

Wednesday, April 29, 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 4 —

*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.*

❶ **“³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort” —**

When Paul begins this narrative of his intense “troubles” that he experienced “in the province of Asia” — he starts, not with his **troubles**, but with a description of **the character of God!**

(a) “THE FATHER OF COMPASSION” — He blesses God for being the source, the originator, of compassion and mercy.

(b) “THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT” — He also blesses God as the one who stands **ready to comfort us “when we find ourselves in times of trouble,”** as that great theologian Paul McCartney recently tweeted. It also reminds me of a song lyric from many years ago...

“The comfort that Paul has in mind has nothing to do with a languorous feeling of contentment. It is not some tranquilizing dose of grace that only dulls pains but a stiffening agent that **fortifies one in heart, mind, and soul. Comfort relates to en-**

couragement, help, exhortation. God's comfort strengthens weak knees and sustains sagging spirits so that one faces the troubles of life with unbending resolve and unending assurance."

DAVID E. GARLAND, *2 Corinthians* (The New American Commentary).

Unlike Paul, I must admit that often I begin with my **problems**, with my troubles, with my circumstances, with my situation, with my issues. My problems appear so imposing to me. How about you? I want to continue learning to begin with **God**, not me; to focus on Jesus, not my troubles; to look first to the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and his comfort, not my challenges.

"We know God's promises best when we are in the direst need of them, when we are, as Paul says, 'harassed at every turn' with 'conflicts on the outside, fears within' (7:5). We learn in such circumstances that God's comfort is sufficient to overcome the slings and arrows that cut us to the quick and the sorrows that break hearts. The same power that raised Christ from the dead is available to comfort us. Christians also learn that, **unlike the Greek pantheon of gods who are quite unconcerned about human anguish, their God cares for them. Pliny the Elder, a first-century Roman naturalist and Stoic, wrote 'that [a] supreme being, whatever it be, pays heed to human affairs is a ridiculous notion.'** He also asserted that suicide was the 'supreme boon' that God bestowed on man. **Israel's God, by contrast, is one who sees the misery of the people, hears them crying out, and is concerned about their suffering so that he comes down to rescue them** (Exod 3:7–8; see Neh 9:9). Paul is keenly aware that God has acted decisively in Christ to deliver humankind from the bondage of sin and that in God's saving action Christ also revealed to him how God delivers — even through death. **That God is the Father of the one who was crucified reveals that God intimately knows our suffering. God may not always remove the afflictions that come our way, but God always comforts by giving the fortitude to face them."**

DAVID E. GARLAND, *2 Corinthians* (The New American Commentary).

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Lord, so many people right now are in pain. People have lost jobs. Some have lost income. Some have lost loved ones. Some have lost hope. They need your comfort.

PROVERBS 18:14 (NIV)

The human spirit can endure in **sickness,**
but a crushed spirit who can bear?

PSALM 34:18 (NIV)

The Lord is **close** to the brokenhearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

PSALM 147:3 (NIV)

He **heals** the brokenhearted
and binds up their wounds.

God, we **believe** you are not only the "THE FATHER OF COMPASSION," but also "THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT" — and so **we cry out to you for both!** Would you this day pour out on your children your compassion and your comfort? We look to you!

Pastor Doug