

THE COMFORT OF GOD
2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 1:3-11.

Intro: It has been estimated that approximately one-third of the Bible contains comforting truth for the people of God.

This should tell us a couple of things:

- 1) How concerned God is about our consolations.
- 2) How certain it is that we will need these comforts.

Nowhere in the Bible are those who believe in Christ promised that they will have a trouble-free life. In fact, just the opposite is the case. For example, in verse 5 of our text we read, ". . . as the sufferings of Christ abound in us . . ." So the people of God not only have the sorrows and testings that come upon all men, but they have those trials that are their's because of the antagonism there is toward the Gospel in this world.

It goes without saying that the goodness of God is manifested in the lives of all men; this world could not survive without God's blessings. At the same time we must recognize that the comfort which the Bible is concerned with has to do with those special mercies which God has reserved for His people. Psalm 119:49, 50 has this to say about the comfort of God:

Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou has caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

This means that those who do not count themselves as the people of God, those who do not receive the Bible as the Word of God, are excluded from the real comfort that God has offered to us in His Word.

I want to examine with you in this service what Paul had to say about the comfort of God in the opening verses of his second Epistle to the Corinthians.

Let us not, first of all,

I. THE WRITER -- THE APOSTLE PAUL HIMSELF.

Spurgeon called Paul, "a much-trying man" (Vol. 45, p. 445).

The days in which he lived were hard times for the Lord's people. And, because of his prominence in the Lord's work, it was especially hard for him. The Jews of his day had a special hatred for him.

But contrary to what you might expect, the subject of trials

and sorrows and persecutions did not depress him. He had learned to expect them, but, more than that, he had learned to rejoice in the Lord when he was right in the midst of them -- as the book of Philippians certainly gives us abundant evidence.

Note what he says here: "Blessed . . ." -- his personal testimony.

But be sure to notice that he did not glory in his sufferings because he like the sufferings, but because of what he knew God was accomplishing in his life through them.

As a summary of what Paul had gone through, read 2 Corinthians 11:23b-28.

So we are not reading the words of a man who was preserved from trials, but one who experienced them beyond what most other people have to endure.

But let us look at a second point in our text:

II. THE COMFORTER.

In the Bible the Lord Jesus Christ is called a Comforter. See 1 John 2:2. And the Holy Spirit is called a Comforter. See John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7. But here in 2 Cor. 1 Paul was speaking of God, the Father as our Comforter. But I want you to realize that this is a work that all the Members of the Godhead are involved in -- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

But how did Paul refer to God here?

We have four names, or titles, given to Him:

- 1) "God."
- 2) "The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- 3) "The Father of mercies."
- 4) "The God of all comfort."

In the first we see His Deity. Let our hearts be impressed with the glorious fact that God is God!

In the second we have the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Since God is, and always has been, uniquely the Father of Jesus Christ, this means that they are equal in Their Deity. If you have any doubts about this, read a passage like John 5:17, 18 and see what the Jews wanted to do when this subject was raised by our Lord.

"The Father of mercies" means that all of our mercies originate with God. We acknowledge this when we sing, "Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow . . ."

Finally, "the God of all comfort" means that He supervises and dispenses the comfort which He is pleased to give to His people.

So, if we had no more than these names of God, we would have sufficient to encourage us, to strengthen us, to ease our sorrows -- which is what COMFORT means.

But now let us look at

III. THE COMFORT.

What did Paul say about our comfort in this passage? How did he describe it? Paul does not deal so much with how God comforts us in this passage as He does with the fact, the reality, of that comfort. He was not writing about something which he hoped to see God do, but about that which he had seen God do time and time again.

Sometimes God comforts His people directly through His Word -- the truth of the Word, the promises of the Word, etc. Sometimes we see His comfort also in His providential dealings with us. Comfort may come through people. It may come through a letter we receive from some Christian who is concerned about us.

But what can we learn about this comfort from what we read in these 5 verses: vv. 3-7?

