

"The God of all Comfort"

Part 4

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

Introduction: Tonight we are once again returning to 2 Corinthians 1:3-11, and it is in this section we are looking at the subject of comfort. Paul wrote this 2nd letter for many reasons and one of his reasons was to defend his apostleship against the attacks of his critics. The critics were motivated by Satan in an attempt to discredit Paul's call to be an apostle. One of the ways in which they were attacking Paul's apostleship was by pointing to his suffering and then claiming he was suffering because of sin in his life. This is why the 2nd letter to the Corinthians opens up with the subject of comfort. As Paul wrote this letter, he was explaining to the Corinthian believers that his suffering was not because of sin in his life. In other words he was not being chastened by God but instead he was being comforted/strengthened by God in the midst of the suffering.

Now let us keep in mind these attacks against Paul were far more serious than just attacking Paul the man. They were an attempt by Satan to destroy the credibility of Paul's letters, which were the New Testament Bible. You see, Satan knew that if he could destroy the credibility of Paul's apostleship, then he could then destroy the credibility of his letters which were inspired by God. So to sum this all up, we must understand that this was a battle for the Truth of God's Word.

Now we have been looking at these verses for several weeks and we have seen several points.

I. **The Source of Comfort**

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:3

II. **The Purpose of Comfort**

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:4

III. **The Measure of Comfort**

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:5

This now brings us to where we are in our study tonight.

IV. **Paul's View of Comfort**

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:6

Now before we get into this verse, I need to remind you of something which we touched briefly on the last time we were together. God has designed the church in a way that we need one another. Our fellowship is very important because when God strengthens us in the midst of the pressure situations, we are then required to pass on the comfort/strength which God has given to us. Let us remember that we are stewards of the strength given to us in the midst of the trials. To pass this on is only possible if we are gathered together in the same place.

Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁴ *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:*

²⁵ ***Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together***, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Now let us look at 2 Corinthians 1:6.

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:6a

This verse gives to us some very important Truth concerning the believer's suffering. Paul tells the Corinthians here that his suffering was for their consolation and salvation. The word "consolation" means comfort/strength, and the word "salvation" means deliverance. Let me explain what it is that Paul is saying here. "God has allowed me and those with me to suffer and then be strengthened in the midst of the suffering so that you (the Corinthians) would be strengthened in the midst of your suffering, and ultimately you would be delivered through (NOT OUT OF) the suffering which you also face.

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:6 again.

Paul tells them in the second half of this verse that as he suffered and as God strengthened him, this was all EFFECTIVE in helping the Corinthians to get through any suffering which they had to face.

At the end of the verse Paul pulls the 2 thoughts together. He tells them if he suffers, it is for their benefit and when he was comforted it was also for their benefit.

Application: There is a lesson here we need to see.

1. **Sometimes our suffering is for the benefit of others.**

Illustration:

In 1974 there was a man who was sentenced to prison and his name was Chuck Colson. He was known as President Nixon's hatchet man. Chuck Colson was ruthless in his dealings, and he was found to be guilty in the Watergate scandal. He went to prison for 7 months and while he was there he came to Jesus Christ. When he was sentenced, he admitted that to go to prison was very shameful and difficult. It was the last place that he wanted to go to. But after he was saved, he began to understand why God had allowed all of this to happen. You see in prison he learned what prisoners go through. He learned how difficult it was for many of the men to go through the prison system and then to go back out into the world. From what Chuck experienced, he developed a great sense of compassion and a desire to help. In 1976 he founded Prison Fellowship Ministries. Because of his time in prison, many people have now come to Jesus Christ through His ministry. It was through his prison experience that he learned what it was like to be a prisoner.

So through Chuck Colson's suffering many others have benefited.

This is often the situation with our lives also. We suffer so that others can benefit. You see we learn things in the midst of the valleys of life that we would never learn on the mountain tops. So God takes us through the valleys so that we will be better equipped to reach out to those we know that also go through the valleys of life. Let me show you an Old Testament example.

Hosea 1:1-3

The word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beerī, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

² *The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, **Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms**: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD.*

³ *So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son.*

Hosea was commanded by God to marry a prostitute who would be unfaithful to Hosea. Why would God give this command? God wanted Hosea to preach a message to the people of the nation of Israel and the message was about Israel's unfaithfulness. So because Hosea would live with an unfaithful wife, he would be better able to preach a message on the very subject of unfaithfulness. He would know the pain of a broken heart. Therefore, he could relate to the heart of God toward His people.

