

AFFLICTION AND HOPE (2 COR 1:8–11) IN THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT

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Abstract

In 2 Corinthians 1:8–11, Paul shares his experiences of affliction, specifically the great pressure he and his companions faced in Asia. But the God who raises the dead had delivered him from such a deadly peril. Affliction and hope provide two aspects of Paul's life context and understanding of who God is amid troubles and hardships. The Nigerian understanding of affliction and hope resonates very much with Paul's context. Afflictions are not relegated to the individual's failure or God's abandonment. Rather, there is a profound understanding and communal approach to affliction, hope, and God. This language is undoubtedly relatable to many Nigerians who have faced overwhelming challenges; hence, this text served as a source of hope, a fundamental aspect of human existence, providing a source of strength and endurance in difficult times. Reading the text hermeneutically and contextually, this paper seeks to explore Paul's affliction and hope in 2 Corinthians 1:8–11 in the Nigerian context to articulate who God is in suffering and afflictions. The significance of this lies in the fact that the fruits of the exegesis will help to encourage Nigerians to dance to the music of affliction, knowing that their hope in God will lead them to a better future.

Introduction

In today's world, we are constantly bombarded with images of pain and suffering. Poverty, disease, and conflict seem to be ever-present, particularly in Nigeria. In the midst of such affliction, it can be difficult to hold on to hope. The second letter to the Corinthians provides some window into the inner life of Paul as an apostle and as a believer. He appears to be as human as every other person except

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That his life context is a mystery. He is mostly misunderstood or misrepresented. His life context of hardships and struggles with temptations and failures is just like any other human being. He laments on the hardships and troubles, and near-death experiences. However, Paul's laments provide some glimpse of faith and assurance of God's deliverance and providence.

In 2 Corinthians 1:8–11, Paul shares his experiences of affliction, specifically the great pressure he and his companions faced in Asia. But the God who raises the dead had delivered him from such a deadly peril. Affliction and hope provide two aspects of Paul's life context and understanding of who God is amid troubles and hardships. This language is undoubtedly relatable to many Nigerians who have faced overwhelming challenges, and this text served as a source of collective hope, a fundamental aspect of human existence, providing a source of strength and endurance in difficult times.

Consequently, the understanding of affliction and hope in Nigeria resonates very much with Paul's context. Afflictions are not relegated to the individual's failure or God's abandonment. Rather, there is a profound understanding and communal approach to affliction, hope, and God. This is a reminder that affliction can overwhelm and rob individuals of their strength and even their will to live. But in the face of such trials, individuals are called to turn towards God and place their hope in Him. This is not a passive hope, but an active one. A hope that draws strength from the knowledge that God has delivered us in the past, and He will do so again.

This is quite *ad rem* especially in a country that has been shaped by struggle, resilience, and unwavering faith in the midst of adversity. This is evident in the African proverbs, "smooth seas do not make skillful sailors." From poverty and hunger to political instability and violence, African communities face numerous challenges on a daily basis. However, it is precisely in the face of these adversities that the Nigerian people have shown incredible resilience and faith. This is so because there is a strong sense of community and reliance on faith. When faced with affliction, individuals and communities come together and turn to God for strength and hope. This is where the beauty of Paul's message lies - in reminding us that our afflictions are not in vain, but rather they serve to deepen our reliance on God and strengthen our hope in Him.

Using the narrative-critical and contextual methods of exegesis, this paper seeks to explore Paul's affliction and hope in 2 Corinthians 1:8–11 in the Nigerian context to articulate who God is in suffering and afflictions. The significance of this lies in the fact that the fruits of the

exegesis will help to encourage Nigerians to dance to the music of affliction, knowing that their hope in God will lead them to a better future.

Paul's View on Affliction and Hope in the Corinthian Letters

The first and second letters to the Corinthians were written during a time of great upheaval in the early Christian community. The Corinthians faced persecution, conflict, and challenges in their faith. In his letters, Paul addresses issues of affliction and hope.

