

Comforted by God to Comfort

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

Introduction

Throughout Scripture, especially the Old Testament, there are many names or titles for God. I want to take the time now to go over many of them. **(SLIDE 2)**

1. Elohim – God the Creator – the name used for God in the first verse of the Bible. In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heaven and the earth. This is a plural noun demonstrating all members of the trinity active in creation. **(SLIDE 3)**

2. El Shaddai - God Almighty – the name used for God seven times and used as He appeared to Abraham and set a covenant. I am the Almighty God.” The same Almighty God who appeared to Abraham is the same Almighty God today. Nothing is impossible or too difficult for Him.

(SLIDE 4)

3. El Olam - The Everlasting God – The timeless and unchanging God. Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. The Psalm of Moses in chapter 90: “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.” Time will have its effects on all things in this world, but never God and His Word. **(SLIDE 5)**

4. El Elyon - The God Most High - The name means the strongest of the strong and the highest of the high. Hinduism and other religions speak of God as a part of the universe, but God is not a part of the universe; He is the transcendent God. He is above all. **(SLIDE 6)**

5. Jehovah - The Self-Existent One. This is most used and is the personal covenant name of God. The root of this name means “self-existing,” one who never came into being, and one who always will be. When Moses asked God, “Who shall I tell Pharaoh has sent me?” God said, “I

am that I am.” Jesus declares Himself as “I am” to hostile crowd of Jews. “Before Abraham, was I am.” The same one who appeared to Moses in the burning bush.

There are many more names or titles for God we can go over, but I wanted to bring attention to one found in our passage today in the New Testament. The God of all comfort. A reason this stands out to me is in consideration of His other titles: He is far above anything in this world and is indescribable. I am 100% - completely unworthy – Smaller than a microscopic spec in comparison if a comparison were even possible. But that same God is the God who loves me, showed His grace and mercy to me, humbled Himself and became a man and gave His life for mine and the sins of the whole world. Conquered death and continuously demonstrates how amazing He is. He is also the God who comforts me.

I want to you think back and remember a time you were truly discouraged. Now, I am not talking about being upset or disappointed from things such as your favorite sports team didn't win the championship or had an unexpected lost or losing money in bet you should not have been betting on in the first place. I am talking about those situations where you and loved one have a falling out, you have been betrayed, you feel like it cannot get any worse. Circumstances where you feel like there is no one else who cares, you feel life has sucker-punched you. In the midst of these times, God is the God of all comfort.

Background

I want to give a little background of our passage today:

This is the 2nd letter to Corinth in Scripture. This local church was established during his 2nd mission trip where he stayed 18 months. After firmly establishing this church, Paul moves on, concluding this missionary journey by returning to Antioch. He then moves on to the Asia region where he stayed in Ephesus for 3 years.

This was a church filled with many issues and received a lot of rebuke from Paul. They questioned his Apostleship, his speaking ability, they had division over which leader they preferred, a member was having affair with his step-mother, they made the Lord's Supper a party – there was issue after issue. Despite these things, Paul still had a sincere love for them and desire for them to grow in the Lord. **(SLIDE 7-11)**

(Reading of the text)

2 Corinthians 1:1-11 **(SLIDE 7)** (1) 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: (2) Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. **(SLIDE 8)**

(3) Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; (4) 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. **(SLIDE 9)**

(5) For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. (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. **(SLIDE 10)**

(7) And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. (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:

(SLIDE 11)

(9) But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: (10) Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us; (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.

Outline

I. Paul's greeting to the Church, vv. 1-2.

(SLIDE 12)

A. Paul follows the customary letter format by introducing himself, v.1a.

1. He introduces himself as an Apostle of Jesus Christ.

a. This may seem like a little, but it had its reasons. This was a church full of people that challenged and doubted his position as an apostle.

b. He is an Apostle "by the will of God." This strengthens the point. Paul was not an apostle by the decision or desire of any man, including himself. If the Corinthian Christians held him in low regard, it did not diminish his standing as an apostle before God.

2. He makes mention of Timothy.

a. The implication here by including Timothy could be his involvement in the letter writing.

b. Paul often introduced his letters in a plural or group perspective.

