

## God's Comfort in Sickness Part 2

### 1. Introduction: Review of Part 1

1. Last week we set the stage for this two part mini-series.
  1. You will not pursue God to find comfort from Him, unless you believe that He is the God who delights to give you comfort. We have the testimony of God about Himself and the testimony of the saints that He is a God of comfort in all types of circumstances.
  2. The reality that He is a God of all comfort won't have an impact in your life unless the truth is ignited by faith that results in peace that comes from that comfort in the midst of the trials. We struggle to believe because long-term and chronic trials seem to have no end in site and the weight of them in combination with their persistence naturally creates discouragement.
  3. The primary way to overcome struggles to believe that God is a God of comfort is to meditate on the entirety of His character and attributes as He describes it to us. You must have a list of verses that you can quickly go to that reminds you about the truth of God's character. Also, you need to have examples of how God has been faithful in your life and the lives of others.
2. As we begin this week's sermon, let's review our foundational Scripture again. 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 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. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. 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.
3. The following struggles that will be addressed are meant to 1) help you identify the sufferers trials and 2) to give you some responses that you may be able to share when you are in a situation that you personally or someone you are talking with needs some help dealing with them.

### 2. Comforting Others in Trials Resulting from Sickness

1. Pain is an undeniable fact of suffering from disease or illness or surgery and is not to be made light of. Vickie's typical response to those who compare their pain to hers and say that their pain is nothing compared to hers is that "Pain is pain."
  1. God does not make light of anyone's pain. It has not escaped His notice. He ordained it for a specific reason, like a doctor with a long-term recovery plan.
    1. Psalm 38:7-9 For my loins are filled with burning, And there is no soundness in my flesh. I am benumbed and badly crushed; I groan because of the agitation of my heart. Lord, all my desire is before You; And my sighing/[groaning] is not hidden from You.
    2. Jesus suffered pain and can empathize with any type. Isaiah 53:3a He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
      1. You can draw near to Him in pain because He understands. Hebrews 2:17-18 Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able

to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

3. We can draw courage knowing that ultimately the pain/trial will come to an end.
  1. Colossians 3:2-3 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
  2. Revelation 21:4 "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."
  3. As mentioned last week, in fellowshiping with and imitating Jesus. Hebrews 12:1b-2a let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross...
4. God is pleased and glorified when we graciously bear pain. Power p. 31
2. Being bed-ridden or debilitated can lead to the hopeless feeling that you are useless or not as useful as before. The melancholy of it can lead to depression if someone is left without encouragement. But none of God's creation is without purpose and He will not leave one of His children useless. Usually, the hidden work God is doing in a life during trials will produce more fruit.
  1. The God who ordains sickness does not create things without purpose; things that are useless.
    1. Psalm 139:16 Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.
    2. He has a purpose for everything. Ecclesiastes 3:1 There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven [Nothing of God is done haphazardly or recklessly.]
  3. Uselessness is only so in appearance; not in substance. Power p. 39
    1. And all your uselessness is only in appearance. True! you cannot take part in the business of life..., but you can be useful in other ways. Your patience, your resignation, your glorifying God in this, your word of good to others, all are useful, inestimably precious in the sphere of his kingdom in which he has now appointed you to act. Sick man, you have a place of usefulness for God, not the old place, but his place-- the place which is best in the eyes of the all-wise one.
2. We are all part of God's whole plan, carefully woven by Him and incomprehensible to us. Acts 17:25b-27 He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;
  1. While Paul was in prison or under house arrest for years at a time, God allowed him to slow down enough to write letters and essays which make up 28% of the New Testament. No prison; no letters.

2. John Bunyan was in prison for twelve years for preaching his faith during which time he wrote the popular book "The Pilgrim's Progress" which is second only to the Bible in copies sold and impact for the gospel.
  3. Who, but God, knows what is going to happen with someone's supposed "time out"!
3. Related to feeling useless is the temptation to have envious thoughts about others who are able to go places and do things; whether it is for work or pleasure or serving others.
    1. If you think about it, hearing about someone else' adventures or, even, mundane activities when you are unable to do any of the things that once brought you pleasure could naturally make you envious of those who are not limited like you are. That should be expected.
    2. The example of Asaph in Psalm 73, the entire Psalm, is the perfect study for curing envy of any type. Let's follow the progression.
      1. The problem - 73:2-3 But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling, My steps had almost slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant As I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
      2. The "Eureka!" moment; finding a solution - 73:16-17 When I pondered to understand this, It was troublesome in my sight Until I came into the sanctuary of God; Then I perceived their end.
      3. Confession is good for the soul; acknowledging reality- 73:21-24 When my heart was embittered And I was pierced within, Then I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a beast before You. Nevertheless I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand. With Your counsel You will guide me, And afterward receive me to glory.
        1. What God has ordained as good for others, is not what is good for us or whomever we are trying to encourage.
        2. The goal is realizing that God Himself is continually with us as believers to the point that He wants us to sense that He is holding our hands! His plan for each one of us is unique; whether we think it is pleasant at the time or not.
    4. As believers in the True God through Christ, we have hope that results in praise and worship! 73:26-28 My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For, behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You. But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord God my refuge, That I may tell of all Your works.
      1. This is an active choice of the will; acknowledging His goodness.
      2. It will be evident to others and God will get the glory!