Affliction: Paul understood affliction to be a constituent part of Christian ministry, a perspective that he also applied to his ministry in Corinth. Mario M. DiCicco identifies this attention to suffering as part of Paul's effort to establish his ethos among the Corinthians. The importance of this theme is suggested by its prominence in the letter's first chapter, where Paul writes, "We do not want you to be uninformed... about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life"

(1:8). From these words, it appears that Paul had recently endured a peril of some magnitude.

Paul relates this suffering to the spiritual welfare of the Corinthians, stating in the prior verses, "If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in your patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort" (1:6-7). This is one of the most revealing Pauline texts regarding his perspective on his relationship with the churches, being indicative of his devotion to them, even at great personal cost to himself.

It is Paul's conviction that his suffering is used by God for the spiritual benefit of the Corinthians. This was the "interchange" marking his ministry: personal affliction endured for collective benefit. Paul had suffered, and Paul had received comfort from God in his affliction, a divine comfort now being transferred to the Corinthians. Put another way, Paul was serving as "the channel of comfort to others." Paul would willingly endure suffering for these converts' sake, because he knew it would be for their betterment.

While the precise character of this suffering for the Corinthians is not clear—or whether he is even alluding to an instance related specifically to this congregation—we know that Paul had been intensely anxious to learn about the current status of situation in Corinth. He writes, "When

we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn—conflicts on the outside, fears within” (7:5).

Certainly, what Paul writes generally about his sufferings in 2 Corinthians 11:28-29 applies also to the Corinthian congregation, over whom he had expended so much time and energy: Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? Fitzgerald says of this text:

Paul’s greatest hardships were provided by the churches to whose care he devoted himself... They were his Achilles’ heel, for as long as his relationship with his churches was good and the churches were themselves at peace, all was well. When there was strife within a church or he himself was at odds with his ‘children,’ then his ‘fears within’ made his ‘fighting’s without’ all the fiercer.

The difficulties that continued to afflict the Corinthian believers and to beset his personal relationship with them had touched the apostle deeply, causing him internal anguish over their spiritual condition. Yet these same sufferings allowed Paul to minister to them more effectively and empathetically, and also demonstrated to them the depth of his devotion. Pickett says that for Paul, his sufferings “are the mark of his solidarity with those who are in need of comfort,” paradoxically allowing his weakness to contribute to the building up of the community. While some of the Corinthians might have suggested that Paul’s sufferings were inflicted as divine punishment for his alleged misconduct, and while his suffering stood in sharp contrast to the Corinthians’ idealized life of wisdom, he insists that such hardships were another confirmation that the congregation’s faith was ultimately not his own doing but God’s. Marshall states, “That which the Corinthians regarded as culturally and socially inferior about Paul was in reality the place where God’s power was demonstrated... and it was precisely to the weakness of the apostle that the Corinthians owed their Christian life.”

Hope: Hope is a powerful theme that resonates throughout the Letters to the Corinthians. These letters, written by the Apostle Paul to the early Christian community in Corinth, are filled with messages of encouragement and optimism, highlighting the importance of hope in the face of trials and tribulations.

One of the key passages in which Paul discusses hope is found in 1 Cor 13:13, where he writes, “And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.” Here, Paul emphasizes the endurance and enduring nature of hope. While faith and love may falter, hope

remains constant and unchanging. This message is crucial for the Corinthians, who were facing uncertain times and needed to hold onto something unshakeable.

In 1 Cor 15:19, Paul also speaks about the consequences of losing hope, stating, “If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.” This verse serves as a reminder to the Corinthians that their hope is not just for this life, but for eternity. As Christians, we are called to look beyond our current circumstances and place our hope in the promises of God.

Another aspect of hope that is highlighted in the Letters to the Corinthians is its ability to bring people together. In 1 Cor 1:10, Paul urges the Corinthians to be united in their beliefs and to avoid division. He reminds them that their hope is rooted in the same Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and this should be the foundation of their unity. This message is particularly relevant in today’s society where division and conflicts seem to be prevalent.

