of his pain.

His feelings are raw and real. The apostle pleads his case in 2 Corinthians, as he does in no other letter.

And this makes 2 Corinthians an important book for everyone who serves the Lord. What I've said of the *Christian life* is also true of *Christian ministry*... Serving the Lord is not always easy, blissful, hassle-free...

Christian ministry is about *helping hurting people*, but soon you discover *hurting people often hurt people*.

If you're not careful, ministry can be hazardous to your own spiritual health. **Ministry can get messy.**

This is why lifeguards are taught to never jump in and swim directly to a drowning man. The frantic victim might overcome the lifeguard, and pull him under with them. The best strategy is to toss him a lifeline...

And the application for Christian service is that a good heart - a caring, well-meaning attitude - is not the only thing we need in ministry. There is a right way and wrong way to minister to spiritually drowning people.

This is why 2 Corinthians is so timely for us. Our church is full of servants. We've grown in Christ and now want to serve Him. But we need to add *wisdom* to our *willingness*. 2 Corinthians will help us with *how*...

It's interesting, despite *the multiple problems and personal attacks* Paul had to address with the believers at Corinth, he still respected *who they were in Christ*.

In verse 1 he refers to them by the lofty title, "*the church of God.*" He even considers them "*saints.*"

Today, the term “*saint*” has multiple meanings...

For one, it refers to a football team in New Orleans, that no Atlanta resident should ever like or cheer for...

It also refers to a super-Christian with unusual faith.

But in reality the word “*saint*” simply means “for special use.” And if you’re in Christ you are of special use to the Master! You’ve been bought with a price. You are God’s special possession. You are a saint!

And Paul greets the “*saints*,” “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul always begins his letters, “*grace and peace.*”

To know God accepts me *just as I am* and *right where I’m at*, brings me peace. I can rest from the pressure to always measure up. Through faith and faith alone I’m assured that I have a right standing with God!

And then Paul writes, verse 3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...” This is a wonderful phrase that appears three times in the NT...

In Ephesians 1:3 Paul uses these words to praise God for His **past blessings** - the favor He’s bestowed on believers... “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ...”

The phrase also appears in 1 Peter 1:3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Peter

praises God for our **future blessings** - the favor we'll receive when Jesus returns.

But here in 2 Corinthians Paul praises God **not** for His *past blessings*, or *future glories*, but for His *present help and comfort* in the midst of our trials. Paul writes, "**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort...**"

If you were a first century pagan reading this passage Paul's title for God would jump off the page!

You'd be shocked. No one familiar with the Greek pantheon of gods ever thought of a God who *specialized in comfort* and *majored on mercy*.

The Greek gods threw down thunderbolts. When their capricious whims were violated they were quick to seek retribution. They were known for their power, lust, envy, greed, vengeance - *not mercy and comfort!*

Yet Paul tells us the true God is the "*Father of mercies.*" In Hebrew culture to use the expression, "*the father of*" was the same as saying, "*the originator of.*"

Jesus called Satan, "*the father of lies,*" because he told the first one. Satan invented deceit. And as "*the Father of mercy,*" God is the originator of mercy.

Consider, the Christian God, the God of the Bible is the first mind to ever think of extending mercy. **Our God holds the patent on mercy and comfort!**

The Bible tells us in Exodus 20:6, that God "*shows mercy to thousands...*" Numbers 14:18 tells us, "*The LORD is long*

suffering and abundant in mercy..."

Psalm 136 repeats time and time again, "His mercy endures forever." In other words, it never runs out.

God has an unlimited supply of mercy and comfort. In fact, Ephesians 2:4 tells us, "God... is rich in mercy."

Aren't you glad God is rich in what we need most!

He has mercy enough to cancel every sin of every sinner, and still have an abundance of mercy leftover.

It's true, our God doesn't promise to shelter us from struggles and difficulties, but He does guarantee us His mercy and comfort in the midst of those hardships.

It reminds me of the little boy who was ushering at a wedding. A veteran usher explained to the young guy, "Before you escort a lady down the aisle ask her, 'are you a guest of the bride or groom?' Put the groom's guests on one side and the bride's on the other side."

