

The Secret of Encouragement

Part I

*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 tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are
in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

~ II Corinthians 1:3-4

Paul's Personal Narrative

*For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears;
not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so
abundantly for you. ~ II Corinthians 2:3*

Key Theme of II Corinthians: God's Encouragement

Literary Characteristics

In style and content, no other letter is more characteristic of the apostle Paul than Second Corinthians. This letter contains much autobiographical information as well as references to people, situations, and events with which Paul and his readers were obviously familiar. Second Corinthians is the most personal and intimate of all Paul's letters.

Audience

The church in Corinth consisted mainly of converted Gentiles, some Romans, and a few Jews. Most of these had little education and were low in social status. According to First Corinthians, immorality was rife in the church, and the believers had become proud and divisive. Second Corinthians was written after most of these problems had been resolved; however, a small faction of anti-Paul activists remained. Paul characteristically begins, as in his other epistles, by establishing his authority and his commission. This ministry was commissioned to him of Jesus Christ by the will of God.

"**Affliction**" in the Greek is the word *thlipsis*. It can be translated as tribulation, trouble, anguish, or burden.

Triumph in Christ

Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. ~ II Corinthians 2:14

Christ's Epistle

You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. ~ II Corinthians 3:2-3

Christ's Sufficiency

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves: but our sufficiency is from God. ~ II Corinthians 3:5

Cast Down But Unconquered

*We are hard-pressed on every side, **yet not crushed**; we are perplexed, **but not in despair**; persecuted, **but not forsaken**; struck down, **but not destroyed**—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. ~ II Corinthians 4:8-10*

Paul's Perspective

For we walk by faith, not by sight. ~ II Corinthians 5:7

Paul's Motivation

For the love of Christ compels us. ~ II Corinthians 5:14

We love Him because He first loved us. ~ I John 4:19

What is Encouragement?

The English word encourage means "to receive courage," which serves as a way of supporting someone, giving confidence or inducing someone to endure hardships.

What is Comfort?

- The English word "comfort" comes from two Latin words that mean "*with strength.*"
- The word in Greek for "comfort" is *paraklesis* which means *exhortation and encouragement, to come alongside and help; The Encourager.*

The Father of Mercies and God of All Comfort

As a father shows compassion to His children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.

~ Psalm 103:13-14

In the Greek the word "mercy" is *oiktirmos*, which means "compassion." God is the author of mercy.

God in His grace gives us what we do not deserve, and in His mercy He does not give us what we do deserve. ~ Warren Wiersbe

Who comforts us in all our tribulation . . .

He comforts us in **ALL** our afflictions, troubles, burdens, sickness, financial difficulties, loss of a loved one, whatever we may be experiencing. The present tense of the verb "comfort" tells us that He is constantly, unfailingly, comforting or encouraging us in whatever situation or trouble we may find ourselves.

The Father of compassionate mercies and a God of every consolation and encouragement, Who consoles and encourages us in our every affliction and tribulation. ~ II Corinthians 1:3

(Wuest's Expanded Translation of the Greek New Testament)

The Promise of His Comfort

And I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive,

because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. ~ John 14:16-17

The word "comfort" (Gr. *paraklesis*) is the same Greek root describing the Holy Spirit as our *Paraclete* in John 14:16.

The Comforter

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. ~ John 14:26

We who live after the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ have the promised Holy Spirit Who makes His home within us and is our Comforter—The Encourager.

The Holy Spirit is the Comforter but Jesus Christ is the Comfort. He cheers or encourages us by the indwelling and constant abiding of the Holy Spirit. That is why it's essential that a believer **abides in Christ**.

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ~ John 15:4-5

Be Filled with the Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity. He possesses all God's attributes and is fully God. The Holy Spirit indwells all believers from the moment they trust in the Lord Jesus as Savior. When an individual accepts Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to indwell, never to leave (Ephesians 4:30).

The Holy Spirit is the believer's greatest asset and is essential for encouragement from God. The Holy Spirit is the believer's Helper (Gk. *Parakletos*: "one called alongside": John 14:15). In other words, the Holy Spirit is "Comforter" and "Teacher" (John 16:7, 13).

The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ

For we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

~ II Corinthians 8:9

Grace is God's gracious provision of sending His Son to die for us to bring us to Himself . . . that's called *reconciliation*.

Grace (Greek: *charis*) denotes goodwill, kindness, and benefit. The Lord's grace includes undeserved favor, unexpected acceptance, and unconditional love.

Clothed in Righteousness

For He has made Him to be sin for us Who knew no sin that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. ~ II Corinthians 5:21

Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. ~ Romans 5:20

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. ~ Ephesians 2:8-9

One who has been genuinely saved by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone will never be in danger of God's condemnation or loss of salvation, but kept forever by God's grace and power.