Hope also plays a crucial role in helping believers endure hardships and challenges. In 2 Cor 4:8-9, Paul writes, “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.” These verses serve as a powerful reminder that no matter what difficulties we may face, our hope in God will sustain us and keep us from being completely overwhelmed.

Finally, the theme of hope in the Letters to the Corinthians is a constant and powerful message that reminds us of the enduring nature of our faith. Through Paul’s words, we are encouraged to cling to hope in the face of trials and tribulations, to have faith in the promises of God, and to remain united in our beliefs. As we navigate through the challenges of life, may we always remember the words of Paul and embrace the message of hope found in the Letters to the Corinthians.

The Text of 2 Cor 1:8-11 (NRSV)

8 We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. 9 Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death so that we would rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. 10 He who rescued us from so deadly a peril will continue to rescue us; on him we have set our hope that he will rescue us again, 11 as you also join in helping us by your prayers, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

2 Cor 1:8-11 as a Coherent Unit

After the liturgical style and rhetorical idiom in verses 1-7, verse 8 introduces a section which lacks these features. It marks the major division of the letter (from 1:8 to 7:16). The connective *gar*, “for,” “then,” indicates a connection with verses 3–7 and 8–11, the “sufferings” and “encouragement” (in vv. 3–7) point forward to some specific occasion, referred to in verses 8–11. *gar* serves as an explanatory bridge from the general reference to “all our afflictions” in the benediction (v.4) to the specific “our affliction in Asia” in the present passage. To lend credence to this, vv. 8-11 just as in 1:12-2:13, Paul deals with what took place after his departure from Corinth and in verse 8, for the first time in his letter, he writes “brothers and sisters,” which could point to a new beginning.

Having pointed to this concrete “affliction,” the writer then (1) declares the severity (“we were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure”), and (2) discloses his personal reaction to it (“so that we despaired even of life”). This pericope is linked by a series of catch-phrases, notably at verse 10 (*errysato...hrusetai...hrusetai*: “he delivered ... he will deliver ... he will deliver”). The positioning of the words in verse 11 is also artistic. From v. 12 onward Paul discusses matters in connection with the Corinthians. Finally, the solemn “full” in v. 11 appears to round off the passage, and the theme there present of “thanking” corresponds quite nicely with that of blessing in v. 3.

Structure of 2 Cor 1:8-11

2 Corinthians 1:8-11 provides a profound insight into the Apostle Paul’s understanding of suffering, faith, and the communal nature of Christian ministry. The structure takes a linear form based on the narrative ploy. In Verse 8, Paul addresses the Corinthians directly, indicating the personal nature of the message. This verse sets up the theme of suffering that runs throughout the passage. Paul’s use of the term “troubles” suggests a range of hardships—physical, emotional, and spiritual. Verse 9 deals with the purpose behind his suffering. He experiences a “sentence of death,” yet this serves to deepen his faith in the God who resurrects. Paul acknowledges God’s past deliverance and expresses hope for future rescue in v. 10. He aligns God’s character of deliverance with his personal experiences. Finally, he shifts focus to the communal aspect of the struggles in verse 11. He calls on the Corinthians to support him through prayer.

This work, therefore, uses a linear structure as discussed above.

Verse 8—Paul suffered much for the gospel.

Verse 9—Suffering created faith in Paul’s life.

Verse 10—God didn’t remove the sufferings.

Verse 11—Share in God’s work by praying.

Exegetical Analysis of 2 Cor 1:8-11

The analysis of the text follows the linear structure as discussed above.

Verse 8: Paul suffered much for the gospel

The conjunction, *gar* (for) that occurs almost immediately, and for the first time in 2 Corinthians, ties vv. 8-11 with the benediction in vv. 1-7. It serves as an explanatory bridge from the general reference to “all our afflictions” in the benediction (v.4) to the specific “our affliction in Asia” in this present passage. Having pointed to this concrete “affliction,” the writer then (1) declares its severity (“we were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure”), and (I) discloses his personal reaction to it (“so that we despaired even of life”).

