

COMFORT IN AFFLICTION

2 Corinthians 1:3-7

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. When we go through trials, we have two options: Be shaken, not be shaken.
2. To be shaken is to get angry with God and run away from Him. To self-medicate with drugs and alcohol. To try to cover the pain with sin. To try to solve the problem with sin. To panic with fear and worry and anxiety. To lose your faith in God. To get angry and bitter, taking it out on those around us. To seek revenge. To get depressed. To end our lives.
3. As Christians, we don't have to be shaken by trials. We can overcome trials. We don't have to be victims; we can be victors. Problems don't have to make you bitter, they can make you better.
4. **Dr. Seuss** "When something bad happens you have three choices. You can either let it define you, let it destroy you, or you can let it strengthen you.'
5. In this sermon series we are learning how to not be shaken by trials. And one of the best places to turn is 2 Corinthians 1:3-7.

II. TEXT: 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

1. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. 4 He comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 5 For just as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. 6 If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation. If we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings that we suffer. 7 And our hope for you is firm, because we know that as you share in the sufferings, so you will also share in the comfort.

III. FOUR REALITIES ABOUT COMFORT IN AFFLICTION

1. **The source of comfort.**

- i. **2 Corinthians 1:3** “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.”
- ii. The source of our comfort is “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.”
- iii. Paul reveals three aspects of God’s character that prove His willingness to comfort us:
 - 1. He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - a. I.e., He is the one who sent Jesus to save us. If He is willing to do that, then He is willing to comfort us.
 - b. **Romans 5:8** “But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
 - 2. He is the Father of mercies.
 - a. Notice the word “Father.”
 - i. He is the source. He is the originator. He is the inventor. He is the best at it.
 - ii. It also means that mercy is God’s very nature. God is merciful. This is who God is. This is what He does. This is what He likes to do.
 - iii. **Luke 1:50** “His mercy is from generation to generation on those who fear him.”
 - b. Notice the word “mercies.”
 - i. Why the plural? God isn’t merciful to us once, but constantly. He doesn’t just extend one kind of mercy, but every kind of mercy.
 - ii. **Lamentations 3:22-23** “... for his mercies never end. They are new every morning.”
 - c. What is mercy?
 - i. It is the compassion and relief which is administered to those who are in misery (The Biblical Illustrator).
 - ii. The object of mercy is the person who is experiencing sorrow and suffering. The act of mercy is feeling sorry for them and seeking to relieve their pain.

- iii. This is who God is. The Father of mercies. This is what He does. This is what He likes to do. Whenever someone is in pain, God wants to show them mercy.
 - 3. He is the God of all comfort.
 - a. Notice the word “all.”
 - i. All true comfort comes from God. You can seek comfort in drugs and alcohol, and in other kinds of sin, and in many other ways, but they don’t last; and they don’t truly comfort. All true comfort comes from God.
 - b. What is comfort?
 - i. This is the definitive passage on comfort in the Bible. The word is used 10 times verses 3-7.
 - ii. It means to come alongside someone to give them strength and courage so that they can cope with their affliction.
 - iv. Because of God’s character, Paul begins the verse with the words “Blessed be.”
 - 1. This is another ways of saying “Praise be God.” It is an expression of worship and adoration and thanksgiving.

2. The promise of comfort.

- i. **2 Corinthians 1:4** “He comforts us in all our affliction....”
- ii. God promises to comfort us in all our affliction.
- iii. Notice five things about the promise of comfort:
 - 1. The promise can be trusted.
 - a. Who comforts us? “He.” God.
 - b. What do we know about God? He never breaks His promises.
 - c. **Joshua 23:14** “I am now going the way of the whole earth, and you know with all your heart and all your soul that none of the good promises the Lord your God made to you has failed. Everything was fulfilled for you; not one promise has failed.”

2. The promise is not to remove us from affliction, but to comfort us in affliction.
 - a. We have already learned from Paul's example that sometimes God doesn't take away the thorn. Sometimes God has a plan to use the thorn in our lives. But if He leaves the thorn, then He will comfort us as we endure it.
 - b. How is God's comfort applied? How does God comfort us?
 - c. Primarily through the Holy Spirit. Jesus called the Holy Spirit "the Comforter."
 - d. **John 14:16 (KJV)** "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever."
 - e. God's Spirit lives inside Christians, and comforts them in their affliction.
 - f. How does the Spirit comfort us? He gives us joy and peace. He assures us that we are God's children, and that God loves us. He reminds us of God's promises to care for us. He reminds us that we have heaven to look forward to.
3. This is a promise we can claim.
 - a. **2 Corinthians 1:4** "He comforts us in all our affliction..."
 - b. Notice that it says "He comforts 'us.'" That includes you me. All Christians.
 - c. Remember, God is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. That's who He is. That's what He wants to do. That's what He likes to do.
 - d. And remember that God loves you. He proved it on the cross.
4. This is a great promise.
 - a. **2 Corinthians 1:4** "He comforts us in all our affliction..."

