

Monday, April 27, 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**. ⁹**Indeed, 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 2 —

*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 ⁹**“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...”

We were reminded yesterday that we have put our faith **in God**. Not in **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...”

❷ ¹⁰ [God] 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**. —

When we experience troubles, sufferings, distress and despair, it turns out that we have a **second** source of assistance. Paul makes it clear that God's continuing commitment to deliver us comes *"as YOU help us by YOUR prayers."* **In some way, the prayers you and I offer up to God on the behalf of another person have a significant part to play in their deliverance by God! It's as if our prayers move the hand of God!**

Paul then reinforces his point by saying it in a different way: *"Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us **IN ANSWER TO THE PRAYERS OF MANY.**"* **In other words, your prayers and mine are highly influential to the cause of our God granting his gracious favor on others!**

I find this astounding. The fact that **God, who raises the dead**, can be relied on to deliver us from even "deadly peril"? Of course.

But the fact that **when you and I intercede on behalf of someone else**, our actions apparently influence the hand of God so that his gracious favor is given to them?! That I find amazing!

Tom Wright puts it like this:

"Paul...found himself stripped of all other resources. Paul begins his letter by telling them this much, not simply in order to gain sympathy, [but because] he wants them to be bound to him all the more tightly in **A FELLOWSHIP OF PRAYER.** *When two people or communities pray seriously for one another, a bond is set up between them which transforms their relationship* when they meet again. In addition, Paul sees in verse 11 that something else happens, which is what he is really interested in: when lots of people are praying for something, and God then grants it, there is all the more thanksgiving."

TOM WRIGHT, *Paul for Everyone: 2 Corinthians.*

If this is the case, then what should we do about it?

If your prayers — and my prayers — are far more potent, powerful and catalytic than we ever dreamed possible, then it follows you and I should give ourselves more to prayer, interceding for more people, crying out to God for more situations! Just imagine the amount of grace and goodness God wants to unleash on our community, our neighbors and our world — if we would just ask him to do so!

Why not ask God, *right now*: who can I pray for today? Whose struggles and challenges are in desperate need of my prayers — and God's "gracious favor"? Pray for our church! Pray for our school! Pray for the many leaders and teachers and pastors who are serving with grace and energy! Pray for the parents and students who are now "doing school" in a radically different way than ever before. Pray for God's financial provision on our church and our school!

::

Almighty God, we believe your word, and your promises, that **our** prayers can bend the curve of history. **We offer ourselves to you as prayer-warriors and intercessors.**

How wonderful to greet many of you who came to connect with our pastoral team on Sunday after the service for our first “FAMILY FIELD TRIP Drive Through”! What a joy it was to see your lovely faces in person! You made our day! We love you!

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.