A. It is divine comfort.

It is not something which we do for ourselves. It may come from people, but it does not originate with them. All true comfort, the only real comfort, comes from GOD!

Psalm 68:19, "Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation."

What a difference it makes to know that our comforts come from God and that, therefore, they are divine in character!

B. It is present comfort.

We may have to wait for deliverance, but we never have to wait for comfort. Note: ". . . who comforteth us . . ." -- not will comfort, but He is doing it right now!

But link with this what the present tense of the Greek usually indicates,

C. It is a continuing comfort.

God's comfort includes tomorrow, and the next day, and the next day, and on and on.

Griefs are not over when the funeral service or memorial service is concluded. They often become more intense as the years come and go. We never really get over the death of someone who is dear to us. Therefore, it is important to know that there is no end to the comfort which God gives. Jeremiah said in Lamentations 3:22-24,
 It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

Some people try to forget their griefs. Others try to cover them up with pleasure or with busy-ness or with the company of people. But there is only one true comfort, and that is in the Lord -- and His comforts come day after day after day!

But notice another thing about the comfort of God.

D. It is all-inclusive comfort.

Did you ever get an insurance policy with exclusions written into it? Most policies are that way. But that is not so with God's comfort. There are no exclusions. No trial is beyond Him. He "comforteth us in all our tribulations."

Just read your Bible and notice all of the different kinds of trials that the people of God suffered, and then notice that God was sufficient for every one of them!

It will always prove to be the same for us, too. There is nothing too hard for Him. If people only realized this, how different their lives would be!

Let me mention three other things about God's comfort.

E. It is purposeful comfort.

God never intended that we should receive His comfort and then hang on to them just for ourselves. Note what Paul said here -- "that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble . . ."

We live in a world of sorrow, of trials, of pressures, and burdens of all kinds. God leads us through difficulties of various kinds so that we will be able to show others how they can find comfort, and where!

If we have not found the answer to our needs, then we are going to be powerless to help others.

F. It is abundant comfort.

God does not just give us enough comfort to match our sorrow or our burden, whatever it may be. He always gives us more than enough.

Note: "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation (which means, comfort) also aboundeth by Christ." Cf. v. 5.

Our comforts to us come from God through Christ and that is the reason that they are always sufficient. But we never realize this until we face the need.

One other point that I want to make.

G. It is a joy-producing comfort.

Notice that word, "Blessed"! Paul's heart was full of praise to God. He was not disappointed in what the Lord had done for him; he wanted the whole Corinthian church, and all believers in every generation from that one to the present time, to know that (as the Psalmist has said in Psa. 30:5b), though "weeping may endure for a night," yet "joy cometh in the morning."

Can you find comfort like this any place else? Of course not! This true, lasting, sufficient comfort is only to be found in God.

Concl: What should we conclude, then, from such a passage as this? Why did Paul write these things.

Let me give you three reasons in closing.

First, it was given to educate us in that which is available for God's people. We would not know this if God had not seen fit to reveal it.

If you do not know the Lord, then this comfort is not for you -- but it can be if you will turn to God and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour. Perhaps one reason for that trial that you are going through may be to make you realize that you not only need comfort, but you need a Saviour from eternal judgment. Cf. John 5:24 -- the words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Secondly, this passage will make us realize how much we ought to love God, and look to Him to meet our needs.

And this means that we will not be looking elsewhere for our

help.

Finally, it ought to cause us to search the Scriptures daily for the comforts of God, and to make us realize what a truly wonderful Book the Word of God is!

Holy Bible, book divine,
Precious treasure, thou art mine;
Mine to tell me whence I came;
Mine to teach me what I am.

Mine to chide me when I rove;
Mine to show a Saviour's love;
Mine thou art to guide and guard;
Mine to punish or reward.

Mine to comfort in distress,
Suff'ring in this wilderness;
Mine to show by living faith
Man can triumph over death.

Mine to tell of joys to come,
And the rebel sinner's doom;
O thou holy book divine,
Precious treasure, thou art mine.

-- John Burton, 1803.