- b. The word “affliction” can be translated trouble, tribulation, trials, oppression. One author said it means the distress caused by painful pressure (Lenski). MacArthur says it refers to crushing pressure.
 - c. One commentary says, “The word tribulation (*thlipsei*) means to be weighed down exceedingly; to be pressed and crushed. It is the picture of a beast of burden being crushed beneath a load that is just too heavy. It is the picture of a person having a heavy weight placed on his breast and being pressed and crushed to the point that he feels he is going to die.” (*Preacher’s Outline & Sermon Bible*)
 - d. Notice the word “all.” I love that word in this verse. It means all kinds of afflictions. Physical. Spiritual. Emotional. Mental. Any kind of adversity or suffering in life.
 - e. You will never go through anything without the God of all comfort.
5. This is a proportionate promise.
- a. **2 Corinthians 1:5** “For just as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.”
 - b. What are the “sufferings of Christ?” They are the kinds of sufferings He experienced, which include every kind of suffering. One commentary listed some of the ways that Christ suffered: born to an unwed mother, in a stable, to poor parents; he was hunted down as a baby; raised in a despicable place (Nazareth); He had no home; he was hated and opposed; charged with insanity and demon-possession; rejected by most; betrayed by a close friend; forsaken by all of His friends; false accused; tortured and executed as an innocent man. If anyone knew affliction, it was Christ.

- c. “The sufferings of Christ overflow to us.”
 - i. Just the like Christ, we have to suffer. God uses suffering to grow and mature us; to shine His light through us.
- d. “So also through Christ our comfort overflows.”
 - i. God’s comfort is given in proportion to our affliction.
 - ii. As much as we have to suffer, that much will we be comforted.
 - iii. Have you ever taken a pain reliever, but it didn’t help, or it only helped a little? God’s comfort is not like that. God’s comfort will always be sufficient for your pain. Your suffering will never be greater than God’s comfort.

3. The purpose of comfort.

- i. **2 Corinthians 1:4** “He comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”
- ii. God comforts us so that He can work through us to comfort others.
- iii. Your suffering is not meaningless.
 1. God loves you; He wants what is best for you.
 2. He is almighty, and doesn’t have to let you suffer. He could rescue you.
 3. Therefore, anytime He lets you suffer, it’s because He has a plan to use it for your good.
 4. Your pain is never meaningless or pointless.
 5. When you suffer, it’s because your loving Heavenly Father has chosen to put you there for a reason.
 6. God uses suffering to benefit us in many ways. Last week, in the case of Paul (2 Cor 12), we saw that God let Paul suffer to protect Him from pride, and to grow him in humility.

7. In this passage we find another reason that God lets us suffer.
- iv. Suffering equips us for service.
 1. Suffering trains you to comfort others who suffer.
 2. God uses your divorce to train you to comfort divorcees. God uses your addiction to train you to comfort addicts. God uses your incarceration to train you to comfort the incarcerated. God uses your loneliness to train you to comfort the lonely.
 - v. This means that one of the ways God comforts us is through His comforters.
 1. Just now we talked about how God comforts us through the indwelling Spirit. But here we see that God also comforts us through other people.
 2. In this way God uses suffering to bless two people. He blesses the person suffering by providing a comforter. And blesses the person doing the comforting by giving them a ministry. One of the most gratifying experiences in life is helping someone.
 - vi. Let me give you two ways to apply this reality to your life:
 1. To find God's comfort, surround yourself with God's people.
 - a. Where should you go when you need comfort? You should go to God in prayer. You should to go God's word. But you should also go to God's people. Go to church and find God's comforters.
 2. Look for opportunities to comfort others.
 - a. If God's plan to comfort His people is through His people, then that means we must be on the lookout for sufferers, and then step in to provide comfort.

4. The key to comfort.

- i. **2 Corinthians 1:6** "If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation. If we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings that we suffer."
- ii. This verse can be translated in two ways:

1. The comfort they receive from Paul will help them endure suffering.
 - a. This is the way the CSB translates the verse.
 - b. This is certainly true. The comfort we receive from others help us to endure suffering.
2. You experience God's comfort when you patiently endure suffering.
 - a. **ESV:** "If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer."
 - b. According to this translation, the key to receiving God's comfort is endurance.
 - c. This is certainly true as well. God promises to comfort you, but His comfort conditional upon your endurance. In other words, if you want God's comfort, then you must endure.
 - d. What is endurance?
 - e. The Greek word for endurance is made up of two words: to remain, and under. It means to remain Christlike under pressure. It means to remain faithful in affliction.
 - f. To endure means that when you go through affliction.
 - g. you run to God for comfort rather than turn away from him in anger and doubt. It means you run to God for comfort rather than to sinful pleasures. It means you wait on God's provision rather than providing for yourself through sinful means.
 - h. This verse is saying that if you want God's comfort, then you must endure. Don't give up on God. Don't seek comfort in sin. And don't try to solve your problems by going outside of God's will.
 - i. Jesus is the best example of endurance.
 - i. **Hebrews 12:1-3** "1 Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses

surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, 2 keeping our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against himself, so that you won't grow weary and give up."

- ii. This passage commands us to endure. To help us, it says to keep our eyes on Jesus, and remember His example of endurance. He endured the cross. He didn't run from the cross. He didn't jump down from the cross. He didn't get angry with God about the cross. He didn't self-medicate. He didn't sin while He was on the cross. He endured the cross.
- j. We don't get God's comfort just because we're suffering. We get God's comfort as we remain faithful in suffering.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. You never have to go through problems alone. The Father of mercies and the God of all comfort will be with you. God comforts us so that we can comfort others, so that they can endure and then in turn receive the fullness of God's comfort.