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The Blessing of God's Comfort

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-7

Introduction

1. Like a number of you, I watched Friday as a young man (Chris French) who grew up here spoke at His mother's funeral (Debbie Townsend).
2. He pulled from a number of Scriptures among which were Psalm 23 & Revelation 14:13.
3. The memories he shared and the things he said were intended to bring comfort to those who were grieving, so that, as the apostle Paul said, they would not grieve as do others who have no hope.
4. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, we find Paul writing to the Christians in Thessalonica and seeking to comfort them concerning the death of their loved ones who had died as Christians.
5. The last thing he said, as he told them about the Lord's return and the resurrection of the righteous was "Comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:18).
6. Tonight, as we begin a series focused upon Paul's second letter to the saints in Corinth, we find him writing about the comfort which we have from God.
7. It is a comfort for all our affliction, not just the loss of a loved one.
8. As we look more closely at what Paul has written, it is my goal to share with you the blessing we each have in God's comfort in our lives.

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A. OUR GOD IS THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort," (2 Corinthians 1:3, NASB95)

1. In Paul's day there was a synagogue benediction which began with these words:

"Blessed art thou, O Lord our God and God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob . . ."
2. Paul adapted this blessing to the church, so that instead of saying, "God of our fathers," he said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."
3. He utilized it again in his letter to the saints in Ephesus (Ephesians 1:3), and Peter picked it up and used it in his first letter to the faithful in Asia Minor (1 Peter 1:3).
4. Ten times in these seven verses Paul uses the word "comfort" in either its noun or verb form.

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5. The prophet Isaiah repeatedly spoke of the comfort which God would bring to His people through the Messiah in Isaiah 40-66:

"Comfort, O comfort My people," says your God." (Isaiah 40:1, NASB95)

"As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you will be comforted in Jerusalem." (Isaiah 66:13, NASB95)

6. When Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the temple as an infant to offer the mandatory sacrifices, they encountered a man named Simeon who was "looking for the consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25).
7. He saw that consolation in the form of God's only Son, Jesus.
8. The word which Paul uses for "comfort" (*paraklēseōs*) which means to encourage or console someone.
9. This is what God does for us.

Slide 4**B. THE PURPOSE OF OUR COMFORT**

"who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those

who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” (2 Corinthians 1:4, NASB95)

1. If we stop and consider Paul's own life, we find a man who was perhaps the most afflicted man in the New Testament.
2. He was assaulted, betrayed, beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, imprisoned, hungry, thirsty, cold, constantly in danger.
3. Later in this letter, he wrote, “For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake” (2 Corinthians 4:11a).
4. Yet through all this and in spite of all this, Paul saw himself as one who was comforted by God. Why?
5. So that he would “be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” (2 Corinthians 1:4b, NASB95)
6. How did Paul comfort others?
 - a. Through his *example*
 - 1) Others witnessed his sufferings.
 - 2) They also saw how he responded not only in the midst of his sufferings, but afterwards.
 - 3) This left an impression upon them.
 - b. By his *prayers*.
 - 1) He no doubt prayed for those who were responsible for his suffering.
 - 2) He must have also prayed for physical strength to endure his afflictions, along with wisdom and patience to respond appropriately.
 - c. His own *words of comfort* to others who were themselves suffering.

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C. AFFLICTION IS ESSENTIAL

“For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our

comfort is abundant through Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:5, NASB95)

1. Affliction was the key to Paul's effectiveness in ministry.
2. It is the key to our own effectiveness.
3. I am not saying that we should go looking for affliction, as if it were a badge of honor for us to wear.
4. However, Paul did say . . .
 - a. “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).
 - b. “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12).
5. When these things happen to us, we can better understand what others may be going through and how to help them.
6. Veterans who have served on the field of battle often find it difficult to relate their experiences to someone else who has not had those same experiences.
7. However, let another veteran enter the room and they suddenly find someone with whom they can discuss their experiences.
8. Why? The other veteran has to some extent walked in their shoes, experienced to some degree what they have experienced.

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9. In much the same way, Paul was comforted by the coming of Titus to Macedonia (2 Cor. 7:6).

“But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;” (2 Corinthians 7:6, NASB95)

10. Prior to that, Titus had been comforted by the Corinthians (2 Cor. 7:7).

“and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more.” (2 Corinthians 7:7, NASB95)

11. And, as Paul himself writes here in verse 6, he is a comfort to the Corinthians.

“But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer;” (2 Corinthians 1:6, NASB95)

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D. HOW DO WE APPLY GOD'S COMFORT?

“But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.” (2 Corinthians 1:6–7, NASB95)

1. Paul saw both his affliction and his comfort as that which brought comfort to the Corinthians.
2. It is vital that we see life in this light because it gives greater importance to our lives in Christ.
3. In both the hard things we experience in life because of our faith and the comforts we enjoy we see God's grace at work.
4. Paul told the Christians in Philippi, “it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).

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5. James said, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” (James 1:2–4, NASB95)
6. Paul's patient endurance of his various afflictions was the key to his experiencing the comfort of God.
7. He didn't run from his circumstances or curse God because of them.

8. Instead, he patiently endured them and found the comfort which God provided to be more than sufficient.

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9. Peter said that this is how we should respond to our own afflictions:

“But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,” (1 Peter 2:20b–21, NASB95)

10. This is our goal – to follow in His steps, the steps of our Lord and those of His apostles.

Conclusion

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1. Paul began our text with these words:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” (2 Corinthians 1:3–4, NASB95)

2. Tonight, around the country, there are millions who are watching what we here in the United States call the Super Bowl.
3. This contest between what are supposedly the two best teams in the National Football League will result in a winner and a loser.
4. The team ahead at half-time is not always the team which is victorious when the last buzzer is sounded.
5. Those of us here tonight are engaged in a contest of far greater importance — eternal importance.
6. The first half began with God's creation which was, according to His own words, “very good” (Genesis 1:31).

7. However, Satan introduced sin into this perfect world and began working to destroy that which God valued and loved.
8. Throughout the first half, Satan did everything he could to disrupt God's plan.
9. There were times when it looked like everything would come crashing down.
10. However, at the right time, God sent His only Son into the world to redeem fallen man.
11. Satan with his schemes brought about the death of God's only Son, thinking He had completely turned the tide in His favor.
12. However, God raised His Son from death and seated Him at His right hand.
13. We are now in the second half, and we already know how the contest will end.
14. On the last day, two scenarios will play out:

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- a. For those who are among the redeemed:

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16–18, NASB95)

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- b. For those who will be condemned:

“the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,” (2 Thessalonians 1:7–9, NASB95)

15. The question for each of us this evening is this: “Among whom will we be found?” The redeemed or the condemned?