

"The God of all Comfort"

Part 2

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

Introduction: Last week in our study of 2 Corinthians we looked again at the background behind the writing of this letter. As Paul penned this letter, he begins by writing about the comfort of God. The reason is because there was in the church at Corinth a group of critics who were doing all they could to destroy the testimony of the Apostle Paul. We must understand what was at stake in these attacks. The critics were attacking Paul, and they were doing all they could to cast doubt upon his apostleship. But the real target of the attack was the Word of God. We can be sure that Paul wrote 13 letters of the New Testament and so Satan's desire was to destroy Paul's testimony so as to cause people to doubt his writings, which are the INSPIRED WORD OF GOD. Let us remember that Paul is dealing with the New Testament church, and they have no New Testament Bible. His writing will be the New Testament Bible and so this is why Paul is under so many attacks by his critics. It is Satan working through the critics to do everything he can to destroy Paul's testimony so as to cast doubt upon God's Word.

Now there were several ways in which the critics attacked Paul. One way was they focused upon his "claim" to be an apostle. Paul was chosen after the ascension of Jesus Christ, and one of the requirements for the office of an apostle was to be an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ.

Acts 1:22

*²² Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, **must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.***

Paul was chosen by Jesus Himself after His ascension in Acts 9. This therefore was used by the critics to attack Paul. So in this letter Paul will defend his apostleship for the purpose of defending the Word of God.

Now another way in which Paul was attacked by his critics was this: they claimed the suffering which he was going through was the punishment of God upon him because of his "claim" to be an apostle. The critics may say something like this, "Paul claims to be an apostle, but do you really think that a man of God would have to suffer as he does? He is not a man of God, he is a false teacher, and he is suffering because God is punishing him for his sin."

These were the claims of the false teachers and so as we now enter into verses 3-11, Paul is going to explain to the Corinthians that God was not punishing him with the suffering but instead God was comforting him in the suffering. In these verses there is so much spiritual Truth for us to gather, so we are going to take our time as we look at what Paul has recorded here.

Now before we step into the verses that are before us, let me define some words so that you will be better able to grasp what Paul is saying here. The word "**tribulation**" used here means "to be pressured". It is referring to situations in which we have no control over and they are situations in which cause us to feel great pressure. It would be the situations that keep you awake at night or they are situations which make you dread facing Monday mornings. They are high pressure situations that feel as though they drain you.

The word "**comfort**", which we will see used many times in this passage, does not refer to a comfortable life. It does not mean that when we are in the high pressure times of life that God removes the pressure. The word means "**to strengthen**". The idea is that when we face the high pressure times in life that God gives to us the **strength** to be able to endure the pressure. Let me show you a picture of this.

2 Corinthians 12:10

¹⁰ *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, **then am I strong.***

Paul tells us here that when he was weak then he was strong. This means that when he faced circumstances which he could not control and he found himself under pressure that it was then that he was given strength from God to endure what he had to face. So when he was weak, he was strong through the strength given to him from God.

Let us now get to the verses before us.

I. The Source of Comfort

Notice 1 Corinthians 1:3-4a

Paul begins this section by praising God for 2 reasons:

1. He is the God of all comfort.
2. He comforted Paul in every one of the pressure situations he was in.

Paul starts in this section and immediately lets the Corinthians know that God is not chastening him but instead God has been comforting/strengthening him in the midst of the suffering.

Application:

When I look at the 2 points which Paul makes here, there is much which goes through my mind.

- a. **Since God is the God of ALL comfort and he comforts us in ALL our tribulation, then that tells me that when I face the trials and the tests of life I need to look to God for the strength I need in the midst of the pressure.**

There is something which Moses told the people of Israel right before they crossed the Red Sea which comes into my mind.

Exodus 14:13

¹³ And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

Since God is the God of all comfort/strength, then we do not need to look for a way to get out of the trial **but instead** we can rest in the Truth that our God is the source of all comfort and strength. We can claim the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 121.