“Brothers and sisters,” Paul’s term of address for the Corinthians, introduced at the first opportunity after the benediction, reappears in the Farewell (13:11) and, perhaps significantly, on only one other occasion in 2 Corinthians (8:1). His disclosure formula “we do not want you to be uninformed,” relating to “our affliction which occurred in Asia,” indicates that new information is about to be given, or, more probably, in this case, a new perspective about the seriousness of that “affliction.” Paul wants the Corinthians to know that: we were weighed down far beyond our power so that we came to despair of life itself, but we felt within ourselves that we had received the sentence of death.

Paul’s repeated use of the first person “we... our” serves to convey the intensity and the deeply personal nature of the “affliction in Asia” (see v. 9). Perhaps his account of the impact on him of this dreadful experience will mollify the Corinthian criticism that he had not come to them directly from Ephesus (see vv. 15-17).

Although he gives no further details of this “affliction,” Paul is most likely referring to the city-wide commotion in Ephesus that brought to an end his (two- to three-year) ministry there. While some scholars doubt that Paul is here referring to the disturbance described in Acts 19:23-20:1, the conjunction of sequence and place (Asia . . . Macedonia- 2 Cor 1:8; 2:13; Ephesus . . . Macedonia - Acts 19:1; 20:1) makes it likely that the two passages point to the one event. The

silence of the Acts about the gravity of the occasion does not logically require these verses to refer to another incident. Given the well-known passion of the Ephesians for their goddess Artemis, it is likely that the Acts incident was extremely dangerous to Paul.

There are dark hints of trouble in Ephesus even in the First Letter: “a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me” (1 Cor 16:9). Possibly this opposition, expressed metaphorically in Paul’s “I fought with wild beasts in Ephesus” in the First Letter, was part of a process that reached its climax in the “thlipsis suffered in Asia” mentioned in the Second Letter. The furor in Ephesus, which arose from the silversmith Demetrius’ complaint that Paul’s message that

“man-made gods are not gods at all” (Acts 19:26) had discredited the goddess Artemis, the pride of Asia, and diminished the trade in cult artifacts, is readily identifiable with Paul’s grim account in these verses.

Paul’s verb, *ebarēthēmen* (we were weighed down), which literally means “weighed down” as by ballast in a ship, is qualified by two phrases, “far beyond” and “beyond our power,” adding to the severity of the picture. These emotional words, which expand upon the “affliction” in the first part of the verse, are consistent with the more detached narrative of Acts, which, nonetheless, presumes a crisis serious that Paul could not reappear publicly in Ephesus, from which he was probably forced to withdraw in secrecy.

The text, in verses 8 and 9 suggests an experience that drove Paul to the edge of despair, the verb *ezaporein* in the passive, “to be in great difficulty,” recurs in 4:8 as well as Ps 87:16 (It is a kind of paroxysm of anguish which banishes all hope) and led him even to the gate of death. He was “burdened” (*ebarēthēmen*, like an overladen ship) by a grievous trial. Paul even adds one of his favorite expressions *kath’ hyperbolēn*, “extreme,” literally, “excessively,” as in Rom 7:13; 1 Cor 12:31; 2 Cor 4:17; Gal 1:13. And the added emphasis “beyond our power” (*hyper*) is found in 8:3; see 1 Cor 10:13. Such point to the intensity of the experience Paul endured and has in his vivid recall.

Verse 9—Suffering created faith in Paul’s life.

