Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – July 1, 2018

The Apostle Paul’s

***Second*** letter to the *Corinthians*

How the Cross changes everything.

“Here we stand.”

Text: 2 Corinthians 1:1-11

The Background: An unresolved misunderstanding has created a rift between Paul and the Corinthians. He is beginning this letter intending to heal that rift. Rather than address the problem directly, he starts with an explanation of how he gets through the day, which, as we will see, often is a difficult day. How does he keep going? How does he do what he does? Where does he find the strength to carry on with the difficult work God has called Him to do? His “bottom line” resource is the Cross. But how does what happened to Jesus affect him? (And the Corinthians, and. . . us?)

Our Foundation: The Cross gives suffering meaning and purpose.

This is the theme of the book and we might say, the whole Bible. Suffering and what to do with it is THE largest question posed by life and the most difficult question posed by critics and sufferers alike. When we ask, “Where is God in my pain?” Paul answers, “He is in the middle of it, with you, transforming it for His glory and your good.”

It is only through suffering that fallen creatures can partake of God’s life, for He, in the person of His Son, has entered into our suffering, paying for our sins. The book begins with Paul’s sufferings being identified with those of Jesus, and the rest of the book shows how that works out in the very trying relationship he has with this church, full of problems and false teachers. This is why the Cross changes everything. God’s righteousness is on full display in paying for sin and forgiving the sinner.

The Narrative: (Reading 2 Corinthians is like hearing one side of a phone conversation. But we don’t really have to guess much, since Paul is both explicit and passionate. That said, we’ll be paraphrasing each section to sort out the argument and the not- so -hidden assumptions the Corinthians were making about Paul and his actions.)

Greetings–from a God-called Apostle of Jesus–to the CHURCH, and in fact, the region–grace and peace from the Father and Son.

(3) Bless God! For He is the one who comforts us (I’ll get into that more as we go along). He is the source of all comfort, which is necessary because we live a life of affliction!

But that affliction is (1) reflective of Jesus’ sufferings and (2) is for you! But the more we suffer for others, the more we are comforted. (That’s the way it works.)

(6)I tell you that because I want you to know that I am suffering in order to minister to you (not for selfish reasons), and not only that, I’m hopeful you will “get” this idea, namely that you, too, will (with us) suffer (in sharing the gospel) so that you, too, will be comforted.

(8) What I mean is that we nearly died in Asia Minor trying to get to you, and in fact, we thought we were going to die. But God delivered us! That is constantly our hope, and we want you to pray with us a prayer for our deliverance so you may participate with us in God’s ministry-blessings.

The Challenge: Do we truly grasp the place of suffering in life?

***Memory Verse: Philippians 3:10***

1. Paul links our suffering to the Cross. See also 2 Corinthians 4:7-11; Philippians 3:10; Colossians 1:24.

2. Suffering is the path by which we grow and are made like Jesus. John 15:20; Acts 14:19-23; Romans 5:3-5; 8:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5

3. In and by the Cross we know that our suffering is redeemed, made purposeful, and ultimately the foundation for comfort.