

THINGS THAT HINDER YOUR YEARS AT SEMINARY

Pressing On through the Unexpected

2 Corinthians 1:1–11

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

No Christian receives immunity from the unforeseen trials of life—a miscarriage, a destroyed home, cancer, or divorce, to name a few. No servant of God receives an easier life due to his or her acts of service. But there are truths to affirm and principles to follow that help us through these trying seasons.

We simply don't know what difficulties God will allow us to endure, but we do know that God is the final arbiter of our time on earth. We have the hope of resurrection beyond death, and we have Jesus' promises to strengthen us during those dark days we face until resurrection.

The heavy topic of suffering, which you may now be experiencing, is the focus of this study. We'll join Chuck Swindoll as he walks through 2 Corinthians 1:1–11, and glean insights that will aid us in those unexpected difficulties of ministry.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

“Pressing On through the Unexpected” will end our three-part series on things that make ministry difficult. As you'll recall, we've reviewed how people as well as ourselves can make ministry tough.

If you wish to explore the topic of suffering beyond this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we recommend Chuck's book *Job: A Man of Heroic Endurance*.



Searching the Scriptures Tip: Prayer

Always, always, always—we want to pray before and during our time in God's Word. As Chuck says, “Study without prayer is an incomplete process—a futile effort.”¹ The Spirit illumines our minds to understand what *God* wants us to understand.

Quotable

*Don't give in or
give up when facing
that dreaded,
unexpected turn
in life.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Before using the *Searching the Scriptures* study method, let's pray:

Father, in light of what Your Son Jesus has said, "Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows" (John 16:33), I pray for the peace, strength, and wisdom that can come only from You, the divine fountain of life and sustainer of all things. Please bless me in this study and use it for Your purposes. For Christ's glory and my joy, amen.



Observing 2 Corinthians 1:1–11

In observation, the first step of our Bible study, we slowly read the author's words, examine the way he connected sentences and paragraphs, and mull over the ideas and imagery he used. Remember: we don't apply the text to ourselves in this step—we merely want to observe what it says. Bible students are like chefs who must prepare and bake the cake before eating it.

Start by reading *2 Corinthians 1:1–11*, and make notes of what you see.

Who God Is—2 Corinthians 1:3

According to 2 Corinthians 1:3, in what two ways did Paul describe God?

According to the same verse, what response did these attributes of God produce in Paul?



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What God Can Do—2 Corinthians 1:9

Now look carefully at 2 Corinthians 1:9. What about God led Paul to rely on Him through suffering?

Paul felt like he was hanging with just a few fingers on the rocky edge of life—expecting all to end. But God rescued him from mortal danger. Notice how God’s provision in the past led Paul to trust God for the future (2 Corinthians 1:10).



Interpreting 2 Corinthians 1:1–11

During interpretation, we move from observing what the text says to discovering what the text means. We ask some interpretive questions like, *How did the original hearers understand it? What’s the theology in the text? What cultural symbols were used then that aren’t used now?*

Why We Suffer

In 2 Corinthians 1:1–11, Paul explains why we may go through suffering. He’s not exhaustive and doesn’t explain all the mysteries in God’s universe, but he offers a helpful launching pad for us to better grasp the topic of suffering. Let’s explore Paul’s thoughts.

In 2 Corinthians 1:4, Paul introduced the *first reason* why we suffer. Notice the “so that”—it’s the clue. What’s the *first reason* we suffer?



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2 Corinthians 1:1–11

In 2 Corinthians 1:5–9, Paul recounted his excruciating experiences building up to the *second reason* for suffering. Just look at Paul's intense language. "Weighed down with troubles" (2 Corinthians 1:6), "crushed and overwhelmed" (1:8), "expected to die" (1:9). Unable to stay in the thick mud of despair, Paul elevated his thoughts to find hope in God's purpose for suffering. It's there at the end of 2 Corinthians 1:9. See it? Record below the *second reason* we suffer.

The *third reason* for suffering lies embedded in 2 Corinthians 1:11. To find it, restate the verse in your own words, uncovering assumptions and clarifying connections. This is a helpful method for interpreting the Bible because we must understand it to reword it. For this exercise, you might consult multiple Bible translations and perhaps an online commentary, such as *Constable's notes* or *William Barclay's thoughts*. Barclay is one of Chuck's favorites. Now restate the verse and note the *third reason* for suffering.



Correlating 2 Corinthians 1:1–11

Correlation expands our interpretation so that we peruse other parts of God's Holy Word to see what He said elsewhere that complements what He said in our main passage. We do this to better understand God's grand redemption narrative, the historical events of the Bible, theology, and how to lead holy lives.

Today, we'll provide a passage that adds another angle on suffering: *Revelation 21:1–7*. We do not lose heart during suffering because of our eternal guarantee illustrated in this text. Slowly read and reflect on Revelation 21:1–7, and summarize how and why it complements our study of 2 Corinthians 1:1–11.



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Applying 2 Corinthians 1:1–11

By applying the Bible to our lives with the power of God's Spirit, we become like Christ, and God the Father will see our transformation through to the end.

Application increases our awareness of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives, helps us see as the Father sees, and animates us to interact with the world as Christ would.

In his sermon "Pressing On through the Unexpected," Chuck tells us:

Rather than fighting, surrender. Rather than resisting, release. There will be occasions in your ministry when you will reach up because that is the only way you have to look.

Is there something in your life or ministry that you're doing everything you can to make happen, but it isn't? Take a moment and begin your surrender to God through prayer.

Is something happening in your life or ministry that you're resisting with all your power? It may be something you need to release to God. Loosen your grip, and rest in God's goodness.

Do you need to reach up right now? Are you yearning for healing or strengthening from God's Spirit? Express your heart to God. He hears you.



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Prayer allows us to unlock the door and enter the house of God's blessings. "It gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom" (Luke 12:32).



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You hear us even if our suffering is too great for words. I know that You choose to use our suffering for ends which I can't see, so I trust in Your promises. Even as Christ endured the cross for the joy set before Him, I pray that You allow me to endure in life because of the joy awaiting me in You. Thank You for allowing me to have a taste of that joy right now. I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2016), 128.



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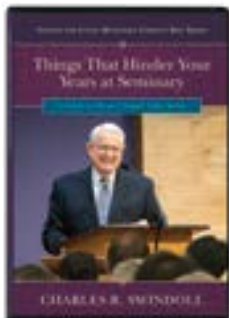
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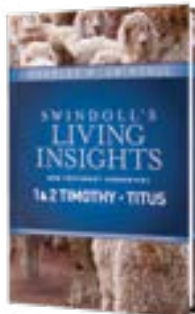
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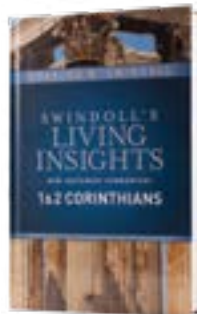
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For the 2018 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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