Following closely on his despair of life (v. 8) Paul begins this verse by referring to the “sentence of death” that, he felt within himself. *eschēkamen*, “We had received” (the tense of the verb is perfect, “we received in our own mind the answer ‘Death’ and feel it to this day”). But this is to over translate, and we should regard the tense as the same as the aorist (as in 2:13). The sense,

then, is that Paul, on reflection, accepted the sentence of death and ceased rebelling against the idea of his premature death. But there is no denying that his language is weighed down with thoughts of death's inevitability—as he viewed his circumstances at a time of great affliction in Asia. For how much credibility we should give to the inference that Paul was a prisoner in Ephesus and whether any or all of the so-called “prison letters” (especially Phil, Col, Philem) originated at this time and from Ephesus. In the first part of v. 9 Paul describes the effect on him of the “affliction . . . in Asia”: ... even to live, v.9, but we ourselves felt within ourselves in v. 10, that we had received the sentence of death.

The adversative “but” sets in contrast the last words in the previous verse, “to live,” and the first words in this verse: “the sentence of death.” The way to life was barred;

death was in prospect. The perfect tense of the verb “we received” probably means both that he felt the impact of that “death sentence” at the time and that he continues to feel it. Metaphorically speaking, he now feels like a condemned man awaiting execution. The powerful effect on Paul's emotions is conveyed by the connecting pronouns, literally, “ourselves within ourselves.”

But, as he explains in the second part, the intensity of his suffering had been for a divine purpose, stated negatively, then positively (“that we might not... but [that we might]”: that we might not rely on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. The verb tenses are important. The permanent sense of being under a death sentence (as reflected by the perfect tense “received”) is now matched by Paul's continuing confidence (as reflected by the periphrastic perfect)- “that [he] might...rely,” not on himself but on God. Henceforth his will be an instinctive and implicit trust in God. Paul was a changed man as a consequence of this experience.

It is significant that God, about whom Paul has so much to say in his opening chapter, is here qualified as “the one who raises the dead.” The power to raise the dead was, and remains, the supreme demonstration of divine power (see Heb 11:19; Deut 32:39; LXX 1Sam 2:6). Paul employs the present tense, “raises,” because while God displayed that irresistible power when he raised Jesus from the dead (see 4:14), he continues to display that power - as seen in the deliverance of his servants from impossible circumstances (4:8-9; see v. 10)-and he will finally reveal that power in the resurrection of the end time (see 4:14; 5:1-10).

The description of God as one “who raises the dead” (see Deut 32:39; 1 Sam 2:6) is drawn from a well-attested understanding of God's power in the Jewish liturgy. The second prayer in the

Eighteen Benedictions runs: “Thou, O Lord, art mighty forever, thou makest the dead to live.” On Romans 4:17 which repeats the thought of God’s power over death. But we should be careful to include with the appeal to Romans 4:17 the reminder that for Paul the God who “raises the dead” derives not from his acquaintance with Jewish prayers but from “the radical faith” in the God who raised the once crucified Jesus to life. And Paul relates this demonstration of divine grace to his own circumstances of need.

Verse 10—God didn’t remove the sufferings

Paul now states the actions past, immediate future, and ultimate future of “the God who raises the dead.” God has delivered Paul (from the affliction in Asia), will deliver him (from other afflictions), and will finally deliver him (from death). The sentence of death had closed Paul off from self-trust in order that he would, instead, trust in God (v. 9), which now, as a concluding remark to vv. 8- 10, he expresses as hope in God’s ultimate future deliverance. Thus, God who raises the dead in v. 9; who delivered us from such a dead also will deliver us in v. 10; upon him we have set our hope who will yet deliver us.