But that's not exactly the way it came out of the young man's mouth. At the wedding, the new usher was overheard asking, "Mam, who's side are you on?"

One thing is certain, if you're in Christ Jesus, **the Father of mercy and God of all comfort** is on *your* side.

As Paul writes in Romans 8:31, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" The true God doesn't shelter us from pain and suffering, but He is a God who cares, and comforts, and shows amazing amounts of mercy.

Paul says as much in verse 4, he refers to our Father God, as He **"who comforts us in all our tribulation..."**

The English word "*comfort*" is from two Latin words which mean "*with strength.*" Sure, God lets us cry on His shoulder - *but just long enough to release our pain.*

He doesn't let us sulk! God's mercy is accompanied by His strength! **God joins no one's pity-party.**

It reminds me of a young mother who wrote, "It was one of the worst days of my life: the washing machine broke down, the telephone kept ringing, my head ached, and the mail carrier brought a bill I had no money to pay. Almost to the breaking point, I lifted my one year-old into his highchair, leaned my head against the tray, and began to cry. Without a word, my son took his pacifier out of his mouth and stuck it into mine."

Hey, I know people who like to share pacifiers!

They like to get together and nurse wounds - cry together over spilt milk - but this is **not** the comfort God specializes in. His comfort is more than a pacifier.

God gives you strength and power and energy to rise up in His Spirit and tackle the challenges you face.

God comforts us like I use to comforted my players when they were at bat and got hit by an errant fastball.

I'd check for serious injury; then wipe their tears.

But after thirty seconds or so, I'd rub some dirt on the sore spot, and tell them it was time to shake it off and take their base. We don't have time to lick wounds and rub boo-boos.

Look on the bright-side you're on first!

My High School football coach was a real hard-nose. He had a rule. If you were seriously injured, then stay on the ground - don't move a muscle - let a trainer come on the field and assist you to the sidelines.

But, if all that happens is you get the breath knocked out of you, or you pull up with a cramp - you were to get off the field on your own, as fast as you could.

As our Coach put it, "I don't want anybody clapping for you just because you got hurt!" *At times we think we deserve applause just because we got injured...*

This isn't the case with God's comfort. Rather than sulk with us in our sorrows, He repairs us for the battle.

Jesus is called "the balm of Gilead." He's a poultice that sucks out the pain. But as one pastor put it, "God's comfort has some strength in it - some teeth to it."

Jesus refuses to assign us permanent disability. He heals us and grows us to send us back into action.

The Latin word for "comfort" is "fortis" - from which we get our term "fortitude." We have victories to win, and it's God's comfort that toughens us for the fight!

Paul says in verse 4, God comforts us, "that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." It's been said, "God's comfort does not terminate in the one who receives it." He works in us, to work through us. He comforts us to make us comforters.

I love Peterson's paraphrase of verse 4, "God comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you

know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us."

God wants to involve us in His work, but we have to go through necessary preparation. What kind of impact do you think you would have on suffering people if God saved you, and then insulated you from all trouble?

You never got sick... or stubbed a toe... or sliced a T-shot... or finished last... or got bummed out... Do you really think the people around you would listen when you talked to them about God's comfort and mercies?

What would you say to your friends if you'd never experienced the hurt they're feeling... never felt the throb of their pain... *How could you help them at all?*

Sure, you could quote some verses, and pass out some sound advice, but how far would it wiggle its way into their soul... if it weren't laced with real empathy?

The late Joe Bayley in his book, *"View From A Hearse,"* talks about his experiences in the aftermath of losing one of his children... "I was sitting there torn by grief. Someone came and talked of God's dealings, of why it happened, of hope beyond the grave.

He talked constantly. He said things I knew were true. I was unmoved, except to wish he would go away.

He finally did. Another person came and sat beside me. He didn't talk. He didn't ask me leading questions.

He just sat beside me... listened when I said something, answered briefly, prayed simply, and left. I was moved. I was

comforted. I hated to see him go.”

If you lose a child, or a spouse, I can visit with you, and spend a few hours saying all the right things.

I've got plenty of truth I can unload!

But I know it won't be as meaningful as a visit from someone who could say the right things bathed in the comfort they'd received in the midst of that same pain.