Psalm 121:1-8

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

² My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

³ He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.

⁴ Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵ The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.

⁶ The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

⁷ The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.

⁸ *The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.*

Let me show you a few other verses.

Psalm 46:1

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Isaiah 40:28-29

²⁸ *Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.*

²⁹ *He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.*

Isaiah 41:13

¹³ *For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.*

Over and over again we are told that God is the One who is the source of strength for our lives.

- b. Based upon verse 4a I can be sure that God will strengthen me every time I face a situation in which the pressures of life overwhelm me.**

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:4a again.

What a declaration this is! God is faithful to comfort us in the midst of every trial and storm which we face.

Let me just say that I have lived this over and over in my life. I have been in situations where I did not know how I would get through, and God always provided the strength which I needed for the situation.

There are so many Christians who go to great lengths trying to escape the storms and the trials of life when they should instead trust God to give them the strength in the midst of what they face. Too many times believers are just like the world in that they complain, get angry, blame others, worry, or maybe shut down in the midst of the pressure. They never trust God for the strength and the comfort they need and so they miss a great

opportunity to glorify God in the midst of the pressure they face. God always gives us the strength we need in these situations. Let me show you an example from God's Word.

1 Samuel 30:1-10

And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire;

² And had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way.

³ So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives.

⁴ Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep.

⁵ And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite.

*⁶ And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David **encouraged** [strengthen] himself in the LORD his God.*

⁷ And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David.

⁸ And David enquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.

⁹ So David went, he and the six hundred men that were with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed.

*¹⁰ But David pursued, he and four hundred men: **for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor.***

Here is a situation where David needed strength, and so he STRENGTHENED himself in the Lord. When they pursued the Amalekites, there were 200 who were too weak to go on, and there were 400 who were strengthened to continue. I believe these 200 represent many believers who do not walk by FAITH in the promise of 2 Corinthians 1:4a and so they live

defeated lives. Many of them have never been taught that God comforts/strengthens us in ALL of the trials we face.

Now we need to understand that it is so important that we walk by faith and we apply the strength which God gives us, and we shall see why in the second part of verse 4.

II. The Purpose of Comfort

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:4

This verse has within it a very important message. Comfort and strength are given to us by God, and we are stewards of them. Paul is telling us here that as we face the storms and the trials, God comforts/strengthens us, and then we are to then take the comfort He has given to us and we are to strengthen others who are facing the high pressure situations.

We are entrusted with comfort and strength just as we are entrusted with spiritual gifts. We will one day be held accountable as to how we use our spiritual gifts, and we can be sure we will also be held accountable as to how we handled the comfort and the strength which God has given to us in the midst of the storms of life.

When we face the storms, God gives to us His comfort and strength and then we are accountable to pass the comfort and the strength on to those whom we encounter who are in need of it.

It is sin to declare that the trial is too great and we cannot go on. To do that is to declare that God is NOT faithful to give to us the comfort and the strength to continue on. To complain and to murmur in the midst of the trial is sin. Instead we are to echo the words of Paul in verse 3.

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

There is so much for us to consider in verse 4, and another thought from this verse is that the storms and the trials of life are often times of training for you and me so that later down the road we will be able to step into the life of a brother or sister in the Lord and be used by God to strengthen them in the situation they face.

2 Corinthians 7:5-7

⁵ For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.

⁶ Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus:

⁷ And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

Here in these verses we can see how it all works. Titus was comforted by the Corinthians, and then he was used by God to comfort Paul with the very comfort he had received from them.

Conclusion:

God allows us to go through the storms and the trials of this life for many reasons. Sometimes we know why, and other times we do not understand as in the case of Job. But there are several things we can be sure of:

1. We are never without the strength to face the storms. (:3-4)
2. God will comfort/strengthen us in the storms. (:4)
3. We are accountable to God for the comfort/strength we receive in the storms. (:4)
4. We are to pass on the comfort to those who are facing the storms of life. (:4)
5. We are to praise God for His provisions in the midst of the storms. (:3)