

Sunday, April 26, 2020

Turn off the outside “noise” for a couple of minutes and consider this message from God’s Word.
I am praying that it calms your spirit and encourages your heart.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-11 (TNIV)

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **THE FATHER OF COMPASSION AND THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT**, ⁴who comforts **us** in all our troubles, so that we can comfort **those in any trouble** with the comfort **we ourselves** receive from God.

⁵For just as **we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ**, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. ⁶If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. ⁷And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as **you share in our sufferings**, so also you share in our comfort.

⁸We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about **the troubles** we experienced in the province of Asia. We were **under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself**. ⁹Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death.

But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. ¹⁰He **has** delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he **will** deliver us again. **On him we have set our hope** that he will **continue** to deliver us, ¹¹**as you help us by your prayers**. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us **in answer to the prayers of many**.

— PART 1 —

*I found that when a passage of Scripture has been very familiar to me for a long time — such as this passage! — if I will simply **slow down** . . . take my time . . . and read thoughtfully and reflectively, it can become alive to me in new and fresh ways.*

① ⁵ “**we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ** — ⁶...we are **distressed**... — ⁸ We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about **the troubles** we experienced in the province of Asia. We were **under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure**...”

The Apostle Paul eloquently reminds us of this reality:

Troubles are universal.

We’ve all got them. And for many of us, they are hitting us “a little bit louder and a little bit worse” right now than they have for many years.

But Paul had troubles in spades! He wrote that “We were **under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure**...” That’s intense!

I sometimes feel these days like I am “**under great pressure**,” don’t you? Although I don’t know that I would claim that **my** current troubles are “**far beyond our ability to endure**...”

② *“so that we despaired of life itself. ⁹ Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death.”* —

But for Paul it gets worse. Far, far worse. His concerns go way beyond just feeling “under great pressure.” He felt like he was under “a death sentence.” Like he was a “dead man walking.”

Death in on our minds these days more than we’d like to admit. Every day we get reminded of the enormous numbers of people who have lost their lives to this evil virus. As of this moment it’s 203,332 worldwide. 53,934 in the USA alone.

Incomprehensible numbers.

Even a single death breaks our heart. But we have close to three million people confirmed cases worldwide? How many will lose their lives before this is over?

Is there anything we can possibly learn during this horrifying crisis?

③ *“⁹ But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but ON GOD, who raises the dead. ¹⁰ He **has** delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he **will** deliver us again. ON HIM we have set our hope that he will **continue** to deliver us...”*

Paul tells us that **our troubles can train us to “rely on God, not ourselves.”** That’s a lesson that is priceless. As Americans, we like to act as if we are self-reliant, self-confident, self-sufficient. This horrific virus has reminded us just how fragile we are. How little in life we actually have “under any semblance of control.”

And yet...we have put our faith **in God**. Not ourselves. And more than that: we have put our faith **in the “God who raises the dead”!**

The one who **“has** delivered us from such a deadly peril...”

The one who **“will** deliver us again.”

The one **“ON WHOM we have set our hope...”**

The one who **“will *continue* to deliver us...”**

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Almighty God, we do not rely on ourselves. We rely on **you**. We trust **you**. We count on **you!** We rely on you, because **you are “the God who raises the dead.”** Thank you for all the times you **have** delivered us. We are confident that you **will** deliver us again . . . and completely assured that you will **continue** to deliver us!

I look forward to “seeing” you this morning...to come TOGETHER into God’s presence...to express TOGETHER our confidence in “the God who raises the dead”!

Pastor Doug

P.S. We would love to hear from you! How are you doing right now? And we would love to pray for you! Email us at info@bethanyonline.net

P.P.S. Keep checking our “ENCOURAGEMENT FOR TODAY” webpage — we will try to post fresh encouragement **every day** during this crisis!

P.P.P.S. And watch our **LIVE-STREAM Worship Service** this coming Sunday at 10:30 A.M. for more encouragement.