God’s deliverance lifted Paul from the threat of “so great a death” as *tēlikoutos thanatos*. Rather than “risk of death” or “peril of death,” Paul simply says, “so great a death.” There are probably two things in mind here: (1) whatever he faced, it may have been of such a nature that he regarded it as a terrible way to die, and (2) he regarded himself as a dead man with no way of escape, humanly speaking, because it was so bad that deliverance required nothing less than an act of God who raises the dead. The effect of this was to drive home the need to never trust in himself, but in God. The note of trust in God rather than in oneself was prominent in the previous verse. Paul now reintroduces the note of “hope” in God (see v. 7). Paul has set and continues to “set his hope” toward the One who raises the Dead, the perfect tense answering the corresponding conviction- also stated in the perfect tense - that he had “received” the death sentence (v. 9). Paul places his confidence in God for the future, both the mundane future and the supramundane or eschatological future. Since the God who raises the dead has delivered Paul in Asia, his servants may both rely on him in the present and hope in him in the future. The theological basis for his hope (*elpis*) is provided in Rom 4:17-18. If God can raise the dead, can He not also deliver us from the gates of death? *ēlpikamen hoti kai eti hrusetai* (we have set our hope on him that he will deliver us again) sets forth a further result and the positive side of what the apostle learned and experienced. This describes the apostle’s perspective of life, “to live with his hope firmly fixed on God alone as his deliverer.” The words, *eis hon ēlpikamen* (we have set

our hope) again represent the perfect tense in the Greek, which here looks at the results of a past event. In this context, the perfect looks at the apostle's present state of mind. This was the result, however, of the past experience he is describing—the so great a death followed by God's deliverance. Thus, "that he will deliver us yet again as you also join in helping us by prayer" states the apostle's confidence. As long as the Lord continues to have a purpose for our lives, He will deliver us. In fact, all deliverances come from the Lord whether we realize it or not (see Ps 68:19-20). Our hope, then, must be fixed on Him. Paul's confidence here is somewhat similar to that expressed in Philippians 1:19-24).

Verse 11—Share in God's work by praying

When the apostle wrote, ". . . We have set our hope on him that he will deliver us yet again, as you also join in helping us by prayer," he chose a very picturesque and expressive verb to portray the nature of their prayers on his behalf. The picturesque verb *sunupourgountōn* ("working together to support me"), a participle which translates as an implied imperative ("you also must help us by prayer,"). It means to join in helping, to cooperate by means of something, or to work together to support, to undergird someone. The means by which they could and did give the support that would lead to his deliverance was "by prayer."

The value Paul set upon these prayers of supplication is seen in the consequence: many people will have occasion to give thanks to God for the "favor" freely granted by God in answer to "the many," that is, the loyal Corinthians who have prayed for Paul. Normally we associate Paul's prayers for his congregations with what he has to say regarding prayer; here it is their prayers for him that are praised.

Seeing God's answers to prayer naturally leads to thanksgiving and praise to God for answered prayer, which constitutes another reason for suffering—praising and giving thanks to God, which brings Him glory. Please note that in the Greek text, this element of praise is very vivid in the words, *hina ek pollōn prosopon to eis hēmas charisma dia pollōn eucharistēthē huper hēmōn* (so that many people may give thanks to God.) The Greek text reads, "in order that from many much thanksgiving will be made to God on our behalf for the gracious gift given to us." In his *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, A. T. Robertson writes:

Prosopon means face. The word is common in all Greek. The papyri used it for face, appearance, person. It occurs twelve times in II Corinthians. It certainly means face in eight of them (3:7, 13, 18; 8:24; 10:1, 7; 11:20). In 5:12 it means outward appearance. It

may mean face or person here, 2:10; 4:6. It is more pictorial to take it here as face “that out of many upturned faces” thanks may be given ...for the gift to us by means of many.

The gracious gift is undoubtedly the deliverance or the preservation of Paul’s life with the privilege of continued ministry as God’s servant in the cause of Christ (see Phil 1:21-24).

Theology of 2 Cor 1:8-11

Paul’s experiences of affliction and hope have significant theological implications. They illustrate the paradox of Christian suffering and joy, where believers are called to endure hardships for the sake of the Gospel while simultaneously experiencing divine comfort and peace. Paul’s life exemplifies the principle found in 2 Corinthians 12:9, where the Lord tells him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness.” Paul’s afflictions serve as a testament to the cost of discipleship and the reality of spiritual warfare. His perseverance amidst trials encourages believers to remain steadfast in their faith, trusting in God’s sovereignty and provision.

