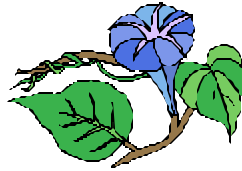


COMFORTED

That we may be able to comfort



2 Corinthians 1:1, 2

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul is writing to the Corinthians to let them know the things he was going through, the troubles that faced him as he reached out with the Gospel.

He wasn't out looking for an easy street. There was no easy street to find, had he looked for it. He wasn't marching down paved roads. It was hard doing what he was doing.

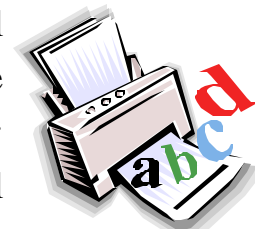
verse 3

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort

Now, there are a couple of phrases in this third verse that we want to look at:

*the Father of mercies,
and the God of all comfort.*

Do you think God has been merciful to you? as a Christian, your life should reflect His mercies. The Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.



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Paul was in trouble. He found hardships in reaching out with the Gospel. It brought him much opposition; and all that traveling wasn't always easy.

verses 4, 5

Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

The Corinthian church was having troubles, and this is something they also needed - comfort.

Paul is talking about these sufferings, these persecutions he had been facing. Preaching Christ was not a picnic. There was a lot of trouble, and often there was little comfort to be found.

Sometimes, when the day is over, it's nice to just sit down in an easy chair and be comfortable, sit down and relax awhile. But that wasn't possible for Paul.

Paul is talking about persecutions and sufferings and troubles, and how he found comfort and consolation from the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.

The sufferings of Christ in us

Paul said, *as the sufferings of Christ abound in us . . .* Do they abound in you?

Jesus went through these type of things Himself; there were many hard things to bear up to.

Paul was speaking of Christ's sufferings working in his life. I wouldn't think it strange if we had to go through some of those type of sufferings.

What does the average Christian in America have to go through today? We have it easy.

We can freely go to church without finding any opposition.

But when Paul was ministering, there was a fight that went on against those who went to church.

Why would anybody want those sufferings?

Listen, it wasn't a matter of whether or not you wanted them.

Paul was willing to endure sufferings, to bear up to them. Yes, he was willing - but it wasn't that he was wanting them.

We don't want to duck out when there's something to do for God, even if it seems a small thing in our eyes.

If the church yard needs to be mowed, be willing to get in there and do it. Whatever the need, be willing to give of yourself to help in the work of the Lord.

verse 6

And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

Once again, Paul is speaking about what they had to bear up to in order to do the work of God.

Paul knew sufferings would come

He had been out there persecuting the church for such a long time, feeling he was doing God a service. But when he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, and God saved him - God told him what great things he would have to suffer.

Acts 9:10, 15, 16

And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord . . . the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he (Paul) is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake.

In reading on in the Scriptures you can't help but note how evident those sufferings really were in Paul's life.

Yes, we can see that those sufferings were real which God said Paul would have to face.

Paul went that route because that is what God chose for him. God put it right in his heart that these were things that he would have to suffer.

And in those sufferings God would reveal His Son Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world.

Nobody wants to suffer; but if nobody is willing to suffer, will anything get done to reach souls?

Paul just kept on working, kept on moving on, kept on doing what he could to share the Gospel.

Now, there are things in Paul's life from which we can benefit:

verse 7

And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.

So when the sufferings have been made manifest in the lives of those being ministered to, they should also should be there to offer some comfort and consolation.

verse 8

For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life

Despairing even of life

This verse should waken our hearts to want the Lord to help us to see that there is the real work of God which needs to be done, and that we should be willing to pay the price.

This was God using a man, putting it in his heart to stand up to the pressure, stand up to the fight, willing to go through, bearing it up.

It wasn't easy. Asia Minor was a place where the fight went on for a long time. It was one of the first places where the opposition began to really be evident, even to where they despaired of their very lives.

What was God to do? Was he to cut a big slice of Asia from the map so nobody would have to go there to work?

Those people had never heard the Gospel. They were lost. They had no message whatsoever about salvation and eternal life.

If somebody didn't go to them with the gospel, then they wouldn't have any chance to get saved.

