

# The Courage to Face Suffering

2 Cor. 1:3-11

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

For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. 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.

Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort. For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia.

For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.

You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

Suffering has many faces: Sickness, death, divorce, unemployment, prison, bankruptcy, aloneness, persecution, chronic pain, loss, wayward child, care of others, troubles brought on by wrong choices of others.

Bitter or Better?

See God as...

- punishing us?            - enjoying our pain?
- callous?                    - too busy?

When we have fearless faith in the face of suffering, we are trusting in what kind of God?

1. A Comforting God

Comfort?

- think comfortable?
  - absence of pain or problems
  - easy chair; hammock
- ... the God of all comfort. (3b)

The Father of mercies – compassion for the hurting.

... you have heard of the steadfastness of Job and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

James 5:11

Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Psalm 24:6

Comforter – Advocate; Paraclete; Helper; Brave Together  
(Latin) – “confortis”

- to come along side of, to help
- to strengthen;
- to encourage;
- to support.

Who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace. 2 Thess. 2:16

... Any comfort from love.

Phil. 2:1

But God, who comforts the downcast, who comforted us by the coming of Titus... 2 Cor. 7:6

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

Isa. 66:13

Your rod and your staff they comfort me. Ps. 23:4

Let your steadfast love comfort me, according to your promise to your servant. Ps. 119:76

God said...

If you never felt pain, then how would you know that I'm a Healer?

If you never went through difficulties, how would know that I'm a Deliverer?

If you never had a trial, how could you call yourself an overcomer?

If you never felt sadness, how would you know that I'm a Comforter?

If you never made a mistake, how would you know that I'm forgiving?

If you knew it all, how would you know that I will answer your questions?

If you never were in trouble, how would you know that I will come to your rescue?

If you never were broken, then how would you know that I can make you whole?

If you never had a problem, how would you know that I can solve them?

If you never had any suffering then how would you know what Jesus went through?

If you never went through the fire, then how would you become pure?

If I gave you all things, how would you appreciate them?

If I never corrected you, how would you know that I love you?

If you had all power, then how would learn to depend on Me?

If your life was perfect, then what would you need Me for?

2. A Responsive God

Sometimes-

God seems distant – Ps. 10:1

“Why do you stand far away?”

God seems to not care – Matt. 27:46 “Why have you forsaken me?”

Who comforts us in all our affliction

(4a)

He responds!

By His nature, He is a comforting God!

By His promises to his people, He comforts!

I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Heb. 13:5 also Deut. 31:6

It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you. He will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed. Deut. 31:8

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isa. 41:10

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Ps. 34:18

“Affliction” – pressure; stress; trials; persecution; pain; grief; troubles; hardships

In all our affliction –

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.

2 Cor. 4:7

We do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. (4:16)

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. Ps. 34:19

This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. Ps. 34:6

### 3. A Purposeful God

... so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (4b)

Purposes of God in affliction >

1. To test our faith

(Prov. 17:3; Dt. 8:2; 1 Pet. 1:6-7)

2. To discipline us (Heb. 12:5-11)

3. To bring greater glory to God (Jn. 9:3)

4. To build character

(Rom. 5:3-5; Jam. 1:2-4)

5. To focus on heaven (2 Cor. 4:17-18)

6. To obey God, no matter what!

(Heb. 11:17-19; Ps. 119:67, 71)

7. To increase our love for Him.

(Ps. 18:1)

8. To help or comfort others.

(Lk. 22:31-32; 2 Cor. 1:4)

9. To bring more people to Christ

(2 Tim. 2:10)

10. To be understood only in heaven

(1 Cor. 2:9)

What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him. 1 Cor. 2:9

He is committed to us... (Phil. 1:6)

He will always love us... (Rom 8:35)

He always is ready to transform everything to something "good."  
(Rom. 8:28)

We are products of our past but we don't have to be prisoners of it.  
"God's grace recycles our garbage into instruments for His service."

Dr. David Seamonds

How do we comfort others?

1. With "being there" – 2 Cor. 7:6

2. With words – 1 Thess. 4:18

3. With the Word of God -

Ps. 119:25, 28, 50, 93

4. With acts of service –

Phil. 2:19-20; 30

5. With prayer – 2 Cor. 1:11

You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

6. With sharing our "story" –

2 Cor. 1:7-8

"These are not your sufferings; they are My sufferings. All I ask of you is the loan of your body."

"He didn't stop the sufferings.

He didn't stop the wickedness,

the cruelties, the humiliation or anything. It was all there. The pain was just as bad. The fear was just as bad. But it was altogether different. It was in Jesus, for Him, with Him."

"The Thorn"

by Martha Snell Nicholson

I stood, a mendicant of God,

Before His royal throne,

And begged Him for one priceless gift

For me to call my own.

I took the gift from out His hand,

But as I would depart

I cried, "But Lord, this is a thorn,

And it has pierced my heart!

This is a strange and hurtful gift

Which Thou hast given me."

He said, "I love to give good gifts,

I gave My best to Thee."

I took it home, and though at first  
The cruel thorn hurt sore,  
As long years passed I grew at last  
To love it more and more.

I learned He never gives a thorn  
Without this added grace;  
He takes the thorn to pin aside  
The veil which hides His face!  
Dear Lord... Please grant that I shall Never waste my pain; for ...  
To fail without learning,  
To fall without getting up,  
To sin without overcoming,  
To be hurt without forgiving,  
To be discontent without improving,  
To be crushed without becoming more caring,  
To suffer without growing more sensitive,  
Makes of suffering a senseless, futile exercise,  
A tragic loss,  
And of pain,  
The greatest waste of all.