

The Comfort of Grief

(2 Corinthians 1:3-7)

Yearly Theme: *“Patience is...”*

Series Title: *“Good Grief”*

November 13th, 2022

Something to think about:

We all desire to be comforted when we’re hurt or injured. Even the most manly of men, or the most unemotional person – if their being honest – desires for someone to share their sorrows and comfort them in their grief. We were created this way, to love and to be loved, and one of the greatest acts of love is compassion shown to the broken-hearted.

Today we come to a passage of Scripture from one of the Apostle Paul’s letters in 2 Corinthians. Paul and his traveling companions have been on their missionary journeys through various different cities and towns, and have experienced multiple set-backs and troubles along the way. They’ve had their lives threatened, their reputations marred, and have experienced bodily harm along the way. When Paul writes 2 Corinthians, he does so from this perspective, however, he also desires to comfort the Corinthian Church after having sent a letter of stern rebuke to them earlier (1 Corinthians). It’s in this vein of consolation and encouragement that Paul pens the following words at the beginning of this new letter to them:

2 Corinthians 1:3-7 (NLT),

³All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. ⁴He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. ⁵For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ. ⁶Even when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation! For when we ourselves are comforted, we will certainly comfort you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer. ⁷We are confident that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in the comfort God gives us.

Biblical scholar and author, Paul Barnett explains that, “In this short paragraph the verbs and nouns for *comfort* (which presupposes suffering) occur ten times, for *trouble* three times and for *suffer(ing)* four times’. Directly or indirectly, suffering is referred to seventeen times in five verses! But to which suffering is he referring? Paul had in mind, in particular, what he called *troubles* (verse 4). The Greek word contains the idea of ‘pressure’, the ‘pressure’ which he felt as a result of his ministry.”¹

It's from this perspective that we unpack these few verses today. And here’s the key point...

Key Point: *“GOD’s comfort to us in our suffering helps us to be a comfort to others.”*

Let’s look at the particulars of this passage to get a clearer understanding of this...

- **GOD is the source of all comfort.**

2 Corinthians 1:3 (NLT), All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort.

- **GOD comforts us so that we can comfort others.**

2 Corinthians 1:4 (NLT), He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.

- **Believers share in Christ’s sufferings.**

2 Corinthians 1:5 (NLT), For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ.

Something to take home:

In the final verse of this passage of Scripture, Paul writes,

2 Corinthians 1:7 (NLT), We are confident that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in the comfort God gives us.

N. T. Wright reminds us of one final thing that Paul’s experience taught him as he suffered through many different afflictions. He writes:

“We should not miss the sense, throughout this letter, that Paul’s deep experience of pain and sorrow has led him to a new vision of God. And that vision, shaped by the Messiah, is a vision of light and love. Light enough to see how to move forward from tragedy to glory; love enough to know that one is held in the divine embrace which will not only comfort in the present but remain faithful and victorious into the future.”²

Has your deep experience of pain and sorrow led you to a new vision of GOD? Have you seen GOD’s hand through the love of His Son, Jesus, welcoming you into his comfort and peace? Have you learned how to move forward from tragedy to glory? And have you, in your sorrow who has been comforted by GOD learned to be a comfort to others along the way?

Remember, comfort is just one step away, and that step is in the direction of Jesus.

Key Point: *“GOD’s comfort to us in our suffering helps us to be a comfort to others.”*

¹ Paul Barnett, *The Message of 2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 30.

² Tom Wright, *Paul for Everyone: 2 Corinthians* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 5.