Suffering and Affliction: From the analysis of the text, it’s clear that suffering and hardship are experiences that everyone encounters at some point. They can manifest in many ways: physical pain, emotional anguish, or spiritual strife. During these tough times, it can be really challenging to find meaning and hope amidst the chaos.

In 2 Corinthians 1:8-11, the Apostle Paul shares with the Corinthian church about the struggles he faced in his ministry. He describes being “burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life” (v. 8). This highlights just how intense the suffering was for Paul, to the point where he felt he might not make it through.

Many of us can relate to that feeling of being overwhelmed and lost during our own difficult moments, where it seems like there’s no light in sight. However, Paul’s message doesn’t end in despair; it turns towards hope. He goes on to say, “But we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead” (2 Cor 1:9). This serves as a powerful reminder that even in our darkest hours, we shouldn’t solely depend on our own strength or understanding. Instead, we should place our trust in God, who holds the power to bring hope out of despair.

Paul further emphasizes this hope when he states, “He 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” (2 Cor 1:10).

Here, Paul mentions deliverance from past, present, and future trials. This illustrates God's unwavering faithfulness in helping us through our past struggles and instills hope for what lies ahead. Regardless of the challenges we might encounter, we can take comfort in knowing that God will ultimately see us through.

Additionally, Paul points out the purpose behind suffering in verse 11: "in order that we may not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead." This is an essential lesson to grasp in the midst of our trials. God doesn't allow our suffering as a form of punishment; rather, it's meant to teach us and to strengthen our faith in Him. Through our struggles, we can truly experience God's power and faithfulness.

Gleaning from the text, we recognize that suffering can have a meaningful role in our lives as believers. These challenges remind us of our reliance on God while also shaping our character and deepening our faith. As Paul notes, "For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ" (v. 5). We can find solace and strength through Jesus, who endured immense suffering for our sake.

Reliance on God: The message highlights that even the apostle Paul, known for his steadfast faith and miraculous works, faced trials that brought him to his breaking point. Yet, it was through these challenges that he discovered the power of leaning on God. Hence, when facing adversity, relying on God should be viewed not as a weakness but as a profound source of strength. By trusting in Him and surrendering our troubles, we open the door for Him to work in our lives, granting us the perseverance we need. Moreover, depending on God means seeking His guidance through prayer. It is through this connection that we gain insight into His plans for us. Leaning on Him allows us to navigate our toughest moments with confidence and courage.

As Paul assures us, placing our hope and trust in God is never in vain. He has been our deliverer in the past, and He will continue to do so in the future. In our reliance on God, we can also turn to our fellow believers for encouragement. Through prayer and the unity of the Christian community, we find support and comfort, reminding us that we are not alone in our struggles.

The Importance of Community and Prayer Life: Paul's reflections on his struggles resonate deeply within the community, highlighting a bond forged through shared experiences. Believers often face challenges together, nurturing unity and solidarity among them. Such shared journeys can deepen their connections and establish a robust support network. When Paul shares his story of deliverance, it becomes a source of inspiration, instilling hope and faith in others who are

navigating their own difficulties. By recounting moments of God's faithfulness, the community can uplift and encourage individuals in their low times.

Paul extends an invitation to the Corinthians to join him in prayer, underscoring the call for community intercession. Each member's prayers play a crucial role in sustaining the spiritual health and support of the group. Prayer is depicted as a vital connection between believers and God. Paul emphasizes that it is through prayer that both he and the Corinthians engage with God's power and faithfulness. This practice offers comfort not just for Paul, but also for the whole community. The knowledge that others are praying brings encouragement and fosters a sense of belonging, reminding everyone that they are not alone in their struggles.

Moreover, praying for one another is a profound expression of love and care. In a world where isolation can be common, the act of interceding for others serves as a tangible reminder that we share each other's burdens. We are called to remember Jesus' words in Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." When we come together in prayer, we're not just a group of believers; we are united with Christ Himself.

