



Sermon Notes

May 18, 2008
Tim Strickland

*The God of all Comfort
2 Corinthians 1:3-11*

2 Corinthians 1:3-11 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, [4] who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. [5] For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. [6] If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. [7] Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

[8] For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. [9] Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. [10] He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. [11] You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

Introduction

Today: A Difficult Week

John Piper: Prepare your people for suffering

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Our Starting Point: Blessed be the God of all comfort (3)
Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

- a. One of the basic characteristics of God is that He is a God of comfort
 - **Isaiah 40:1** *Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.*
 - **John 14:27** *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you*
 - **Acts 9:31** *...in the comfort of the Holy Spirit...*
 - **Psalms 23:4b** *your rod and your staff, they comfort me*
 - There are many Biblical examples of God as our Comforter:
 - John 14:25-27, Rom. 15:4-6, 2 Thess. 2:16-17, Psalm 71:20-22, Psalm 119:49-52, Isaiah 55:11-14, Isaiah 66:12-14, Jeremiah 31:13-14, Lamentations 3:14-33, esp vv21-26, 31-33
- b. **Our starting point is blessing** to our glorious God of all comfort!

1. The God of all comfort brings comfort in our afflictions so that we might comfort others in their afflictions (3b-7)

- a. How does God comfort us? (3b-4)
 - *...the God of all mercies and God of all comfort,*
 - *who comforts us in all our affliction,*
 - *so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction,*
 - *with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*
- b. In Christ, abundant comfort comes through abundant suffering (5-6)
 - *For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings,*
 - *so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.*
 - *If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation;*
 - *and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort*
 - *which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer.*

Note: Paul's sharing in Christ's sufferings were central to His ministry of comfort to the church of Corinth. The heart of the gospel is seen here, that Christ suffered, died, and rose again, *that we too might walk in newness of life* (Rom. 6:4)
- c. Our hope is secure (7)
 - *Our hope for you is unshaken*
 - *for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort*

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2. The God of all comfort permits our afflictions so that we will rely on God and not on ourselves (8-11)

- a. Paul suffered bitterly to the point of utter despair (8-9a)
 - *...affliction...utterly burdened beyond our strength*
 - *that we despaired of life itself*
 - *Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death*
- b. God has a clear purpose for our afflictions: Total reliance on Him (9b)
 - *But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.*
- c. What is the substance of our comfort?
 - *He delivered us from such a deadly peril,*
 - *and he will deliver us.*
 - *On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.*
 - "The experience of God's deliverance in the **past** and the corresponding surety of his deliverance in the **future**, is the 'comfort' of his people in the **present**."

- Scott J. Hafemann

Note again that our hope is centered on God and the gospel!

- d. We must help those who are suffering by prayer (11)
 - *You also must help us by prayer,*
 - *so that many will give thanks on our behalf*
 - *for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many*

Our End Point: Thanksgiving to God (11)

"so that many will give thanks"

It is not coincidental that our passage begins with blessing to God and ends with thanksgiving to God.

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Our Response

1. Let us not rely on ourselves in our suffering but let us rely only on the *God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction.*
2 Corinthians 1:9 *Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.*
2. God's comfort is meant to be shared. Comfort others with the comfort that you yourself have received from God in your own suffering.
2 Corinthians 1:3-4 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, [4] who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*
3. Cry out to God in prayer on behalf of someone who is suffering. Give blessing and thanks to God in your prayers.
2 Corinthians 1:11a *You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf, for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.*

Questions for Application

1. Do you know someone who is suffering right now? Are you yourself suffering?
2. Have you experienced affliction that pushed you to trust in God alone? How does great affliction make us rely on God rather than ourselves?
3. Discuss: God is more interested in our total reliance on Him than in our physical well being. How does this impact our response to affliction in our lives?
4. Have you experienced the comfort of the Lord in past afflictions? Is there someone who is suffering in a similar way, with whom you could share the comfort you yourself have received from the Lord?
5. Pray together for God's help for those who are suffering. In your prayers, give blessing and thanksgiving to our glorious God of all comfort.

Questions, Comments? - inthebeginning@look.ca

If you have questions or comments about today's message, please drop me an email to the address above. Thanks,

Tim



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