

GOD OF ALL COMFORT

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2 Corinthians 1:1-11

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

4 who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

6 But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer;

7 and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.

8 For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;

9 indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;

10 who 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,

11 you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many.

Bro Blair and Bro Corey always start their sermons with "For the Glory of God"
And I'd like to follow suit, so:

For the Glory of God:

Whether you're a Christian or not, and by the way I pray that you are, but every person ever born and has lived any length of time at all has dealt with suffering to some degree or other. No one can be immunized against suffering or sorrow or pain or being mistreated or just plain having a rotten day.

How we deal with those so-called negative times in our life is what we are going to look at today, and, Lord willing, come away with a better understanding of what God has instructed us in His Word to do about suffering, burdens, afflictions, bad hair days, and to know that He is the God of all comfort.

Non-Christians seek comfort in a multitude of ways that more often than not just makes their predicament worse. Drugs, sex, alcohol, self-help books, role playing games, and the list goes on and on. Every diversion you can think of and even more as time goes on. Look, man has even come up with a bottled liquid comfort...Southern Comfort! There is no limit to the inventions that man can come up with to take him farther away from the only true source of comfort. That is what God was saying in **Genesis 11:6** *...now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them.* God never for a second implied that man would be able to build a tower to heaven. Because what they wanted was to build a monument for their rebellion against God. Fallen man will continue to come up with more ways to be self-sufficient and in no need of God.

Christians on the other hand have a wonderful promise in the 3rd verse of 2 Corinthians 1 that we just read. God is the source of our comfort. In Him is the relief, the peace, the strength, and the deliverance that we all seek. And in this passage we also have the example of the importance of the local church body in that once God has comforted us, we, in turn, are to comfort others that are going through the same situations we did by pointing them to this fact that God comforts those who are His. That necessitates us being together and knowing each other. It's almost like God planned it that way, huh?

By my counting, the word (*paraklesis*), that is translated comfort and comforted, is used 40 times in the New Testament. But don't confuse this with the word used to talk about the Holy Spirit, (*parakletos*). In our passage today it is used 10 times. So that is 1 in 4 times of its use in the NT, or ¼ of the total usage of that word in the NT is in these verses. In the other locations it is only used one or two times in the whole book. My point is that Paul is placing great importance on making sure we get the picture that God wants us to know that He, and He alone, is the source of our comfort. When you come across a word or phrase

that is repeated numerous times it is a signal for you to do a study on that word or phrase.

A little background:

On Paul's 2nd missionary trip he stayed a year and a half in Corinth, and while he was there he founded the church; you can read about this in Acts 18. A while after he left Corinth, he was in Ephesus during his 3rd missionary trip and it was from here he wrote the first inspired letter to the Corinthian Church which (according to 1 Corinthians 7:1) was in response to a letter the Corinthian Church had sent to him. According to 1 Corinthians 5:9, he had already sent one letter correcting their behavior in the church. Then we see in 2 Corinthians 2:4 that Paul sent another letter between 1st Corinthians and 2nd Corinthians. So it seems to me that there may have been four letters that Paul sent to Corinth. I've heard and always believed that there were three letters, but in my studying for this sermon I'm thinking that there may have been four. I say that because of the language Paul uses in verse 4 "*....much affliction and anguish...*". He did not use that type of language in 1 Corinthians 5:9 or verse 11. Anyway, that is just a side note for study material. I was wrapped up for a while searching this out until I realized this might take some digging. We do know for a fact that there were 2 inspired letters that Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church. And it is this 2nd inspired letter we have the passage we are concerned with today.

Let's start in verse 1:

2 Corinthians 1

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,
To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout
Achaia:*

One of the reasons of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians is in defense of his office of apostle. Accusations had sprung up that Paul was a self-serving busy body who only wanted to lord over the church in Corinth. Paul was setting the record straight that it was the Lord's doing and the Will of God to appoint Paul an apostle. Look with me at what The Lord told Ananias in:

Acts 9:15

But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;

When Paul went to Jerusalem and the Jews were trying to kill him he was

rescued by the Romans and he asked to speak as they were leading him away under protective guard. Paul told the Jews what Ananias had said when God sent him to Paul that he might know God had chosen him and set him as an apostle:

Acts 22:14

"And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth.

Proof that Paul had actually seen the Lord, had been chosen by the Lord, and even told by the Lord what to say.

Paul also included Timothy in his introduction, one because he was Paul's son in the faith, but two, Timothy had accompanied Paul in his first visit to Corinth when the church was established there. So Timothy was known by at least some of the Church body in Corinth.