Christ took our sins . . .

So we could have His righteousness.

~ *Thought for the Day*, Mrs. Lydia Erb (Volume I: 37-40)

Believing Christ died . . . that's history.

Believing that Christ died for me . . . that's salvation

~ *Thought for the Day*, Mrs. Lydia Erb (Volume II: 4-7)

Discouragement: One of Satan's Most Effective Tools

Discouragement flies where faith appears; and vice versa, faith flies when discouragement appears. We must choose between them, for they will not mix.

~ *The God of All Comfort*, Hannah Whithall Smith

Discouragement: "to be deprived of confidence; a feeling of hopelessness; a defeated spirit; to be disheartened, which means *no heart*."

There is no circumstance, no trouble, no testing, that can ever touch me until, first of all, it has gone past God and past Christ, right through to me. If it has come that far, it has come with a great purpose. ~Alan Redpath

What a Friend We Have in Jesus

By Joseph Medlicott Scriven ~ 1855

I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. ~ John 15:15

What a Friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge—
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,
Thou wilt find a solace there.

I Needed the Quiet

I needed the quiet so He drew me aside,
Into the shadows where we could confide.
Away from the bustle where all the day long
I hurried and worried when active and strong.
I needed the quiet though at first I rebelled,
But gently, so gently, my cross He upheld,
And whispered so sweetly of spiritual things,
Though weakened in body, my spirit took wings
To heights never dreamed of when active and gay.
He loved me so greatly He drew me away.
I needed the quiet. No prison my bed,
But a beautiful valley of blessings instead—
A place to grow richer in Jesus to hide,
I needed the quiet, so He drew me aside.

~ Alice Hansche Mortenson

In quietness and confidence shall be your strength. ~ Isaiah 30:15

We Do Not Lose Heart

*Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, **we do not lose heart.*** ~ II Corinthians 4:1

*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, **bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*** ~ II Corinthians 10:4-5

The Renewal Plan

Since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ~ II Corinthians 4:16

As water reflects the face, so one's life reflects the heart. ~ Proverbs 27:19

Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new. ~ II Corinthians 5:17

*He gives power to the faint... They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and **not faint**. ~ Isaiah 40:28-31*

Our Savior promises Himself to handle our weary moments:

Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

~ Matthew 11:28-30

I would rather wear out than rust out. ~ George Whitfield

Things That Last

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. ~ II Corinthians 4:17-18

Our Eternal Home

For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ~

II Corinthians 5:1

Cast Down But Not in Despair

God comforts those who are cast down. ~ II Corinthians 7:6

In perplexities—when we cannot tell what to do, when we cannot understand what is going on around us—let us be calmed and steadied and made patient by the thought that what is hidden from us is not hidden from Him.

~ Frances Ridley Havergal

Take Heart

In this world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. ~ John 16:33

Paul's Account of Paradise

I knew a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know—God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. ~ II Corinthians 12:1

And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. ~ II Corinthians 12:4

The Thorn in the Flesh

*And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a **thorn in the flesh** was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ~ II Corinthians 12:7-8*

Sufficient Grace

*And He said to me, '**My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.**' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ~ II Corinthians 12:9*

<i>Our prayer is not Thy will be changed, but Thy will be done. ~ Amy Carmichael</i>
--

Turning Affliction into Joy

Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. ~ II Corinthians 12:10

I walked a mile with Pleasure;
She chatted all the way;
But left me none the wiser
For all she had to say.

I walked a mile with Sorrow;
And ne'er a word said she;
But, Oh! The things I learned from her,
When Sorrow walked with me.

~ Robert Browning Hamilton

The promises never shine so brightly than in the furnace of affliction.
~ Charles Spurgeon

The Secret of Encouragement

1. What Christ did **for** you. (II Corinthians 5:17, 21; 8:9)
2. What Christ does **in** you. (II Corinthians 4:6-7; 4:16)
3. What Christ does **through** you. (II Corinthians 1:4; 4:6)

Lessons in the Valley

I have been through the valley of weeping,
The valley of sorrow and pain;
But the 'God of All Comfort' was with me,
At hand to uphold and sustain.

As the earth needs the clouds and the sunshine;
Our souls need both sorrow and joy;
So He places us oft in the furnace,
The dross from the gold to destroy.

When He leads thro' some valley of trouble,
His omnipotent hand we trace;
For the trials and sorrows He sends us,
Are part of His lessons in grace.

Oft we shrink from the purging and pruning,
Forgetting the Husbandman knows
That the deeper the cutting and paring
The richer the cluster that grows.