Even Jesus had to undergo this kind of preparation.

Hebrews 4 tells us, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." We can confidently approach Jesus for help, because He knows firsthand the help we need.

When my son, Zach, was 3 or 4 years old he spent the night with his grandparents. Zach and Dad were in the den playing cowboys. Their toy guns were blazing.

Villains and sheriffs were dropping like flies.

Every time Zach got shot he'd fall to the ground.

His granddaddy would race over to the wounded cowboy, open his shirt, cut the bullet out of chest, and sew him back up... then they'd start playing again.

At one point in the shootout grandma walked by... when Zach hit the deck she jumped into the action.

She opened his shirt, cut the bullet out of his chest, and

sewed him up - but rather than popping up to continue playing, Zach just laid motionless on the floor.

Finally, he looked at her and groaned, "Grandma, there's only one problem. They shot me in the leg."

And realize, this is why Jesus is such an excellent comforter... For He knows exactly where it hurts!

Like you, Jesus plumbed the depths of depression.

Jesus knows the agony of a betrayal - and the pain of a cruel death. He's felt *our sorrow* to bring us *His joy*.

Here's a provocative quote, "If you are going to be used by God, he will take you through a multitude of experiences that are not meant for you at all; they are meant to make you useful in his hands."

The trial you're enduring even as we speak, may ultimately have very little to do with your life. God is using it to prepare you to minister to someone else at a time and in a way that will change their course forever.

And what you're begrudging and resenting right now is what will qualify you to speak into that person's life.

It's a true statement, "God does not comfort us to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters."

Empathy is one of the most powerful forces on Earth.

The knowledge that someone cares can reach into the deepest depression and lift a person out! *But the person with empathy pays a price to obtain it.*

The tendency for us when we get hurt is to shut down, and

lick our wounds - to sit on the sidelines and sulk in our sadness - but healing comes to us when we keep on caring, and loving, and reaching out to others.

All God's healers are wounded healers. Jesus leads the way. Because of His wounds, He knows how to heal people who've been bruised and broken.

God is pleased - we are blessed - people come to Christ - the Kingdom gets built - the devil is defeated - when we redeem our *hurts*, and turn them into *help!*

Paul goes on in verse 5, "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ." God raises the level of His comfort in proportion to the suffering He calls on us to endure.

He doesn't leave us hanging... or in over our heads.

As *The Living Bible* puts it, "You can be sure that the more we undergo sufferings for Christ, the more He will shower us with His comfort and encouragement."

It's like a morphine drip. A hospitalized patient in pain has an IV. When their suffering rises, they push a button to increase their comfort... This is how God's comfort works. Though He holds the button, in miracle ways He adjusts His consolation to manage our grief.

In verse 6 Paul speaks of his suffering in relation to the Corinthians, "Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer.

Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation." Paul's sufferings were largely tied to his efforts to

bring the gospel to the Corinthians and to people all around the world. The beatings and burdens, the stonings and shipwrecks, all the trials he will innumerate later - could've been avoided if Paul had spend his life lying on the couch playing video games.

Ironically, it was his passion to see the Corinthians comforted, that caused Paul to endure such affliction!

But it was his affliction that caused them to doubt his legitimacy. Remember, their false assumption - *a servant of God will only see blessing... Thus, if Paul were truly of God, then why was his life so difficult?*

It was a Catch-22... Paul suffered in his attempts to minister the Gospel to the Greeks, but the Greeks saw suffering as proof he wasn't a minister of the Gospel.

With the Corinthians, Paul was in a no-win situation.

He writes in verse 7, "**And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.**" Paul knows that what happened in his experience will ring true in the lives of the Corinthians. As they suffer for Christ they'll experience His comfort.

Yet at the moment, with his critics he can't win.

But in his eyes, he *can't lose*. His **hope is stedfast**. If we *suffer for Christ*, then we'll be *comforted by Christ*.

And Christ's comforts are always worth the effort!

Verse 8, "**For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were**

burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.” Apparently, there was a specific, pressing hardship that Paul endured.

While in Asia, probably Ephesus, Paul had been overwhelmed. If it'd been modern times they might've branded him suicidal, or put him on anti-depressants.

