



2 Corinthians: Triumph in Trials

Week 2: Stand Firm!

2 Corinthians 1:12-24

Feedback from last week: Comfort in Troubles

Has last week's passage and session changed you in any way this week? Have you been aware of God's comfort in trials? Have you had a chance to offer God's comfort to anyone else this week?

Share your stories

Read 2 Corinthians 1:12-24 (twice preferably!)

Context: Leadership challenges

The context of much of this letter is that Paul has faced opposition over his leadership from travelling leaders - 'Super apostles' - as he sarcastically calls them (see 2 Corinthians 11:1-6) - who had come into the church he had founded in Corinth. These opponents - who had appeared impressive on the outside both in their oratory and in their wealth in comparison to Paul - had clearly caused much pain to Paul, and discredited him. And they had turned the church against him and caused great division. But, Paul in this letter seeks to demonstrate that true Christian leadership isn't about leading with the ways and values of the world. It is not the way of impressive stature and cleverness and power, or credentials.

No, he says, true Christian leadership is a cross shaped leadership - a leadership which is transformed through suffering and brokenness and self-sacrifice, a leadership which is Christlike, a leadership where power is made perfect through weakness.

Questions (choose some from):

- 1) Give an example of a leader that you admire. Why do you admire them?
- 2) Looking at v 12-14, identify some of the characteristics and values of 'Godly Leadership' according to Paul. How are these characteristics different from the world's values and characteristics for leadership?
- 3) What do you understand Paul means when he describes how he has led 'according to God's grace' as opposed to 'according to worldly wisdom'? (v12)
- 4) Look at v18-20. What does it mean that God's promises are 'Yes in Christ'?
- 5) Look at v21-22. What does this say about how we stand firm amid trials and troubles?
- 6) Take each of the phrases below and share what they mean to you, and how they might help you 'stand firm' in trials
 - a. He anointed us (especially think... what do you believe God has anointed you for?)
 - b. Set his seal of ownership on us
 - c. Put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come

Respond and Encounter:

Some suggestions:

- 1) Take some time together to pray for leaders (that you know personally and famous leaders too, or even our mission partners) that they be strengthened to lead in a Godly way.
- 2) Whether you are a leader or not (and leadership can be in a small way or a big way, as a parent/grandparent, work leader, leading a church group etc.) take a few moments to reflect with God on the Godly characteristics of v12. What is God saying to you? It might be an encouragement or a challenge. Share that with someone else and pray for each other.
- 3) Play some reflective music (e.g. The Father's Song (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovlaa-lmSeg>) or Who you say I am (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcC1Bp13n_4) and reflect on v21b-22

*'He anointed us,
Set his seal of ownership on us,
and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.'*

Perhaps you might even like to anoint each other with oil as and speak these words over each other as a way of affirming God's call on your life.

- 4) Share in small groups what you sense God has 'anointed you for' on your frontlines. Share any particular challenges you might have at the moment and pray for each other that you will stand firm in the calling God has given you.

Key verses to meditate on this week:

'Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come' (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)