

The God of All Comfort

2 Cor. 1:3,4

Intro: Turning aside from our studies in Genesis for today

my brother, M. L., "with the Lord" after a very brief illness - 28 days from the first symptoms - 20 days after I heard of it

The shock of it!

many have asked about his family:

- his wife, Marilyn
- Karen, his oldest daughter, married to Tom Wilson, on May 28 of this year - met at Wheaton. Will be in Portland this year - preparing for the ministry
- Larry, working here in Portland
- Robin - a senior at Portland Christian High School
- Kenny - a sophomore

M. L. was #4 in a family of 7 children - 6 boys, 1 girl. Both of our parents are with the Lord. M. L. the first of us 7 to go. He died on our parents' 60th wedding anniversary.

His life touched many lives:

- through his medical practice
- through his church - Hinson

- through his association with
Young Life, Bible Study Fellowships,
etc.

- through his many personal friendships

Obviously this has been a new and
very deep sorrow for all of us in the
family - and for many of you who loved
M. L.

But, as hard as this has been (and
will continue to be) for our family, it
has not been any worse for us than
the death of your loved ones has been
for you.

This has re-opened ^{wounds of grief for} many of you.

Illus: Last Friday - at service for
Mrs McKenna's mother, I stood
at the graveside talking to three of our
ladies. The subject of M. L.'s death
came up - and I suddenly realized that
all three of these ladies had lost their
husbands in death.

- Mrs McKenna

- Mrs Dooly

- Mrs Wilman

I had had all three funerals - and
M. L.'s death had caused each of
them to re-live their own sorrow again
- as undoubtedly they had many, many
times - perhaps almost daily!

Their experience could be multiplied many times over in your lives.

There is no life that goes untouched by grief for very long - it comes to all of us eventually.

The marvel about this life is not that we are sometimes sad, but that we are ever happy.

It would probably be one of the most wonderful services we could have to get together and to tell how the Lord has comforted us. The grief remains, fortunately it is relieved, but then it comes again to us when someone else is taken.

And so while I have had to face sorrow and to enter into it again, I am thinking about you dear people and would like for us to turn to 2 Cor. 1:3,4 for our mutual encouragement and blessing this morning.

We sorrow, but not as others who have no hope. Let's see what comfort these two verses hold for us.

Note first:

I. A VERY SURPRISING WORD - AN UNWANTED WORD: "TRIBULATIONS."

What are they?

- Troubles?
- Pressures.

~~Did you come to the Lord~~

what form do they take?

- physical ills, often chronic,
- death,
- problems with people, ^{our} children
- persecution for the Gospel's sake,
- financial needs,
- loneliness,
- and many more.

Did you come to the Lord thinking that the Lord was going to save you from all of these - or most of them? Do we tell others that they will be spared from these?

Let us remember that no one is spared! Often Christians are hit even harder. Our Lord said, "In the world ye shall have tribulations" (John 16:33). - the same word that we have in our text!

Paul at Lystra, Iconium, Antioch - Acts 14:22, "... that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

But alone with this we have

III. A SEEMING PARADOX - THE IDENTIFICATION OF GOD: "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort."

(Explain)

2 Cor. 1:3, 4 (5)

many would say, "If God is what you say He is, then why do His people go through such suffering?"

Death always raises many questions - & often they cannot be answered!

But what is Paul telling us?

He is telling us that our only hope for comfort is in God -

- not in ourselves,
- not in our resources,
- not in our activities,
- not in being laid,
- not in our friends alone,

BUT IN GOD!

(Read from Spurgeon in Parker, ch 1.)

note next:

III A WONDERFUL, AN AMAZING STATEMENT OF TRUTH - IN REALITY, A PROMISE: "who comforted us in all our tribulation."

Two things:

A. He comforts us: helps us
consoles us
encourages us
teaches us
exhorts us

The word 5x in these two verses; 17x in the Epistle.

B. The word, "all." no tribulation is excluded. Whatever my need, my pressure, my sorrow, He is completely sufficient.

How does He do it (although this is not a part of our text)?

- obviously from Himself, and by what He is (this is in the text)

But how do we know Him?

- By HIS WORD.

This gives us

- His promises.

By hymns

Then we see His providence in our lives, and His people and the way He nurses us in each others' lives. Also our families!

He does many, many ways. But He does it always and in all kinds of tribulations.

Not from, but "in."

IV. THE PURPOSE (as stated in this passage)
"that we may be able..."

We do not experience God's comfort to keep, but to pass it on - remembering that it always comes from the Lord!

Oh, how great is God's compassion for us!

So what should all of this lead to? And

this is the main point of the passage.

V. A NOTE OF PRAISE: "Blessed..."

To praise is to speak well of.

This was my great burden for the service last Tuesday.

We must not be:

- angry, or bitter,
- doubting, or suspicious,
- despairing, or hopeless,

but we must praise Him - trusting
when we cannot see, when we cannot
understand.

Conclusion: Three "Blessed"s in the NT
- two from Paul; one from
Peter.

One has to do with the past: Eph. 1:3.

How grateful I am that M.L. was saved.

The second: our text - for the present:

2 Cor. 1:3,4. No need can arise but what
He is completely adequate, sufficient.

Third: 1 Pet. 1:3-5 - OUR HOPE, "a lively
hope," a living hope because it is real,
it is true.

The Lord has not left a single thing
out - and He never will! Cf. Psal. 23:1.

How can it be minimized, BUT
NEITHER CAN THE GRACE, MERCY, AND LOVE OF
GOD.

Some day will understand. Until we do,
let all our words about God begin with
"Blessed."