2 Corinthians 1:8-11 in the Context of Nigeria

Contemporary society is characterized by rapid change and unpredictability, resulting in frequent encounters with afflictions and struggles. Individuals face both personal and societal challenges that can lead to despair and hopelessness. Within the Christian tradition, adherents are encouraged to seek hope and comfort through faith, particularly during periods of hardship.

In Nigeria, where economic, social, and political challenges are widespread, the idea of affliction and hope takes on a deeper significance. The nation has endured political corruption, economic instability, widespread poverty, and ongoing security concerns. Despite these daunting circumstances, Nigerians are known for their resilience and unwavering hope, grounded in a strong faith in God.

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, addresses the topics of affliction and hope in 2 Corinthians 1:8-11. He speaks about the hardships and sufferings he faced while in Asia, which brought him to the brink of despair. However, he then goes on to discuss how God delivered him from his afflictions and how this experience strengthened his faith.

In verse 8, Paul speaks of being "under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself." This statement would have resonated deeply with the Christians in

Nigeria, as they faced intense persecution and tribulation for their faith. Even today, Nigerian Christians continue to face challenges and persecution, with the country ranking as one of the top countries for Christian persecution.

In response to such trials, Paul instructs the Corinthians not to rely on personal strength but to depend on the power of God. This message is particularly significant for the Nigerian church, which has experienced God's strength and faithfulness during periods of adversity. Nigerian Christians, despite considerable pressure, demonstrate steadfast faith and rely on divine strength and grace to endure. This faith provides hope and comfort, enabling perseverance through challenging circumstances. Many Nigerians maintain a conviction that God will provide deliverance from affliction and that hope persists even in difficult times.

In verse 9, Paul asserts that suffering was permitted to encourage reliance on God, described as the one who raises the dead. Nigerian believers report experiencing divine intervention during periods of hardship, including accounts of healing and provision. These experiences reinforce the belief that God can restore hope and vitality in adverse circumstances.

Paul, in verse 10, also speaks of how God has delivered them from "a deadly peril." This would have struck a chord with the early church in Nigeria, as they faced not only persecution but also deadly attacks from extremist groups. In the midst of such danger, Nigerian Christians have found hope and security in God's promise of protection and deliverance.

The Nigerian culture of communal support and the strong faith of its people have also played a significant role in the country's recovery from afflictions. Despite the hardships they face, Nigerians continue to have a sense of hope and optimism about the future. This is evident in the way they come together to support one another during times of adversity. In verse 11, he calls on the Corinthians to join him in prayer for his deliverance, knowing that God will answer their prayers and they will have more reason to give thanks for His faithfulness. In Nigeria, where Christians have faced and continue to face intense persecution, prayer is a vital tool in their spiritual warfare. The Nigerian church has learned to lean on God and trust in His promises, knowing that He is faithful to answer their prayers.

Conclusion

Affliction and hope, as described in 2 Cor 1:8-11, hold particular relevance in the Nigerian context, where political unrest, economic instability, and social injustices are widespread. The

apostle Paul's reflections on suffering remind us that affliction is an unavoidable part of life, yet it can foster resilience and deepen our reliance on God.

In Nigeria, individuals encounter diverse forms of affliction, ranging from personal struggles to broader societal challenges. The hope expressed in this scripture, which reassures us of God's presence and comfort during times of suffering, has a significant influence. This hope motivates both individuals and communities to persevere, recognizing that they are not isolated and that their struggles can contribute to the collective healing and development of the community.

Furthermore, the call to share in the sufferings and comfort of others is especially relevant in Nigeria's diverse society. Shared experiences of hardship can give rise to acts of compassion and solidarity, promoting unity and mutual support among Nigerians.

Ultimately, the message of affliction and hope encourages us to view our difficulties as opportunities for deeper faith and communal strength. It urges us to cultivate hope not as passive anticipation of relief, but as active participation in supporting one another through concrete acts of kindness. By embracing both our afflictions and the hope found in Christ, we can address the complexities of life in Nigeria with courage and grace, becoming a more resilient and connected society.

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