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

God isn't willing that souls go to hell - though many will go there. But they won't go there because it was what God wanted for them.

They'll go there because they refused God's love and God's mercy, and wouldn't accept His Son Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Those souls in Asia needed Jesus, and they needed a preacher to tell them about salvation.

2 Corinthians 1:9, 10

But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us

We may get killed out here, but we trust in God who raises the dead.

If you want to find someone to trust in, is there anyone better than trusting in yourself? Yes, there is - trusting in the Lord is far better.

Acts 14:19, 20

And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

Did this scare Paul? No, it didn't scare him! He got up and returned into the city where he had come from, to the place where he had been taken out and stoned.

Paul didn't use common sense

Why would he do that? Didn't he have any common sense? Thank God he didn't. If he had *common* sense, what would he have done? One thing, he wouldn't have stayed long enough to be stoned in the first place!

We all were born with common sense. But Paul faced up to the reality that he had to be willing to face death for the sake of the Gospel.

There he was laying on the ground as dead, and God raised him up. He wasn't just moaning about how bad it was. He went right back into the city because he still had Jesus on his mind.

It was hard. It was difficult. But there were lost souls in that city. And who was doing anything to win them? Paul was.

Paul had some young men whom he had trained, such as Timothy and Titus. I wonder if we could find any young men today who would be willing to go out on a tour like this one.

Paul needed deliverance

Paul was trusting the Lord to deliver them.

I thought they were going out there to deliver others. But we find the preachers needed to be delivered, too.

The sinners were being delivered from the ungodly lives they were living, from the bondages of sin. But Paul and those working with him needed to be delivered from the hands of unreasonable men.

In all of this, we see a man who needed help. There were still a lot of things to go through - and Paul wanted to leave a record that God delivered them yesterday, and He would deliver them today.

He knew God would be with them to help them go through anything they had to go through.

Paul had something in him that not very many seem to have.

He went out there with a trust in the Lord.

It was enough to scare anyone. All of this persecution and suffering, all of this opposition. It was a storm Paul had to bear up into - but he had a willingness to fight back.

The fighting that Paul was doing was not like what we would think of as fighting. But the fight was necessary because he was out there doing the will of God.

Help us, Lord. Help us to know what to do. What about my life? What about your life?

verse 11

Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

Here at Corinth were some faithful people. And you and I should want to be faithful, too.

This is just as real today, when we are reaching from our church to help others, as it was when the church at Corinth was helping Paul

Faithful to pray

Now, Paul speaks of how they had helped by praying as well as by giving.

Pray for the missionary, pray for those who are out there working for the Lord. If we pray for them, it will make a difference.

Your prayers can move mountains if you exercise enough faith.

They just trusted God and God was at work to provide the need.

Helping together - I like that phrase - *helping together by the prayer for us*. Their prayers were important. I think we ought to take that seriously.

Our prayers for those who are out there working and laboring to spread the Gospel, those prayers are precious.

What about the missionaries across the face of the earth?

You know, when missionaries go on the field, they go on their own. After they have been on the field for a while, they soon find out there is one thing they can't do. They can't expect to live off of the people they are reach out to.

Helping together by prayer for us - Paul, as a missionary, believed that the prayers of others for his labors was something that would bring a

blessing to help him in the trials he faced.

No doubt, this was just what Paul needed. He had been going through these hard times with all these things happening to him, and here he is telling us what it was like for others to get down to business and really pray for him.

If prayer is the only thing you can do, know that it is a great thing you can do! The strength and the power of prayer goes beyond our natural mind.

What can God do? God can do anything. God has all power and all might, all wisdom and all knowledge. He is not limited.

In supplying the needs - you have to remember that when you are involved deeply in the work of the Lord, God is with you. You may not see Him, but you have to acknowledge God is with you.

Maybe someone brought you a bag of food today, or did something else to supply a need you had. That should more than tell you that God is there with you.

Paul wanted us to know the prayers of those faithful people would really mean something to help in time of great need.

verse 11

Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

When you're out on the mission field, you will find that things may be done to help you once or twice - but you're going to need more than that if you're a missionary. You'll need those who will give and pray faithfully.