Paul admits, “*we despaired even of life.*” Like an old, worn-out dog, Paul wished God would just put him down - call him home - put him out of his misery!

Imagine, the great Apostle suffered from depression. *And he didn't try to cover it up.* He wasn't ashamed. He prefaces verse 8, “*we do not want you to be ignorant.*”

He wants all Christians to know this can happen. Even God's servants can have *bouts with the blues!*

Charles Haddon Spurgeon is often called “*the prince of preachers,*” but he once confessed, “*I am the subject of depressions of spirit so fearful I hope none of you ever gets to such extremes of wretchedness as I go.*”

Even in the Bible we find examples of mighty men who underwent frightful episodes of dejection. *Elijah, Job, Jeremiah* all explored the dregs of the dark night.

Paul says in verse 9, “*Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves...*” Some Bible commentators think a warrant was issued for Paul's arrest and execution.

Whatever this “*sentence*” was, it was a dark time for Paul. *And this happens.* Again, like the Corinthians we assume that Christians only have sunny days, and high times, and lots of

laughs. Something is wrong if we find ourselves under a cloud, feeling low, or wiping a tear.

But the truth that comes across so profoundly in 2 Corinthians is that **God's will for us encompasses not only blessing, but suffering - trials as well as triumphs.**

And Paul explains why in verse 9, **"Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead..."**

Here's why God allows stress to invade a Christian's life... it strips us of *self-confidence* and replaces it with *God-confidence*. It's through *trials* we learn to *trust*.

Often folks say, **"God won't give you more than you can handle."** Some people think that's in the Bible. It's not. It's not true. God overwhelmed Paul, so that he would learn to trust in Him, not in his own resources.

Once, a wife decided to clean out her husband's wardrobe. She was tired of his old-fashion threads.

But he objected! He said his taste in clothes was just fine. The wife finally won the battle, and added her husband's old clothes to what she was offering at the garage sale. But when a lady shopper saw his clothes, and started shouting, **"Great, these clothes are exactly what I'm looking for!"** the husband felt vindicated.

He was just about to take a jab at his wife with his best, **"I told you so!"** when the lady added, **"These clothes are perfect for the scarecrow in my garden!"**

Every Christian's diet needs a regular slice of humble pie. *We need to be reminded we're not all that!* We're servants. The power comes to us from God!

It's funny, our trash picks-up on Monday mornings!

That means I always end my big day of ministry for Jesus by rolling out my trash to the street! It's a fitting reminder that God raises the dead! *I put out the trash!*

Verse 10 tells us it was God - not Paul, not me, not you - **"who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us..."** If Jesus won the victory over death, why would you think He'd now watch us flounder in life?

If He delivered us once, He'll do it again and again!

Author Kent Hughes suggests, **"The cycle of Christ's experience becomes the pattern for Paul and all serious Christians: affliction - death - resurrection."**

To hammer home the message of the Gospel, God repeats it's principles over and over in our experience.

We're afflicted with a trial... That attack results in a death... Out of that death God works a resurrection...

Maybe the affliction has to do with business. Your company closes - a dream dies. Yet through it, God takes you in a new direction, resurrects an opportunity.

Perhaps your affliction is a troubled relationship. It doesn't work out - *love dies*. Yet from the ashes, God resurrects a wiser you who's now ready for a new start.

CS Lewis once said, “Nothing that has not died will be resurrected.” To know the resurrection power of Jesus, you have to taste a death of some sort.

Thus, *affliction, death, resurrection* - is not only an article of Christian faith. It's ingrained in the Christian life. It's a cyclical reminder of God's faithfulness.

And notice how Paul finishes his thoughts on Christ's great deliverance. He tells us how we can assist, “you also helping together in prayer for us...” The picture is of several people working as one to lift a heavy object.

This is what we do in prayer! Life is full of *objects too heavy to lift - obstacles too entrenched to move - and mountains too high to climb - on our own!* It's through prayer that we join forces and overcome together!

And we do it for a reason. “That thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many.” *When many pray, then many praise!*

Praying together insures us rejoicing together.

And that's Paul's hope for the Corinthians - to *end* their misconceptions, and *end up* praising God with them... Next week we'll finish 2 Corinthians 1...