2 Corinthians 1:2

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

What have we been learning about grace? It is so much more than the pat answer that it is God's unmerited favor. Without repeating the whole study we've been in on Sunday night it is God's divine intervention to change the fallen human heart that leads us to salvation. And peace is just one of the benefits (although a huge benefit) for the believer. Our peace is with God. Being in the Lord Jesus Christ frees us from sin. Not that we never again sin, but that we no longer have a part in God's wrath.

"...God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ..." the parties of the new covenant.

In the OT the covenant was between God and man: The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob.

Now, verse 3, where the title of this message is found.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

Before we examine this verse go to 2 Corinthians 11:21-31 to look at the sufferings that Paul had experienced.

2 Corinthians 11:21-31

21 But in whatever respect anyone else is bold — I speak in foolishness — I am just as bold myself. 22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. 23 Are they servants of Christ? — I speak as if insane — I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. 24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; 27 I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern? 30 If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness. 31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.

Let's read verse 3 again:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

The pain and suffering Paul went through was real, the pain and suffering we go through is real, but in the midst of it we are to PRAISE GOD because He is worthy of our praise.

The verse begins with praise that Paul borrowed from the OT example of God being blessed, not needing anything in creation to supply some lack:

Genesis 14:20

And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand."

Psalms 66:20

Blessed be God, Who has not turned away my prayer Nor His lovingkindness from me.

Psalms 68:35

O God, You are awesome from Your sanctuary. The God of Israel Himself gives strength and power to the people. Blessed be God!

We even have an example of a pagan king recognizing the Absolute Being of God:

Daniel 3:28

Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him,

Paul also made mention in two other books in the NT about the independent existence of God:

1 Timothy 6:13-16

I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, 14 that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 which He will bring about at the proper time — He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.

Romans 1:18-25

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. 24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Now what is Paul *praising* God for here? For His Fatherhood. First of all that He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but also because He is the Father of mercies! That is in reference to us, is it not? The Lord Jesus Christ is the same essence as God the Father right?! He, God does not need to extend mercies to Himself, we are the needy ones!!!

"...God of all comfort..." Nowhere else in the Bible is God called the God of all comfort. Not SOME comfort, ALL comfort! A comfort that is complete; a comfort that only can come from Him. If you are in Christ, there is no longer anything you can go through alone.

Isaiah 66:13

"As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you;

God is love and God is perfect. You've never met a mother like that, how could she be? Whether saved or unsaved she is still fallen. I'm not putting down on a mother's love or the amount of comfort she can bring, but it pales when it is compared to God's comfort.

A mother's comfort is warm, caring and soft. I don't mean to say here that that doesn't apply to God's comfort but as we look at the following verses you'll see that Paul is explaining that the comfort God brings will cause us to be strengthened, God's comfort will give us courage and great boldness when those trials, sufferings and afflictions come.

2 Corinthians 1:4

who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

What God expects in giving us His comforting grace in various difficult situations is so that we may be able to comfort others who suffer the same kinds of affliction. Did you understand that? Whatever pain or heartache we are going through, God will see us through and He will comfort us.

John Piper has a series entitled "Don't Waste Your Cancer". How are we as Christians called to respond when cancer invades our lives, whether our own bodies or those of our friends and family?

On the eve of his own cancer surgery, John Piper writes about cancer as an

opportunity to glorify God. With pastoral sensitivity, compassion, and strength, Piper gently but firmly acknowledges that we can indeed waste our cancer when we don't see how it is God's good plan for us and a hope-filled path for making much of Jesus.

"Don't Waste Your Cancer" is for anyone touched by a life-threatening illness. It first appeared as an appendix in *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God*.

We will be able to point others to the same God who comforted us. In other words, we suffer to receive comfort from God and this comfort that we receive we are to pass on to others.

The first thing everyone is quick to say is "You don't know what I'm going through!" or "You don't know how I feel!"

We can tell them, that's true (whether it is or not), we don't know. But we know someone Who does know, in fact, He knows better than anyone. Your pain is not my pain and your pain is not the same as another person's pain. We all experience varying levels of sorrows, pains, afflictions, hurts and sufferings. But, listen, Christ experienced it all.

Once we are convinced that all of that is true we will be able to comfort others who are hurting or suffering in some way by pointing them to Christ.

2 Corinthians 1:5

For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

Paul knew that the afflictions, trials, persecutions and thorn in his side that he had experienced in the past would continue. And like him we, too, will experience the same, if we haven't already.

We all know someone who has the "woe is me" complex. Their philosophy is "Something is going to happen today and I know it's not good!" It's no one in this Church, but we all know someone, right?

