

Theme: Life is full of trouble and pain, and though Christians are not spared this, they can find comfort through God and His people, and know that their ultimate security lies in Christ alone.

I. Intro – A tough few weeks for BRCC

- A. Our church family has lost two dear people recently
- B. Both situations were tragic - young woman & a suicide
- C. How do we respond in times like this?
- D. Where do we find comfort?
- E. Paul knew much about suffering - and finding comfort

II. The Problem - A World of Sorrow and Evil

- A. Paul has no pollyanna view of life - there is real pain
 - 1. Paul speaks of trouble, hardship, distress (θλίψις / θλίβω) 4 times
who comforts us in all our **troubles**, so that we can comfort those in any **trouble** with the comfort we ourselves have received from God...⁶ If we are **distressed**, 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 we suffer...⁸ We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the **hardships** we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. 2 Corinthians 1:4, 6, 8
 - 2. Paul speaks of sufferings (πάθημα / πάσχω) 4 times
For just as the **sufferings** of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.
⁶If we are distressed, 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** we **suffer**.⁷ And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our **sufferings**, so also you share in our comfort. 2 Corinthians 1:5–7

- 3. This is a fallen, broken world, full of pain and evil
 - a. Things are not as they should be my friends
 - b. The first coming of Jesus did not change this - the world is still broken and full of pain
 - c. Being a Christian does not relieve us of this - look at Paul's suffering in this passage!
 - d. Friends, life is full of good and blessing - and also pain and suffering
- B. These troubles, hardships, sufferings produce emotional distress
 - 1. Paul speaks of intense pressure (ὑπερβολὴν ἐβαρήθημεν) 1 time
We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under **great pressure**, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. 2 Corinthians 1:8
 - 2. Paul speaks of despairing of life, feeling sentence of death
We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, **so that we despaired even of life.**
⁹Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death.
But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 2 Corinthians 1:8–9

3. Being a spiritual Christian does not put us above such despair
 - a. This despair is part of being human
 - b. Christians do not cease to be human - it restores us to full humanity!
 - c. Read the Psalms - full of every real emotion - including despair, sorrow, grief
 - d. Paul was more spiritual than you or me - and he despaired of life itself!
 - e. Jesus was overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death
Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." Matthew 26:38

III. Finding Comfort In Troubled Times

- A. We find comfort by turning to God
Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 2 Corinthians 1:9
 1. God wants us to turn to Him in these times of distress
 2. It is then that we learn to rely on God rather than ourselves
 3. If we run to Him - not away - He will bring comfort to us
Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

- a. At times God does not seem compassionate or comforting
 - b. But He is the source of all true compassion & comfort
 - c. He is never far from our suffering - and He wants us to pour it out to Him
 - d. And this includes pouring out our pain, our fears, our grief - and even our anger
 - e. Again - read the Psalms!
- B. We find comfort through fellow believers
Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4
 1. We receive comfort from God - to give it to others
 2. No one can empathize and comfort like someone who has been through the same experience
 3. Do not isolate yourself from others - that does not help
 4. Isolation only extends the time it takes to heal
 - C. A word of warning when comforting others
 1. Healing often takes time - don't rush people through it
 2. We do not comfort by having all of the answers
 3. They do not need us or our wisdom - they need Jesus

4. Often those trying to help comfort do more harm than good
5. Do not just give them answers or correct them - pray for them!
He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. **On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, ¹¹ as you help us by your prayers.** Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the **gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.** 2 Corinthians 1:10–11

D. A final plea - sometimes professional help is needed

1. Many times friends loving and praying is enough
2. Sometimes they need an elder or ministry staff
3. Sometimes they need a professional to take real time to work through deep issues and grief. Don't discourage this - encourage it!
4. Never be embarrassed or feel unspiritual about this - God works through others

IV. When Comfort Fails - The Gospel Does Not

A. There are tragic times like this week when all comfort fails

1. Many people reached out to Karen - and there were times of hope
2. Karen received much pastoral care - and there were times of hope
3. Karen received professional care - and there were times of hope
4. But in the end despair swallowed her hope - all of

our comfort failed

B. But friends the Gospel never fails!

1. Karen's hope of salvation is not in her overcoming - but in the fact that Christ overcame
2. Our hope of salvation is not in our victorious Christian life - but in Jesus's victorious life!
3. Our friend succumbed to despair - but Christ has overcome and will raise her again!
4. Our hope is not in our works or victory - but in Christ!

C. Come to the Table - and receive the comfort of God

1. Whatever your troubles - come freely receive from God
2. See and receive the depth of God's love for you - Christ given for you
3. Christ was forsaken - so you might never be
4. Christ was obedient - so we are saved!
5. Come and receive comfort - and go and give it

Comfort In Troubled Times

2 Corinthians 1:3-11
July 21, 2013
Communion
Numbers 6:24-26

The Lord bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. Numbers 6:24–26

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. ⁵ For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. ⁶ If we are distressed, 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 we suffer. ⁷ And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

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2 Corinthians 1:3–11