So the lesson for us is that God often allows us to suffer for the benefit of others. Now let me show you how Paul viewed the suffering that he faced as he served the Lord. I point

to this because it is a great encouragement to us in the midst of the sufferings of this life.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9, 15-18

⁸ *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;*

⁹ *Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;*

¹⁵ ***For all things are for your sakes***, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

¹⁶ *For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*

¹⁷ *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;*

¹⁸ *While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

When Paul faced the sufferings of his ministry, he held on to the Truth that it would strengthen those to whom he ministered. He knew God would give to him an inner strength and he knew that the sufferings he faced were only "light afflictions" compared to the glory that awaited him. Therefore, Paul set his focus upon the eternal reward for his sufferings.

There is a word in 2 Corinthians 1:6 that we need to see before we move on. It is the word "enduring". This word describes how we are to face the sufferings of this life. Let me show you what Guzik says concerning this word:

"It isn't the idea of passive, bleak acceptance, but of the kind of spirit that can triumph over pain and suffering to achieve the goal. It is the spirit of the marathon runner, not of the victim in the dentist's chair."

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:7

Here in this verse we see that Paul's faith in God was so strong that he did not worry about the Corinthians in the midst of sufferings because he knew that God would give to them the strength they needed to make it through.

V. Paul's Experience

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:8

We do not know when this happened to Paul. Many believe it was in Acts 19 but we cannot be sure. But we can be sure that the pressure in this situation which Paul faced was so great that Paul and those who were with him thought they were going to die. When Paul says that he was "pressed out of measure", it means the pressure was so great there was no way to describe it nor could it be measured. They were utterly crushed under the weight of the pressure.

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:9

Now this very is very interesting. It is a contrast of the previous verse. So we must ask ourselves what it is that Paul is contrasting here.

The contrast is about the purpose of the pressure. In verse 8 it looks like the pressure was for the purpose of ending Paul's life, but here in verse 9 we see that it was not to end his life but instead it was for the purpose of causing him to trust in God, who has the power to raise the dead.

Application:

There is much to learn from verses 8 and 9. First of all when I read these verses, I see that God **does** allow us to be pressured beyond what we are able to endure in our own strength. Have you ever heard someone say that God will never give us more than we can handle? These verses here cancel out that teaching. Paul was pressed beyond measure to the point he thought he was going to die and in his own strength he could never have made it through.

One of the reasons for this pressure in Paul's life was to get Paul to trust in God completely and not to trust in his own strength.

One of the reasons why we are placed in situations where we face great pressure is so that we will learn to rely on the strength of the Lord instead of our own strength. Let me show you the words of Ray Stedman on these verses.

"One of the major reasons God sends us suffering is to break the stubborn spirit of self-will within us that insists on trying to work it all out by our own resources, or run to some other human resource, or in some way refuse to acknowledge that we need divine help."

We need to understand that God allows the pressure to strip us of self-dependence and to make us more God-dependent.

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:10

Here we see what Paul had learned from the sufferings which he faced as he served the Lord. He had to be taken through a training process in which he came to trust God in every situation. Here we see that he had come to the place where he fully trusted the Lord. He knew that God had delivered him in the past. He knew God was delivering him in the present, and he knew God would deliver him in the future. Through the sufferings Paul had come to the place where he was walking by faith in the promises of God. This faith enabled him to write words of great encouragement for you and me.

Romans 8:31-32

³¹ *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

³² *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

Philippians 4:11-13

¹¹ *Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

¹² *I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*

¹³ *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

Application:

This is the place where we need to come to in our lives. We need to live by faith in the promises of God. We are not to murmur and complain when we face the pressures of life, but we are to see these situations as opportunities to be a testimony to others.

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:11

Here in this verse we can see another reason for suffering. It is to remind us how much we need one another. Let me show you how the Amplified Bible translates this verse.

¹¹ *while you join in helping us by your prayers. Then thanks will be given by many persons on our behalf for the gracious gift [of deliverance] granted to us through the prayers of many [believers].*

Paul knew the power of prayer. He knew that it was the prayers of the Corinthians which moved God to provide the deliverance for Paul and his fellow laborers.

Application:

This verse helps us to understand the importance of sharing our requests with the body of Jesus Christ. The prayers of God's people move God to work within our lives. The Corinthians prayed Paul THROUGH the high pressure situation. When we pray for one another, we can expect God to move within our lives.

Conclusion:

Let me close this with a verse that sums it all up.

Romans 8:28

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.