Here's some good news, Paul was convinced so we should be too that it is God Who calls, it is God Who equips, and it is God Who keeps. Not only will He keep us but the comfort He gives far out does the sufferings.

2 Corinthians 1:6

But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer;

As we learn to become Godly men or Godly women and attempt to have a Biblical Church we are encouraged as we see each other deal with situations on a daily basis.

1 Corinthians 12:26

And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

There is an expression in the world that says misery loves company, but that is false. If I start complaining about my misfortunes, someone else may pipe in and start complaining as well, but they are not siding with me. Try it for yourself. They begin voicing their own complaints.

Guess who comes to your pity party. Just you.

But in the community of believers when one hurts it's not that we all hurt in the same way. We put our own agenda aside in order to assist the other. When a member of the Church is rejoicing the others can genuinely join in and rejoice with them. In the world this is not the case. More times than not if someone rejoices it causes resentment and envy.

2 Corinthians 1:7

and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.

Some of the members of the Church at Corinth were evidently experiencing what Paul was going through probably because of their loyalty to him. Those who were against Paul were undoubtedly persecuting them as well. Paul is encouraging them to embrace the comfort he was receiving. Paul didn't receive comfort for some of his afflictions, he received comfort for all his afflictions!

2 Corinthians 1:8

For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;

“...beyond our strength...” We have already mentioned that our trials, our afflictions, are from God with the intention of sanctifying us. If we could handle these problems on our own accord, we wouldn't need God's help. We could just build another tower, right? No, Paul is telling us we must rely on God because the things that try us or afflict us do so because we are helpless to do anything about them on our own accord.

“...we despaired even of life...” The word used here that was translated despaired literally means no passage or the total absence of an exit. Paul was trying to communicate to them the severity of the affliction he was experiencing that there was a chance of his ministry ending soon, because his life was in danger.

In no way was Paul seeking pity or even sympathy. He was simply preparing the Corinthian Church for what was eventually going to happen. The urgency he was trying to communicate was not for anyone to come to his rescue, but he did not want to leave the Church in the state it was in, so the importance of his message was for the Saints to strengthen the Church, to deal with those items and individuals that he had wrote about. And we can see the same attitude type of urgency in:

2 Timothy 4:6-8

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Philippians 2:17-18

17 But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. 18 You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

The drink offering was the final offering that followed the burnt offering and the grain offering.

2 Corinthians 1:9

indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;

“...sentence of death...” The word that was translated as “sentence” had to do with a formal document. Death was imminent; it was just a matter of timing.

“...we could not trust in ourselves, but in God...” Not only was Paul's life and death out of his hands, but also out of the hands of any other human. You say you believe that God is sovereign? Put yourself in Paul's shoes, he knew it was going to happen, he told the Church it was going to happen and yet he carried on his ministry day by day. Could I do this, would I do this? I'd like to think so. This I can say, “Lord help me/us to remain faithful!”

“... *God who raises the dead...*” This is the assurance that Paul had and that we need. To be able to truthfully say no matter the outcome God is my rescue!

2 Corinthians 1:10

who 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,

Past, present and future hope of deliverance.

When we know the ending from the beginning it seems silly not to have faith.

But when the whole Israel army was being stalemated by Goliath, how great was the faith of David with a sling and 5 rocks (but, by the way, he only used one) to go up against the giant who was wearing armor, had a shield, a spear the size of a weavers beam and a sword that most men could not swing?

2 Corinthians 1:11

you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many.

“...*helping us through your prayers...*” this portion of verse 11 is proof alone that there were still faithful believers in the Corinthian Church. Paul is saying that he needed their prayers. Paul was chosen by God to be an apostle, it is evident that God had equipped him with a special faith, with boldness and a purpose for the Lord's ministry, yet he needed the prayers of his brothers and sisters in the Corinthian Church. Do you suppose prayer is important?

Prayer does not change God's plan yet from Genesis to The Revelation we see the example of the duty of prayer. We saw in the study on prayer we had on Wednesday nights that God commands His people to pray. We are not telling

God what to do. We are asking that His perfect will be carried out.

When Peter was in prison don't you think he knew it was God's will for the Church to be praying?

We should pray for ourselves and for one another so we too can have the hope for the giving of thanks by many for answer of prayer.

And maybe our comforts will be more abundant than our afflictions. Not that we are seeking the easy life but so that whatever does come our way our hope will always be in Christ.

The passage we looked at does not tell us that God keeps us from all affliction but that in the affliction He will comfort us and He will be there with us.

What was His promise? He said He will never leave us nor forsake us.

Hebrews 13:5

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, " I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"

1 Peter 1:3-9

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.