B. Paul follows the customary letter format by identifying the recipients, v 1b.

1. He writes unto the "Church of God" at Corinth and with all the saints in Achaia

2. There is a denomination out there that are labeled to be Christians called "the church of God." While this phrase is a Biblical one, this does not mean that the denomination in its teachings are Biblical.

3. Also unto the saints in Achaia. This place is known as Greece. Often Paul's intention of his letters was to be passed around in the region. Never for the content to stay in one's place. These are known as "circular letters."

C. Paul follows the customary letter format by giving his peace wish v. 2.

1. “Grace be to you and peace . . .”
 - a. “Grace and peace” are used in all of Paul’s epistles to the churches, but it is always with sincerity. He always had the well-benefit and growth of these churches at heart.
 - b. This reminds us that we as believers are children of God.
2. “. . .From God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - a. We are not children of God by nature, but through adoption.
 - b. The blessing of being children of God is significance. We come to Him in prayer as our heavenly Father. He is a father to even the fatherless.

(SLIDE 13)

- c. David proclaimed in Psalm 27:10 “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.”

II. Thanksgiving to the God of all comfort, vv. 3-4. (SLIDE 14)

A. Paul opens by praising God v. 3.

1. He praises God who has shown so much mercy and comfort to Paul. Paul certainly knows the mercy and comfort of God on a first-person basis. Not just in his salvation on the road to Damascus, but in his life after.
2. He titled God as the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.
 - a. Mercy is the idea of not getting what we deserve.
 - b. As all men are sinners and guilty before a righteous God, we deserve punishment, but in His mercy, He gave us the provision through the cross.

- c. The word comfort in this passage is the original is paraklesis. The idea behind this word for comfort in the New Testament is always more than soothing sympathy. It has the idea of strengthening, of helping, of making strong.
- d. This is a title also associated with the Holy Spirit. Jesus Himself is also given this title. He promised after Him, He would send another Comforter. That is the Holy Spirit.

B. God's comfort in action, v. 4a.

- 1. "Who comforteth us in all our tribulations."
- 2. God is a God who comforts His children in the midst of tribulation.
- 3. Where in the Bible did God promise an easy life?
 - a. A matter a fact, we are promised the opposite. The Christian life is not a life of no troubles, but it is a life full of joy and blessings as we abide in Him.
 - b. Comforting us in our tribulation also implies receiving comfort of things not caused by ourselves. **(SLIDE 15)**

1 Peter 4:12-16 (12) Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: (13) But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

(SLIDE 16)

(14) If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. (15) But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. (16) Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

- c. If you have suffering and tribulation because of your faith in Jesus, the Bible calls you blessed. You are made more like Christ as you glorify God in your trials! (SLIDE 17)

C. The purpose of God's comfort in tribulations v. 4b.

1. The question has been asked many times and books have been written on this subject: "Why do bad things happen to good people."
2. The question itself has its flaws since there is no such thing as good people in God's standards, but a more accurate approach would be "Why do bad things happen to God's people?"
3. The Word of God gives us these answers; here it is for the purpose of using the comfort God shows you to comfort others.
4. God's comfort can be given and received through other believers.
5. It is common to confuse what we want God's comfort to look like. Here is poem to think on.

Illustration: Comfort me, Lord, and... pay my bills... Comfort me, Lord, and... cure my ills ... Comfort me, Lord, and... remove my fears . . . Comfort me, Lord, and... dry my tears. . . Comfort me, Lord, and... increase my wealth . . . Comfort me, Lord, and... preserve my health. . . Comfort me, Lord, and... plead my case. . . Comfort me, Lord, and... enlarge my place. . . Comfort me, Lord, and... tell me "why?". . . Comfort me, Lord, and... set me on high. . . Comfort me, Lord, and... do what I say. . . Comfort me, Lord, and... do it today. . . The Spirit listened as I uttered my mind. . . He said not a word as I pleaded and pined. . . And then He spoke in the language of conviction . . . Saying, "Comfort isn't comfort in the absence of affliction."

6. Many here can testify that through difficult times, they have grown closer to the Lord and learned to depend on Him.

7. Some of you have gone through things unimaginable, a lot of pain, a lot of hurting. Some of you are going through it now. These are opportunities to rely on the Lord and use it to comfort another.
8. Then those who receive that comfort are to pass it on. Think of it like a positive pyramid scheme. I have been comforted by God to comfort another, so they can comfort another and so on. All the credit and glory however go to God.