4. Another related consequence of feeling useless is that you feel like you are being a burden to others. It can make ones sad that others need to give their time and energy to help them either completely or partially do tasks that they once considered simple or mundane.
  1. We need to remember that the serving is most often done from love and is a way that God's love is glorified through others.
    1. God is delighted when we imitate Him.
    2. God is the ultimate Rewarder of these acts done in His name.
  2. God gave to me the spiritual gift of mercy and serving, so serving Vickie brings joy to me.
    1. It's not a bother or burden. I know that it is part of how I am able to reflect the glory of Christ in me. He Himself has given me the strength, endurance, patience and desire to serve her.
  3. This next point is something that Vickie has done for me. It is a good reminder to share with the person who is sick and in need. Being thankful and appreciative, with gracious compliments and smiles, is a good way that God is glorified by the one being served.
    1. It delights the one who is serving to know that they are having a positive impact with their serving.
    2. In this way, the one who is being helped can bring joy to one serving them. They are mutually bringing joy to each other; it's not a one-way street.
5. The Never-ending Story that isn't a fairy-tale. In the midst of chronic illness, regardless of how severe, there is always the temptation to fear that the affliction will always be constant and never let up. Like I said last week, anxious thoughts multiply, they just don't add up one on another. We must fight the temptation to let our fears become like a runaway train racing down the mountain. Remember Psalm 94:17
  1. One-Day-At-A-Time! Each day has enough trouble of its own. That's what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount.
  2. Sometimes we need to reduce it to one hour or minute or a few seconds. Like a mother making it through labor one contraction at a time; not that I have personal experience with that, but it's what I've heard!
  3. Recently finished reading an auto biography titled "Sea Stories" by Retired Admiral William McRaven, who tells the story of how those who graduate to become Seals make it through their weeding out process called "Hell Week". They remind one another to just take it "One revolution at a time." One event at a time. The ones that don't make it think about how they can't believe that they can make it through another hour of the cold water and sand or mud or ... The ones that make it break it down into manageable time frames; minutes or seconds.
  4. Here's another relevant quotation from Power (p. 72) related to Deuteronomy 33:25. "Therefore you may say, 'How long the future will be I know not; but I know that it will and must be a future of days; and as my days, so also shall my strength be.'"

5. While it is challenging to do, another key to enduring a trial that seems like it will never end is that we must help one another to keep an eternal and heavenly perspective. This is a strength of Vickie's. Paul helps us by drawing wisdom from his personal experiences in 2 Corinthians.
  1. 4:7-11 But we have this treasure [the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God] in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; **always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.**
  2. 4:16-18 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man [temporal] is decaying, yet our inner man [eternal] is being renewed day by day. For momentary [compared to forever], light [compared to the sufferings of Christ] affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but [look] at the things which are not seen [using the eyes of the heart and mind of Christ in the Spirit e.g the prayer of Paul in Ephesians 1:16-18]; for the things which are seen are temporal [outer man], but the things which are not seen are eternal [inner man].
  3. Paul continues the theme in 5:4-10
    1. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan [in pain], being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed [in our final glorified body patterned after the one Jesus has], so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life [eternal and immortal]. Now He who prepared us [Jesus told us in His own words before leaving this planet] for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.
    2. Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— for we walk by faith, not by sight [using eternal eyes]— 8 we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord [Ask yourself whether you can genuinely say and mean this.]. 9 Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. [The final and ultimate eternal reality!]
3. This is the Goal: Abiding in Comfort in order to Be a Comforter
  1. Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please [God], for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
    1. You must know and remember God's testimony about Himself and the testimony of the saints who have suffered-long bear witness to the truth that God is the God of All Comfort.
    2. You must make this your reality about God. It has to become personal.
      1. Find a passage like Lamentations 3 or one of the Psalms or one of the stories about Jesus from the Gospels and meditate on it.

2. Study it. Examine the major thought of the passage, then the major thought of the paragraphs, then the meaning of some personally meaningful sentences and, finally, specific words that particularly grab your heart.
2. Keep and review the notes from today; not because I think that these thoughts are “the end all-be all”, but these can form the nucleus of some ways that you can improve upon and customize the way that you help those who are suffering in a long-term situation. I will post them on Sermon Audio and bring, or send with someone else, some hard copies next week.
3. Of all of the issues discussed these last couple of messages, two of them are the most common focus of Vickie and my discussions related to helping each other in the midst of this long-term struggle and trial.
  1. It is essential that we see that God is only and always good. We must believe and internalize that “The nearness of God is our good.” He is only and always at work in us for our greatest good and His greatest glory.
  2. We must learn to take it “one day at a time” or whatever portion of a day is relevant for the specific incident. “Each episode has enough trouble of its own” and our God is the God who supplies all grace and all comfort to help us make it through.
4. Lastly, I ask you to pray for me and join me in my journey to learn to live with an eternal perspective in the midst of a finite world.
  1. I challenge you to study 2 Corinthians chapters 4 & 5 or find another passage that helps you to maintain and walk daily with an outlook that makes heavenly values your earthly means.
  2. Find a book that stretches your thinking this way. My personal favorite is Paul Wolfe's “Setting our Sights on Heaven.”

In closing, I leave you with: Philippians 3:20-21

For our citizenship is in heaven,  
from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;  
who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory,  
by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.