

Friday, May 1, 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 *comfort-ed*, 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 6 —

*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.*

New Testament professor George Guthrie gives us a perspective that helps us understand not only this passage but also the entire book. Here is the way he puts it: **“Second Corinthians is profoundly ‘Christ-centered.’**

To prove his point, he then footnotes the following passages . . . so I’m inclined to agree with his statement! Of course, you shouldn’t feel obligated to look these all up. (Although it wouldn’t be a bad thing if you decided to do so!)

[See **2 Cor. 1:1–3, 5, 14, 19, 21; 2:10, 12, 14–15, 17; 3:3–4, 14, 16–18; 4:4–6, 10–11, 14; 5:6, 8, 10–11, 14, 16–20; 6:15, 17–18; 8:5, 9, 19, 21, 23; 9:13; 10:1, 5, 7–8, 14, 17–18; 11:2–4, 10, 13, 17, 23, 31; 12:1–2, 8–10, 19; 13:3, 5, 10, 13.**]

He continues:

At times Paul points to his **solidarity with Jesus in his suffering** (1:5; 4:10–11, 14; 8:9; 10:1; 12:10), but he also makes much of Jesus **as the exalted Lord** (1:14; 2:14; 4:5, 14; 5:8, 10–11; 10:5, 8). **This double look at Jesus gives strong encouragement to the believer experiencing difficulties and is instructive for us. When we experi-**

ence suffering, we need to think much on and pray much to our Lord Jesus, who also suffered *but now reigns as Lord of the universe*. All the enemies hurting us will be put under his feet. Both our shared experience with Jesus in suffering and *his status as the exalted Lord* should give us encouragement!"

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

So when you and I suffer, we can look to Jesus and remember:

He suffered for us (see v. 5) — so he **understands** what we're going through, and he will be right **there** with us in our suffering.

He was raised to new life (see v.9, "God, who raises the dead") — so he knows what comes on the **other** side of the suffering . . . but also he reigns and rules with God, and from his vantage point as "our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 3) he can pour out comfort on his children when they are suffering.

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Beautiful Savior, Lord Jesus, our Anointed King, thank you for going through the valley of suffering before us, as our "pioneer" who paved the way for us. Hebrews 12:2 tells us to "**fix our eyes on Jesus**" because he is "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith." (THE MESSAGE puts it like this: "he both began and finished this race we're in.") Jesus, you showed us how to **endure** suffering. You showed us how to **trust** the Father in the middle of suffering. You showed us that suffering **doesn't last forever**. You showed us that **something beautiful** lies on the other side of suffering.

HEBREWS 12:2b (The Voice)

"He endured the cross and ignored the shame of that death because He focused on the joy that was set before Him; and now He is seated beside God on the throne, a place of honor."

So may we also be Christ-centered in our suffering, like Paul was.

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.