III. Paul's personal experience with God's comfort vv. 5-7. (SLIDE 18)

A. Paul's personal suffering and consolation, v. 5.

1. Paul viewed his sufferings as Christ's sufferings.
 - a. If there was someone who knew suffering it was Paul.
 - b. Likewise, if there was someone who knew what it meant to be comforted by God, it was Paul.
2. Since the sufferings were for Christ's sake, He counts it as Christ's suffering.
3. God allows situations in our life where our only consolation is found through Christ. Sometimes we think the only consolation is found in a change of circumstances, but God wants to console us right in our difficult circumstances, and to do it through Christ.

B. Paul's perspective of the affliction, v. 6.

1. Paul says "if we be afflicted it is for your consolation and salvation."
2. If Paul and other ministers were afflicted, it was for the sake of God's people. God had a larger purpose in Paul's suffering than working on Paul himself. God was bringing consolation and salvation to others through Paul's sufferings.

3. He writes it is effectual in the enduring: God's desire is that we would be enduring through suffering. Endurance isn't the idea of passive acceptance, but of the kind of spirit that can triumph over pain and suffering to achieve the goal.

C. The hope in the suffering, v. 7.

1. Paul's hope in Corinthians is steadfast because just as they are partakers in sufferings, they also are partakers in consolation.
2. We may be told that we will have difficult times and trials, but we are also promised by the God of the universe to always be with us – to comfort us – to strengthen us – to provide for us – and always to lift us up.

IV. Paul's trouble in Asia, vv. 8-11.

(SLIDE 19)

A. The overwhelming trouble, v. 8.

1. We are not told the specifics of what this trouble was, but later in the letter Paul give several hardships he had. **(SLIDE 20)**

2 Corinthians 11:23-28 “ (23) Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. (24) Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. **(SLIDE 21)**

(25) Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; (26) In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; **(SLIDE 22)**

(27) In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. (28) Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

2. Whatever the trouble was, it pressed them above measure and beyond strength that he anticipated death.

3. You may have heard the phrase “God will never allow more than what you can handle.” I want to challenge that a little by Scripture.

a. There is some truth in that in regards being tempted to sin. **(SLIDE 23)**

1 Corinthians 10:12-13 (12) Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he

fall. (13) There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

b. However, it is never been about what YOU can handle.

c. God allows things all the time above what you are capable of it so that you do not rely on your own strength and have to depend on Him.

d. The better way to see it is “God will not allow more than what He can handle.” Living the Christian life has never been supposed to be of your own abilities but depending on God! **(SLIDE 24)**

B. The trouble that pushed Paul to rely on God, v. 9.

1. These troubles were beyond what Paul and others could handle

2. He had the sentence of death within himself. God allowed this for Paul to depend on Him.

3. “who raises the dead.”

a. The resurrection of Christ that gives us victory is our hope.

b. Even though the resurrection of believers is a future event, there is a sense in which it is every day for suffering Christians. It is as we know the power of His resurrection that we also can be blessed by the fellowship of His sufferings (Philippians 3:10).

C. God’s threefold work in salvation, v. 10.

1. Who delivered us from so great death (past) – sin’s penalty.
2. Who doth deliver (present) – sin’s power
3. In whom we trust will yet deliver (future) – sin’s presence.

D. The intercessory prayer, v. 11.

1. Paul knew the value of prayer. He was not shy about asking others to pray for him and truly appreciated it.
2. The work of ministry cannot be done properly without prayer.
3. When I hear there are people praying for me, I truly appreciate and know how much it is needed.

Application

God as the God of all comfort holds significance in our lives. No other person understands suffering more than Jesus Christ Himself. As our High Priest, He sympathizes with our weakness and we can approach Him with confidence. God allowed suffering and brought divine comfort—so that the Corinthians might have the empathy to enter another person’s sorrow and comfort them. When we suffer, remember that God will bring comfort to us through His Word, by the Holy Spirit, and through fellow believers. God does not comfort us so that we will be comfortable; we are comforted by God so that we might be comforters. **(SLIDE 25)**

Reflection Questions

1. Have you been blaming your troubles on God or others and playing the victim?
2. When was the last time you used the comfort from God to comfort another?
3. What can you do today to comfort another believer?
4. How has God been comforting you in your walk with Him today?

(Gospel preaching)