Well He knows the affliction is needed;
He has a wise purpose in view,
And in the dark valley He whispers,
'Hereafter thou'lt know what to do.'

As we travel thro' life's shadowed valley
Fresh springs of His love ever rise;
And we learn that our sorrows and losses,
Are blessings just sent in disguise.

So we'll follow wherever He leadeth,
Let the path be dreary or bright;
For we've proved that our God can give comfort;
Our God can give songs in the night.

Words to a Hymn Published in Streams in the Desert
~ Mrs. Charles E. Cowman

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they **comfort** me. ~ Psalm 23:4*

The Secret of Encouragement

Part II

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 tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

~ II Corinthians 1:4

The Stewardship of Encouragement

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. ~ II Corinthians 1:5-7

Encouragement: A Gift to Others

Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. ~ Proverbs 16:24

A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. ~ Proverbs 25:11

Grace never looks for a reason; it only looks for an opportunity.

~ Warren W. Wiersbe

The Words We Speak

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

~ Ephesians 4:29

A Wife's Encouragement

The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life. ~ Proverbs 31:11-12

Encouraging words can go a long way in building up or edifying your husband and strengthening the foundation of your marriage. It's not a matter of false encouragement but demonstrating the "grace of God" to him.

We are not called to "feel" love; we are called "to display" love through the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we get confused into thinking that we can do loving things only if we *feel*/like doing them, but Scripture says nothing of the kind.

Encouraging your husband is vital to his well-being as well as to your marriage. You may find that your husband's heart softens towards you as you encourage him.

Words from Job's Wife

Job's Wife: "Do you still retain your integrity? Curse God, and die."

Job: "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and shall we not accept adversity?"

~ Job 2:9-10

Content or Contentious?

It is better to live in a corner of a roof, than in a house shared with a contentious woman. ~ Proverbs 21:10 & Proverbs 25:24

It is better to dwell in the wilderness than with a contentious and an angry woman. ~ Proverbs 21:19

A continual dripping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike. He who would restrain her restrains the wind, and grasps oil with his right hand. ~ Proverbs 27:15

Kindness: Love in Action

And on her tongue is the law of kindness.

~ Proverbs 30:31

Love is patient and kind.

~ I Corinthians 13:4

The Fruit of Forgiveness

Be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. ~ Ephesians 4:32

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.
~ Galatians 5:22-23*

The basis for believers forgiving others is the fact that they themselves have been graciously forgiven by God in Christ and released from any obligation to make restitution . . . that's grace.

Are there roots of bitterness that have defiled your relationship with your husband? If you are unwilling to forgive your husband, for whatever reason, that unwillingness has affected you, and you will be unable to encourage him. Your resentment and bitterness will get in the way.

God has provided His grace and His comfort to soothe in times of hurting.

Encourage Without a Word

Wives, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.

Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. ~ I Peter 3:1-4

*When it is just me who has been wronged, my lips should most often be silent. And I must see to it in the **Hidden Person of the Heart** there is always the gentleness of Christ. Words of complaint can be so destructive. Let this be my rule: Silence, unless the reason for speech shall be the searchlight of Eternity.
~ Amy Carmichael from *His Thoughts Said . . .**

A Mother's Comfort

As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you.

~ Isaiah 66:13

What a delightful metaphor in picturing God's comfort for us as compared to a mother's! Even though this reference in Isaiah 66 is addressed originally to the Jewish exiles returning to an impoverished land and ruined temple, it's applicable to us as well, for its message brings comfort and hope in every situation.

A Mother's Faith

By faith, Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child, and they were not afraid of the king's command. ~ Hebrews 11:23

A Mother's Influence

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he looked to the reward. ~ Hebrews 11:24

A Mother's Prayers

Amazing Grace

Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound)

That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found,

Was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,

And grace my fears relieved;

How precious did that grace appear,

The hour I first believed!

~ John Newton

Hymn Published in 1779

Encouraged in Christ

*And God is able to make **all grace** abound toward you, that you, always **having all sufficiency in all things**, may have an **abundance** for every good work.*

~ II Corinthians 9:8

His Eye Is on the Sparrow

*Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come,
Why should my heart be lonely, and long for heaven and home.
When Jesus is my portion? My constant Friend is He;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.*

*"Let not your heart be troubled," His tender word I hear
And resting on His goodness, I lose my doubts and fears;
Though by the path He leadeth, but one step I may see;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.*

*Whenever I am tempted, whenever clouds arise,
When song give place to sighing, when hope within me dies,
I draw the closer to Him, from care He sets me free;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He cares for me.*

~ Words: Civilla D. Martin, 1905

~ Music: Charles H. Gabriel

Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

~ Matthew 10:29-31