

Thursday, April 30, 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 5 —

*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 ³***Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort*** — Paul opens his letter with a benediction, a blessing. George Guthrie suggests that “Paul uses the benediction as a launching point, developing the letter by **dramatizing the transformation of ‘despair’ into ‘hope;’ of ‘sorrow’ into ‘love;’ and of ‘fear’ into ‘joy.’ Thus by example he calls the Corinthians to consider their own response to the circumstances in which they find themselves, challenging them to bless God in the midst of suffering.”**

GEORGE H. GUTHRIE, *2 Corinthians* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament).

Guthrie’s final sentence is worth reading a second time. We need to consider our own response to the circumstances in which we find ourselves, and ask whether we, like Paul, “bless God in the midst of suffering”!

Paul begins this narrative of his intense “troubles” that he experienced “in the province of Asia” with a description of **the character of God!** *Who is God?* He is:

(a) “THE FATHER OF COMPASSION” — *Mercy is his identity.*

(b) “THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT” — *Comfort and encouragement his character.*

② *“**4 who comforts us in all our troubles**”* — First Paul **identifies** God as the God of All Comfort . . . and now he **describes** the **way** God comforts us! He has told us who God **is**. Now he shows us what God **does!**

Notice the “all’s” in this passage. God is the God of **ALL Comfort** — no matter what kind of comfort we are in need of at the moment, God can provide it! This means **God offers us “every possible encouragement”** (Guthrie)! And he comforts us in **ALL our troubles** — no matter what kind of troubles we find ourselves in at the moment, God stands ready to comfort us!

③ *“so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”* — Paul says there is a **purpose** (notice the “so that”) to our troubles — because “the experience of being encouraged by God in the midst of harsh ministry situations has served the purpose of enabling [us] to offer encouragement to others. . . . Those [of us] who have suffered have resources to empathize with and minister to those who are scarred.” (Guthrie)!

When we are in trouble, God will **comfort** us, and **encourage** us. That’s just who he is!

And through that experience, he is **also preparing us to help others who are in trouble!**

Let’s give Professor Guthrie the last word here, or more accurately, let him challenge us with three closing questions:

“As we face the sometimes crushing discouragement of day-to-day ministry, are we living in and living out the benediction of 2 Cor. 1:3? Do we see God, the Father of our Lord Jesus, as compassionate and the Supreme Encourager? Are we characterized by ‘blessing’ him amid very difficult periods of ministry?”

GEORGE H. GUTHRIE, 2 Corinthians (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament).

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Gracious Father, thank you for being who you **are**. And thank you for doing what you **do**. We **bless** you as our COMPASSIONATE COMFORTER! And we humbly offer our little lives to you . . . and ask you to **help us be conduits of comfort and compassion to our friends and neighbors** during this uncertain and troubling season we are all going through in our community, nation and world.

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.