It takes faith

This brings up a question for all of us: how much faith do we really have?

Remember this about God supplying: it takes faith, but God gives that faith. Yes, God will really give you the faith that you need. He will put a faith in you that will cause you to do things you would never think of doing before - because you are doing it by faith.

It's so good to live in the realm where we can know and experience faith, and what faith can accomplish. We need to know for our own good what faith can accomplish.

We've been looking at a Scripture that would tell us well enough that the prayers of others can really make a difference.

Now, what if you don't pray

Think about what it means when you don't pray for others, when you don't pray for missionaries, when you don't pray for those who are sick.

What does it mean when you don't pray for others? and there's no answer. There's no answer because the people just failed to pray.

Hey, if they need something, let them get a job and work for a living.

Listen, don't pick on the help. Those are God's helpers. They were doing something for God when they were helping Paul and his party by giving and by praying. That was God at work.

verse 12

For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly

sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

A good conscience

This is the testimony from Paul of a good conscience. Does your conscience ever trouble you? If you do wrong, your conscience should be right there to tell you to straighten out, letting you know when you're wrong.

Isn't it nice that God has put something like that in you to help you live right?

Titus 1:15

Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

A conscience. Some people don't seem to have any conscience. They could just slit your throat, wash their hands in your blood - and walk away, thinking they did you a favor!

If we fail to do things for God like we should - shouldn't it affect our conscience?

Listen, if mother was home and had nothing to eat, could you ignore her and not give her anything? Could you do that in good conscience?

Why is a conscience brought up here by Paul? The testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity - this speaks out for Paul.

He had a godly conscience. He couldn't just walk away from the need. There were all those souls. Could he just walk away without saying anything?

We should have such a conscience. It should be something in the realm of a good conscience that we have a good conscience about reaching out with the Gospel, helping souls find Christ and salvation - that they can have eternal life.

We should be thankful that we can have a good conscience to do these things.

Some would say, *I'm not going to help them. Let them get a job!*

No conscience. There's someone trying to get to the mission field - looking for someone who cares enough to help.

We should have a good conscience and ask, *God, what can we really do in good conscience?* Or is it, *Lord, we utterly failed You! We didn't care.*

We have looked at Paul's ministry, and how the church at Corinth prayed for him, as well as gave to meet needs.

If we had been there, what would we have done? Would we have done what these people did? I hope we would.

verse 11

Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

It meant something to Paul that these people were that concerned. His rejoicing was the testimony of his conscience.

We should learn something from all this. What does it do to you as you read this message which Paul wrote to the Corinthian church?

How about it? We've got to be willing to suffer, willing to go without. But Americans, generally, don't know what it is to do without. Are we living in a rich country?

I asked my Mom when I was a little boy, *Mom, how much money do you have to have to be rich?* She said, *Oh, about \$100.* I don't know where she got the figure, but that was a lot of money to her in those days.

Missionaries, according to what Paul is telling us, need help. They need people to pray for them.

Now, you don't have to personally know any missionaries to pray for them. You don't even have to know of a specific missionary. You do know they're out there. There are many of them throughout the world - and they each need someone to pray for them.

Take this thought with you - maybe there's something you can do, something more to help missionaries or someone else - someone who is lost, someone who is in need, someone who isn't saved and doesn't know what to do.

Ask the Lord,
to help reach



*What can I do
souls?*

Let's give ourselves to the Lord, surrendering our all to Him. Let's have more of a surrendered heart, more of a surrendered mind - so that we're always willing to do what we can do for the sake of the Gospel and reaching out to others.

Let's be more minded of what we could put our heart to. It would do us all good - and it would do good to others who need God's help.

Someone is in Need

Open thy mouth, judge righteously,
and plead the cause of the poor and needy.

Proverbs 31:9

Pray for someone every day,
Many are suffering along life's way,

Hurting from within, without,
Only God can bring them out.

Filled with fear, doubt, unbelief,
God would grant them great relief.

Out of conditions of disgrace
Into His glorious, marvelous grace.

That they may no longer be sad;
But rejoice in Him and be glad.

by Patricia Dailey
November 22, 2001

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