SERMON BASED STUDY GUIDE

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HOW TO GET THROUGH WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH

OPENING & PRAYER:

Paul's life blows up the idea that loving God means a person never goes through anything. Paul wrote much of the New Testament, preached the gospel everywhere, cared deeply about the local church, and still got beaten, imprisoned, shipwrecked, hungry, exhausted, and crushed beyond his ability to endure. The truth is simple: everybody goes through stuff. The real question is not whether trouble comes, but how a person goes through it and whether they come out better on the other side.

"Lord, thank You for always being there for us. Please guide us as we study Your word and how it helps us to get through those tough times. We thank You for Your love for us and help. In Jesus' name we pray, amen."

SCRIPTURE:

Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times received forty stripes minus one. **2 Corinthians 11:23-24**

Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; **2 Corinthians 11:25-26**

in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? **2 Corinthians 11:27-29**

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ. **2 Corinthians 1:3-5 (NLT)**

Even when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation! For when we ourselves are comforted, we will certainly comfort you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer. We are confident that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in the comfort God gives us. **2 Corinthians 1:6-7 (NLT)**

We think you ought to know, dear brothers and sisters, about the trouble we went through in the province of Asia. We were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it. In fact, we expected to die. But as a result, we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God, who raises the dead. **2 Corinthians 1:8-9 (NLT)**

And he did rescue us from mortal danger, and he will rescue us again. We have placed our confidence in him, and he will continue to rescue us. And you are helping us by praying for us. Then many people will give thanks because God has graciously answered so many prayers for our safety. **2 Corinthians 1:10-11**

So Moses told the people of Israel what the Lord had said, but they refused to listen anymore. They had become too discouraged by the brutality of their slavery. **Exodus 6:9 NLT**

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! **Phil 4:4**

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. **2 Corinthians 1:3a**

Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again—my Savior and my God! **Psalms 42:5 NLT**

But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. **Acts 16:25-26**

And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. **Acts 16:23-24**

God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. **2 Corinthians 1:3b**

because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. **Romans 5:5**

So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most. **Hebrews 4:16 NLT**

He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. **2 Corinthians 1:4**

That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our inner strength in the Lord is growing every day. These troubles and sufferings of ours are, after all, quite small and won't last very long. Yet this short time of distress will result in God's richest blessing upon us forever and ever! So we do not look at what we can see right now, the troubles all around us, but we look forward to the joys in heaven which we have not yet seen. The troubles will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever. **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**

GO DEEPER:

The fallen world explains why pain, sickness, sorrow, and suffering are here. Adam and Eve's choice brought consequences into the earth, and free will means God does not turn human beings into robots. God could wipe out pain in a moment, but that would require taking away the ability to choose. Love that is forced is not love. God desires a family that chooses Him from sincere, pure, holy love, not from obligation.

Paul's words in 2 Corinthians give the way through. God is the merciful Father and the source of all comfort. Trouble can bring a person to the end of self-reliance, where confidence gets placed in the God who raises the dead. Paul does not pretend

suffering is easy. He says they expected to die. Yet God rescued them, would rescue them again, and used their hardship to strengthen others through prayer and comfort.

Praise shifts the focus. Israel became so discouraged by slavery that they could not hear God's promise of freedom. Discouragement can become an identity, until a person sees only the prison and cannot see the Deliverer. Praise does not thank God for the crying in the Kool Aid. Praise thanks God for who He is and what He can do. A sacrifice of praise lifts Him up when feelings are down, stirs faith, and becomes surrender.

Paul and Silas show what that looks like in a real prison. Their backs were striped, their feet were fastened in stocks, and yet midnight found them praying and singing hymns. Men and women who praise in their prisons cannot truly be imprisoned. God shook the foundations, opened the doors, and loosed the chains.

God's mercy must also be received. Adam ran from God in shame, but Hebrews calls believers to come boldly to the throne of grace. God's love is not earned by performance. His love is poured into hearts, and that received love becomes the source of loving Him and loving others.

Joseph's story gives another lens for pain. What others mean for evil, God can mean for good. Problems can direct, inspect, correct, perfect, protect, and grow a person. What appears to disqualify someone can become the very thing God uses to comfort others. Eternity keeps present affliction in perspective, because trouble cannot last forever, but God's glory does.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1. Praise shifts the focus upward. Praise refuses to let the problem become the biggest thing in the room. It fixes the heart on God's worth, power, and faithfulness when circumstances have not yet changed. A sacrifice of praise is not denial of pain, but surrender to the One who is bigger than it. **[26:28]**

2. God comforts before He sends. God does not waste the comfort He gives in hard seasons. His mercy reaches a wounded heart so that wounded heart can later carry real comfort to somebody else. Pain handled in God's presence becomes a qualification, not a disqualification. **[20:07]**

3. Grace must be received boldly. Shame runs from God and assumes failure has closed the door. Grace calls a person to come boldly because mercy is found at God's throne, not earned through better performance. God's love has to be received before His love can flow through a life. **[43:42]**

4. Prisons cannot hold worshipers. Paul and Silas praised God with stripes on their backs and chains on their feet. Worship did not deny the prison, but it kept the prison from owning their hearts. God can shake foundations that human strength cannot move. [38:03]

5. Eternity puts trouble in perspective. Present suffering can feel permanent when all attention stays on today. Paul calls affliction light and temporary beside the eternal weight of glory being worked in Christ. Trouble has an expiration date, but God's purposes do not. **[49:58]**

LEARNING AND GROWING:

1. According to Hebrews 4:16, what are believers invited to receive when they come to God's throne of grace? **[43:42]**

2. Paul did not say trouble made him stronger in himself; he said it taught him to rely on the God who raises the dead. What is the difference between self-reliance and God-reliance when circumstances feel impossible? **[21:00]**

3. Hebrews calls believers to come boldly for mercy and grace, while shame often causes people to hide from God. Why might receiving God's mercy be difficult for someone who feels they have failed? **[43:54]**

4. A sacrifice of praise is offered when feelings are low, not just when life is going well. What is one specific way you could praise God this week—in prayer, music, Scripture, or gratitude—without denying the reality of your situation? **[26:28]**

5. How could remembering eternity change the way you face one present affliction that feels permanent or overwhelming? **[49:58]**

CLOSING PRAYER:

"Father, thank you for the opportunities to grow in our faith. We will continue to lean on Your Word as we grow to bring people to know you. In Jesus' name we pray, amen."